



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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Email:
freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk

Our Ref: FOI2020/09229

Date 6 April 2020

Dear Owen Stevens,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FoI) request received on 28 February. You asked for:

"The email chain below indicates that staff at Torquay contact centre [...] were issued with new guidance or information about the operation of the SDP gateway in an email dated 26/2/2020.

Please provide an anonymised copy of this email to staff at Torquay contact centre"

DWP Response

I can confirm that we hold the recorded information to respond to your request.

The email that you refer to was sent out by our Service Planning and Design Team to all contact centres as follows:

For your information – please can you ensure that colleagues are aware of the attached update.

Apologies this is not the normal route for cascading messages but we want to make sure the attached Implementation Memo, which has just been published via the Change Implementation route, has been cascaded and understood by all Jobcentre staff.

Currently, any customers who breach the UC Hard Gateway, and are in receipt of Severe Disability Premium at the time, have to stay in UC and cannot return to a legacy benefit if UC has already been put in to payment. However, from Monday, 2nd March 2020, this will change and the UC SDP Gateway team will start to identify any customers impacted by this and make necessary arrangements for their UC to be repaid, and for a Legacy Benefit to be put into payment, along with Housing Benefit and Tax Credits, as appropriate. All of these cases, will be dealt with by Preston Benefit Centre, who will take the claim (or reinstate a previous claim) and arrange for any necessary WFI to take place.

The numbers are anticipated to be low and around 3-4 per week nationally, but these customers will need to be seen in a jobcentre and for a WFI to take place. Preston will phone any impacted Jobcentres to ask them to book the interview and also for them to inform the customer, but we need to ensure that all sites are aware of the possibly of receiving one of these calls.

If any sites do have queries, these can be raised through your group Change Implementation Manager.

The following was included as a bulletin:

Background:

Following a Universal Credit policy change which took place from 16 January 2019, claimants who were receiving SDP on their legacy claim are not entitled to claim Universal Credit (UC). Claimants are prevented from claiming UC if they have received and where entitled to SDP within the last calendar month. We call this a “hard gateway”.

However, customers have been breaching the gateway and have been making claims to UC. When this is identified before UC goes into payment, these customers are currently signposted back to their legacy benefit by the UC SDP Team.

From Monday, 2nd March 2020, customers who were not identified in time and are therefore now in receipt of UC, but who had SDP in payment/continued to be entitled, at the time they made their claim to UC, will also be moved back to a legacy benefit and their claim to UC will end.

Please note, customers who become entitled to SDP following a mandatory reconsideration (MR) or an Appeal, will not be included in this exercise. This exercise ONLY covers customers who had SDP entitlement when they made their claim to UC.

The UC SDP Team will be responsible for identifying customers, and will direct them accordingly depending on the stage of their UC claim:

- Customers who have made a claim to UC, but it is not yet in payment will be handed back to the New Claims teams, which is an existing process.
- Customers who are in receipt of UC will be directed to a specialist team in Preston, via a warm handover from the UC SDP Team.

Please Note. Only the UC SDP Team and Preston Benefit Centre staff should take any action to repatriate these customers to a legacy benefit.

Next steps:

All staff to be aware of the content of the enclosed Staff Brief which contains scenarios (lines to take) for customers who may ask about returning to UC.

If a customer, currently claiming UC, makes contact and states they were in receipt of SDP at the time they made their claim, or within the previous calendar month, please explain that UC are currently identifying all customers who are impacted by this. However, if a customer wants to confirm that they will be included in this exercise, please signpost the customer to the UC SDP Team on 0800 181 4049 or 0800 012 1331 for customers in Northern Ireland.

If a customer contacts stating they are currently in the process of moving back to legacy benefit as a result of this change, an email should be sent to Preston Benefit Centre asking for a call back. Please ensure you provide a current phone number for the customer. Do not try and release any payment to the customer.

If a customer contacts stating they are currently in the process of moving back to a legacy benefit, but wants to speak about the overpayment of UC please refer the customer to the UC SDP Team.

Jobcentre Action:

Once these customers are brought back on to a legacy benefit, they will need to follow existing customer Journeys, which may well include bringing back into any labour market activity (JSA and certain IS and ESA Customers).

Preston will identify the relevant Jobcentre by using FIND and will make contact by telephone to arrange for the LMS record to be updated and determine whether the interview should be waived, deferred or booked immediately.

As these claims are having to be reinstated through a clerical process, a copy of the claim form will be sent to the relevant Jobcentre for the customer to sign during their WFI. Once signed, the signature sheet should be scanned and emailed back to Preston, and the claim form should then be sent via Courier these need to be sent back to Preston.

Please note, if the customer Fails to Attend the interview in the Jobcentre, the Jobcentre will need to contact Preston via email, using the following email address, on the same day the customer fails to attend, and Preston will contact the customer and then either rebook or consider if a home visit is required

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

Yours sincerely,

Operations Fol Team
Department for Work and Pensions

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@dwp.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
Web: ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745