

To B Adams  
C/o request-122772-0a9bc724@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: 3585-2832

DATE 17 August 2012

Dear B Adams

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request that was received by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Freedom of Information Requests on 22 July 2012 and forwarded on 23 July for response by the DWP Medical Services Contracts Correspondence Team (MSCCT) Freedom of Information Officer.

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

*Please could you provide me with a copy of the Descriptor Handbook as used by DMs and HCPs and which are used to provide consistency in the way that ESA descriptors are interpreted both at the assessment and decision making stages*

In reply to your request please find attached a copy of the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Filework Guidelines (For HCPs) which is information relating to the pre-board check of the Limited Capability for Work questionnaire (ESA 50) and weblinks to a copy of the Revised Work Capability Assessment (WCA) ESA (LCW/LCWRA) Amendment Regulations 2011 Handbook <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/#other> that is issued to approved HCPs employed by Atos Healthcare, and the Decision Makers (DM) Guide (DMG) <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/specialist-guides/decisio-makers-guide/> which is used by DMs as guidance when deciding on benefit entitlement.

The first 2 documents have been produced as part of a programme for approved Healthcare Professionals (HCPs) to carry out medical assessments. All HCPs undertaking these medical assessments must be registered medical or nursing practitioners who in addition, have undergone training in disability assessment medicine and more specific training. The training includes theory training in a classroom setting, supervised practical training, and a demonstration of understanding as assessed by quality audit. These documents must be read with the understanding that, as experienced medical or nursing practitioners, the HCPs will have detailed knowledge of the principles and practice of diagnostic techniques and therefore such information is not contained in these documents. In addition, these are not stand-alone documents, and form only a part of the training and written documentation that a HCP receives. As disability assessment is a practical occupation, much of the guidance also involves verbal information and coaching. Thus, although the documents may be of interest to non-medical readers, some of the information may not be readily understood without background medical knowledge and an awareness of the other training and guidance given to HCPs.



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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@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.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)

