

# **Freedom of Information request 2015-3801**

**Date received 07 September 2015**

**Date of response 23 February 2016**

## **Information request**

**The total number of ESA claimants that have been successfully moved on to an ESA component group (WRAG and support group) without having had a WCA medical assessment, and therefore on the basis of their completed ESA50 form and medical evidence only. This request does not include claimants applying under the special rules. Please also provide the total number of successful ESA applicants (with and without a medical assessment) who moved on to a component group. This is to enable me to compare in percentage terms (those who did not have a medical assessment as a percentage of the whole.)**

## **DWP response**

The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) determines eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). It is a functional assessment which looks at what a person can do rather than assuming that their health condition or disability is automatically a barrier to work. It also identifies those claimants who can work; those who require more support to move into employment and with the right support could work; as well as those who face the greatest barriers to employment and therefore are unable to work.

In practice, individuals are assessed by qualified healthcare professionals against a set of qualifying descriptors. DWP decision makers will consider the healthcare professionals' advice, along with any other appropriate evidence, when determining entitlement to ESA and which group the individual should be placed in: the Work-Related Activity Group (WRAG) or the Support Group (SG).

For new ESA claims, at the initial Work Capability Assessment, only SG recommendations can be made using paper evidence only. At repeat assessments and for Incapacity Benefit Reassessment (IBR), both SG and WRAG recommendations can be made using paper evidence only. No claimant can be found fit for work without undergoing a face-to-face assessment.

In response to your query, excluding special rules cases, statistics on the number of ESA WCAs where the outcome was decided on paper-based evidence only, and how many of these were placed in the SG and the WRAG accordingly can be found in table 1 below.

**Table 1: ESA Work Capability Assessments – Type of Work Capability Assessment (WCA) by specified decision outcome and paper-based assessment method, Great Britain: October 2008 – March 2015**

<b>WCA type</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Total Decisions</b>	<b>Of which: paper-based cases</b>
Initial	Support Group	766,600	441,900
Repeat	Support Group	685,800	465,000
	Work Related Activity Group	502,900	235,900
IBR	Support Group	633,400	448,500
	Work Related Activity Group		243,000
		488,400	

**Source:** Data in the above tables is derived from administrative data held by the DWP and assessment data provided by the healthcare provider.

**Notes:**

1. Data is rounded to nearest 100.
2. Figures exclude clerical cases and, for ESA initial/repeat assessments, Terminally Ill (Special Rules) cases. Information on Incapacity Benefits Reassessments (IBR) special rules cases is not available.
3. ESA new claims initial and repeat assessments are tabled by claim start date, Incapacity Benefits Reassessments (IBR) are tabled by referral date. The reassessment of existing incapacity benefits claimants started in October 2010 with a trial in the Burnley and Aberdeen areas.
4. For new ESA initial claims only Support Group recommendations can be made using paper evidence only. At repeat ESA assessments and for Incapacity Benefit Reassessments, both SG and WRAG recommendations can be made using paper evidence only.