

8 October 2012

Dear Mr Newman

You asked:

*The WCA Handbook consistently instructs HCPs to use an evidence-based approach, not to leave anything to chance and avoid ambiguity. This is obviously important to a DWP DM who has no formal medical training.*

*However, in complete contradiction of this basic principle, HCPs are allowed to speculate over ways in which an individual's mobility might be improved by the use of mobility aids, even though the individual may not have used them before and the individual's GP has specifically advised against them. P 26 of the WCA Handbook*

*(<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/wca-handbook....>) states:*

*a) "..... the HCP should consider whether a person could potentially use a wheelchair regardless of whether or not they have ever used a wheelchair. In considering this issue, as above, upper limb function and cardio respiratory status must be taken into account." and*

*b) "A manual wheelchair may be considered any form of wheelchair that is not electrically driven." Note the use of the word "potentially", i.e. they do not need to make a definite recommendation, just suggest there is a possibility without even having to qualify it with "good", "slight" etc.*

*If the HCP is of this opinion:*

*1) Are they required to discuss the proposition openly with the individual during the WCA to make sure nothing relevant is overlooked?*

*2) Are they required to state the recommendation clearly on the ESA85? Not being medically trained, it would of course not be possible to leave a DWP DM to draw their own conclusion.*

*3) What (if any) limitations are there on the aids they can consider – specifically, could they consider a powered mobility scooter? If not, why not?*

*4) If there are limitations, on what are they based? If there are no limitations and individual HCPs can act as they see fit, how do you ensure fairness & consistency?*

*5) Assessing a patient's need and suitability for a wheelchair is in itself a highly technical and complex issue requiring specific education and training. (See for example*

*<http://healthcare.rempoy.co.uk/assets/....> Furthermore, the NHS website (<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHS...>) states: "The people who assess you (for*

wheelchair use) will all be health professionals, such as GPs, occupational therapists or physiotherapists, and should include a "rehabilitation engineer" (someone who specialises in wheelchairs and seating). There is no one-size-fits-all policy, which means you will be assessed according to your individual needs. The assessment should take into account your physical and social needs, as well as the environment in which you live and work."

6) Are all HCPs performing WCAs fully qualified to consider all of these factors relevant to wheelchair use, notably rehabilitation engineering, before making their recommendation? If they are so qualified, why can't they make the recommendation openly in the best interests of the patient?

Finally,

7) Can a DWP DM decide to award zero points for the mobility descriptor based on what might only be a remote and unproven possibility?

8) What steps must the DM take to eliminate the uncertainty left by the Atos DM?

Please note that none of this information is contained within the WCA handbook.

Freedom of Information is about the provision of non-personal recorded information.

The role of the FoI Act is about the supply of recorded information held by the Department rather than providing an explanation to, or confirming whether the assumptions made by the author of the questions are correct or not.

Apart from the WCA handbook, the only other relevant guidance for Healthcare Professionals regarding wheelchair use is contained in the Registered Nurse New Entrant Revised WCA LCW/LCWRA Training Course Day 1MED- RNNEREVWCALCWLCWRA~001(a) facilitator notes. This states

Mobilising versus walking

Discuss:

Effects of fatigue/ variability/reasonable time Mostly lower limb but upper limb and cardiorespiratory status must be carefully considered.

Wheelchair - standard manual wheelchair only and whether it is reasonable for the person to use it medically.

Working environment

Working environment

Balance

Indicate that W(a) is a Support Group category

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Fol Team

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