

Dear G Ward,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 19 April 2018. You asked:

“Can you please explain the following regarding a claim for Universal Credit

1. What information will be requested from a claimants GP, if the claimant provides online permission when claiming?

2. What qualifications has the person receiving such information, or, will they have the ability to request relevant information to the claim, or will it be a case of searching for it?

3. Can the claimant refuse access to their medical data by DWP or its HCP providers, if so, would the onus still be on claimant to provide evidence required to enable DWP DM to make a decision on that claim.”

DWP Response

1. If further medical evidence is required in order to make a decision at this stage, a request is made to the claimant's GP asking for relevant information in relation to the health issues stated on the application.

2. The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) aims to identify a person's capability for work, taking into account developments in healthcare and the modern workplace. The assessment that is carried out is different to the more usual type of medical examination in which the Medical Clinician's aim is to make a diagnosis and decide on appropriate treatment. The role of the Healthcare Professional (HCP) within the WCA process is to assess the disabling effects of medical conditions and the way in which a claimant's illness or disability affects them in carrying out of a range of every day work-related activities.

DWP has set clear requirements on the professions, skills, experience and training of HCPs employed by Centre for Health and Disability Assessments (CHDA).

All HCPs have passed strict recruitment and experience criteria and are registered with a relevant regulatory body such as the General Medical Council (GMC), the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or EEA equivalent. CHDA ensure that any HCP has the following qualifications and experience:

- they are an occupational therapist, nurse, physiotherapist or doctor
- they are fully registered with the relevant regulatory body (doctors must have a licence to practice)

- they have no sanctions attached to registration (unless they relate to disability) – in individual cases this may be waived subject to agreement with the authority;
- they have at least 2 years post full registration experience (GMC, NMC, HCPC or EEA equivalent) or for non EU graduates 2 years post full registration experience unless otherwise agreed on an individual basis by the Authority.

DWP approves HCPs to carry out assessments. Approval by DWP will be dependent on CHDA demonstrating that the HCP has completed, to DWP's satisfaction, a course of training and appraisal and demonstrates the required competence to carry out assessments.

3. A claimant can decline to give consent for DWP and contractors working on our behalf, to ask the GP and other HCPs for medical evidence, where appropriate, which would be used to provide additional information in the assessment of the claimant's capability for work. Where the claimant declines to give consent, the assessment will be undertaken using medical evidence provided by the claimant.

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 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