Chapter 01 - Principles of decision making and Evidence

Contents

Who decides claims and applications ............................................................. 01001
Making decisions .......................................................................................... 01010
What decisions are made by DMs ............................................................... 01030

Other decisions and determinations .............................................................. 01040
Reference to HM Revenue and Customs .................................................... 01045
Home Responsibilities Protection and credits .............................................. 01050
  Credits awarded by HM Revenue and Customs ....................................... 01051
  Credits awarded by DWP ........................................................................ 01052
Determinations on incomplete evidence ...................................................... 01060
  Housing costs - IS, SPC and ESA .......................................................... 01061
  Other IS determinations ........................................................................ 01062
  SPC determinations .............................................................................. 01063
  JSA determinations ................................................................................. 01064
  Other ESA determinations ...................................................................... 01065
Deciding a claim with no election ................................................................. 01070

Referring a claimant for a medical examination

Reference by DM ......................................................................................... 01080
  Incapacity for work, limited capability for work and limited capability
  for work-related activity .......................................................................... 01081
Reference by First-tier Tribunal .................................................................... 01082
Meaning of health care professional ............................................................ 01084
Meaning of medical practitioner ................................................................. 01085
Failure to attend for medical examination .................................................. 01086
  Has the appointment been cancelled ...................................................... 01091
  Good cause ............................................................................................. 01092

Outcome decisions ....................................................................................... 01100

Vol 1 Amendment 34 June 2010
First-tier Tribunals and outcome decisions .................................................. 01105
IIDB decisions .............................................................................................. 01108
How is the decision recorded ....................................................................... 01111
   Defective decisions ............................................................................... 01113
How is the decision notified ......................................................................... 01116
   When is the decision notified ............................................................... 01118
   Failure to notify the decision ............................................................... 01119
Explanation................................................................................................... 01120
Request for written statement of reasons .................................................... 01130

Finality ......................................................................................................... 01150
Changing a First-tier Tribunal's decision ...................................................... 01152
Claim or award disallowed ......................................................................... 01160
   Revision following backdating request ............................................... 01170
Finality of determinations ......................................................................... 01180
   Incapacity for work .............................................................................. 01181
   Limited capability for work ................................................................. 01182
   IIDB .................................................................................................. 01190

General principles of common law .............................................................. 01200
Definitions.................................................................................................... 01201
Relevant law ............................................................................................... 01205
   Uprating ........................................................................................... 01206
Estoppel (personal bar in Scotland) ............................................................ 01210
   Res judicata ..................................................................................... 01212
Natural justice ............................................................................................ 01220

General principles of European Community law ....................................... 01230
Regulations ............................................................................................... 01235
Directives .................................................................................................. 01236
Opinions and recommendations ............................................................... 01238
Supremacy of European Community law ................................................... 01239
Judgments of the European Court of Justice .............................................. 01250
Referring questions to the European Court of Justice .............................. 01251

European Convention on Human Rights .................................................... 01260
Vol 1 Amendment 34 June 2010
Human Rights Act 1998 .......................................................................................... 01261

Revising and superseding decisions of former authorities

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 01270
Meaning of adjudicating authority .................................................................... 01280
Meaning of appellate authority .......................................................................... 01281
Decisions of adjudicating authorities ............................................................... 01282
Decisions of appellate authorities ..................................................................... 01283

Evidence

Introduction .......................................................................................................... 01300
Types of evidence ............................................................................................... 01310
Responsibility for collecting evidence .............................................................. 01320
Evidence from HM Revenue and Customs .......................................................... 01330
Evidence from a local authority or county council ............................................. 01334
  Meaning of social security information ......................................................... 01337
  Meaning of specified benefit .......................................................................... 01338
Further Information Sharing Provisions ............................................................ 01340
Standard of proof - balance of probability ....................................................... 01343
Failure to provide evidence ............................................................................... 01350
  Treated as capable of work .......................................................................... 01370
  Treated as not having LCW ......................................................................... 01372
Corroboration of evidence .................................................................................. 01380
Evidence provided by local authority or county council .................................... 01385
Contradictory evidence ....................................................................................... 01390
Self-contradictory evidence ............................................................................... 01391
Inherently improbable evidence ........................................................................ 01392
Claimant’s own evidence .................................................................................... 01400
Burden of proof ................................................................................................. 01405

Evidence in certain situations

Destruction of documents .................................................................................... 01420
Evidence of Departmental procedures ............................................................... 01430
  Evidence of a decision ................................................................................... 01431
Evidence given in confidence ............................................................................ 01440

Vol 1 Amendment 42 February 2013
Appeals: Address of partner from whom claimant is separated .......... 01450
Fraud ............................................................................................................ 01451
Advice on the law ......................................................................................... 01460
Decisions given by other courts ................................................................... 01470
   Appellate authorities .............................................................................. 01474
   Upper Tribunal decisions ....................................................................... 01475
   Court of law ............................................................................................ 01490
   Rehabilitated offenders ......................................................................... 01492
   Employment tribunals ........................................................................... 01500
   Coroner’s court ....................................................................................... 01510

Medical evidence .......................................................................................... 01520

The role of Medical Services
   AA and DLA ............................................................................................ 01540
   IB and NI credits ...................................................................................... 01545
   ESA and credits ........................................................................................ 01551
   IIDB and SDA ......................................................................................... 01560
   REA ......................................................................................................... 01565

Exchange of medical reports ....................................................................... 01570
Consent and harmful medical evidence ....................................................... 01590
Appeals ..................................................................................................... 01595

Areas where information gathering and decision making functions
must always be undertaken by separate members of staff............ Appendix 1
Who decides claims and applications

01001 Decisions on claims and applications are made by the Secretary of State. In practice the Secretary of State does not make decisions personally. Instead, under the Carltona principle officials act on the Secretary of State’s behalf, provided that he is satisfied that they are suitably trained and experienced to do so. Throughout this Guide these officials are called decision makers (DMs).

01002 The Carltona principle dates from a judgment of the Court of Appeal in October 1943. The judgment said that the Secretary of State could not possibly make every decision for which he is constitutionally responsible and accountable to Parliament. The Secretary of State is therefore entitled to authorize a person of suitable authority to exercise these functions on his behalf.

1 Carltona Ltd v. Commissioners of Works and others

01003 The Secretary of State provides training and approved guidance to DMs on how to make decisions on his behalf. The DMG itself is one such form of guidance, advising DMs how to apply SS law. DMs should note that approved guidance must be followed when applying the law to the facts of the case. However, DMs may request advice from DMA Leeds on the application or clarification of the DMG in cases of doubt.

Note: See DMG 01460 for guidance about legal advice as evidence.

01004 The DM takes all necessary actions on behalf of the Secretary of State, including

1. gathering information
2. making decisions on claims and applications
3. dealing with administrative matters such as suspension of payment.

Note: The DM is not an independent officer.

01005 Although a DM may undertake all these functions, in some circumstances it may be appropriate to divide functions between different members of staff. However, there are some areas in which functions must always be undertaken separately for business and/or system security. See Appendix 1 for details.

01006 The DM must make a decision by considering all the evidence and applying the law, including any relevant case law, to the facts of each case. Where the legislation specifies or implies discretion, the DM’s judgement must be reasonable and made with unbiased discretion.
Making decisions

01010  Generally, each decision must be given on the facts as they exist at the date of the decision and not in anticipation of a future state of facts\(^1\). But there are variations and exceptions, for example where entitlement begins after the date of the claim. Entitlement can be established from a date after the date of the claim under

1. the advance claim provisions\(^2\) or
2. the principle that the DM must consider the claimant’s circumstances down to the date on which the claim is decided.

See DMG Chapter 02 for further guidance on deciding claims.

\(^1\) R(G) 2/53; 2 SS (C&P) Regs, reg 13 to 15

01011  A decision may be revised or superseded for past periods when facts relating to the period were not known at the time. For further guidance on revision and supersession, see DMG Chapters 03 and 04.

Example

Following an investigation, an IS claimant is found to have been in remunerative work for a month over a year ago. The effect of the facts found is that there is no entitlement to IS for the one month period. The decision awarding IS is superseded to disallow IS for the period of remunerative work only. Entitlement after the period of work is unaffected.

01012  A fact is either a relevant circumstance or an occurrence which

1. exists at the time the decision is given and
2. is known, accepted or proved to be true.

01013  The DM may use the help of an expert in cases where a question of fact needs special expertise\(^1\). An expert is a person who appears to the DM to have knowledge or experience in determining a particular question of fact\(^2\).

\(^1\) SS Act 98, s 11(2); 2 s 11(3)

Example

Norman claims DLA. There is insufficient evidence in the claim form and advice from Medical Services to decide the disability questions. The DM requests a report from an examining HCP. The DM then considers all the evidence to decide whether Norman is entitled to DLA.

01014  In cases other than discretionary SF payments\(^1\), if the decision is found later to be inaccurate it can be altered by

1. revision\(^2\)
2. supersession\(^3\)
3. appeal\(^4\).

Vol 1 Amendment 30 February 2009
What decisions are made by DMs

01030 The DM

1. decides any claim for a relevant benefit (see Annex A to this Volume)
2. makes contribution decisions on HRP and credits (see DMG 01050)
3. makes any decision that is made under, or by virtue of, a relevant enactment (see DMG 01031).

These decisions are called outcome decisions. It is important that DMs distinguish between outcome decisions and other decisions and determinations. This is because only outcome decisions carry the right of appeal to the FtT\(^1\). See DMG 01100 - 01102 for further guidance on outcome decisions.

01031 A relevant enactment\(^1\) is any enactment in

1. Chapter II of the SS Act 98
2. the SS CB Act 92 (except Part VII)
3. the SS A Act 92 (except Part VIII)
4. the SS (Consequential Provisions) Act 92
5. the JS Act 95
6. the SPC Act 02
7. Part 1 of the WR Act 07

01032 - 01039
Other decisions and determinations

01040 There are other decisions made by DMs which are not outcome decisions. These are
1. the decisions in Annex E to this Volume, which are generally determinations made as part of an outcome decision
2. decisions on the discretionary SF\(^1\) made in accordance with Directions and Guidance
3. determinations or findings of fact.

\(1 \text{ SS CB Act } 92, \text{ s } 138(1)(b)\)

01041 Determinations and findings of fact are not outcome decisions, but part of the process which goes towards making the outcome decision\(^1\). The DM should ensure that a determination is not notified as an outcome decision with appeal rights. Such a decision would be defective, and may be set aside as invalid on appeal to the FT\(^2\).

\(1 \text{ R(I B) 2/04; 2 R(I S) 13/05}\)

Example

A person applies for SPC. The DM finds as fact that he is LTAHAW with the owner of the house he lives in. The claimant is notified of the LTAHAW determination, and that either he or his partner must make an application for both parties. No findings are made about income, capital, housing costs etc, and no decision on entitlement to SPC is made. On appeal, the FT decides that it has no jurisdiction to hear the appeal as no outcome decision on the application for SPC has been made.

