

Dear Laura Wetherly,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 19 November 2015.

You asked:

**“1.) Since the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in 2008, the total number of people with multiple sclerosis who have been placed in a) the Support Group b) the Work Related Activity Group with a prognosis statement of i) 3 months ii) 6 months iii) 12 months iv) 18 months v) two years vi) in the longer term.**

**2.) Since the introduction of ESA in 2008, the total number of completed repeat assessments of people with multiple sclerosis, broken down by year of repeat assessment.**

**3.) Since the introduction of ESA, total number of people with multiple sclerosis who have had at least one repeat assessment, broken down by year of initial assessment. ”**

Entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is based on the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The WCA is a functional assessment of what activities an individual can do. In practice, individuals are assessed by qualified healthcare professionals against a set of qualifying descriptors. As such whilst it is unlikely that individuals with certain degenerative illnesses will recover from their condition, the assessment will take into account their functional abilities at the time of the assessment and where the individual is capable of working or of undertaking some work related activity they could be found fit for work or placed in the work related activity group (WRAG).

If an individual's condition deteriorates or they present another illness they may make another application for ESA and have their eligibility reassessed, either via a new WCA or based on paper evidence; and on this basis they may then be moved into the WRAG or support group (SG).

In response to questions 1-3, the following tables include statistics relating to the ESA WCA and Incapacity Benefits Reassessments (IBR). Each of these can be used in answer to your queries.

Question 1:

**Table 1: Number of completed ESA initial assessments of people with a main condition of multiple sclerosis who have been placed in the ESA Support Group or the Work Related Activity Group by prognosis statement length: October 2008 - March 2015**

<b>Prognosis advise that a return to work could be considered within:</b>	<b>Support Group</b>	<b>Work Related Activity Group</b>
3 months	100	400
6 months	300	500
12 months	1,200	900
18 months	800	200
Unlikely to return to work within 2 years	1,300	300
Unlikely to return to work within long term	3,400	300
Other	100	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,200</b>	<b>2,600</b>

Question 2:

**Table 2: Number of completed ESA repeat assessments of people with a main condition of multiple sclerosis by year of repeat assessment: October 2008 - March 2015**

<b>Year of Repeat Assessment</b>	
2008	-
2009	-
2010	700
2011	1,500
2012	2,900
2013	2,400
2014	1,900
2015	200

Question 3:

**Table 3: Number of people with a main condition of multiple sclerosis who have had at least one ESA repeat assessment by year of initial assessment: October 2008 - March 2015**

<b>Year of Initial Assessment</b>	
2008	300
2009	1,600
2010	1,500
2011	2,100
2012	1,400
2013	200
2014	-
2015	-

**Source:** Data in the above tables is derived from administrative data held by the DWP and assessment data provided by Atos Healthcare.

**Notes:**

1. For all tables, data is rounded to nearest 100. Totals may not sum due to rounding method used. “-” denotes nil or negligible values.
2. Prognosis is shown for those in the Support Group and Work Related Activity Group.
3. The ‘Other’ category includes those whose prognosis is ‘Terminally Ill’ or ‘Unknown’.
4. For Table 1, figures include outcomes of initial functional assessments that were completed by month of assessment up to 31 March 2015 for initial assessments for ESA new claims and exclude clerical cases and Incapacity Benefits Reassessment cases.
5. The assessment outcomes relate to the claimant’s first assessment before appeal and may include cases that will have been revised following reconsideration.
6. There is a reporting lag owing to the time needed to process data e.g. March 2015 data is reported in September 2015.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact us 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 <https://ico.org.uk/>