

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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

Our Ref: FOI2020/09336

16 March 2020

Dear Alison Ward,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 29 February. You asked:

- 1. Could you please send me any DWP guidance training materials /policy that Maximus/CHDA currently use to assess claimants for a Universal Credit, Work Capability Assessment.*
- 2. Could you please include any DWP guidance/policy/ training materials held relating to the reasons for Maximus/CHDA accepting or denying a request for a home assessment regarding Universal Credit.*
- 3. Could you please send me any information including any DWP training materials/guidance/ policy used by Maximus/CHDA staff members regarding their awareness and understanding of all types of disability discrimination within the Equality Act 2010 .*
- 4. Any DWP information/training materials/guidance/policy That Maximus/CHDA call centre staff are supplied/trained with Specifically regarding reasonable adjustments and when staff must make these adjustments for claimants with disabilities or be in violation of section 20 of the Equality Act 2010.*
- 5. Any DWP information/training/materials/guidance/policy that DWP/ Maximus/CHDA staff Including call centre staff use on how to converse/advise a claimant who informs staff that they feel that they are being, or have been discriminated against by the DWP/Maximus/CHDA/ a staff member. Specifically a claimant who meets the definition of Disability and significant disability under the Equality Act 2010 and is therefore protected against all forms of disability discrimination.*

DWP Response:

Request 1.

Section 21 of the Fol Act, allows us to direct you to information which is already reasonably accessible to you, as it is already in the public domain.

Please see the enclosed link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-capability-assessment-handbook-for-healthcare-professionals> to a copy of the Revised Work Capability Assessment (WCA) Handbook that is issued to approved Healthcare Professionals (HCPs)

employed by Centre for Health and Disability Assessments (CHDA). Please see section 3 from page 52 onwards which refers to the functional assessment.

Request 2.

Firstly, I would like to confirm that it is not the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which makes the decision about home visits; this is for the assessment provider to decide as per the arrangements agreed with the department.

For WCA, please find below Annex A which refers to home visits and is an extract from the WCA Filework Guidelines.

The process for a WCA includes consideration by the CHDA, based on the individual's questionnaire (ESA/UC 50) and other supporting evidence, whether the individual can be assessed based on paper evidence alone, is required to attend an assessment centre, needs a taxi to an assessment centre or requires a home visit.

However, once offered an appointment for an assessment, if the individual feels they cannot travel because of how they are affected by their medical condition they can request a home visit and they are required to provide medical evidence from a treating medical clinician to support the request. This evidence is then considered by a HCP who decides whether it supports a home visit or provision of a taxi.

In answer to questions 3, 4 and 5.

Please find attached the CHDA Equality and Diversity Policy as requested. Specifically, for request 4 please refer to section 5.3.2, and for request 5 to section 5.3.

These requested documents attached have been produced as part of a training programme for approved HCPs to carry out WCA's. All HCPs undertaking these assessments must be registered practitioners who, in addition, have undergone training in disability assessment medicine and more specific training. The training includes theory in a classroom setting, supervised practical training, and a demonstration of understanding as assessed by quality audit. These documents 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, these are not stand-alone documents, and form 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. Although the documents 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.

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law. Documents (except photographs) can be also used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.

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

Annex A – Extract from WCA Filework Guidelines

Home visits

Not all benefit assessments are conducted at an assessment centre. Sometimes a claimant indicates that they are unfit to travel to or to attend the assessment centre and then a home visit may be necessary.

Assessments at an assessment centre is the most desirable option, as the conditions there are most suitable in terms of Health and Safety and providing a suitable environment to conduct a comprehensive interview. However, it is recognised that, at times, the assessment needs to be conducted in the claimant's home.

It is impossible to provide specific guidance that covers all eventualities, but the following guidance should be considered when assessing a request for a home visit.

- Does the claimant have a medical condition that precludes them from travelling to the assessment centre?
- Has there been medical verification of the severity of the condition that precludes them from attending for assessment in the assessment centre?
- Are there health and safety implications for a home visit? E.g. the claimant or their representative has UCB status identified?

When considering these factors, we must ensure that there is medical confirmation of the condition, providing the reason why the claimant cannot travel on the grounds of health. The request for a home visit may come from a GP or other health care professional involved in the claimant's care. When assessing this request you should consider:

- Whether the request is based on medical fact rather than opinion e.g. "My patient has severe agoraphobia and cannot leave the house" rather than "I feel my patient would benefit from an assessment at home" or "My patient tells me they are unable to travel to the assessment centre"
- Does the request relate to the claimant's medical problems rather than social circumstances at home?
- Does the information leading to the home visit request suggest a severe level of disability where advising Limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA) likely may now be applicable?

In each case, the evidence should be reviewed. At times, it may be necessary to seek further clarification from the author of the report to clarify the medical facts.

Information that may help support a home visit request may be:

- Diagnosis suggesting significant disability that may make travel extremely difficult – e.g. incomplete quadriplegia where LCWRA status cannot be established without further assessment
- Evidence that the claimant receives home visits or telephone consultations with their GP
- Evidence that the claimant has home visits from the psychiatrist/Community Mental Health Team

The HCP may also consider whether other options may be acceptable - for example if travelling on public transport is the issue, could a taxi be considered?

There are some circumstances where a home visit may be authorised without the need for further medical evidence. This may be due to practical or health and safety issues. For example, if the local assessment centre had no ground floor assessment rooms and the claimant is a wheelchair user, a home visit could be authorised. Each case must be considered carefully by the HCP taking into account all the information available and health and safety issues.

In many cases, the HCP may wish to consult with an experienced colleague when considering whether a home visit is appropriate.