01042 The DM can not make a decision on
1. HB or CTB\(^1\) which are administered by the LA
2. issues in respect of NI Contributions, SSP, SMP, statutory adoption pay or statutory paternity pay which are decided by HMRC\(^2\) (see Annex C to this Volume).

Note: See DMG 01047 - 01048 for guidance on the different roles of DWP and HMRC in RP cases involving GMP.

\(1 \text{ SS Act } 98, \text{ s } 8(4); 2 \text{ SSC (ToF) Act } 99, \text{ s } 8(1)\)

01043 - 01044

Reference to HM Revenue and Customs

01045 Entitlement to SS contributory benefits depends on the contribution conditions being satisfied. In practice the NI contribution record is usually obtained and any decision is based on the assumption that the record is factually correct. However, where there is a dispute about the record, the matter must be referred by the Secretary of State to HMRC for a formal decision\(^1\). See DMG Chapters 03, 04 and 06 for guidance on how decisions and appeals are handled after a reference to HMRC.

Vol 1 Amendment 34 June 2010
Note: See DMG 01050 - 01053 where the dispute is about whether credits should be awarded.

01046 The Secretary of State remains responsible for deciding whether the contribution conditions are satisfied in relation to benefits including
1. the earnings factor derived from them
2. which are the relevant income tax years
3. the years in which the contributions must have been paid or credited
4. the commencement of a PIW
5. the start of the relevant benefit year.

01047 In RP cases involving GMP, it is for HMRC to determine the amount of GMP from one or more occupational pensions. The DM should then determine where appropriate the aggregate amount of GMP, and the amount of AP for the purposes of entitlement to RP.

01048 DMs should note that
1. appeals against decisions about contributions matters made by HMRC are heard by the FtT (Finance and Tax Chamber)
2. appeals against decisions about GMP made by HMRC are heard by the FtT (Social Entitlement Chamber) in the same way as SS appeals.

01049

Home Responsibilities Protection and credits

01050 The Secretary of State remains responsible for deciding HRP and credits questions. In practice all HRP and some credits decisions are taken on his behalf by HMRC.

01051 HMRC considers whether to award credits for
1. SSP
2. SMP
3. Statutory adoption pay
4. WTC (including the disability element)
5. jury service

Vol 1 Amendment 34 June 2010
6. periods of wrongful imprisonment or detention in legal custody
7. auto credits for
   7.1 16-18 year old people
   7.2 men born before 6th October 1953
8. approved training where not awarded by DWP

Credits awarded by DWP

01052 The DWP considers whether to award credits for
   1. incapacity and LCW
   2. maternity
   3. unemployment
   4. carers entitled to CA
   5. approved training.

For further guidance on awarding credits, see Agency specific guidance.

01053 Where
   1. a claim is disallowed because the contributions conditions are not satisfied
      and
   2. the claimant alleges that they should be awarded credits for a past period

the DM should decide the credits issue before dealing with the dispute about the contributions conditions. This may mean referring the credits claim to HMRC for a decision where appropriate.

Example

A claim for ESA is disallowed because the claimant failed the second contribution condition in one of the relevant years. In that year the claimant had been awarded 48 unemployment credits through two awards of JSA. In the remaining period he had been on holiday. The claimant argues that he should be awarded credits for the missing weeks. The DM awards two unemployment credits, and revises the ESA disallowance to award benefit.
Determinations on incomplete evidence

01060 The DM can make assumptions about certain matters where the evidence required to make a determination for the purposes of an outcome decision is incomplete. This enables an outcome decision to be made without waiting for information. A further determination can be made and the decision revised or superseded as appropriate when the evidence is received. See DMG Chapters 03 and 04 for guidance on revision and supersession.

Housing costs - IS, SPC and ESA

01061 Where

1. the DM has to decide a claim or make a supersession decision and
2. a determination is required about what housing costs are to be included in an award of
   2.1 IS\(^1\) or
   2.2 SPC\(^2\) or
   2.3 ESA\(^3\) and
3. there is not enough evidence to make that determination

the DM can make the determination on the basis of the evidence already held\(^4\).

\(^{1}\) IS (Gen) Regs, reg 17(1)(e), 18(1)(f) & Sch 3; 2 SPC Regs, reg 6(6)(c) & Sch II;
\(^{2}\) ESA Regs, reg 67(1)(c), 68(1)(d) & Sch 6; 4 SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 13(1)

Other IS determinations

01062 Where

1. the DM has to make a determination about whether
   1.1 the applicable amount is reduced or disregarded for persons affected by trade disputes\(^1\) or
   1.2 a person is treated as receiving relevant education\(^2\) or
   1.3 the applicable amount includes the SDP\(^3\) and
2. there is not enough evidence to make that determination

the DM makes the determination on the basis that the missing evidence is adverse to the claimant\(^4\).

\(^{1}\) SS CB Act 92, s 126(3); 2 IS (Gen) Regs, reg 12; 3 reg 17(1)(d), 18(1)(e) & Sch 2, para 13;
\(^{2}\) 4 SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 13(2)
SPC determinations

01063 Where

1. the DM has to make a determination about whether a claimant’s appropriate minimum guarantee includes an additional amount for the severely disabled\(^1\) and

2. there is not enough evidence to make that determination

the DM makes the determination on the basis that the missing evidence is adverse to the claimant\(^2\).

\(^{1}\) SPC Regs, reg 6(4) & Sch 1, para 1; \(^{2}\) SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 13(3)

JSA determinations

01064 Where

1. the DM has to make a determination about whether

   1.1 the applicable amount is reduced or disregarded for persons affected by trade disputes\(^1\) or

   1.2 a person is treated as receiving relevant education\(^2\) and

2. there is not enough evidence to make that determination

the DM makes the determination on the basis that the missing evidence is adverse to the claimant\(^3\).

\(^{1}\) JS Act 95, s 15; \(^{2}\) JS & A Regs, reg 54; \(^{3}\) SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 15

Other ESA determinations

01065 Where

1. the DM has to make a determination about whether a claimant’s applicable amount includes the SDP\(^1\) and

2. there is not enough evidence to make that determination

the DM makes the determination on the basis that the missing evidence is adverse to the claimant\(^2\).

\(^{1}\) ESA Regs, reg 67(1), 68(1) & Sch 4, para 6; \(^{2}\) SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 13(2)

01066 - 01069
Deciding a claim with no election

Where

1. a person claims a Cat A or Cat B RP, SAP or GRB and
2. an election is required\(^1\) because entitlement is deferred and
3. no election is made at the date of claim

the DM may decide the claim before the election is made or treated as made\(^2\). See DMG Chapter 75 for guidance about deferring entitlement and making elections.

\(^1\) SS GRB Regs, Sch 1, para 12 or 17; SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 13A(1) & (2); reg 13A(3)

01071  The DM must revise the decision on the claim once the election is made or treated as made. See DMG Chapter 03 for guidance about revising decisions.
Referring a claimant for a medical examination

Reference by DM

**01080** Before making a decision on a claim for, or entitlement to a relevant benefit (except where an IfW, LCW or LCWRA determination is required) the DM may refer the claimant to a HCP approved by the Secretary of State for an examination and report. The DM may make the referral at the initial, revision or supersession stage of a claim. The claimant is referred only when a medical examination is necessary to obtain information to enable the DM to reach a decision on the claim or entitlement to benefit\(^1\).

\(^1\)SS Act 98, s 19(1)

**Incapacity for work, limited capability for work and limited capability for work-related activity**

**01081** Where a DM is determining IfW, LCW or LCWRA whether on a claim for benefit or credits, the claimant can be referred for an examination\(^1\) by a HCP approved by the Secretary of State.

\(^1\)SS CB Act 92, s 171A; SS (IW) (Gen) Regs, reg 8; ESA Regs, reg 23, reg 38

Reference by First-tier Tribunal

**01082** The FtT may refer a claimant for a medical examination where information is needed to determine an appeal\(^1\) and an issue raised by the appeal\(^2\).

1. is whether the claimant satisfies the disability conditions for
   1.1 AA\(^3\) or
   1.2 DLA\(^4\) or
   1.3 SDA\(^5\)
2. relates to the period for which the disability conditions for AA or DLA are likely to be satisfied
3. is the rate of an award of AA or DLA
4. is whether the claimant is incapable of work
5. relates to the extent and assessment of disablement for IIDB (except REA) and SDA\(^6\)
6. is whether the claimant suffers a loss of faculty as a result of an IA\(^7\)
7. relates to a disease or injury for the purposes of IIDB (except REA)\(^8\)
8. relates to Old Cases Schemes\(^9\).

\(^1\)SS Act 98, s 20(2); 2 TP (FtT) (SEC) Rules, rule 25; 3 SS CB Act 92, s 64 & 65(1); 4 s 72(1) & (2) & 73(1), (8) & (9); 5 s 68; 6 Sch 6; 7 s 103; 8 s 108; 9 s 111 & Sch 8

**01083**

Vol 1 Amendment 39 February 2012
**Meaning of health care professional**

01084 A HCP is

1. a registered medical practitioner
2. a registered nurse
3. a registered occupational therapist or physiotherapist or
4. a member of such other regulated profession as prescribed.

Note: For the purposes of claims to the higher rate of DLA mobility component on the grounds of severe visual impairment, optometrists registered with the General Optical Council and orthoptists registered with the Health Professional Council are HCPs.

No other professions have been prescribed as HCPs at present.

1 SS Act 98, s 39(1); SS (C&P) Regs, reg 2(1); SS (IW) (Gen) Regs, reg 2(1); Health Act 99, s 60;
2 NHS Reform & Health Care Professions Act 02, s 25(3); SS Act 98, s 39(1)

**Meaning of medical practitioner**

01085 A medical practitioner is defined in the UK as a registered medical practitioner. This definition includes a person outside the UK who has the equivalent qualifications as those of a registered medical practitioner.

1 SS Act 92, s 191; SS (IW) (Gen) Regs, reg 2(1)

**Failure to attend for medical examination**

01086 In benefit cases where IWW is not an issue, the DM decides against the claimant if they fail, without good cause, to attend for or submit to a medical examination.

What decision is made depends on the reason for referring the claimant for examination. The DM can make adverse assumptions following the failure.

1 SS Act 98, s 19(3)

01087 Generally, in the case of

1. a claim, the DM should disallow
2. reassessment following a provisional award of IIDB, the DM should disallow
3. an application for revision, the DM should notify that the decision is not revised (see DMG Chapter 03)
4. an application for supersession, the DM should make a decision not to supersede (see DMG Chapter 04).

