

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: Fol 2103

DATE: 8 June 2017

Dear Anita Bellows,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 16 May 2017. You asked:

*In your response sent on the 2nd of May 2107 (Reference Fol 1341), to the following question 'Please provide the definition or guidance being used by the Department to identify "vulnerable claimants" for the purpose of a HWC and to define circumstances in which a HWC will not be appropriate'*

*you stated:*

*'DWP defines vulnerability as "an individual who is identified as having complex needs and/or requires additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services." Work coaches will be issued with clear guidance on who will be exempted from the HWC. For example, claimants who are terminally ill and those receiving treatments such as haemodialysis would not be required to attend a HWC. Work coaches will also be able to defer the HWC if the claimant cannot attend due to temporary circumstances'.*

*As claimants have already received letters requesting them to attend a Health and Work Conversation, I would like to see the guidance given to work coaches on who is being exempted from the HWC under the vulnerability definition of DWP.*

*Could you also explain what you mean practically by 'complex needs' and by 'and/or requires additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services'?*

**RFI1: As claimants have already received letters requesting them to attend a Health and Work Conversation, I would like to see the guidance given to work coaches on who is being exempted from the HWC under the vulnerability definition of DWP.**

I have attached to this response the guidance on who will be exempt from attending the HWC.

**RFI 2: Could you also explain what you mean practically by 'complex needs' and by 'and/or requires additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services'?**

DWP defines complex needs as "difficult personal circumstances and/or life events that affect the ability of the individual to access DWP benefits and use our services.

Please see below further information on how the Department identifies claimants who require additional support.

An individual may require additional support to enable them to:

- access benefits and use our services (may be unable to use on-line claim facility, unable to read claim forms for ESA, JSA, PIP, PENSIONS, etc)
- prove eligibility (may not understand or remember what evidence they have to provide, to prove they are eligible to claim)
- maintain conditionality (may not understand the requirement to attend an interview in the jobcentre)
- maintain their claims (may not understand when to provide change of circumstances' information)
- maintain their finances (be in severe financial hardship/debt, may not have the ability to understand money/numbers)

An individual might experience difficulties with:

- understanding information
- interpreting situations
- making decisions
- giving consent
- communicating information or their views
- requesting specialist or additional help and support

When making a judgement about whether an individual requires additional support, it is essential that our staff communicate with them and record their additional requirements. If, and what, support is required can only be determined as part of a measured assessment.

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)