

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: [freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk)

Our Ref: FOI2020/42901

Date 23 September 2020

Dear J Roberts,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 5 August 2020. You asked:

*"You used the Jesus Army to deliver "workfare":*

*[https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/workfare\\_partner\\_the\\_jesus\\_army#incoming-946003](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/workfare_partner_the_jesus_army#incoming-946003)*

*According to a damning report leaked to the BBC, senior members of the disgraced organisation covered up the abuse of women and children:*

*<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-53450901>*

*"It attracted thousands of members, from homeless drug addicts to devout Christian families, many of whom lived together in close-knit, rural communes.*

*Members were put to work on the church's farms or businesses and forced to hand over money and possessions.*

*Surviving members have described an intense, bullying regime, in which children were severely disciplined and forced to sit through long worship sessions involving speaking in tongues and exorcisms."*

*The link to the organisation that you provided in your response to the request above now contains the following extracts:*

*"On Sunday 26th May, the members of the Jesus Fellowship Church (JFC) voted to revoke the Church's constitution. This means that the national Church, formerly known as the Jesus Army, will cease to exist and the current National Leadership Team will be stepping down from their roles once the winding up of the central Church has been completed."*

*"In 2013 the JFC invited people to make disclosures about their experiences of the Church and many came forward with disclosures related to pastoral abuse and bullying as well as financial, physical and sexual abuse."*

*"This information was passed to the Police, who launched Operation Lifeboat, examining non-recent abuse in the JFC. As a result, a number of criminal cases were successfully prosecuted through the courts."*

*<https://jesus.org.uk/>*

- 1. If any benefit claimants who participated in "workfare" with the Jesus Army contacted the DWP with allegations of a sexual nature, please provide the number who did.*
- 2. Please confirm whether you were contacted by the police concerning any criminal investigation into the organisation."*

## **DWP Response**

The department does not hold the information you have requested. Please note that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) only applies to information held by the department on the date of the request. It does not require us to create information

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Department quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,  
Contract Management and Partner Delivery Briefing and Correspondence Team  
Department for Work and Pensions

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### **Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act**

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing [freedom-of-information-request@dw.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dw.gov.uk) or by writing to DWP, Central FoI Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, SW1H 9NA. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

Web: [ico.org.uk/Global/contact\\_us](http://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745