01088 There may be some cases where it is not appropriate to give a decision as in DMG 01087. This is where the DM was able to award benefit on the existing evidence, and the examination was required in order to establish whether a higher rate of benefit should be awarded.

Vol 1 Amendment 39 February 2012
Example

A claim for DLA is received. The DM accepts from the evidence that the claimant is entitled to the higher rate of the mobility component. The evidence for entitlement to the care component is inconclusive, and the DM refers the claimant to a HCP for examination and report. The claimant refuses to attend without good cause. The DM awards the mobility component, but decides that the conditions for the care component are not satisfied.

01089  The DM may also suspend and terminate benefit where a claimant fails, without good cause, to attend a medical examination and

1.  the Secretary of State wished to check the correctness of an award or
2.  the claimant had applied for revision or supersession¹.

See DMG Chapter 04 for further guidance on suspension and termination.

¹ SS Act 98, s 24; SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 19

01090  In cases where an Iw, LCW or LCWRA determination is required, and the person fails, without good cause, to attend or submit to a medical examination, the DM should follow the guidance in DMG Chapter 13 or DMG Chapter 42.

Has the appointment been cancelled

01091  People cannot fail to attend the medical examination if the appointment has already been cancelled by Medical Services¹. The DM should investigate any indications that the claimant had made contact with the issuing office before the time of the examination. This is so that they can satisfy themselves that the appointment has been left open for the claimant.

¹ R(I B) 1/01

Good cause

01092  Good cause is not defined in legislation but a number of Commissioners’ decisions deal with it. It includes any facts which would probably have caused a reasonable person to act as the claimant acted¹, for example

1.  the claimant’s health at the time
2.  the nature of the claimant’s illness
3.  the information that the claimant received
4.  whether the claimant was outside GB at the time
5.  whether there was any postal delay.

¹ R(SB) 6/83
For details on how to obtain and weigh up the medical evidence see DMG 01520 - 01599.

01093 - 01099
Outcome decisions

01100 The most important issue for a claimant who makes
1. a claim or
2. an application for
   2.1 revision or
   2.2 supersession or
   2.3 an IA declaration

is the outcome of that claim or application. For a claim, the claimant wants to know whether the claim has been successful, and if so, how much benefit will be paid and from when. The same principle applies to an application.

01101 The decision on a claim or application is called an outcome decision because it tells the claimant the outcome of the claim or application. An outcome decision incorporates all subsidiary determinations such as the separate elements of entitlement to benefit and the day that benefit will be paid.

01102 The claimant has a right of appeal against outcome decisions only\(^1\) as listed in Annex D to this Volume. An outcome decision on a claim, for example, is whether or not the claimant is entitled to benefit. As part of the process of making that decision, the DM makes determinations or findings of fact which lead to the outcome. These determinations generally do not have the right of appeal - see Annex E\(^2\). Although an appeal is against the outcome decision, in practice the claimant may wish to focus on a component part of the decision. For further details on appeals see DMG Chapter 06.

Example 1

A woman is receiving IS as a lone parent with three children. Following investigation, the DM determines that she has been LTAHAW with the father of her children since before the date of claim. The awarding decision is revised for ignorance of a material fact. The outcome decision is that she is not entitled to IS from the date of claim as her partner works F/T. The claimant has the right of appeal against that decision, although the issue under appeal is the question of LTAHAW.

Example 2

A man who works P/T makes a claim for JSA. The DM makes determinations about treatment of earnings and availability. The outcome decision is that he is entitled to JSA.
First-tier Tribunals and outcome decisions

01105 The FtT is not required to substitute an outcome decision for the decision under appeal\(^1\). The power enabling them to deal only with the issues raised by the appeal\(^2\) does not have the effect that they have to make a decision on every issue if there is a more appropriate way of dealing with those issues. Where the FtT decides the issue but does not give a new outcome decision, the case is sent back to the DM. See DMG Chapter 06 for more details about the FtT and outcome decisions.

\(^{1}\) R(IS) 2/08; \(^{2}\) SS Act 98, s 12(9)(a)

01106 If the case is remitted to the DM, a new outcome decision should be made incorporating the FtT decision. The FtT decision is binding on the DM, subject to supersession or appeal. See DMG Chapters 04 and 06 for further guidance.

01107

II DB decisions

01108 In addition to decisions on claims, IIDB DMs make the following types of outcome decisions, both of which carry a right of appeal

1. in an IA case, an accident declaration\(^1\)
2. an assessment of disablement\(^2\).

Note: See DMG 01190 - 01191 for guidance on II DB determinations.

\(^{1}\) SS Act 98, Sch 3, para 7; \(^{2}\) SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 26(c); SS CB Act 92, s 103 & 108 & Sch 6

01109 An assessment of the extent of disablement arising from a claim for an IA or a PD is a separate decision from the one awarding or disallowing benefit\(^1\). This means that on a first claim for benefit where an IA has resulted in a loss of faculty or an industrial disease has been diagnosed, the DM gives two separate outcome decisions

1. an assessment of disablement and
2. a decision awarding or disallowing benefit.

Note: Both decisions should be recorded in full on one LT54.

\(^{1}\) SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 26(c)

01110 However, if the DM determines that there is no loss of faculty or the disease is not diagnosed, they make a single decision disallowing benefit which incorporates that determination (see DMG 01190 - 01191).
How is the decision recorded

In most cases the decision is recorded on the Department's computer system. However, where a decision is revised or superseded, Departmental procedures may require that it is recorded clerically, e.g. on form LT 54. A revision or supersession must

1. identify the person to whom it relates
2. identify the decision it is changing
3. specify whether it is revising or superseding an earlier decision and
4. specify the grounds or authority for doing so.

For example, in a case where the claimant has previously passed the PCA, and on a further PCA fails to satisfy the test, the record of the decision should say

“I have superseded the decision dated ...[date] awarding incapacity benefit/credits. This is because the Secretary of State has received medical evidence following an examination by a HCP approved by the Secretary of State, since that decision was given.

...[The claimant] does not score 15 points for the physical descriptors or 10 points for the mental health descriptors, or an aggregate score of 15 points where both physical and mental health descriptors apply. The personal capability assessment is not satisfied.

As a result, ...[the claimant] is not incapable of work and is not entitled to incapacity benefit/credits from and including ... [date]."

Where more than one decision needs changing on revision or replacing on supersession, each decision should be identified where possible. This is particularly important in overpayment cases.

Defective decisions

Where a decision following revision or supersession is appealed, it is the formal record of the decision which will be considered by the FtT. Failure to set out the basis for the decision in the record may result in the FtT declaring it to be

1. defective or
2. unidentifiable as a revised or supersession decision.

DMs should ensure that this is not necessary by following the guidance in DMG 01111.
In most cases the FtT should perfect or correct such decisions\(^1\). However, where it is not possible to identify whether the decision under appeal is a supersession or revised decision, the FtT may conclude that it is not possible to remedy any defects, for example because there is no effective date, or the decision is in reality a determination of fact. In such cases the DM may need to make a decision which complies with the requirements for revision or supersession as appropriate\(^2\). This may have the effect that the decision takes effect from a later date in cases where the effective date is the date of the decision. There may also be an impact on any overpayment decision.

\(^1\) R(IB) 2/04; \(^2\) R(IS) 13/05

**Example**

The claimant is in receipt of IS as a lone parent. Following a fraud investigation, the DM makes a determination that the claimant is LTAHAW with the father of her children. The determination is notified as an outcome decision with appeal rights, although it does not record what effect the LTAHAW determination has on entitlement to IS.

A further decision is made about the overpayment of IS from the date that the claimant is found to be LTAHAW. The claimant appeals the decision to the FtT. The FtT concludes that no overpayment decision can exist because one of the requirements for such a decision, a proper revision or supersession decision, has not been made. The DM has the power to make a proper revision or supersession decision, and to make a proper overpayment decision.

**How is the decision notified**

The written notification of an outcome decision is issued to the claimant either clerically or by computer\(^1\). The notification contains

1. information which gives the effect of the decision such as whether there is entitlement to benefit and where appropriate the amount payable and when it is payable from and

2. an explanation of revision and appeal rights\(^2\) because a party who is notified of an outcome decision and is unhappy with that decision may apply for revision or appeal it.

\(^1\) SS Act 98, s 2(1)(a); \(^2\) SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 28(1)(c)

The information about revision and appeal rights invites the claimant to ask for an explanation of the decision - see DMG 01120 - 01124. The claimant is also advised that a written statement of reasons can be requested if no reasons for the decision were given in the notification\(^1\) - see DMG 01130 - 01135.

\(^1\) reg 28(1)(b)
When is the decision notified

A decision is notified when it is

1. handed to the claimant or appointee or
2. sent by post to the person's last known address.\(^1\)

Where a decision is posted, DMs should bear in mind that the notification may not leave the office on the day that it is produced.\(^2\)

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Failure to notify the decision

A decision is not effective unless and until it is notified - see DMG 01015. This can lead to disputes about whether the time for revision or appeal has expired, or whether the condition for making an overpayment decision is satisfied. It is therefore important to ensure that evidence is available to show that a decision has been notified. Evidence of notice can be a clerical or computer record.\(^1\)

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Explanation

Where

1. a claimant or their representative queries a decision by
   1.1 asking for it to be explained
   1.2 requesting a written statement of reasons
   1.3 making an application for revision
   1.4 making an appeal and
2. the decision is not changed by revision or supersession

the DM or another suitably trained officer should offer the claimant or representative an informal explanation of the decision. The claimant or representative should be contacted by telephone if possible, unless they have specifically requested a response in writing.

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The purpose of the explanation is to help the claimant understand the decision, and to clarify any areas of dispute in the event of an application for revision or appeal.

Note: An explanation is not a compulsory step in the revision or appeal process.
01122  The explanation must

1. be personalized
2. be given in a manner that is clear, understandable and effective
3. explain why the decision was made
4. explain the effects of the law on the facts
5. deal with any further points the claimant or representative may make
6. ensure that the claimant understands the decision even if they do not agree with it
7. ensure that the revision and appeal process including time limits is explained.

01123  If the claimant

1. cannot be contacted or
2. does not want an explanation or
3. is not satisfied with the explanation

the action which prompted the offer of an explanation should be continued in the normal way. For applications for revision, see DMG Chapter 03, and appeals, see DMG Chapter 06.

01124  Where

1. the explanation followed an application for revision or an appeal and
2. the claimant accepts the explanation

they should be asked whether they wish the application or appeal to go ahead. See DMG Chapter 06 for guidance on withdrawing an appeal.

