

DMG Chapter 53: ESA - Wfl, WRA, Sanctions and Hardship, Disqualification and Advance awards

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Introduction 53001 - 53004

53001 This Chapter contains guidance on

1. the requirement for certain ESA claimants to

1.1 take part in a Wfl

1.2 undertake WRA

2. reduction of ESA (sanctions)

3. hardship for ESA claimants

4. disqualification for misconduct and imprisonment

5. advance awards of ESA(IR).

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Introduction

53005 All claimants in the WRAG who are required to take part in a Wfl will have interviews with an adviser (work coach) or provider focusing on helping them back to work. The initial Wfl will take place after the first WCA, with the remaining Wfls occurring as decided by the adviser or provider.

Note 1: 16/17 year olds in the WRAG will be asked to attend a Wfl (known as a learning focused interview) after the WCA. They will be subject to full conditionality at age 18.

Note 2: Claimants who move from the support group to the WRAG, from receiving credits only to ESA(IR) due to a change of circumstances or qualifying for housing costs will be required to take part in Wfls as above.

Note 3: From 25.9.17 a new type of Wfl is introduced for certain claimants who have not yet completed the WCA (known as the Health and Work Conversation) see further guidance at DMG 53051 et seq.

Meaning of support group

53006 A person is a member of the support group if the DM has made a determination that they have, or are treated as having, LCWRA¹.

Meaning of working day

53007 A working day is any day except Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a bank holiday¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 2(1) & Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971

Meaning of lone parent

53008 A lone parent is¹ a person who

- 1.** is not a member of a couple² **and**
- 2.** is responsible for and a member of the same household as a person under the age of 16.

1 WR Act 07, s 24(3A); 2 SS CB Act 02, s 137(1)

Treated as responsible for a child aged under one

53009 A lone parent is treated as responsible for, and a member of the same household as, a child aged under one in accordance with IS legislation¹ - [see DMG 22031 et seq.](#)

1 IS (Gen) Regs, reg 15 & 16; ESA Regs, reg 2(6) & (7)

53010 - 53012

Requirement to take part in a Wfl

53013 The Secretary of State may require a claimant who satisfies the conditions at DMG 53014 to take part in one or more Wfls as a condition of continuing to be entitled to the full amount of ESA¹. See DMG 53031 et seq for guidance on where a claimant is also required to undertake WRA.

1 ESA Regs, reg 54(1)

53014 The conditions¹ referred to in DMG 53013 are that the claimant is

- 1.** entitled to ESA **or** an advance award of ESA² has been made (DMG 53200 et seq) **and**
- 2.** not a member of the support group **and**
- 3.** under the age at which a woman of the same age as the claimant attains pensionable age (see DMG Chapter 75) **and**
- 4.** not a person who is only entitled to ESA(Cont) payable at nil rate

5. not a lone parent who is responsible for and a member of the same household as a child aged under one.

1 ESA Regs, reg 54(2); 2 reg 146(1)

53015 Any requirement to take part in a Wfl ceases to have effect if the claimant no longer satisfies any of the requirements of DMG 53014¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 54(3)

53016 Partners of claimants receiving ESA may be required to take part in a Wfl as a condition of the claimant continuing to receive the full rate of benefit¹. See DMG Chapter 05 for further guidance.

1 SS (JPIfP) Regs, reg 3

Purpose of a Wfl

53017 The purposes of a Wfl¹ are

1. assessing the claimant's prospects for remaining in or obtaining work
2. assisting or encouraging the claimant to remain in or obtain work
3. identifying activities that the claimant may undertake that will make remaining in or obtaining work more likely
4. identifying training, educational or rehabilitation opportunities for the claimant which may make it more likely that the claimant will remain in or obtain work or be able to do so
5. identifying current or future work opportunities, including self-employment opportunities, for the claimant that are relevant to the claimant's needs and abilities.

