

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: [freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Our Ref: Fol 3756

DATE: 21 September 2017

Dear Ms Harriman,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 10 September 2017. You asked:

*I understand - please correct me if I am wrong on this - that when DWP ring someone back on a mobile - for example if they are calling about a Universal Credit matter - that the DWP number will automatically come up as a withheld number.*

*This causes problems for people whose phones block withheld numbers, or people with mental health problems or chaotic lifestyles / debts who are wary of numbers from someone they do not know.*

*Could you please send me any documentation which explains why this decision was made and whether there is any possibility of such return calls NOT coming up as withheld numbers.*

*OR if DWP could arrange for "DWP" to come up on the phone - or some code which the claimant would be told about and could recognise.  
Is this possible? Has it been considered?*

## **DWP Response**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) withholds its telephone numbers depending on where the call originates from. If an outbound call is made from one of our contact centres, a telephone number will be presented. When a member of the public calls these presentation numbers back, they will hear a pre-recorded message stating that DWP tried to call them. If the outbound call is made from outside our contact centres, for example from a benefit processing site, the number is withheld. The reason for this is that there is a risk that these telephone numbers could be used incorrectly, impacting on the Department's ability to deliver its business efficiently, resulting in a poor customer service.

DWP has investigated the possibility of having "DWP" present when calling members of the public, however we have been informed by our telephony supplier that it is not technically possible to do so. We recognise that not all customers will answer withheld telephone numbers, or numbers that they do not recognise, so wherever possible we will send a SMS in advance or between attempts to advise the customer that we are trying to call them. We are

also attempting to reduce the amount of outbound calls that we make, by enabling contact centre agents to resolve as many queries as possible when a customer calls us, however if a query is particularly complex and requires expert intervention we will have to arrange for someone to call them back. When call backs are arranged we always advise the customer when to expect our call, for example within the next 24 hours.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Strategy Fol Team

-----

**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.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.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 [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)