01125 - 01129

Request for written statement of reasons

01130  Where an outcome decision is notified without a statement of the reasons for the decision, the claimant has one month from the day following the date of notification to ask for the written statement. Claimants can ask for a written statement of reasons, for example by asking for an explanation of a decision, either orally, by telephone or in person at an appropriate office, or in writing. They do not have to use the specific words “request for a written statement of reasons”. Where the application is made orally, the Department must keep a record of the conversation. The DM must supply the statement within 14 days of receiving the request or as soon as practicable afterwards. See DMG Chapters 03 and 06 for guidance on extending the revision and appeal period where a written statement is requested.

1 SS CS (D&A) Regs. reg 28(1)(b); 2 reg 28(2)
A written statement of reasons should

1. be personalized
2. give an explanation of why the decision was made
3. provide details of the law used to make the decision, and how it was applied
4. give information about the extended time limit for revision and appeal.

The DM should note when the statement is issued in order to calculate time limits for revision and appeal where appropriate.

Where a decision is revised, the claimant can request a written statement of reasons for the decision in its revised form, even if a statement was provided for the original decision. This is because there is a right of appeal against a decision as revised. Rights to request a written statement should always be notified when a decision has the right of appeal.

Where a decision is not revised, there is no right to request a statement of reasons for the refusal to revise, as this is not a decision with a right of appeal. The rights to request a statement or appeal the original decision still exist subject to time limits. See DMG 01130 and DMG Chapter 06 for guidance on time limits.

Where the request for a written statement is made outside the one month period in DMG 01130, the statement should still be issued so that the claimant can understand why the decision was made. However, the claimant should be advised that the time for applying for revision, or for an appeal, is not extended.

In exceptional circumstances a further written statement can be provided, for example where the claimant requires further clarification of the decision.
Finality

01150 A decision made by a DM, the FtT or the UT is final unless it is
1. revised (decisions of DMs only)
2. superseded
3. terminated after an award has been suspended
4. changed or replaced on appeal
5. corrected or
6. set aside (decisions of the FtT or the UT only).

Note: See DMG 01180 - 01191 for guidance on finality of determinations.

01151 Where a decision is changed or replaced as in DMG 01150, the new or revised decision becomes the final decision on the claim or application, even where it does not change the outcome. But see DMG 01152 - 01153 where an outcome decision is not replaced on appeal.

Changing a First-tier Tribunal’s decision

01152 Where the FtT
1. allows an appeal on the issue or issues raised
2. does not give an outcome decision
3. remits the case to the DM

the DM must follow the FtT’s decision when dealing with the matters referred back for subsequent decision. See DMG 01105 - 01106 for further guidance.

01153 The FtT’s decision on the issues it has dealt with is final unless
1. there are grounds to supersede the decision (see DMG Chapter 04) or
2. the DM considers it is erroneous in law and applies for leave to appeal (see DMG Chapter 06).

01154 - 01159
Claim or award disallowed

Where a claim is disallowed or an award is disallowed following supersession, a later claim for the same period cannot be determined. The DM should give a decision on the later claim from the date following the disallowance.

Example

A decision awarding ESA which is superseded and disallowed on 21 July from and including 9 July is effective down to 21 July. Entitlement can only be considered from 22 July if a claim is then made for any period before 22 July.

Where a disallowance is given by a DM, the claim is disallowed for the period from the first date covered by the claim to the date of the decision. However, where the disallowance is confirmed on appeal to the FTT or the UT, the period of the disallowance is not extended up to the date of the new decision. This is because the FTT cannot take account of any changes after the date of the DM’s decision.

Revision following backdating request

The DM should also consider whether a request for backdating, in a case where an award is made following termination of an earlier award for the same benefit, should be treated as an application for revision of the decision which ended that award. This applies where the claimant in the backdating request argues that

1. the decision ending the previous award was incorrect or
2. the fresh claim should be backdated to the day following the last day of the previous award.

Finality of determinations

Normally, determinations embodied within an outcome decision are not conclusive for the purposes of a further claim for the same benefit.

Example

Following a change of address, a claimant is found to be LTAHAW. Her award of IS is superseded on a relevant change of circumstances and disallowed from the date of the change. The DM also decides that the overpayment is recoverable due to the claimant’s failure to disclose. On an appeal against the overpayment decision, the DM’s findings on LTAHAW in the supersession decision is not binding on the FTT. The finding is also not conclusive on a further claim for IS.
Incapacity for work

DMG 01180 does not apply where the determination is about IfW. Where the DM makes a determination that a person is, or is treated as, capable or incapable of work, any DM should use those findings as conclusive for the purposes of further benefit decisions\(^1\).

\(^1\) SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 10(1)(a) - (b) & (2)

Example 1

A man is awarded IB because he is suffering from chronic arthritis. He is also awarded IS. He has been incapable of work for 196 days and the DM applies the PCA. The DM considers all the evidence relevant to the PCA and determines whether the man is incapable of work. The determination on the man’s IfW is then conclusive in determining his ongoing entitlement to IS.

Example 2

A woman claims JSA (Cont) and is looking for work as a typist. She recently had an accident and has broken her leg. When she applied for IB she was found capable of work. The DM uses the determination on IfW as conclusive when considering the woman’s capability for work for the purposes of JSA.

Limited capability for work

DMG 01180 also does not apply where the determination is about LCW. Where the DM makes a determination that a person has or does not have, or is treated as having or not having, LCW, any DM should use those findings as conclusive for the purposes of further benefit decisions\(^1\).

\(^1\) reg 10(1)(c) - (d) & (2)

IIDB

Determinations on

1. date of onset\(^1\) and
2. diagnosis, made either before 5.7.99 or on or after 18.3.05\(^2\)

are exceptions to the general rule in DMG 01180 and are conclusive for decisions made on that claim and further claims including REA. (Note, however, that determinations on diagnosis made on or after 5.7.99 but before 18.3.05 are not conclusive.)

\(^1\) SS (Industrial Injuries) (Prescribed Diseases) Regs, reg 6; 2 reg 5(2); R(I) 2/03; R(I) 2/04
This means that they are binding on future DMs, and cannot be changed unless the outcome decisions in which they are incorporated can be altered by one of the methods in DMG 01150.

**Example 1**

On a claim for IIDB made on 14.4.96, the Adjudicating Medical Authority decides that the claimant is not suffering from PD A11. The adjudication officer disallows the claim on 4.6.96. A new claim for the same disease is made on 5.9.05. Medical opinion is that the claimant is suffering from the disease and has done so since 1.4.85. The previous determination on diagnosis was binding, so unless there are grounds for revising or superseding the decision of 4.6.96, the date of onset cannot be earlier than 5.6.96.

**Example 2**

On a claim for IIDB made on 7.9.01, the DM determines that the claimant is not suffering from PD A11. The claim is disallowed on 16.11.01. A further claim is made on 5.9.05 for the same disease. Medical advice is that the claimant has been suffering from PD A11 since 1.1.80 with an assessment of disablement of 4%. The DM is not bound by the diagnosis on the previous claim and determine that 1.1.80 is the date of onset.

**Example 3**

On a claim for IIDB made on 14.6.05, the DM determines that the claimant is not suffering from PD A11. The claim is disallowed on 19.7.05. A further claim is made on 22.11.05 and the Medical Adviser is of the opinion that the claimant has been suffering from the disease since 1.4.85. The DM considers all the evidence and decides that the latest medical evidence is only a change of opinion and that there are no grounds to revise or supersede the decision of 19.7.05. The previous diagnosis determination is binding and the date of onset cannot be any earlier than 20.7.05.

**Example 4**

On a claim for IIDB made on 14.6.05, the DM determines that the claimant has been suffering from PD A11 since 3.1.05 and assesses disablement at 15% from 7.4.05 indefinitely. A claim for REA is received on 6.8.05 and accompanying medical evidence suggests that the claimant has suffered from the disease since 1989. The previous determination on the date of onset is binding and cannot be changed unless there are grounds for revising or superseding the assessment of disablement. As the DM decided that grounds do not exist, the claim for REA is disallowed.
General principles of common law

01200 The DM must make a decision taking account of common law principles and European law (see DMG 01230). The common law principles are

1. definitions of words and phrases
2. relevant law
3. estoppel (personal bar in Scotland) and res judicata
4. natural justice.

Definitions

01201 The DM can find definitions of words and phrases

1. within the Acts
2. at the beginning of each set of regulations
3. in case law (the UT, Court of Appeal, Supreme Court and the ECJ)
4. in the Interpretation Act 1978.

The DM may use a dictionary if none of these sources contains a definition.

01202 Headings and side notes can be helpful in understanding a provision as can the explanatory memorandum attached to a statutory instrument. These are not part of the legislation but are permissible aids to construction which can be used to aid understanding.

01203 - 01204
Relevant law

01205 When a DM is determining a claim or an application, the relevant law is the law applying at the time the claim or application is made. Where there is a change in a particular legal provision so that it

1. ceases to have effect or
2. begins to take effect

during the period of a claim or application, the DM should apply the change in the law only from the date of the change\(^1\) unless the legislation has retrospective effect or there are specific transitional provisions.

\(^1\) R(I) 4/84

Uprating

01206 Legislation provides for benefit rates to be altered in accordance with the Uprating Order without the need for the DM to supersede the previous awarding decision\(^1\). But in certain JSA, IS and SPC cases the DM is still involved in giving a supersession decision\(^2\) (see DMG Chapter 04).

\(^1\) SSA Act 92, s 135(3); \(^2\) SS CS (D&A)Regs, reg 14

01207 - 01209

Estoppel (personal bar in Scotland)

01210 In general law the doctrine of estoppel, known in Scotland as personal bar, has the effect of blocking or preventing a person from alleging or proving in later proceedings, matters which have already been decided in earlier proceedings\(^1\). When this doctrine is applied by DMs it is called res judicata (see DMG 01212 - 01213).

\(^1\) R(I) 9/63

Example

A DM decides that a woman has had an IA. The woman appeals against the rate of benefit paid and the case goes to the FtT. At the FtT hearing the woman argues further points about the IA. The issues surrounding the IA have already been decided by a DM therefore estoppel applies.

01211 The doctrine of estoppel does not apply where the claimant
1. on the advice or a promise given by the Secretary of State, has formed a view about future benefit rights and

2. has taken a particular course of action.

The DM must decide the matter solely on the basis of the relevant legislation, even though the decision may be contrary to the original advice or promise.

Example

A claimant in receipt of JSA(IB) is considering extending his mortgage. He rings his local Jobcentre Plus office and is told that the new mortgage would be met as part of his housing costs. He takes out the new mortgage. The DM decides that the loan is not eligible for housing costs. Estoppel does not apply, because the DM is not bound by the advice given by another person in the Department.

Res judicata

Res judicata prevents a judicial authority from deciding a matter that has already been decided by a person of similar status. This principle is given effect for DMs by a provision in legislation and is also known as the principle of finality (see DMG 01150 et seq).

Note: This does not apply to most determinations and findings of fact - see DMG 01180 et seq.

