

DWP Stakeholder Bulletin – February 2015

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New assessment provider: Centre for Health and Disability Assessments

From 1 March 2015, a new provider will be delivering health-related assessments, including Work Capability Assessments, on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The new provider will “Centre for Health and Disability Assessments”, operated by MAXIMUS, and the service will be called the Health Assessment Advisory Service. People’s benefit payments will not be affected by this change, and there will be no changes to assessment policy or processes for which DWP is responsible. However, the department will be making changes to how it audits the quality of assessments.

Atos Healthcare will be exiting their contract to deliver health-related assessments, including the Work Capability Assessments from the end of February. Personal Independence Payment claims will continue to be delivered by Atos Healthcare and Capita.

Explaining State Pension changes

DWP has published a State Pension Toolkit, with guidance and promotional material to help organisations and employers communicate the changes to the State Pension being introduced in April 2016.

From April 2016 the current State Pension will be replaced by the new simpler system. The new State Pension is designed to give people greater clarity about what they will get from the State in retirement and will affect everyone who reaches State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016.

The toolkit brings together simple and downloadable information across all of the State Pension changes including:

- seven fact sheets
- two [videos](#)
- six infographics and photo case studies

- an all-in-one '[State Pension explained](#)' guide
- [guidance for employers and trustees on the end of contracting-out](#)

We are encouraging organisations such as trade bodies, charities, private-sector companies and the media to download and use this information to help explain the changes to their customers or employees.

Topics covered in the toolkit include: the current State Pension, the new State Pension and how it will be calculated, State Pension Top Up, deferring your State Pension, State Pension for the self-employed, contracting-out, and National Insurance.

The toolkit will be regularly updated with new products.

You can access the State Pension Toolkit at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/state-pension-toolkit>

Three month reviews for existing JSA claims from EEA nationals

From 9 February 2015, European Economic Area (EEA) nationals whose existing claim to income-based Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) was made before 1 January 2014 will be told that their claim to income-based JSA, and their right to reside as a jobseeker, will be reviewed in three months' time.

At the interview they will need to show they have a genuine prospect of work or, where appropriate, an alternative right to reside in the UK.

If the claimant provides compelling evidence that they have a genuine prospect of work, a short extension to benefit may be considered. If the claimant is unable to provide the required evidence their JSA claim will stop. Those claimants who have an alternative qualifying right to reside in the UK may, in some circumstances, continue to receive income-based JSA. This will be a one-off exercise conducted over a period of weeks with the first interviews taking place in May 2015.

Improvement in Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Performance

The latest figures for processing of PIP claims, show a significant improvement in productivity:

- The time the average claimant waits for a PIP new claim assessment has more than halved from 30 weeks in June 2014 to 14 weeks in January 2015.
- Clearance times for new claims (normal rules) have increased by four times from around 14,000 to 60,000 per month between January and December 2014.
- In the last six months of 2014 the number of assessments completed has doubled, compared with the previous 14 months.

The figures, published on 28 January, show that the DWP is continuing to drive down waiting times and improve the service to claimants, which remains our priority.

On 23 February DWP rolled out PIP to existing Disability Living Allowance claimants living in the following post code areas, where assessment providers have sufficient local capacity: AB (Aberdeen), BB (Blackburn), BD (Bradford), DD (Dundee), DN (Doncaster), EX (Exeter), HX (Halifax), KA (Kilmarnock), KY (Kirkcaldy), LS (Leeds), PH (Perth), PL (Plymouth), PO (Portsmouth), PR (Preston), S (Sheffield), SO (Southampton), TS (Cleveland) and WF (Wakefield).

Fit for Work now live

Fit for Work is now live, providing free and impartial advice to anyone requiring work-related health advice, including employees, employers and GPs. It aims to support SMEs who previously had no access to occupational health advice. [Visit Fit for Work](#) to find out what's available and how to get in touch.

Fit for Work will soon offer a nationwide referral service where employees can get tailored advice to help them return to work as soon as possible. This service is being tested in Sheffield before being rolled out across the UK later this year. Employers in the pilot area may receive a Return to Work Plan from an employee who has been referred as part of the testing phase. The Return to Work Plan will provide recommendations and also provide evidence of sickness for pay purposes - this will replace the need for a fit note.

Fit for Work intends to complement, not replace, existing occupational health provision. There will be a phased roll-out before Fit for Work goes nationwide. You can find [guidance about Fit for Work online](#). You can also [sign up for email updates](#).

DLA claimants 65 years or over transfer to Pensions Service

From Wednesday 25 February 2015, people wanting to claim DLA whose date of birth is on or before 8 April 1948 should contact the Attendance Allowance Service Centre on 0345 (0845) 605 6055, Text phone 0845 604 5312.

This is because DLA claimants aged 65+ are not being assessed for PIP. All disabled pensioners will be dealt with by DWP Pension Service.

DLA claimants whose date of birth is on or after the 9 April 1948 should continue to contact the DLA Helpline on 0345 (0845) 7123456, Text phone 0845 722 4433.