

Work Capability Assessment

Tell us what you think about it



Easy Read

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

Important

This is a big booklet, but you do not have to read all of it if you do not want to.

Instead, look at the list of contents on pages 1 and 2. It shows what is in the booklet. Look down the list to find things you want to read about.

Red writing

In this easy-read booklet we sometimes explain what words mean.

The first time we mention any of these words, it is in **bold red** writing. Then we write what the words mean in a light **purple** box. If any of the words are used later in the booklet, we show them in **normal red** writing.

These words and what they mean are also in a Words list at the back of the booklet.

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Message from Malcolm Harrington

The Department for Work and Pensions has asked me to look at their **Work Capability Assessment** to make sure

- it is fair.
- it gives the right support to the people who need it.

Work Capability Assessment or assessment

This is when a health expert looks at someone's illness or disability to see if they cannot work. This usually at a medical and the health expert may be a doctor or a nurse.



The **Work Capability Assessment** is an important part of making decisions about claims for **Employment and Support Allowance**.

Employment and Support Allowance

This is money people may get if they are less than 65 and are not working because of an illness or disability.

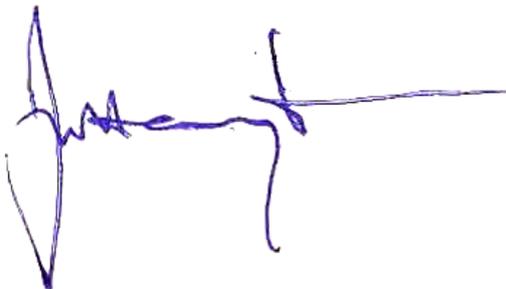
The Department for Work and Pensions uses the **assessment** to decide if someone

- can never work.
- cannot work now but could work in the future.
- is ready for work right away.

I will have a good look at how the **Work Capability Assessment** is working now. Then I will then write a report to the government about how I think the **assessment** should work in the future.

If there is anything you would like to tell me about the **Work Capability Assessment**, please send me a letter or an email. You can also use the pages at the back of this booklet to write your answers to the questions I ask in this booklet.

But we must get your letter, email or answer pages by 8 October 2010. The addresses are shown on page 16.



Professor Malcolm Harrington CBE

Background

Benefits for people aged 16 to 65

Employment and Support Allowance started in October 2008. It gives support to

- people in the **support group**.

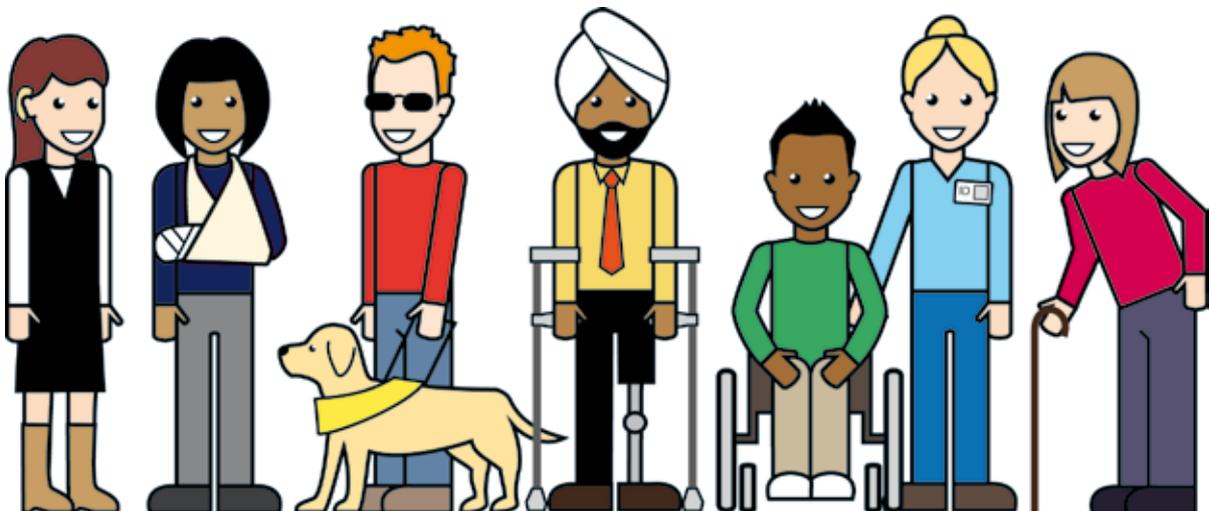
Support group

These are people whose illness or disability means that they can never work. They get extra money from the government.