Natural justice

There is a common law requirement that DMs should observe the rules of natural justice. The rules are not prescribed collectively but they represent the manner in which justice is expected to be achieved. An unbiased approach is needed, reflecting the principle that impartiality is at the heart of the judicial process.
General principles of European Community law

01230 The following paragraphs set out the general principles of EC law that apply to SS legislation. Detailed guidance on its application is in DMG Chapter 07.

01231 When interpreting EC legislation, the DM must consider the purpose of the provisions and not just the meaning of the words. Cases of difficulty should be referred to DMA Leeds for advice.


01232 The main sources of EC law are

1. treaties establishing the EC. The EC can only legislate on matters in areas where it has been given powers to do so by the treaties
2. secondary legislation (regulations, directives, recommendations, decisions and opinions)
3. judgments of the ECJ.

01233 - 01234

Regulations

01235 Regulations apply to all EEA countries. See DMG Chapter 07 part 1 for a list of EEA countries. They become part of national law as soon as they are agreed by the Council of Ministers. There is no need for a separate Act of Parliament or secondary legislation.

1 Treaty of Rome, Art 249

Directives

01236 Directives are binding, in terms of the result to be achieved, upon each Member State to which they are addressed. But it is left to the national authorities to decide the form and methods used to achieve the result. In the UK, an Act of Parliament or regulations made under statute, is usually needed.

1 European Communities Act 1972

01237 A Directive may have direct effect if
1. it, or part of it, is clear and precise
2. it, or part of it, is unconditional and
3. the time limit within which it had to be implemented has passed.

"Direct effect" means that a person may rely on a provision of a Directive.

Vol 1 Amendment 30 February 2009
Example

Directive 79/7/EEC was issued in 1978 and gave Member States six years to implement equal treatment in SS (see DMG Chapter 07). The Directive took effect on 23.12.84 and is binding on all Member States from that date. Most necessary changes to UK law were made by that date to conform to the Directive.

Opinions and recommendations

Opinions and recommendations have no legally binding force but they state the collective view of the EC. The ECJ and national courts must take opinions and recommendations into account when deciding cases.

Supremacy of European Community law

EC law is supreme. This means that where there is a conflict between the provisions of EC law and that of any EEA national law

1. EC law must be applied and

2. the national law must be set aside or amended as appropriate.

Where EC law is applied directly to set aside or amend UK law, the UK law may be changed so that the disadvantaged group is brought up to the level of the advantaged group. This is called levelling up.

Where an EEA country amends its national legislation to provide equal treatment for men and women, it can specify any conditions provided that from 23.12.84 those conditions apply equally to men and women. This is so even if the conditions are harder to satisfy after 22.12.84 than before that date. This is called levelling down. For further details on equal treatment see DMG Chapter 07.

For further details on equal treatment see DMG Chapter 07.
Judgments of the European Court of Justice

01250 Judgments of the ECJ are not generally available to DMs. The DM should contact DMA Leeds for information about these decisions.

Referring questions to the European Court of Justice

01251 When in doubt about the correct interpretation of EC legislation on an individual case

1. the FtT (but see DMG 01255)
2. the UT or
3. the Court of Appeal

can refer a question to the ECJ for a preliminary ruling¹.

¹ EC Treaty, Art 234

01252 If a case is before the Supreme Court and there is still an outstanding question involving EC law, the Supreme Court must refer a question to the ECJ. When the ECJ has answered the question, the Supreme Court decides the appeal.

01253 As a general rule, where an appeal can be made to a higher court from the authority currently considering the case it is better to give a decision on the question at that level and leave the higher court to make a reference¹ to the ECJ.

¹ R(S) 5/83

01254 Where the question of a referral arises during the course of the FtT, the DM should ask the FtT to consider the matter without referring the question to the ECJ at that stage. If the FtT refuse to decide the question before them, the DM should ask for an adjournment so that legal advice and representation can be arranged.

01255 If the FtT refuse to adjourn, the DM should ask for the request and refusal to be included in the note of evidence. The DM should then pass the papers to DMA Leeds for advice.
European Convention on Human Rights

01260 The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is a treaty of the Council of Europe. The Convention contains Articles which guarantee a number of basic human rights. In addition, Protocols have been signed which are to be regarded as additional articles to the Convention. The main Convention Rights are set out in Annex G to this volume.

Human Rights Act 1998

01261 The Human Rights Act 1998 which gives effect in the UK to the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights came into force 2.10.00.

01262 Public authorities, including courts and both the FiT and the UT are under a duty to act compatibly with the Convention rights and all legislation must be read compatibly with the Convention rights as far as it is possible to do so. Also, courts and both the FiT and the UT should have regard to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and decisions and opinions of the Commission and Committee of Ministers.

01263 DMs applying the normal principles of decision making, which are

1. natural justice
2. consideration of evidence
3. standard of proof and
4. application of relevant law

should not find themselves in breach of Article 6 of the Convention. This is because they are already expected to determine questions without bias or discrimination and within a reasonable timescale.

01264 For further guidance on appeals to the FiT and the UT involving human rights, see DMG Chapter 06.

01265 - 01269
Revising and superseding decisions of former authorities

Introduction

01270 Decisions on benefits current in 1999 made by adjudicating and appellate authorities before the coming into force of current legislation can be revised or superseded under the new system of decision making. This is made possible by treating them as decisions made under current legislation.

01271 Decisions on former benefits can also be revised or superseded. They are prescribed as relevant benefits for the purposes of decision making. Decisions on these benefits are also treated as decisions made by the Secretary of State under the Act. See Annex A to this Volume for a list of relevant benefits.

01272 The Act came into force on different days for different benefits. These are
1. 5.7.99 for IIDB
2. 6.9.99 for RP, WB, IB, SDA and MA
3. 18.10.99 for AA, DLA, CA, JSA and credits
4. 29.11.99 for IS and SF Maternity, Funeral payments and CWPs
5. 16.10.06 for prescribed former benefits.

Meaning of adjudicating authority

01280 An adjudicating authority is
1. an adjudication officer
2. an adjudicating medical practitioner
3. a specially qualified adjudicating medical practitioner
4. a medical board
5. a special medical board.

Meaning of appellate authority

01281 An appellate authority is
1. a disability appeal tribunal
2. a medical appeal tribunal
3. a SS appeal tribunal
4. a SS Commissioner.
Decisions of adjudicating authorities

01282 Decisions of adjudicating authorities made before the day in DMG 01272 are treated as decisions of the Secretary of State. This means that they can be revised\(^1\) or superseded\(^2\) under the new provisions.

\(^1\) SS Act 98, s 9(1); \(^2\) s 10(1)(a)

Decisions of appellate authorities

01283 Decisions of appellate authorities made before the day in DMG 01272 can be superseded\(^1\) under the new provisions.

\(^1\) s 10(1)(b)
Evidence

Introduction

01300 The guidance in the following paragraphs sets out the general principles which the DM should follow regardless of the benefit or business area involved. See DMG 01001 for details of the authorization of suitable people to exercise the function of DM on behalf of the Secretary of State.

01301 The DM should approach the determination of claims and applications objectively by always
1. considering the evidence
2. from that evidence, establishing the facts of the case
3. applying the law to those facts.

01302 Proper consideration and careful recording of evidence when making and recording decisions are essential. It is particularly important that telephone conversations and interviews are accurately recorded. This approach assists DMs dealing with disputes and may avoid appeals. It also helps in any subsequent appeal proceedings.

01303 The provision of sufficient information or evidence to establish the national insurance number is a specific requirement for certain benefits. For details see DMG Chapter 02.

01304 - 01309

Types of evidence

01310 DMs, like any other statutory authority, must base all decisions on evidence. There are three types of evidence
1. direct - for example, a statement by a witness to an IA
2. indirect - for example, a statement by someone who did not see the accident but saw the victim immediately afterwards and saw the injuries and the circumstances which probably caused them
3. hearsay - for example, a statement by someone recording what they were told about the accident.

01311 Each type of evidence may be either
1. documentary - for example, certificates or wage slips
2. oral - for example, a statement given verbally (such as in a telephone call)
3. real - something tangible, for example, a wage packet with the money in it.
The DM can use all three types of evidence. Some carry more weight than others. The weight given should be carefully judged in the circumstances of the particular case. As a general rule, direct evidence is more significant than indirect or hearsay evidence. Also, the closer in time to the event the DM obtains and considers the evidence, the more helpful it is likely to be.

There may be situations where the DM has "secondary" evidence as opposed to "primary" evidence, for example where a medical report refers to a video recording which is unavailable or no longer exists. The lack of the primary evidence does not mean that the secondary evidence is not admissible, and appropriate weight should be given to it.

Example

Joanne, in receipt of higher rate mobility and lowest care components of DLA, was videotaped by private investigators in a personal injury claim. The tapes were shown to her consultant and he wrote a report, part of which said "It is clear that she is able to walk and would be able to perform the majority of household chores". The decision awarding DLA was superseded and the award terminated. Through various delays, by the time the claimant's appeal is heard by the FitT, the video is no longer available but the report is. The claimant argues that without the tape (primary evidence) the secondary evidence should not be relied upon to withdraw the claimant's benefits. The FitT has to have regard to all the evidence before it, including the report, and has to weigh all such evidence and reach a conclusion.

Responsibility for collecting evidence

Evidence on which the DM decides the claim or application is collected on behalf of the Secretary of State. In some cases this person will also be the DM. Evidence can be collected by telephone, letter or interview. Where evidence is collected by letter, a copy of a letter asking specific questions should always be kept with the reply. Where evidence is collected by telephone, the questions asked should be recorded along with the replies. See DMG 01451 et seq in fraud cases. Documentary evidence carries the most weight and is preferred.

The circumstances in which statements are obtained - that is, voluntarily or during an interview under caution - can be important. Where the circumstances are not clear, an explanation should be attached to the statement.
Evidence from HM Revenue and Customs

01330 Any information held by HMRC for the purposes of
1. contributions functions (see DMG 01042.2)
2. SSP
3. SMP

may (or on request by an officer authorised by the Secretary of State must) be given
to an officer of the DWP where the information is required for SS purposes¹. This
enables the DM to obtain information about matters such as contribution records
and employed earners employment.

¹ SS Act 92, s 121E

01331 In the same way information held by the DWP for SS purposes may be given to
HMRC where necessary for their functions in DMG 01330¹.

¹ SS Act 92, s 121F

01332 - 01333

Evidence from a local authority or county council

01334 When a claimant supplies information to a LA for the purpose of claiming HB or CTB
and this information is supplied to DWP, the Secretary of State must use the
information without verifying its accuracy¹. This information can be used for the
purpose of a claim for, or award of, specified benefits².

