

To: Mr G Reynolds  
C/o [request-157463-b6d2f125@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-157463-b6d2f125@whatdotheyknow.com)

10 May 2013

Dear Mr Reynolds,

**Freedom of Information Act – Request for Information**  
**Our Reference: Fol 1763**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request which we received on 13 April 2013.

You asked:

*Please explain the depth of training that a nurse working for ATOS, needs to attain to overturn a fully qualified specialists decision that a claimant is unfit for work, whilst carrying out an ESA examination?*

- 1. Please list the level of qualification attained?*
- 2. Please state the list of organisations that recognise the ATOS qualifications?*
- 3. Please state the length of training done to achieve the qualifications?*
- 4. Has the training been done in a medical environment utilising human beings or was it done within a classroom environment?*
- 5. Were the trainees paid whilst training?*
- 6. How many trainees failed to acquire the relevant qualifications?*
- 7. Please indicate how many trainees came from outside the uk?*
- 8. Were any kind of settlement/moving fees paid to nurses or doctors that came from outside the uk?*
- 9. If it was, who paid the fees?*
- 10. Would the qualifications enable the HCPs to enter practise within the NHS?*
- 11. Are ATOS HCPs ever reprimanded for finding too many claimants unfit for work*

In answer to **Qs 1, 2, 3, 10 & 11** Healthcare Professionals (HCP) are recruited by Atos Healthcare receive training in such areas as disability analysis, customer's rights, equal opportunities and professional standards. Detailed technical information relevant to the benefit concerned is provided.

HCPs employed by Atos Healthcare do not make decisions on entitlement to benefit. They provide advice to DWP Decision Makers who make these decisions. Atos Healthcare are not made aware of the outcome of a claimant's claim to benefit so HCPs are not reprimanded for finding too many claimants either fit or unfit for work, and it can be confirmed that payment to Atos Healthcare for the services provided is not related in any way to the outcome of individual medical assessments.

Atos Healthcare new entrant training provides HCPs with the necessary skills to undertake the assessment of claimants with a broad range of medical conditions. The HCPs are specifically trained in the assessment of disability. By evaluating the clinical history, the physical

examination and informal observations in the light of the claimant's daily activities, they are able to provide an assessment of the claimant's functional restrictions.

Training for all HCPs follows the following steps:-

Stage 1 – pre-course reading and an office based, trainer led event which is broken down into 2 elements

- Pre-course reading – the time taken is dependent on the individual HCP
- A programme of face to face trainer led training which takes:
  - 6 days for new entrant doctors
  - 18 days for new entrant nurses
  - 21 days for new entrant physiotherapists.

Stage 2 – a written assessment of medical knowledge

Stage 3 – supervised practical training and appraisal

In this stage the HCP carries out assessments under the supervision of an experienced trainer where the emphasis is on:

- customer service
- medical assessment techniques, and
- report completion skills

Stage 4 – Appraisal of casework

During the period of provisional approval, the HCP trainer will assess all reports completed by the HCP until his or her competence is assured.

In addition, once the initial training has been completed, and prior to approval by the DWP Chief Medical Adviser (CMA) HCPs have to complete a number of assessments that meet a specified quality threshold.

The CMA approves HCPs to carry out assessments. Approval is dependent on the adherence to strict recruitment criteria, completion of a course of training in disability assessment medicine which is approved by the CMA and evidence of satisfactory performance. There are no formal qualifications obtained by the individual in the completion of this training that would enable the individual to enter practise in a similar role with the NHS, this is because HCPs in order to continue to be approved by the DWP CMA have to undertake assessments on a regular basis.

The Welfare Reform Act makes provision for medical assessments in connection with benefit entitlement to be carried out by a range of HCPs specified in the legislation. This move has been taken because nurses and other HCPs are increasingly being used in roles which were once reserved for doctors; and it is appropriate to extend this to benefit entitlement assessments.

Nurses must be fully registered (level 1) Registered General Nurses without current or previous restrictions or cautions with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). In addition they must have at least 3 years post full registration experience. In individual cases, solely at the discretion of the DWP CMA, the requirements that no cautions be attached to registration and that the nurse must have a minimum of 3 years post registration experience, may be waived.

All HCPs carrying out assessments in relation to current social security benefits have passed strict recruitment and experience criteria and are registered with an appropriate professional body.

In reply to **Qs 4 & 5** the Registered Nurses recruited by Atos Healthcare to undertake the job role of HCP must attend and complete a facilitator led training course which is described above. During this training course HCPs will receive a salary from Atos Healthcare and must demonstrate competency in a number of areas including communication skills, physical examination techniques, a MCQ and a further test case. During this course professional role players are employed as part of the training to assist in certain aspects of the training. This training course is followed by further training back at their local unit on a one to one basis, however this secondary training period can only be entered into following successful completion of all aspects of the facilitator led training. Following successful completion of this phase of training, they continue to have further support and training.

..... The Registered Nurse New Entrant Academy is recognised and has received accreditation from the University of Derby.

In response to **Qs 6 & 7** Atos Healthcare do not keep records relating to the numbers of individuals who apply for jobs with the company as HCPs then do not complete the training to a satisfactory level or the proportion of trainees who are from outside the UK.

In answer to **Qs 8 & 9** it has been established that DWP does not hold any information regarding remuneration to Atos Healthcare staff.

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

Yours sincerely

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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](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) or by writing to DWP, Central FoI Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London 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)