1 ESA Regs, reg 55

Notification either in writing or otherwise and place of the Wfl

53018 The Secretary of State must notify the claimant of the requirement to take part in the Wfl. The claimant must be given or sent a notification specifying the time, date and, if required to attend in person, the place of a Wfl¹. The notification may be in writing or otherwise² (for example by telephone). A Wfl³ can take place at a claimant's home if it is determined that requiring them to attend elsewhere would cause them undue inconvenience or endanger their health.

1 ESA Regs, reg 56(1); 2 reg 56(3); 3 reg 56(2)

53019

Taking part in a Wfl

53020 A claimant is regarded as having taken part¹ in a Wfl if they

- 1.** are required to attend in person, attend for the interview at the place and at the date and time notified as in DMG 53018 **and**
- 2.** are not required to attend in person, are available and respond at the date and time notified as in DMG 53018 to any contact made at that time for the purpose of carrying out the interview **and**
- 3.** provide information, if requested, about any or all of the matters set out in DMG 53021 **and**
- 4.** participate in discussions, to the extent that is considered necessary by the Secretary of State, about any or all of the matters set out in DMG 53022.

Note: Also see guidance at DMG 53030 regarding the meaning of failing to participate and claimant behaviours.

1 ESA Regs, reg 57(1)

53021 The matters referred to in DMG 53020 **3.**¹ are

- 1.** the claimant's educational qualifications and vocational training
- 2.** the claimant's work history
- 3.** the claimant's aspirations for future work
- 4.** the claimant's skills that are relevant to work
- 5.** the claimant's work-related abilities
- 6.** the claimant's caring or childcare responsibilities
- 7.** any paid or unpaid work that the claimant is undertaking.

1 ESA Regs, reg 57(2)

53022 The matters referred to at DMG 53020 **4.**¹ are

- 1.** any activity that the claimant is willing to undertake which may make obtaining or remaining in work more likely
- 2.** any such activity that the claimant may have previously undertaken
- 3.** any progress the claimant may have made towards remaining in or obtaining work

4. any WFHRA the claimant may have taken part in

5. the claimant's opinion as to the extent to which the ability to remain in or obtain work is restricted by their physical or mental condition.

1 ESA Regs, reg 57(3)

53023

Deferral of requirement to take part in a Wfl

53024 The requirement to take part in a Wfl may be

1. deferred **or**

2. treated as having been deferred

if at the time the Wfl is to take place, or was due to take place, the interview would not at that time be or have been of assistance to the claimant or appropriate in the circumstances¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 59(1)

53025 A decision to defer may be made at any time after the requirement to take part in a Wfl has been imposed, including after the time the Wfl

1. was due to take place **or**

2. took place¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 59(2)

Example

Warwick was due to attend a Wfl on 25 March. However Warwick did not attend because he was taking part in a training course. On 1 April the DM decides that the requirement to attend a Wfl can be deferred.

53026 Where a requirement to take part in a Wfl is deferred or treated as having been deferred then the time the Wfl is to take place must be re-determined¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 59(3)

53027 It may be determined that the requirement to take part in a Wfl does not apply, or is to be treated as not having applied, if the interview would not be, or would not have been, of assistance because the claimant is or was likely to be starting or returning to work¹.

Failure to take part in a Wfl

53028 The DM must determine whether a claimant who is required to take part in a Wfl has failed to do so and if so, whether they have shown good cause for that failure¹. The claimant must show good cause for that failure within 5 working days of the date on which the Secretary of State gives notification of that failure² or the claimant's ESA may be reduced. See DMG 53012 for the definition of working day. Any notification sent by post is to be taken as having been received on the second working day following posting³.

Note: For the meaning of failing to participate see guidance at DMG 53030 and for guidance on good cause see 53036.

1 ESA Regs, reg 61(2); 2 reg 61(1); 3 reg 65

Example

Susan is required to take part in a Wfl on 15.4.09, but fails to attend. Notification of the failure is posted on 17.4.09, and is taken as having been received on 21.4.09. Susan has until 28.4.09 to show good cause for her failure to attend.

