

Freedom of Information request 3854/2013

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Information request

Can you confirm that the DWP will refund all the out of pocket travel expenses associated with traveling the 90 minutes distance (up to 4 times a week) quoted above to cold call visit employers and details of whether this includes via train, bus, coach and own transport (car)?

Samples of 90 minute journeys:

*London to Birmingham by train
@ £50 standard same day return*

*London to Oxford by coach
@ £17 same day return*

If the DWP does not refund travel expenses associated with meeting a Claimant Commitment (CC), does the DWP expect Universal Credit (UC) payments to be used to fund mandated unavoidable CC expenses?

Further, if the DWP does not refund travel expenses in such circumstances what is the geographical walking distance the DWP can expect someone to walk in Winter, Summer and Autumn, to cold call visit employers to meet any Jobseekers Agreement and CC obligations?

Plus finally if the travel costs, within the aforesaid 90 minutes, to start a new full time 35 hour per week job would alone be greater than all in-work or out of work UC payments, would the job have to be accepted or risk total loss of CC for up to 3 years via a sanction?

DWP response

Anyone can request copies of information which a public authority already holds in a recorded form, but the Freedom of Information Act does not require the Department to provide opinions or explanations, generate answers to questions, or create or obtain information it does not hold.

Your request asks a series of questions which would require answers to be generated.

You may find the following information helpful.

The purely illustrative example Claimant Commitment included in the response to the original FoI which you make reference to stated that employers could be cold called by a variety of methods including: visiting; telephoning and written correspondence. The most appropriate means by which employers are cold called would be determined by the claimant's personal circumstances and the nature of the prospective employment.

All Jobcentre Plus District Managers have a limited amount of discretionary funding, known as the Flexible Support Fund, that they can use to supplement mainstream services and to tailor support to the needs of individuals and the local area.

To support claimants in their search for work, advisers can use their discretion to make awards from the local fund. In exercising that discretion, advisers consider the appropriateness of an award, taking into account whether there is a more appropriate method of contact e.g via e-mail or telephone, individual circumstances and value for money in terms of enhancing employment prospects and reducing the time spent on benefit. It is important to note that claimants have no automatic entitlement to this funding.

Regarding your question about sanctions for refusing employment which incurs travel expenses which represent an unreasonably high proportion of income, the guidance for Decision Makers can be found in Chapter K2, paragraph 2151 at:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/advice-for-decision-making/>.