

To: G Smith
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DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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Our Ref: FOI 4885

27 November 2014

Dear G Smith,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request which we received on 8 November 2014.

You asked:

'Could you provide me with the guidelines and/or regulations pertaining to PIP and WCAs that indicate whether or not it is a requirement for the HCP carrying out the assessment to identify themselves? And also their occupations (as this is highly relevant in the case of MH, for example)?

I have trawled through the WCA Handbook and PIP Assessment guidelines but cannot find any reference to what should be a basic requirement and the claimant's right to know.

A claimant is required to provide proof of identity before their assessment can proceed. However, I have been provided with many instances of the (usually Atos) HCP refusing to provide a surname and/or occupation. Yet the Atos Customer Charter makes a big deal about their assessments being "fair, accurate and objective". How is it "fair" to be assessed by a person paid from the public purse that refuses to identify themselves or confirm that they are sufficiently qualified to carry out the assessment?

There is also the Equality Act 2010, reasonable adjustments, to be considered. A claimant with MH issues, such as paranoia, for example, may find this refusal by the HCP to identify themselves extremely distressing and it creates an atmosphere of distrust for all claimants before the assessment has even begun. Also, if the HCP was a physiotherapist, for example, and refused to provide this information at the start of the assessment, this would render the HCP's report useless for a MH-based assessment, as the courts have ruled that a physiotherapist's assessment of a person with MH issues has no value; meaning that it is extremely important to have the HCP's profession/qualification established prior to proceeding with the assessment.

As the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is responsible for approving HCPs, what does the DWP have to say about HCP's who refuse to identify themselves or confirm their suitability, professionally speaking, to conduct the assessment?

Furthermore, if a HCP failed to identify themselves and state what their occupation is: nurse, doctor, midwife, physiotherapist, etc., would the claimant be within their rights to cancel said assessment without fear of sanctions?

Please send me the relevant data pertaining to this issue.'

Atos Healthcare undertakes Work Capability Assessments on behalf of the Department. As part of their training programme, Healthcare Professionals are provided with the professional standards that are expected of them whilst carrying out an assessment. This document is attached for your information.

There are two Assessment Providers for Personal Independence Payment (PIP); Capita carry out face-to-face consultations in Wales and Central England and Atos Healthcare carries out face-to-face consultations in Scotland, North East and North West England, London and Southern England.

Capita have provided the following extract from a document used in the training of their Health Professionals (HP) to undertake face to face assessments.

'Introduction

Introduce yourself and check that the claimant is aware of the reason they are being seen. Check their identification and show yours. Introduce yourself and establish the relationship of any companions.

Explain what will happen during the assessment and that it will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Explain that the assessment is about the claimant's functional ability and is different from going to see a health professional for treatment or diagnosis.'

Likewise, Atos Healthcare has advised that PIP HPs in their employ are required to provide their name at the commencement of a face to face assessment.

Healthcare Professionals are also expected to comply with the requirements of their relevant licensing body (i.e General Medical Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council and Health & Care Professions Council) in relation to the disclosure of PIN/Registration numbers.

As the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act relates to the supply of recorded information held by the Department rather than explaining things or confirming whether your assumptions are correct or not, the remainder of your questions cannot be categorised as FOI requests.

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

Yours sincerely

Correspondence Team
Health Services Directorate

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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@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central FOI 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
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