Meaning of failure to participate

53030 Requiring claimants to participate means the claimant must do more than just attend the interview by turning up on the right day at the right place. Participation also extends to taking part in discussions and providing information as required to the extent that is considered necessary by the Secretary of State¹ which means

- 1.** appropriate and reasonable participation as would normally be expected by a reasonable person **and**
- 2.** making some meaningful contribution to the interview, for example by answering questions which are an integral part of the interview.

Therefore behaviours that lead to premature termination of an interview may well be considered to be a 'failure to participate', for example, refusing to answer questions, being unwilling, abusive or uncooperative.

1 ESA Regs, reg 57

53031 Each case should be considered on its own merits and all the individual facts and circumstances, taking into account the claimants' health condition and the impact this could have on their understanding and ability to communicate effectively. For example if the claimant is depressed their behaviour could be part of their symptoms and not because they are being deliberately uncooperative. Any failure to

participate is considered by a DM under good cause and whether a sanction will apply for the failure (see further guidance on good cause at DMG 53036).

53032 - 53035

Good cause

53036 In determining whether good cause has been shown the DM must take account of all the individual facts and circumstances of the case in consideration of what is reasonable.

53037 Good cause is not defined in legislation, but has been considered in case law. It includes facts and circumstances which would probably have caused a reasonable person to act as the claimant did¹.

1 R(SB) 6/83

53038 The DM should not just consider one factor but should consider the overall picture of the claimant's individual circumstances. The consideration is whether the reasons given contributed to the claimant failing to participate in a Wfl and whether that was reasonable in the claimants' circumstances.

Note: When considering good cause the DM should also be mindful of the guidance in DMG Chapter 34 on good reason. The principles set out in DMG Chapter 34 apply equally to the consideration of good cause for failures to participate in a Wfl or to undertake work-related activity.

53039 A distinction must be drawn between having a good excuse and having good cause in law which is not about one moment in time but about a person acting reasonably in the light of all the facts and circumstances. The general rule for taking each incidence on its own merits and considering all the facts and evidence should be applied.

53040 Consideration of all the evidence should be made on

1. the balance of probabilities **and**

2. whether the evidence is inherently improbable, inconsistent or implausible in the circumstances.

Note: See DMG Chapter 1 for guidance on the principles of decision making.

Example

Les is claiming ESA. His incapacity is epilepsy. He fails to attend a Wfl appointment. He provides his reasons for the failure within 5 days and explains that on the day of the Wfl appointment he had an appointment to visit the dentist.

It is established that this was a routine inspection appointment.

The DM decides that a reasonable person should have been able to rearrange their dental appointment to attend the Wfl. Les had known about the Wfl appointment for some time and made no effort to contact the work coach to rearrange it.

The DM decides that Les did not act reasonably and has not shown good cause for his failure to attend the Wfl (also see DMG 53046).

53041 The DM should also take into consideration that a claimant is expected to take care in matters to do with the claiming and receiving of benefits. Failure to take such care cannot of itself be good cause however genuine or deserving an error or mistake may appear to be. However care should be taken to consider the extent of how a claimants health condition may affect the claimant's ability to process information. For example, claimants who are suffering from mental health conditions, alcohol or substance dependency or learning difficulties may have difficulty understanding the importance of their responsibilities.

Example 1

Karis is in receipt of ESA and her incapacity is sciatica. She is required to attend a Wfl appointment and is adequately notified of the date, time and place of the appointment and the consequences of non compliance.

When asked for her reasons for failing to attend the Wfl, Karis says that she made a mistake with the date and ringed the wrong day on the calendar. This was a genuine mistake and she phoned up to arrange another appointment as soon as she realised her mistake.

A claimant has a responsibility to attend to his/her affairs with due diligence and care which equally applies to cases where the claimant makes a mistake about the date and time of an appointment.