- people in the **limited capability for work group**.

Limited capability for work group

These are people whose illness or disability means they cannot work now but could work in the future if they get support to help them get ready for work.



Work Capability Assessment **Tell us what you think**

The **Work Capability Assessment** also started in October 2008.

The **assessment** is very important because it helps the Department for Work and Pensions decide if someone can get **Employment and Support Allowance**.

People who do not work and cannot get Employment and Support Allowance may get **Jobseeker's Allowance**.

Jobseeker's Allowance

This is money people may get if they are looking for work.



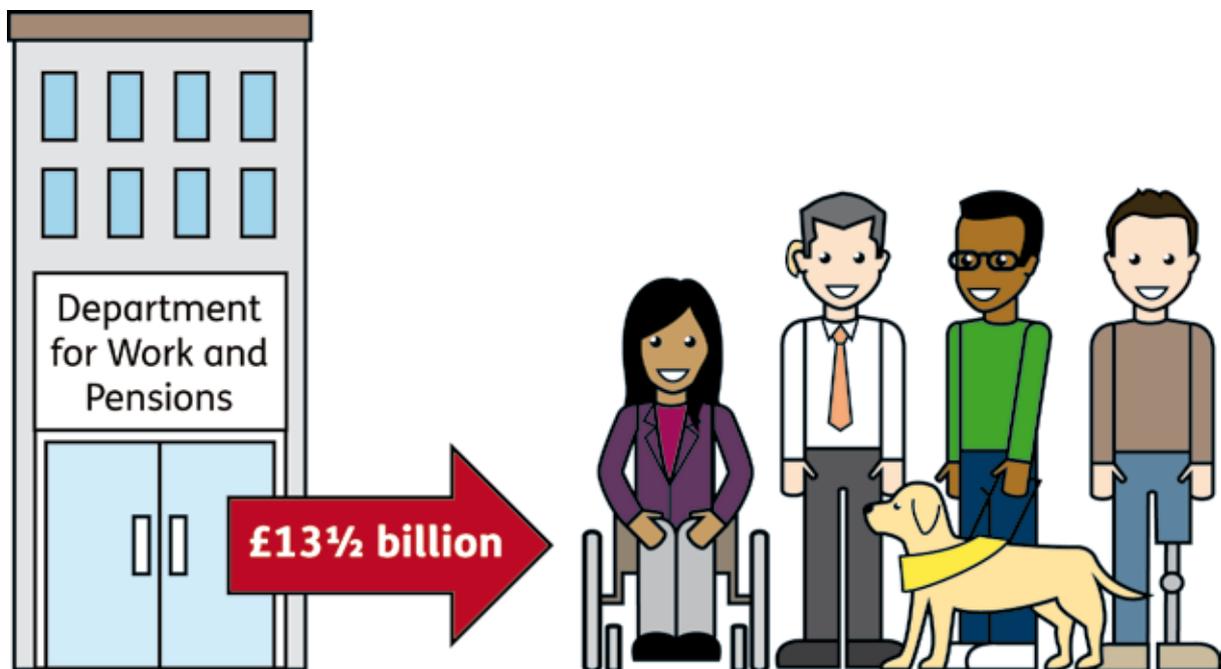
Money for people who are too ill or disabled to work

A lot of people in Great Britain get **incapacity benefits** because they are too ill or disabled to work.

Incapacity benefits

These are benefits paid to people who do not work because of an illness or disability. For example, Incapacity Benefit, **Employment and Support Allowance**, and Income Support for people who do not work because of an illness or disability.

The Department for Work and Pensions spends more than £13½ billion on **incapacity benefits**. It is very important that this money goes to the people who need it most.



