



Menu

Press release

Hoban – taking action to improve the Work Capability Assessment

Organisation: Department for Work and Pensions (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>)

Page history: Published 22 July 2013

Policy: Simplifying the welfare system and making sure work pays
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/simplifying-the-welfare-system-and-making-sure-work-pays>)

Topics: Employment (<https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/employment>) and Welfare
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/welfare>)

Minister: Mark Hoban MP (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/mark-hoban>)

As part of the ongoing process of improving the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), the DWP is to bring in additional providers to carry out assessments, Minister for Employment Mark Hoban announced today.



This change in approach for contracting providers to carry out the assessments to be delivered on a regional basis is likely to be fully operational from summer 2014 and will provide extra capacity to help tackle waiting times.

The Minister also announced that he has already directed Atos Healthcare to put in place a quality improvement plan following a DWP audit which identified an unacceptable reduction in the quality of written reports produced following assessments.

Measures include retraining and re-evaluating all Atos healthcare professionals, with those not meeting the required standard continuing to have all of their work audited until they do, or have their approval to carry out assessments withdrawn by the department.

The reports provided by Atos form only a part of the WCA process, which has a number of checks and balances built in to the system, and a 'C' grade report does not mean the assessment was wrong. Claimants whose report following their assessment has not met the DWP's quality standard have been no more likely to be found fit for work, or to appeal against their decision than other claimants.

Mark Hoban, Minister for Employment, said:

“ I am committed to ensuring the Work Capability Assessment process is as fair and accurate as possible, with the right checks and balances to ensure the right decision is reached. Where our audits identify any drop in quality, we act decisively to ensure providers meet our exacting quality standards.

Since 2010 we have made considerable improvements to the system we inherited from the previous government. However, it's vital we continue to improve the service to claimants, which is why we are introducing new providers to increase capacity.”

The DWP has also engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to provide independent advice in relation to strengthening quality assurance processes across all its health and disability assessments. Atos Healthcare have also brought in a third party to assess the quality of their audit and make recommendations for improvements.

The WCA process has a number of checks and balances built in to ensure the right decision is reached. These include:

- › DWP Decision Makers making the final decision on claimants' benefit entitlement. Decision Makers can – and do – reach different decisions to those recommended to them by the assessments when all the supporting information is taken into account
- › claimants who disagree with the outcome of their WCA can provide more medical evidence and ask the DWP to reconsider the decision
- › a claimant who disagrees with their decision can also appeal to an independent tribunal, and before any appeal the original decision is looked at again by another DWP Decision Maker

The DWP also remains committed to annual independent reviews of the WCA – from which over 50 recommendations have been, or are being, implemented – to ensure the WCA is as fair and as accurate as possible. The fourth independent review of the WCA is currently being undertaken by Dr Paul Litchfield, a respected Senior Occupational Physician.

More information

In April/May 2013 the DWP carried out an urgent audit of around 400 reports following concerns raised from a previous smaller audit. This covered cases audited by Atos between October 2012 and March 2013.

The quality of the reports produced by Atos following an assessment are graded A-C and the audit demonstrated that the number of C-grade reports was around 41% between October 2012 and March 2013.

A 'C' grade report does not mean the assessment was wrong, and the recommendation given in a 'C' grade report may well be correct, but, for example, their reasoning for reaching that recommendation may lack the level of detail demanded by the DWP.

In light of the audit we required Atos to put in place a performance improvement plan and will be bringing in new providers to increase capacity.

Atos Healthcare do not make the decision on someone's benefit entitlement – the reports produced by Atos are only a part of the process with DWP decision-makers making the final decision.

Press Office

Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

London Press Office (national media and London area enquiries only – not questions about personal claims)
020 3267 5144

Out-of-hours (journalists only) 076 59 108 883

England and Wales (local media enquiries) 029 20 586 then 097 or 098 or 099

Scotland (local media enquiries) 0131 310 1122

Media enquiries for this press release 0203 267 5161

Follow us on Twitter www.twitter.com/dwppressoffice (<http://www.twitter.com/dwppressoffice>)

Share this page

- › Share on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fnews%2Fhoban-taking-action-to-improve-the-work-capability-assessment>)
- › Share on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fnews%2Fhoban-taking-action-to-improve-the-work-capability-assessment&text=Hoban%20%E2%80%93%20taking%20action%20to%20improve%20the%20Work%20Capability%20Assessment>)