Karis therefore cannot show good cause for failing to participate in the Wfl. She had a duty of care in the claiming of and receiving of benefits and it is reasonable to have expected that she should have taken care to correctly record the date and time of the relevant appointment knowing that a failure to participate could result in a sanction of her benefit.

Karis could provide no evidence to suggest there were any mitigating or exceptional circumstances that contributed to the mistake.

Example 2

Ismail is in receipt of ESA. He suffers from OCD, anxiety state and learning difficulties. He lives alone in a one-bedroom flat. He has difficulties reading because of poor education but can recognise his own name and address.

Ismail is required to attend an appointment with his Work Programme provider. He fails to attend the appointment and in his good cause reasons says due to an increased amount of mail he is currently receiving, it has made him particularly anxious and he has adopted the habit of not looking properly at mail he receives because it is often for previous tenants or is junk mail. He tends to discard letters unless they are in a brown envelope.

Letters in brown envelopes where he recognises his name and address he saves to open with a family member present.

His brother or sister visit him twice a week to check on him and help him deal with all his correspondence and assist him with the managing of all his post, appointments and paying bills etc.

He further explains that he thinks the appointment letter arrived in a white envelope and he discarded it without looking at it in sufficient detail to understand what it was. On checking with the provider, they confirm that appointment letters are sent out in white envelopes with a 'this is not a circular' stamp upon them. They also confirm Ismail's appointment letter should have been addressed personally to him and to his correct address.

Ismail had recognised all other correspondence issued by the Benefit Processing Centre such as the self-assessment questionnaire (ESA50) and the good cause enquiry letter (BF223) and has attended Wfl's as all relevant correspondence was issued in brown envelopes and he had saved them to open with a family member present and had then met his obligations to respond or attend as required. However, as the Work Programme appointment was issued in a white envelope he had not recognised it as being important and destroyed it.

It is reasonable to accept that Ismail's health problems, in particular his mental health, his limited reading abilities and his reliance on his family members to assist him with his post had affected his ability to process his mail. Since this incident his brother has re educated Ismail to save all his post to sift when he or his sister visits to avoid any further mistakes.

Ismail made a genuine mistake in destroying the letter which of itself would not have shown good cause but in his circumstances his health condition had contributed to the mistake and affected his ability to process his mail. Ismail can show good cause for the failure to attend the Work Programme appointment with the provider.

Time limit for showing good cause

53042 The burden of proof to show good cause is on the claimant within 5 working days of the date on which the Secretary of State gives notification of the failure¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 61(1)

53043 The 5 day time limit to show good cause is absolute. A tribunal of judges found unanimously that good cause must be shown within a defined period¹. They favoured a very narrow reading of the meaning of the requirement to provide good cause and concluded there is no power to extend that time limit.

1 Jeffrey & Bevan v SSWP[2016] ECWA 413

53044 Evidence for good cause received after 5 days cannot normally be taken into account as per 53043. However, information which is received late, but merely serves to verify or clarify evidence which

was received within the time limit, can be taken into account.

1 R(JSA) 2/04

Example 1

Daniel lives with his wife and claims ESA. His incapacity is arthritis. He has no other known health problems. Daniel fails to attend a Wfl and says in his good cause letter that he forgot about the appointment. It was a genuine mistake.

The claimant provides further evidence that he had to look after his granddaughter on that day who was ill so his daughter could go to work. This evidence is received after the five days.

This evidence cannot be taken into account in relation to his failure to attend the Wfl as he did not show good cause within the five days time limit. He had not shown due care and diligence in making a note of his appointment and contacting his work coach if he could not attend as per the notification. It was reasonable to have expected the claimant to contact the benefit processing centre to inform them he could not attend on the date of the appointment and reschedule the Wfl for another date and time. There is no medical reason why Daniel could not use a phone for that purpose, i.e. he has no known mental or cognitive impairments that would restrict him.