¹ SS (C&I) Regs, reg 3(2); 2 reg 3(1)(b)

01335 Information provided as in DMG 01334 does not have to be used without carrying
out further checks on its accuracy if
1. it is supplied more than twelve months after it was used by a LA for HB or
   CTB purposes¹ or
2. the information is supplied within twelve months of its use by the LA but the
   Secretary of State has reasonable grounds for believing the information has
   changed in the period between its use by the LA and its supply to him² or
3. the date on which the information was used by the LA cannot be determined³.

¹ SS (C&I) Regs, reg 3(3)(a); 2 reg 3(3)(b); 3 reg 3(3)(c)

Example
A claimant provides evidence of his savings to support his claim for HB. The LA
verifies that his savings are £10,000 - this includes shares. This information is sent
to DWP. Eight months later a claim for IS is made. The Secretary of State requests
that the claimant provides evidence of his savings due to the likelihood that the
value of his savings will have changed.

Vol 1 Amendment 42 February 2013
Where SS information is verified by a LA and forwarded to DWP the Secretary of State must use this information without verifying its accuracy for the purpose of a claim or award of a specified benefit\(^1\). However, information may be checked if
\begin{enumerate}
\item the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds for believing the information is inaccurate or
\item the information is received more than four weeks after it was verified by the LA\(^2\).
\end{enumerate}

\textit{Meaning of social security information}

SS information means
\begin{enumerate}
\item information relating to SS, child support or war pensions or
\item evidence obtained in connection with a claim for or an award of a specified benefit\(^1\).
\end{enumerate}

\textit{Meaning of specified benefit}

The term "specified benefit" means one or more of the following benefits\(^1\)
\begin{enumerate}
\item AA
\item BA
\item BPT
\item CA
\item DLA
\item ESA
\item IB
\item IS
\item JSA
\item RP
\item SPC
\item WPA
\item WFP.
\end{enumerate}

Claims for some SS benefits can also be made at LAs, and county councils in England, known as alternative offices\(^1\). See DMG Chapter 02 for further guidance. Information or evidence supplied to, or obtained by alternative offices relating to the claim may be verified, recorded and forwarded to DWP as soon as possible\(^2\).
Information or evidence which relates to an award of benefit may be received, verified, recorded and forwarded to DWP by county councils.\(^3\)

\(^1\) SSAA Act, s 7A; SS (C&P) Regs, reg 4(6B)(b), 4D(4), 4(6A)(c & d); \(^2\) reg 4(6C)(d); \(^3\) reg 32B

### Further Information Sharing Provisions

01340 LAs may provide information to the Secretary of State of the type set out in DMG where related to the following benefits\(^1\)

1. AA
2. DLA
3. JSA(IB)
4. ESA(IR)
5. IS
6. SPC
7. HB
8. CTB
9. PIP.

\(^1\) The Social Security (Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc) Regulation 2012, reg 4

01341 The information referred to in DMG 01340 is\(^1\)

1. whether a resident is meeting in full the cost of the provision to them of residential care and if so the date this started and the period over which the cost is intended to be met
2. whether the LA is funding or has funded in full or in part the cost of the provision to a resident of residential care and if so
   2.1 the date from which the funding started and the period covered or intended to be covered by it
   2.2 the date the funding stopped or is intended to stop
   2.3 the enactment under which the funding is being or was provided
   2.4 whether there exists any agreement enabling the LA to recover the cost of the funding on the sale of the resident’s home and if so, whether that recovery has commenced or when it is intended to commence
   2.5 whether the LA has entered into a deferred payment agreement with the resident and if so the date this started and the period the agreement is intended to cover

**Note:** This also includes information about when the provision of the service begins or ends or is likely to do so.

\(^1\) The Social Security (Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc) Regulation 2012, reg 3

Vol 1 Amendment 43 June 2013
The Secretory of State may provide information to an LA or an authority which administers HB (or their service providers or persons exercising functions on their behalf) for:

1. determining a person’s eligibility or continued eligibility for a disabled person’s badge
2. determining whether to make to any person a disability adaptation grant, a disabled facilities grant or a discretionary housing payment and if so the amount of that grant or payment
3. determining whether a person applying for housing support services, the provision of domiciliary care or the provision of residential care is liable to contribute towards the cost of the service and if so the amount
4. identifying households eligible for support under the troubled families programme and providing appropriate types of advice, support and assistance to members of such households under that programme

Note: 4.4 applies to LAs in England

The Social Security (Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc) Regulation 2012, reg 5

Standard of proof - balance of probability

The DM must decide claims and applications on the balance of probability. This is not the same as "beyond reasonable doubt", the standard test for proof in criminal trials.

The balance of probability involves the DM deciding whether it is more likely than not that an event occurred, or that an assertion is true. It does not mean that the claimant can be given the benefit of the doubt. If the evidence is contradictory the DM should decide whether there is enough evidence in favour of one conclusion or the other to show which is the more likely. The DM may decide on the basis of findings made on the balance of probability or may find that there is not enough evidence to satisfy them about findings one way or the other.

Alternatively the DM may find that there is insufficient evidence to establish the facts one way or the other and ask for more evidence. Claimants must supply all information and evidence required in connection with the decision. The DM should do as much as possible to see that all the necessary evidence is brought to light.
Failure to provide evidence

01350 If the claimant fails to provide the requested evidence or information a penalty may be imposed
1. for failure to sign a declaration in claims for JSA
2. in CS cases, by way of a RBD.

01351 Evidence requirements for IS and JSA are in benefit specific guidance.

01352 When making a decision, the DM should decide the importance of the failure and any reasons given for not providing evidence, as this could cast doubt on the facts previously provided. See DMG 01405 for guidance on the burden of proof.

Example 1

An IS claimant states that there is no capital or income from the sale of her business, because the money from the sale was used to clear the business debts. The DM asks for evidence of the transaction. The claimant is unable to produce any. The transfer of the business was within the family. The DM is entitled to take the view that it is more likely that the claimant has not disposed of the assets of the business.

Example 2

A jobseeker states he left his employment because of a grievance with the employer, but on being asked to provide more details, does not reply. The DM can impose a sanction because the jobseeker has not proved just cause for leaving his employment voluntarily.

Treated as capable of work

01370 Where the claimant has not replied to enquiries requesting evidence of IfW\(^1\), there are special rules to treat a person as capable of work. They apply if the claimant fails without good cause to
1. return the questionnaire for the PCA\(^2\)
2. attend or submit to a medical examination\(^3\) for the OOT or PCA.

See DMG Chapter 13 for details.

\(^1\) SS (IW) (Gen) Regs, regs 6, 7 & 8; \(^2\) reg 7; \(^3\) reg 8

01371 DMs should note that a claimant cannot be treated as capable of work for a period where they have failed to provide medical evidence. The appropriate test of incapacity must be applied. See DMG 01545 and Chapters 04 and 13 for further guidance.
Treated as not having LCW

Where the claimant has not replied to enquiries requesting evidence of LCW\(^1\), there are special rules to treat a person as capable of work. They apply if the claimant fails without good cause to

1. return the questionnaire for the WCA\(^2\)
2. attend or submit to a medical examination\(^3\).

See DMG Chapter 42 for details.

DMs should note that a claimant cannot be treated as not having LCW for a period where they have failed to provide medical evidence. The appropriate test of LCW must be applied. See DMG 01551 and Chapters 04 and 42 for further guidance.

Corroboratation of evidence

There is no rule of law that corroboration of the claimant's own evidence is necessary\(^1\). But the DM should not accept evidence, from the claimant or anyone else, uncritically. It needs to be weighed carefully, in the light of the circumstances of the case.

Example

A man claims IS. He states he has capital of £20,000. The DM therefore decides that he is not entitled to IS. Four weeks later the man makes another claim for IS. He states that he has spent all of his capital, but he cannot produce evidence of any expenditure. The DM decides that the man still has capital of £20,000 and that he is not entitled to IS.

Evidence provided by local authority or county council

Evidence verified by a LA or county council and supplied to DWP should not be verified by DWP where it is used for the purposes of claims for or awards of certain benefits. But see DMG 01334 - 01339 for exceptions to this rule.
Contradictory evidence

01390 If the evidence is contradictory, the DM should
1. try to resolve the discrepancy or
2. decide that there are sufficient grounds to decide the point on balance of probability - see DMG 01340 et seq.

Example

A woman has been in receipt of IS for three years for herself and her partner. She has not notified the Department of any change of circumstances. Her partner makes a claim as a single person stating that he and the woman are no longer living together as husband and wife. The claimant and her partner are interviewed. The evidence at the interviews points to a deterioration in the relationship but not to separation. The DM accepts the woman’s statement that she and her partner continue to live together as husband and wife and disallows her partner’s claim.

Self-contradictory evidence

01391 The claimant’s own evidence may include statements which conflict with each other. These mutually contradictory statements usually need explaining.

Example

An IB claimant suffering from low back pain fails to attend for a medical examination. He states that he is unable to travel to the medical centre by public transport due to his disability and cannot afford taxi fares. When asked how he manages for shopping etc he replies that he needs very little because he takes the bus to his parent’s house each day and they provide his meals. The distance between the claimant’s house and his parent’s is similar to that between his house and the medical centre. The DM decides that the claimant’s reason for not attending the medical is not enough on its own to excuse the failure.

Inherently improbable evidence

01392 The DM may decide that a claimant’s statement is inherently improbable. This is where it is very unlikely that what has been asserted can be true.

Example

Following an investigation, the DM finds that the partner of a JSA claimant is in remunerative work and disallows the award of JSA. The claimant states that he had no idea that his wife had been working as a cleaner for five hours every weekday evening for the past three years. The DM decides that this is inherently improbable, and that the overpayment is recoverable.
In some cases the DM may decide that uncorroborated evidence (that is, evidence not supported by any other evidence) cannot be accepted because it is self-contradictory or improbable. Such evidence may contradict itself, or other evidence before the DM, or the DM may consider that it is unlikely to be true. In such cases the DM may request further evidence. If none is available the DM should decide the claim or application on the evidence provided already.

Claimant's own evidence

A claimant's statement, whether oral or in writing, is evidence. It is often the best evidence and sometimes the only evidence available, even after enquiries. In such a case, the DM must decide whether the claimant has discharged the burden of proof. See DMG 01405 et seq.

Example 1

A claimant was overpaid JSA for several years because an increase in the hourly rate for his P/T work was not taken into account. During the investigation he stated that he had declared the increase at an interview at the Jobcentre Plus office. He said he remembered the conversation in detail, including the fact that the interviewer said that she would write down the details and make sure that the increased income was taken into account. The claimant could not remember any other details of the interview or completing the claim form which stated that his P/T earnings had increased. The DM decided that the statement was unlikely to be true. This view was reached after considering the claimant's selective memory of events and was reinforced because he had not disclosed recent changes in his hours and income. The DM decides that the claimant has not discharged the burden of proof.

