

Freedom of Information request 888/2013

Received 23 February 2013

Published 03 May 2013

Information request

“(1) Does this condition apply only to full-time workers (who may earn enough wages to be able to afford substantial travel costs associated with such a long commute) or ALL WORKERS, including part-time workers, who may not be able to earn enough money to be able to afford the travel costs associated with such a journey? (2) Does this condition apply to part-time carers who do want to work locally, part-time or possibly full-time, but cannot be separated from the person (or people) that they care for for extended periods associated with full-time work at a distance, e.g., 3 hours travel + 8 hours work + 1 hour lunch break = 12 hours in toto? (3) Will the condition apply to single parents, forcing them to abandon their children for up to twelve or more hours per day?”

DWP response

One of the limitations on work search and availability requirements set out in the Universal Credit regulations is that it should be limited to a location which would take the claimant a maximum of 90 minutes to travel to work and 90 minutes to travel home again. This limitation is only relevant to claimants who are subject to work search and availability requirements and so it is certainly not the case that “every recipient of Universal Credit will, without exception, be required to commute for up to three hours a day to work or forfeit benefit”. For example, responsible carers (which includes lone parents) of children under the age of five will not need to carry out work search or availability requirements. Full time carers of severely disabled people will also be exempt from these requirements.

If any claimant does not take up a job within the 90 minute travelling limitation, Jobcentre advisers must explore the reason behind the claimant not taking up the job to establish whether they had “good reason” to do so. The guidance on good reason sets out a non-exhaustive list of circumstances which should be considered when deciding this. This includes whether the claimant had caring responsibilities, and whether there are unavoidable expenses, such as travel or child care costs, which would be incurred if they amount to an unreasonably high proportion of the income they would have received from the job in question.