

Freedom of Information request 3786/2013

Received 10 August
Published

Information request

“Please provide the latest Universal Credit Claimant Commitment and the work search and preparation plan if it is separate from the Claimant Commitment.

Please also provide any guidelines/training used by Jobcentre staff in relation to preparing a Claimant Commitment with a jobseeker.”

DWP response

With regard your first request, an example Claimant Commitment is included at Annex 1.

With regard your second request, Knowledge Management (KM) is the guidance available to support operational Universal Credit staff in preparing a Claimant Commitment. It is available in the Universal Credit Pathfinder only and is not accessible to all frontline Jobcentre Plus staff. We are continuing to develop the KM, building on learning from Pathfinder and other ongoing work. KM products are therefore constantly being amended and reviewed before publication. In the interests of transparency, it is our intention to make KM products accessible to staff and the wider public via a dedicated portal.

Therefore, the information you have requested is due for future publication and is exempt from disclosure under the terms of Section 22 (Information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act. This exemption is qualified, and is therefore subject to a public interest test. This means that the public interest in maintaining this exemption must outweigh the public interest in disclosure.

There are public interest arguments in favour of disclosure of the information you seek at the present time. Disclosure would for example improve transparency in the operations of the Department and give the public an early insight into its delivery of the Claimant Commitment.

However there are weighty public interest arguments to the contrary. The Act recognises the desirability of information being freely available in its own right, but section 22 also acknowledges that public authorities must have freedom to be able to determine their own publication timetables. This allows them to

deal with the necessary preparation, administration and context of publication. It is also in the public interest to ensure that this information is available to all members of the public at the same time. Premature publication could undermine this principle by thwarting the official publication process. Where information is intended to be made available, as in this case, individual requests for information should not determine the Department's publication timetable.

The public interest in permitting DWP to publish information in a manner and form and at a time of its own choosing is part of the effective conduct of public affairs. It is right that the general publication of information is a conveniently planned and managed activity within the reasonable control of the Department. Given that the Department has taken the decision in principle to publish, we have a reasonable entitlement to make our own arrangements to do so.

On this occasion, I am satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the future date of publication (section 22(1)). And that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.