Questions about the assessment

Deciding which group people belong to

Some people say the **Work Capability Assessment** is doing really well because it helps people to find a job and earn money – even people who think they cannot work.

Other people say the **assessment** is not working properly because it does not make sure that people get the money and support they need.

Question 1 - a

Is the **Work Capability Assessment** good at finding out which people should be in the **support group**?

Question 1 - b

Is the **Work Capability Assessment** good at finding out which people should be in the **limited capability for work group**?

Question 1 - c

Can you think of anything about a person's illness or disability that the Department for Work and Pensions should look at when deciding which group a person should be in?

Most people do not like being moved onto a new benefit – for example, because they must learn the new rules for getting the benefit. And some people also think changes are unfair to them or to people they know.

It was a big change when **Employment and Support Allowance** started on 27 October 2008.



But it is important that people understand how the different parts of the benefits system work together. They should not just look at how a change affects them or people they know.

Question 2

Is there any **evidence** that shows that problems with the **Work Capability Assessment** are because it was a bad idea? Is there any **evidence** that shows problems are caused by the way the health experts do their **Work Capability Assessment** work?

Evidence

This is facts and numbers proving that something is true.

Illnesses or disabilities that sometimes change

Some people have illnesses or disabilities that sometimes change – sometimes they feel worse than at other times.



But a **Work Capability Assessment** cannot be done every time someone's illness or disability changes. So the **assessment** needs to tell the Department for Work and Pensions

- what someone can do when their illness or disability is bad.
- what someone can do when their illness is not so bad.

Question 3

What is the best way to make sure that the **Work Capability Assessment** works well for people whose illness or disability changes all the time?

People with more than 1 illness or disability

Some people have more than 1 illness or disability. So the **Work Capability Assessment** needs to tell the Department for Work and Pensions

- how this affects the person.
- what help they need.



Question 4

What is the best way to make sure that the **Work Capability Assessment** works well for people with more than 1 illness or disability?

Do you think there are any illnesses and disabilities that always make it harder for people who are already ill or disabled?

Extra information about an illness or disability

In most cases, the **Work Capability Assessment** gives the Department for Work and Pensions all the information it needs to make the right decision about **Employment and Support Allowance**.

But sometimes other people, like a doctor or nurse, have extra information about someone's illness or disability. That extra information can help make sure the **Work Capability Assessment** is right.



Question 5

How do you think the information from other people should be used in the **Work Capability Assessment**? What changes can be made without

- giving doctors and other people too much extra work.
- spoiling the way customers and doctors get along?

Making sure everyone is treated fairly

The government wants to make sure the **Work Capability Assessment** treats everyone fairly. This means

- people with different kinds of disabilities must be treated the same. For example, people with learning disabilities cannot be treated better or worse than other disabled people.
- all other people must be treated the same. For example, people cannot be treated differently because they are a man or a woman, because they belong to an **ethnic minority group** or because of their age.

