

Freedom of Information request 2611/2011

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Information request

I am conducting some ongoing background research into the types of illness and conditions which are going through the Atos Medical Assessments and the DWP decisions and what the outcome is.

I find some quite serious conditions and permanent conditions, chronically disabling conditions and even terminal conditions are being called and going through the Atos medical assessments and being wrongly written off and the person having to go through several repeat assessments and appeals even to point of permanent incapacity in their condition or up to death.

I am aware that neither govt or DWP or Atos put into place a system of accounting and auditing the disabled and the affect on disabled and whether chronic and acute conditions were rightfully being exempt. However, every one has a National Insurance number and all their data and facts are in the govts hands.

Therefore, can you find out for me the extent and breakdown of what types of illness and disability have been called for Atos assessments. How many were called that were on the exempt list? or recommended exempt list?

How many of certain specific conditions were called neurological conditions, head injuries, heart conditions, Multiple Sclerosis, Cancer, stroke victims and severe mental health conditions such as schizophrenia and manic depression or bi-polar or personality disorders. I have found all such conditions and even people with acute psychosis have been called and interviewed alone and struck off as fit even though psychotic and suffering delusions and hearing voices and being strongly led by their psychosis.

It is important that a true breakdown of what types of illness are being assessed by Atos inadequate medical assessments and what the outcome is.

Please provide me with the breakdown asap. I think it is in the interests of public knowledge and public safety and wellbeing that these facts were known. To avoid doing so may mean a worse disaster later. We need to know whether wrong decisions are being made in regards to people's health and general public safety and negligence of accountability and trustworthiness by an agent acting on behalf of the government, who is putting us all at risk.

DWP response

The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) does not classify people according to the label of their disability or health condition but instead it looks at how

their disability or health condition affects them and whether these affects are such that they have limited capability for work.

The evidence shows that individuals with the same disability or health condition can be affected in very different ways. The evidence also shows that many individuals with serious disabilities or health conditions can and do work.

We want to encourage as many people as possible to work and not to write people off onto long term benefits simply because of the label of their condition. The WCA helps us to do this and to ensure those individuals who are limited such that it would not be reasonable for them to work are allowed the benefit.

The Department regularly publishes official statistics on ESA and the WCA. The latest report was published in July 2011 and can be found on the internet at the link below.

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_wca

In response to your request for a breakdown of the medical conditions of those who have been called to a WCA, I have placed a table on the DWP ad hoc statistics website which shows the outcomes for all new ESA claimants from October 2008 to November 2010 at their initial WCA after the effects of appeals. This is broken down by the claimants' detailed medical condition.

http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2011/110919_med_cond.pdf

http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2011/110906_wcaresults_bycondition_clean.xls

Note that this shows the outcomes for all initial WCA decisions; some claimants who have been assessed to be in the Support Group will have been assessed without having to attend a face-to-face assessment. This will happen when the Department has been informed that the claimant is eligible for automatic qualification to the Support Group. For example, if the claimant is terminally ill, or receiving certain types of chemotherapy. However, detailed information on whether the claimant was assessed with or without a face-to-face assessment is not centrally recorded.

Note that the linked table covers the initial WCA for all ESA claimants who started their claim between October 2008 and November 2010, many of whom may have subsequently left the benefit. Information on the ESA caseload at given dates by condition is available at the Department's tabulation tool:

<http://83.244.183.180/100pc/tabtool.html>

Information on the ESA caseload by detailed medical condition was also published on the Department's ad-hoc statistics pages on 31 August 2011 at the following link:

http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis