

17 February 2012

Dear Mr Newman

I am writing in response to your review request received on 6th February 2012. An internal review has been carried out by someone of a more senior grade than dealt with it previously. I am now in a position to respond to you.

As stated in our initial response, all DWP learning is hosted internally and is not accessible via the internet. The only other way to provide this material would be for a member of staff to access every page of guidance and every piece of training material to print it off and post it to you, and, as explained in our earlier reply, the cost of this would exceed the limits, set by the government, that specify at what point such costs would be deemed to be disproportionate. Also, as Decision Makers receive learning in various forms, there is no such thing as a set course, but rather multiple interventions depending on experience and previous training received. Consequently, it would be impossible to say, categorically, what each would receive. However, I am happy to provide you with a more detailed explanation, including information about where some of the guidance used can be found.

Decision Maker training includes formal, technical, learning; work-based learning; job-shadowing of experienced colleagues; observing tribunals; etc. Their technical learning is relevant to understanding the legislative requirements and guidance which are in the public domain and accessible.

In addition to the technical learning, Health Care Professionals deliver sessions to Decision Makers relevant to the benefit or allowance being decided. These include:

- Introduction to reading medical guidance
- Muscular-skeletal conditions
- Cardio-respiratory conditions
- Neurological conditions
- Mental Health conditions
- Cognitive Impairment
- Sensory Impairments
- Overview of Limited Capability for Work (LCW)
- Work Capability Assessment (WCA) descriptors

For Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Decision Makers, the Health Care Professional provides an understanding of the WCA descriptors and how to apply them. The learning places the emphasis on an individual's day-to-day functionality rather than the health condition itself.

Following their initial period of learning, Decision Makers have access to on-going support and are continuously building their knowledge. Full explanations of the WCA descriptors and how they are applied are provided by the WCA Handbook. Decision Makers making Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) decisions refer to the Disability Handbook. Both handbooks are accessible via the internet.

With regards to medical and disability issues, Decision Makers use Customer Case Management (CCM) guidance. CCM provides detailed information about a wide number of medical conditions. It enables the Decision Maker to compare and contrast the evidence provided by the customer and Health Care Professionals with the medical information provided on CCM.

Decision Makers are also able to contact a helpline for advice or explanation from a Health Care Professional if medical information provided is not understood or is contradictory.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

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