

To: Trudy Baddams
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DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Our Ref: FOI817

4 March 2015

Dear Trudy Baddams,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request which we received on 28 February 2015.

You asked:

'What are the specific duties of assessors assessing for WCA's'

In response to your question, review the enclosed link to a copy of the Revised Work Capability Assessment (WCA) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Amendment Regulations 2011 and 2012 Handbook that is issued to approved Healthcare Professionals (HCPs) employed by Centre for Health and Disability Assessment (CHDA) which outlines the HCP role.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-capability-assessment-handbook-for-healthcare-professionals>

This document has been produced as part of a training programme for approved HCPs to carry out WCA's. DWP learning modules are currently being updated and are expected to be updated by July 2015 as part of the usual annual cycle of changes. Until then some learning and development information still uses existing terminology such as 'Atos Healthcare' and 'Medical Services'.

All HCPs undertaking these 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. This document 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, this is not stand-alone document, and forms 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 document 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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I believe some of the information contained in the document falls within the exemptions allowed by Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act and has therefore been redacted. The Section 40 exemption is applied on the basis that it is personal data about a third party, in this case names of DWP and/or Atos Healthcare employees who are below the Senior Civil Service (SCS) Grade, and it is Departmental policy that the names of employees below SCS grades are not released and the disclosure would breach data protection principles.

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It may also be helpful to clarify that CHDA ensure that all HCPs have the following competencies before they are approved to deliver the Services:

- they have appropriate knowledge of the clinical aspects and likely functional effects of a wide range of medical conditions;
- they demonstrate appropriate skills in assessing people with physical health conditions including history taking, observation and ability to perform a relevant examination;
- they demonstrate appropriate skills in assessing people with conditions affecting mental health, intellectual and cognitive function including history taking, observation and ability to perform a relevant examination;
- they are able to critically evaluate evidence and use logical reasoning to provide accurate evidence-based advice;
- they have excellent interpersonal and written communication skills that include the ability to:
- interact sensitively and appropriately, with particular regard for an individual's cultural background and issues specific to disabled people;
- take a comprehensive, appropriately focused, clear history,
- accurately record observations and formal clinical findings;
- produce succinct, accurate reports in plain English, fully justifying conclusions from evidence gathered, and dealing appropriately with apparent conflicts of evidence and fluctuating conditions.

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 happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing 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. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

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.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745