



Department
for Work &
Pensions

17 APR 2018

**Complaints and Correspondence
Review Team**

DWP Complaints
Post Handling Site B
Wolverhampton WV99 2GY

email: correspondence@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk

Anneliese Dodds MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Your ref:
Our ref:

13 April 2018

Dear Ms Dodds

Thank you for your letter of 17 March to Cheryl Holgate on behalf of Mr Peter Turville of Oxfordshire Welfare Rights, Barton Neighbourhood Centre, Underhill Circus, Oxford, OX3 9LS who has asked about explicit consent and disclosure of information about Universal Credit claims. I have been asked to reply.

Personal information held by DWP is regarded as confidential and DWP have a number of laws and procedures in place to protect it. For consent to be lawful under the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA), it must be fully informed and freely given. In the case of information defined as sensitive in Schedule 3 of the DPA, consent must be explicit.

Universal Credit is the DWP's first fully digital service. Claimants and anyone acting for them can see full details of the claim, including a stock of personal information, including financial details. This data allows us to run a modern digital service improving the experience of claimants. But this same data, in the wrong hands, could result in the claimant being subject to fraud and theft.

We need to balance the valuable support third party organisations offer our claimants against our duties to protect the sensitive information we hold for hundreds of thousands of UK citizens. Accordingly for people who represent claimants we have instituted a system of explicit consent so that we can see that the claimant has given authority for someone to deal with their claim. This provides an additional layer of security to protect claimants. We believe that the explicit consent arrangements are proportionate and point to the daily reports in the press on breaches of personal data as grounds for this.

Information about Universal Credit consent and disclosure of information is available at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-detailed-information-for-claimants/universal-credit-consent-and-disclosure-of-information>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Frith', written in a cursive style.

Patrick Frith
Correspondence Manager