Example 2

A woman declared P/T work at the beginning of her claim and regularly reported changes. During a check on employment details it is found that a pay rise has not been taken into account for three months. There is no record of disclosure of the increase in the claim file. The claimant states that she declared the additional income in a letter in which she also reported that her son had left the household. The letter cannot be found but the claim had been adjusted to exclude the child around the date of the alleged letter. The DM decides that, on the balance of probability, the claimant had reported the change in income and it had been overlooked in dealing with the family circumstances.

The DM should look at each statement made by the claimant and assess it on its merits. A statement may occasionally be so extraordinary that it casts doubt on the credibility of the person and any other statements they have made. The DM should
be careful in assessing these matters on written evidence alone. It may be necessary to interview the claimant to get clarification or further information.

01402 If it is clear from the case papers that a claimant has previously made statements which have proved to be incorrect, the DM is entitled to regard evidence provided by that claimant critically, regardless of whether these statements were genuine errors or attempts to mislead.

Example

An IB claimant is claiming for a partner who has earnings which he states are the same each month. The papers show that on occasion his partner has not told him of overtime and bonus payments. The overpayments are not recoverable because the claimant did not know the facts and could not be expected to disclose the additional earnings. The DM cannot rely on the claimant’s evidence and asks to see the pay slips each month.

01403 - 01404

Burden of proof

01405 A clear understanding of where the burden of proof lies helps the DM to weigh the evidence and decide whether further evidence should be sought. DMs should note that

1. initially the burden lies with the claimant to prove that the conditions for a claim or application are satisfied but they should do as much as possible to ensure that the claimant has every opportunity to provide all relevant evidence and where the information is available to them rather than the claimant, then they must take the necessary steps to enable it to be traced

2. where they wish to show that an exception to a condition of entitlement is not satisfied, the burden of proof rests with them

3. there is no presumption in favour of the claimant though for IIIB the claimant is normally presumed to have the PD if he has worked in the prescribed occupation; for example, a cotton weaver with byssnosis (see DMG Chapter 67 for full guidance)

4. where an allegation is denied by the claimant it is generally for DMs to prove the facts.

5. the burden of proving that the conditions for revision or supersession are satisfied lies with the person who applies for revision or supersession

6. in overpayment cases the burden of proof for the purposes of determining the sum to be recovered falls on them (see DMG Chapter 09).

7. where a criminal court convicts a person of an offence related to obtaining or receiving benefit, that conviction shifts the burden of proof relating to the same benefit and period at issue from them to the claimant.
**Note 1:** An example of 2. is where there is a claim for a SF funeral payment, it is for the DM to show that the claimant is not entitled because a close relative is not in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

**Note 2:** Where 5. applies the question of whether the conditions for revision or supersession are satisfied must be considered separately from the question of whether the decision should be revised or superseded.

1 R(SB) 2/83(T); 2 Department for Social Development v Kerr [2004] UKHL 23; 3 SS A Act 92, s 71; CS Act 91, s 16 - 19 & s 71; R(SB) 34/83; 4 R(S) 2/80

01406 - 01419
Evidence in certain situations

Destruction of documents

01420 The Department routinely destroys documents, either to clear storage space or because there does not seem to be any reason for keeping them. No one can make any presumptions about what evidence the documents might have contained\(^1\). This means that claimants cannot say that the destroyed documents must have supported their case. This principle does not apply if the claimant can prove that the documents were disposed of with the sole intention of destroying evidence.

\(^1\) R(IS) 11/92

01421 The DM should take account of any available evidence and make a decision on the balance of probabilities. Where it is impossible to reconstruct the document the DM should not assume any fact but decide the question on the basis of any other evidence.

01422 The DM must consider the burden of proof when looking at evidence. This can rest with either the claimant or the DM.

01423 - 01429

Evidence of Departmental procedures

01430 Where a case relies on systems of work or Departmental forms no longer available, the DM should

1. get evidence of the system of work or
2. explain why the original form is not available.

The DM could then decide on the balance of probabilities whether the procedures were properly followed.

Example

An overpayment has been identified. The DM is looking at recoverability. Benefit is paid to the claimant by direct payment. The DM knows the benefit cannot be paid by direct payment unless the claimant signs a declaration of understanding and agreement that overpayments may be recovered\(^1\).

The DM decides that the prescribed conditions for recoverability are satisfied even though the original document has been destroyed under normal destruction procedures.

\(^1\) SS (PO) Regs, reg 11(2)(b)
Evidence of a decision

01431 It may be necessary for the Secretary of State to produce evidence of a decision of a DM, for the purpose of an appeal for example. If so, the evidence of the decision should contain a certificate signed on behalf of the Secretary of State stating that the document is such a record. The certificate must be signed by an officer specifically authorized to do so.

1 SS Act 98, s 39ZA

01432 A certificate should not be produced where there is no evidence that a decision was made or recorded, or that the decision was different from that provided in any explanation or recorded in a submission to the FT.

Example

The claimant is in receipt of IS as a lone parent. Following an investigation, the DM records a determination that the claimant is LTAHAW with the father of her children, and has been for three years. He is in remunerative work. The award of IS is terminated from a current date. The DM's determination is incorrectly notified with appeal rights. The Secretary of State cannot certify that the determination is a decision superseding and ending entitlement from the date the claimant began to LTAHAW.

01433 Where DMG 01432 applies, the DM should not use the certification process to construct a record of what ought to have been decided. DMs should be aware that it is a false statement which could lead to criminal sanctions.

1 Perjury Act 1911, s 5

01434 Where the decision was made electronically, the DM should

1. produce a computer printout showing the decision history and
2. provide an explanation of codes used in the computer record.

See DMG 01111 - 01113 for guidance on recording decisions.

01435 - 01439

Evidence given in confidence

01440 If evidence raises any question of confidentiality, the matter must be resolved before it is put to the DM. If any confidential evidence is disclosed to the DM, that evidence must be disclosed to the FT. However, the FT may make an order prohibiting the disclosure or publication of confidential evidence.

1 TP (FID) (SEC) Rules, rule 14
All evidence available to the DM should be available to the FtT\(^1\) and disclosed to the claimant or representative\(^2\) except medical evidence that is harmful to the claimant's health.

\(^{1}\) TP (FtT) (SEC) Rules, rule 24(4)(b); \(^{2}\) R(S) 1/58

All information obtained in the course of deciding a claim or application is confidential between the claimant and the statutory authorities. It follows that personal details of one claimant should not be put to the DM as evidence for the claim or application of another claimant. An exception would arise if a claimant claims to have responsibility for a child or children included on another person's claim.

Information given in confidence from a third party, such as

1. social workers or
2. doctors or
3. letters containing allegations where the writer has not given written permission for the contents to be disclosed

should not be available to the DM when making the decision.

All information obtained in the course of deciding an application should be regarded as confidential.

All the evidence that is put to the DM must be put to the FtT if a claimant appeals. This includes confidential evidence. See DMG Chapter 06 for details.

**Appeals: Address of partner from whom claimant is separated**

Where a document shows any details which could lead to the location of the claimant being discovered by the other party, these details must not be made known to the FtT if the separated partner has asked for their whereabouts not to be divulged. If this information is not to be released the DM should

1. prepare a note to the Presenting Officer to explain the omission to the FtT and
2. make sure that all copies of the document have the information blanked out.

**Fraud**

To ensure that DMs act independently and fairly officers involved in fraud work do not make decisions with regard to payment of benefit. Cases of suspected fraud which need a decision must be referred to an officer who is not a fraud specialist.

See Appendix 1.
Full-time fraud specialists temporarily engaged on other duties and staff who are employed part-time on fraud work may make decisions while they are carrying out duties unrelated to fraud work. They must not give a decision on any case

1. which is the subject of current fraud action or
2. in which they have been engaged in investigating fraud.

Advice on the law

Advice produced for the purposes of litigation e.g. advice on a particular case or advice on potential legal challenges, for example from DWP Legal Services or DMA Leeds, does not need to be disclosed to the claimant, the claimant’s representative or the FT. This type of information is covered by legal professional privilege. There is also no obligation to supply the advice where there is a request to disclose it under the Data Protection Act 19981. However, if a request to disclose is made under the Freedom of Information Act 20002 the information may be disclosable if it is in the public interest to do so. Advice provided outside of a litigation context will be disclosable unless it comes from a solicitor or barrister.

1 Data Protection Act 98, Sch 7, para 10; 2 Freedom of Information Act 2000, ss 2 and 42

Decisions given by other courts

In making decisions, DMs should take account of

1. their own independent conclusions and
2. decisions of appellate authorities including reported UT decisions.

The DM is bound by decisions of the appellate authorities (see DMG 01475) on questions which are identical to those they have to decide.

Appellate Authorities

The appellate authorities are

1. the UT and
2. the higher courts.
Upper Tribunal decisions

Reported decisions are those of general importance. They
1. deal with points of construction on statutes and regulations
2. add to the consistent and orderly development of the law
3. have the agreement of at least the majority of the UT
4. often deal with important questions of interpretation of provisions in the Acts and regulations
5. have been selected for reporting by the editorial board of the UT.

Reported decisions are now numbered using neutral citation, - see Annex K - an example of which KS v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (JSA) [2009] UKUT 122 (AAC); [2010] AACR 3. To explain the composition of the citation, it is broken down below into its component parts
1. KS v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (JSA) refers to the parties to the appeal and the benefit involved;
2. [2009] UKUT 122 (AAC) refers to the year the decision was made, United Kingdom Upper Tribunal and the neutral citation number; i.e. the consecutive number of the case within the year’s series and the name of the chamber making the decision;
3. [2010] AACR 3 refers to the year the decision was reported, the name of the publication it is reported in and the consecutive reporting number within that year’s series.

At the head of each reported decision is printed
1. a brief note of the facts of the particular case and
2. the substance of the decision.

This headnote is not part of the decision and carries no authority. A guide to reported decisions can be found in Neligan¹. Annex L contains an explanation of the previous reported decision serial numbers and the benefits to which they relate.

¹ Neligan - Social Security Case Law, Digest of Commissioners’ Decisions

Copies of all reported decisions are held by
1. the President of the TS
2. TS regional offices.

DMs in all offices of the DWP should have access to all reported decisions.

Reported decisions have the support of the majority of the UT and contain points of general importance about the interpretation of the law. Both reported and unreported decisions are sources on the interpretation of legislation. The DM should rely
primarily on reported decisions. Many unreported decisions do not deal with matters of general importance and are specific only to the facts of a particular case.

Great care is needed before using an unreported decision as the basis for general application in similar cases. If decisions of the UT conflict, then a reported decision has more weight than an unreported one¹. A decision of the UT consisting of 2 or 3 Judges should be preferred to that of a single UT Judge². Where a claimant or a representative produces a decision without warning at a tribunal, the presenting officer can seek an adjournment so that a copy of the decision can be obtained and made available to all parties.

