

To P Wilkinson  
C/o request-94942-3dd531a4@whatdotheyknow.com

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: [freedom-of-information-xxxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx](mailto:freedom-of-information-xxxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx)

Our Ref: VTR 2630-3583

DATE 23 December 2011

Dear P Wilkinson,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request that was received by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Adelphi on 28 November 2011 and forwarded for response by DWP Commercial Management of Medical Services (CMMS) Freedom of Information Officer.

In your email you asked to be provided with information answering the following questions:-

*Dear Department for Work and Pensions,*

- 1. Please could I have a detailed description of the course/training modules which the HCP's working for Atos, have to complete to become qualified to conduct assessments on people in receipt of welfare benefits.*
- 2. Can people who are not working for Atos, complete the same types of courses, if they have a nursing qualification, and on completion, call themselves Disability Analysts?*
- 3. Which body has given the HCPs accreditation up to now and who is giving them accreditation in the future?*

In answer to **Q 1** the Atos Healthcare training is outlined as follows:-

*Initial Training:* varies in detail according to which benefit is involved. However all such training follows a similar basic pattern, as follows;

*Theoretical Training:* Theoretical training commences with a trainer led theory based course usually delivered to a group of HCPs in a classroom setting. HCPs who are new to the work of Atos Healthcare will receive instruction in such areas as disability analysis, customer's rights, equal opportunities and professional standards. Detailed technical information relevant to the benefit concerned is provided. All Atos Healthcare trainers have undergone specific training to prepare them for the role, including practical sessions to enhance their understanding of how adults learn.

*Practical Training:* Practical Training is the work undertaken by the new recruits that is produced in a controlled environment. For examination centre based assessments the HCP is supervised and appraised by an experienced Medical Adviser as they complete their introductory cases. In the domiciliary visit based benefits the initial cases are monitored immediately on return to allow feedback to be given without delay.

*Demonstration of understanding assessed by multiple choice examination:* for Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance the HCP is required to attain a pass mark in a multiple choice questionnaire before they are allowed to proceed to the practical training. The questionnaire includes questions on the whole range of topics covered in the training course.

*Demonstration of understanding by audit:* In all benefits the initial cases produced by the HCP are target monitored by an experienced medical adviser and the training cannot be considered as complete until they have demonstrated that their work is acceptable. Whenever any problems are identified appropriate feedback is provided. Further cases are monitored until the work is shown to be satisfactory. If the situation is not rectified the HCP may be required to repeat the entire training process. Continued lack of progress will result in the HCP being informed by a medical manager they can be offered no further training and no further work.

*Approval:* All HCPs must be approved by the CMA to the DWP and separate approval is required for each benefit area in which the HCP is involved. Approval is dependent on successful completion of all stages of their training process and ongoing demonstration that the work being carried out meets a satisfactory standard.

*Written Guidelines:* As part of the HCPs training and ongoing support they are issued with guidelines pertaining to the benefit involved. These guidance notes provide specific technical advice about the benefit concerned, outline best practise and contain general advice about disability analysis and service to the people with disabilities.

All HCPs are monitored to ensure that their work meets the required quality standards. If a problem is identified, the HCP may be required to undertake tailored training, which may involve training in mental health issues if required.

After basic training, the training given to HCPs differs. Information relating to the training of HCPs can be provided if it is known which specific benefit is being discussed.

In reply to **Q 2** all HCPs employed by Atos Healthcare to undertake medical assessments as a part of the contract to supply Medical Services to DWP are fully trained in Disability Assessment Medicine. Expertise in this field qualifies the HCP to give an impartial, independent assessment on the way in which a claimant's illness or disability affects them in carrying out of a range of everyday work-related activities. Training includes the assessment of the effects of specific conditions, for example mental health, or where a condition may fluctuate. Emphasis is always placed on the differing circumstances of each individual claimant. Atos Healthcare do not stipulate that HCPs must hold the Diploma in Disability Assessment Medicine (DDAM) qualification. Should an HCP choose to acquire the DDAM, they are not obliged to inform Atos Healthcare. In relation to who else may call themselves disability analysts you may want to contact the relevant professional organisation for advice.

In response to **Q 3** applications for both employed and contracted HCPs are initially processed centrally. This involves a check of the applicant's General Medical Council/Nursing and Midwifery Council registration and medical defence status, and the taking up of references. Successful completion of this stage is followed by a formal interview.

The DWP Chief Medical Adviser then gives approval to carry out assessments; this is currently Dr Bill Gunnyeon, who is the DWP Director for Health, Work and Wellbeing, Chief Medical Adviser and Chief Scientist,

Maintenance of approval is conditional on the HCPs continuing to demonstrate satisfactory standards in their work. If the work is not satisfactory, appropriate feedback is given, allowing the HCPs an opportunity to improve. The exact course of events is dependent on the circumstances of each particular case but, if following remedial action, a satisfactory standard cannot be attained the HCP will no longer be permitted to carry out that work.

It is also dependent upon the HCPs undertaking work for Atos Healthcare in the particular benefit area that the training permits and his/her continuing utilisation whilst fulfilling the following criteria:

- the HCP continues to satisfy the required standards.
- the HCP completes any mandatory training required.
- the HCP utilised availability within the last 12 months is acceptable to the Medical Manager and is broadly in line with his/her agreed utilisation.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

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#### **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, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor The Adelphi, 1-11, John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT. 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)