Ethnic minority group

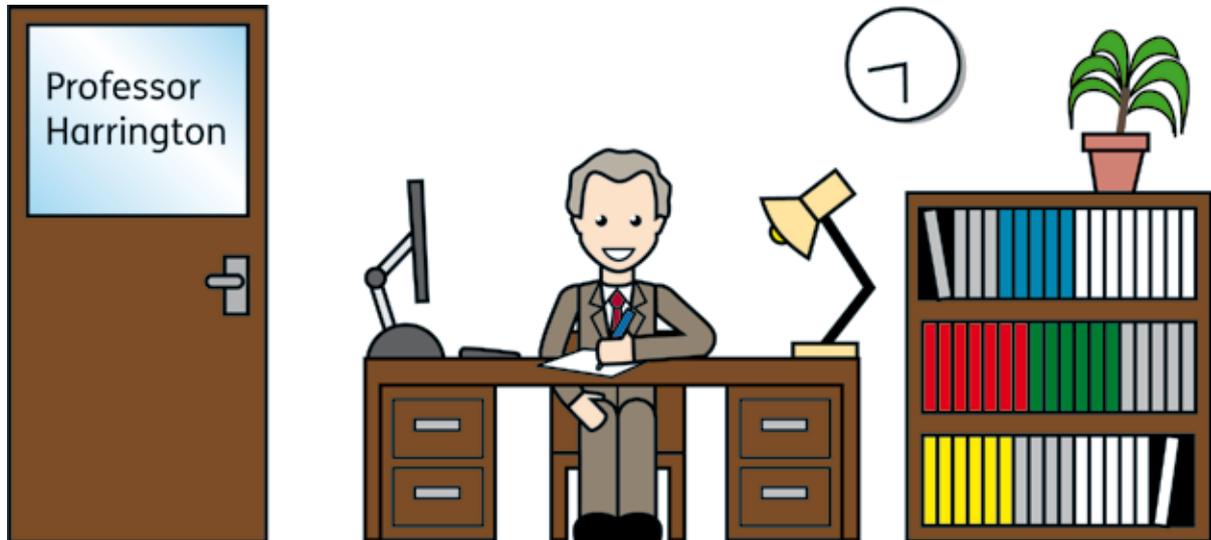
These are groups of people who, because of their race, colour, culture, language or nationality, are not the same as most of the other people in Britain. For example, black Caribbean people, Pakistani people and Chinese people.

Question 6

Is there any **evidence** that shows that the **Work Capability Assessment** is unfair to any groups of people? For example, because they are a man or a woman, because they belong to an **ethnic minority group** or because of their age.

Looking to the future

When Professor Harrington writes his report, it will say how he thinks the **Work Capability Assessment** can be made better.



The Government will also ask an **independent person** to look again at the **Work Capability Assessment** every year for the next 4 years.

Independent person

This is someone who thinks and acts for themselves. This is mostly because they are not part of the government or the Department for Work and Pensions.

Question 7

Do you have any other ideas about how the **Work Capability Assessment** could be made better so that it tells people with illnesses or disabilities which benefit is right for them?

What we want you to do next

We want to hear from you if you live in England, Wales or Scotland and have something you want to tell us about the **Work Capability Assessment**.

For example, you can tell us about

- how well you think the **assessment** is working.
- how good the **assessment** is at deciding if a person should be in the
 - **support group**.
 - **limited capability for work group**.

We want groups to tell us about how well they think the **Work Capability Assessment** is working too.

There are some pages at the back of this booklet where you can answer the questions in this booklet. If you need more space, use a piece of paper, but write the question number at the top.

But we must get your letter, email or your answers by 8 October 2010.

When Professor Harrington finishes his report, he will send it to the government. This will happen in late 2010.

Where to send your reply

Please send your reply to us at 1 of the addresses below.

- If you want to send us a letter or if you have used the answer pages at the back of this booklet, send them to

WCA Independent Review Team
Floor 6, Section B
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London SW1H 9NA

- If you want to send us an email, send it to

wca.evidence@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

And remember, we must get your letter, email or answer pages by 8 October 2010.



Word list

Employment and Support Allowance

This is money people may get if they are less than 65 and are not working because of an illness or disability4

Ethnic minority group

These are groups of people who, because of their race, colour, culture, language or nationality, are not the same as most of the other people in Britain. For example, black Caribbean people, Pakistani people and Chinese people 13

Evidence

This is facts and numbers proving that something is true9

Incapacity benefits

These are benefits paid to people who do not work because of an illness or disability. For example, Incapacity Benefit, **Employment and Support Allowance**, and Income Support for people who do not work because of an illness or disability .. 7

Independent person

This is someone who thinks and acts for themselves. This is mostly because they are not part of the government or the Department for Work and Pensions..... 14

Limited capability for work group

These are people whose illness or disability means they cannot work now but could work in the future if they get support to help them get ready for work.....5

Limited capability for work-related activities

This means that someone’s illness or disability stops them from using all the support other people get. Instead, they get special support to help them get ready to find a job they can do..... 15

Jobseeker’s Allowance

This is money people may get if they are looking for work6

Support Group

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Work Capability Assessment or assessment

This is when a health expert looks at someone’s illness or disability to see if they cannot work. This usually at a medical and the health expert may be a doctor or a nurse.....3