1 R(IS) 9/08; 2 R(I) 12/75

01481 - 01489

Court of law

The conviction of a claimant in a court of law for falsely obtaining benefit should not be ignored and should have a bearing on the case relating to benefit¹. When a prosecution has taken place the DM should try to obtain

1. all the evidence that was available for the criminal proceedings and
2. evidence of the conviction itself

before giving a decision on benefit, or revising a decision which has already been given.

1 R(IS) 2/80

The initial responsibility of showing that the conviction relates to the benefit and period at issue rests on the DM. A conviction for an offence relating to the same benefit and period at issue before the decision making authorities has the effect, on reconsideration, of shifting the burden of proof on to the claimant who has been convicted. The claimant must show, on the balance of probability, that there is entitlement to the benefit at issue.

Rehabilitated offenders

It is a criminal offence for anyone whose official duties involve access to official records to disclose information about spent convictions of rehabilitated offenders other than in the course of those duties¹. See DMG 01494 et seq.

¹ ROO Act 74, s 9

An offender who has been sentenced on conviction to

1. a term of imprisonment or
2. detention in legal custody of not more than 2½ years
can be rehabilitated by avoiding re-conviction for a serious offence within a specified period beginning with the date of conviction\(^1\).

\(1\) ROO Act 74, s 4(1)(a)

01494 When an offender has completed the rehabilitation, the conviction becomes spent and evidence relating to it is only admissible in proceedings before a judicial authority\(^1\). DMs are judicial authorities within the meaning of the Act.

\(1\) s 7(3)

01495 The DM should only consider evidence relating to spent convictions when that evidence is essential to the determination of the claim. The DM is then acting within official duties for the purposes of the Act.

01496 - 01499

**Employment tribunals**

01500 Decisions of Appeal Tribunals are not binding on Employment Tribunals or vice versa. Although the issues before the tribunals have much in common, they are not identical\(^1\). The DM should consider any relevant evidence given to an Employment Tribunal, but does not have to take the same view of its credibility or draw the same inferences.

\(1\) R(U) 2/74; R(U) 4/78

01501 - 01509

**Coroner’s court**

01510 A Commissioner declined to follow the decision of a Coroner's jury, declaring that it was the duty of Commissioners to determine the probabilities, having regard to the evidence before them\(^1\). DMs have the same duty.

\(1\) R(U) 25/00

01511 - 01519
Medical evidence

01520 In general, medical evidence should be treated in the same way as any other evidence. Medical training is not required, but there are additional considerations for DMs.

01521 Medical evidence is often given as a medical opinion and is not conclusive. See DMG Chapter 04.

01522 The DM is entitled to reject an opinion where there is direct or circumstantial evidence which raises a strong inference against the opinion. Where doctors or HCPs disagree, the DM has to decide, on the balance of probabilities, which of the contrasting opinions is more likely to be correct. The view of the claimant's own doctor is not conclusive.

01523 Where a decision hinges on a medical issue the DM must seek advice from Medical Services if they have any doubt about
   1. whether the evidence is sufficient to make a decision, or
   2. how it should be interpreted.

01524 It should be remembered that the onus is on the claimant to provide evidence in support of their claim or application. The DM may consider that additional evidence will help Medical Services give better advice. If this can be obtained quickly, either from the claimant or elsewhere, it should be requested. However, if the information is then delayed, the claim form or application should be sent to Medical Services who should be told that further evidence has been sought but not received. It will be for Medical Services to decide how then to proceed.

01525 The DM may refer any question of special difficulty to one or more experts for examination or report. An expert in this context may include, for example,
   1. a registered medical practitioner
   2. a physiotherapist
   3. a nurse.

   Examination includes a physical examination if the claimant agrees. Referral to an expert may be made through Medical Services. See benefit specific guidance for more details.

01526 The DM should decide the claim or application in the light of all the evidence including the HCP's report.
The role of Medical Services

AA and DLA

01540 When a person makes a claim for AA or DLA, they complete a claim form, including a self-assessment of how their disability affects their daily life. This contains personal details such as name, address and whether they normally live in GB. They may also supply

1. a statement from another person, for example from a carer or a doctor, about the claimant's illness and disability
2. a corroborative statement from a third party to verify the claimant's disability.

01541 Although DLA and AA claims can be decided on the basis of the evidence in DMG 01540, DMs can

1. seek further evidence themselves or
2. refer the claim to Medical Services for advice.

01542 The main role of Medical Services is

1. to arrange references to a HCP approved by the Secretary of State
2. to provide advice, either by report or verbally (using the helpline), to the DM on claims and applications.

IB and NI credits

01545 When a person claims IB or NI credits, and the PCA is the test of incapacity, they are usually required to complete a questionnaire, which enables them to describe how their incapacity affects their ability to perform specified tasks. The DM refers this to Medical Services.

01546 Medical Services gives an opinion on

1. whether the person passes the PCA without the need for examination and report or
2. arranges for the person to be referred to a HCP for examination and report.
In cases where

1. the PCA has to be applied because the claimant has stopped sending in medical statements and

2. the claimant has been treated as capable of work because they failed to
   2.1 return the questionnaire or
   2.2 attend for and submit to a medical examination and

3. limited or no evidence of IfW is available

Medical Services is unlikely to be able to give an opinion on IfW. The DM should weigh the available evidence, and make assumptions about the PCA on the balance of probabilities.

Example

The claimant sends in form SC1 followed by a medical statement which states he should refrain from work for two weeks due to back pain. No further medical statements are received from the claimant, and he does not return the questionnaire. The DM does not refer the case to Medical Services, and on the balance of probabilities assumes that the claimant scores 0 points on the PCA after treating the claimant as capable of work for failure to return the questionnaire.

ESA and credits

To be entitled to ESA a claimant must have LCW. Claimants who are not treated as having LCW have to answer a questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed for the claimant to give as much information as possible about their condition and how it affects them in their daily functioning and how they manage their condition. Medical Services are responsible for gathering the information required. This includes sending the questionnaire.

 Medical Services will also provide an independent medical opinion on the claimant’s condition, functionality and their ability to perform activities related to work. They do not provide a diagnostic examination.

The questionnaire and the medical opinion are referred to the DM to consider whether the claimant has LCW. See DMG Chapter 42 for full guidance.
II DB and SDA

Where there is a claim for II DB or SDA, a reference to Medical Services will usually be required. This is particularly important in relation to II DB, because the HCP who advises the DMs will have experience in dealing with these benefits and DMs must have regard to that fact when making their decision. See DMG Chapters 57 and 64 - 73 for details on the handling of claims for these benefits.

1 SS (D&A) Regs, reg 12(3)(b)

When a claimant notifies that their condition has deteriorated, the DM should seek medical advice on whether there has been a change and, if so, the date it occurred. In relevant PD cases, the DM should ask whether a recrudescence question arises (see DMG 04425 and 67215). Medical advice may be that the claimant’s condition has deteriorated, stayed the same or improved. It may also cast doubt on the original diagnosis or loss of faculty (see DMG 04331 for guidance on distinguishing medical opinion from fact). See DMG Chapter 04 for guidance on what decisions are required following the advice.

1 SS(II)(PD) Regs, reg 7

REA

In determining the relevant loss of faculty on a claim for REA a DM

1. is not bound by an opinion given by medical experts
2. is concerned with a claimant's capacity or otherwise, for their regular occupation
3. cannot award the allowance for any period outside the period of assessment of disablement
4. can admit and accept evidence from other sources, which tends to illustrate the disabling effects, if any, of the loss of faculty.

1 R(f) 7/64

Exchange of medical reports

A claimant may argue that a medical report produced for another benefit should be used to decide a claim or dispute. The DM should, if possible, obtain a copy of the report and take it into account when making the decision.

The same applies when a DM is sent a medical report by another officer of the Department. For example, an officer dealing with a claim for II DB may be sent medical reports obtained for the purpose of a compensation recovery case.
DMs should bear in mind that medical reports are produced in order to determine whether the person satisfies the conditions of entitlement for a particular benefit and that some of the findings might not be relevant to another benefit. If reports appear to conflict, DMs must take into account the level of expertise of the HCPs concerned. For example, a HCP is specially trained to assess disability in the context of a claim for DLA or AA and their evidence would therefore be preferable to that of another HCP when deciding a claim for those benefits. DMs should consult Medical Services if they have difficulty interpreting the medical evidence.

The DM also needs to be aware of other factors which may affect the weight to be given to the report as evidence. For example, where a PCA report is used as evidence to disallow an award of IB or credits, and the decision is overturned on appeal, the PCA report may not be a useful source of evidence when deciding a claim for DLA.

Consent and harmful medical evidence

Claims for IB, SDA, AA, DLA and IIDB to collect medical evidence include consent to the information being made available to the decision making authorities. The whole report should be disclosed to the claimant or representative unless DMG applies.

Medical evidence should not be disclosed to the person to whom it relates if disclosure would be harmful to the health of that person. If a report from a GP or consultant is signed to indicate that no information need be withheld, the report can be disclosed on request as normal. Where the GP states that information in the report is harmful, the DM should consider whether it should be disclosed, asking Medical Services for advice in cases of doubt. The DM should take account of the evidence where it is relevant.

Where the DM considers that disclosure of medical evidence would be harmful, the evidence should not be disclosed to anyone acting for the person concerned unless the DM is satisfied that it is in the interest of the person to do so. If the evidence is disclosed it should be on the understanding that it will not be disclosed to the person to whom it relates.
Appeals

01595 Where

1. medical evidence used to make a decision is considered by the DM to be potentially harmful and
2. an appeal is made against the decision

the appeals officer should prepare two sets of documents including the submission.

01596 The first set should have all evidence including that considered to be potentially harmful medical evidence, with a form explaining what evidence is considered to be potentially harmful medical evidence and why. This form

1. explains what evidence is considered to be potentially harmful medical evidence
2. asks the FtT for a ruling on disclosure¹.

¹ TP (FT) (SEC) Rules, rule 14

01597 The other set should have the potentially harmful medical evidence obliterated. The submission should not be sent to the appellant.

01598 On receipt of the FtT’s ruling, the clerk will

1. send the appropriate submission as directed together with the pre-hearing form to the claimant and representative and
2. send a copy of the ruling to the Department.

01599 The Department’s file should be noted to ensure that the ruling is followed in any contact with the claimant or representative. The appropriate submission should be issued to the presenting officer if there is to be one.

01600 - 01999
Appendix 1

Areas where information gathering and decision making functions must always be undertaken by separate members of staff

1. Allocation of NI numbers
2. Determinations about LTAHAW and LTACP
3. Fraud investigation
4. Instrument of payment replacement
5. Social Fund.

The content of the examples in this document (including use of imagery) is for illustrative purposes only

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