

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: VTR 3318

13/8/14

Dear Sarah Connor,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 21/7/14. You asked:

*Dear Department for Work and Pensions, please supply a list of workfare providers for the following post code areas:*

Y01  
Y02  
Y03  
Y04  
Y05  
Y06  
Y07  
Y08  
Y09  
Y010  
Y011  
Y012

We do not have a workfare programme. All of the department's employment programmes are supportive initiatives, designed to help unemployed people gain skills and help them into work. The information you seek about the list of providers is exempt from disclosure under sections 29(1)(a), 29(1)b, 36(2)(c) and 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act").

A balancing exercise was conducted in order to consider whether the public interest factors in favour of withholding the information outweighed those in favour of release. In this case we concluded that the public interest weighed in favour of withholding the information because of the established risk and real harm.

Section 36(2)(c) of the Act protects information which, in the reasonable opinion of a Minister of the Crown, would be likely to damage the effective conduct of public affairs if disclosed.

The Minister of State for Employment is satisfied that the exemption applies in this case. This is because disclosing the details of placement hosts in the listed postcodes could lead to campaign groups creating a list of organisations that host the department's mandatory employment programmes. This then runs the risk of campaign groups targeting placement

organisations to cause them to withdraw from the scheme. These actions aim to create a climate of fear and cause disruption, which also discourages other organisations from joining the scheme with the intention of disrupting the delivery of government employment programmes. This risk, if realised, would be prejudicial to a policy which is designed to help move jobseekers into sustainable work.

Thwarting the delivery of the policy in this way would be likely to undermine the benefits to the wider economy of moving jobseekers off benefit into employment. Such disruption is also detrimental to the job prospects of individual jobseekers who will not benefit from the disciplines and support that the employment programmes offer.

Section 29(1)(a) is engaged if disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the economic interests of the United Kingdom or of any part of the United Kingdom.

Section 29(1)(b) is engaged if disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the financial interests of any administration in the United Kingdom, as defined by section 28(2).

Section 43(2) of the Act is engaged if disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

DWP considers that disclosure of the information you have requested would, or would be likely to result in such prejudice in a number of different ways, but including in particular the following:

1. If this information was used to create a list of placement hosts and those hosts subsequently withdrew from the scheme, then providers and subcontractors could lose some or all the money they had invested in sourcing those hosts and could mean that they would have to invest still more in finding replacements.
2. If placement hosts withdrew, DWP would have to spend more on benefits to claimants and have less to spend on 'commercial' activities, e.g. contracts with contractors to assist jobseekers back to work.
3. Having to pay more in benefits to jobseekers and pay more to support them into work (including paying more to contractors for assisting claimants into work), would in our view, lessen the extent to which the government is able to exercise proper control over the economy in order to maintain sound public finances and would slow the progress of fiscal consolidation which risks damaging the wider economy.
4. In the face of a hostile campaign, placement hosts who do not currently seek payments from providers may begin to seek payments from providers and sub-contractors to offer placements or those that already seek payments may seek payments of a higher value. These increased costs to contractors would be likely to lead to DWP having to pay higher costs for contracting the same service.

Where sections 29, 36 and 43 of the Act are engaged, the exemptions in those sections have effect where, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemptions outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information (see section 2(2) of the Act).

In looking at whether it is in the public interest to withhold the information encompassed by your requests, DWP has considered a number of factors including in particular the following:

1. If this information is disclosed, and placement hosts withdraw then claimants will have fewer opportunities to access the support that will get them closer to the labour market. It is clearly in the public interest to reduce unemployment.
2. If this information is disclosed, it is clear that a number of people would seek to undermine the goodwill of organisations who offer opportunities to unemployed people by attempting to damage the reputation and standing of those organisations.

On balance, DWP is satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemptions referred to above outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Strategy Fol Team

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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@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk) or by writing to DWP, Central Fol 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 [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)