Example 2

Joyce is claiming ESA. Her incapacity is diabetes and anxiety state. Joyce fails to attend the scheduled HWC and in her good cause letter says that she could not afford to pay for a taxi to make the 20 mile return journey to attend the appointment. The DM decides that Joyce has not shown good cause because it is considered reasonable to expect Joyce to travel by public transport to attend her HWC. Based on local knowledge, there is a regular bus route that passes where Joyce lives and she has no known mobility problems that mean she cannot travel by public transport.

In response to the decision Joyce sends further detailed evidence which is received after the five days time limit. Joyce says that on the date of the HWC appointment there was a problem with public transport on that particular route, she waited for a bus which did not turn up. She then phoned the bus company who confirmed the bus route had been suspended due to the driver phoning in sick and as she does not drive she checked out the price of a taxi which she considered was too expensive and she couldn't afford it. She had not phoned the work coach as she says it had all made her feel ill and increased her anxiety state.

This evidence can be taken into account because it verifies why the claimant could not use public transport and had to consider using a taxi and so serves to clarify her reasons given within the 5 day time limit. The DM contacts the local bus company to confirm that indeed on that morning they had a shortage of drivers and so the buses were cancelled on that route until later in the day as it is not considered a priority route.

The DM can take into account the evidence provided outwith the 5 days time limit when considering whether the claimant can show good cause.

53045 If the DM decides that they require further evidence to support the good cause decision they can request additional evidence at any time and allow a reasonable amount of time for the claimant to provide that evidence.

Reconsideration

53046 If the claimant provides information or evidence giving good cause after a sanction determination decision has been made then the claimant can request a reconsideration of the decision. Any new facts and evidence received within the normal time limits for revision (1 month) should not stop the normal revision rules coming into play which would alter the original decision but also see the guidance on time limits for showing good cause at DMG 53042.

Example

See example 1 at DMG 53040. On receiving the decision to sanction Les phones to say that he would have incurred a £5 cancellation charge if he had cancelled the dentist appointment and requests a reconsideration of the decision. This evidence serves to clarify good cause already provided within the 5 days time limit and so can be taken into account.

The DM gives Les two weeks to provide further evidence regarding the cancellation charge. Les provides a letter from his dentist.

The decision is reconsidered but not altered. The DM considers that Les would normally have been able to provide good cause as DWP should not make the claimant incur any expense to cancel his appointment. However, in this particular case, Les had plenty of notice in which to cancel his dental appointment and the letter from the dentist confirms the charge would only be incurred if the cancellation was actually done on the day of the appointment. This also did not deter from the fact that regardless of the dental appointment he did not make any effort to contact the work coach to say he could not attend the Wfl. On reconsideration the DM considers Les has not acted reasonably in the circumstances and cannot show good cause for his failure to attend the Wfl.

Contracting out certain functions relating to Wfls

53047 The Secretary of State may contract out¹ certain functions relating to Wfls. These are

- 1.** the requirement to take part in a Wfl
- 2.** the notification requirements
- 3.** the taking part in a Wfl
- 4.** the deferral of the requirement to take part in a Wfl

5. the requirement to take part in a Wfl not to apply.

Note: Providers do not have authority to make determinations on good cause or to impose sanction decisions. Those decisions are determined by the DM.

1 ESA Regs, reg 62

53048 - 53050

Health and Work Conversation (HWC)

53051 The HWC is a Wfl designed to engage with ESA claimants who have not yet completed the WCA at or around the fourth week of their claim.

53052 The HWC is a mandatory conversation which supports claimants with health conditions and disabilities. It allows the claimant and work coach to discuss the claimant's skills, abilities and goals and find out about the support that is available to help them move closer to work when they are able to do so in the future. The claimant and the work coach will look at what is important to the claimant and talk about what the claimant wants to do, and how they can do it. Together they will put together a plan of voluntary tailored support. The actions are agreed in discussion between the work coach and ESA claimant, drawing out strengths, identifying health and work goals and making realistic, achievable plans, for example, access to health services, skills courses or support with budgeting.

Note: Whilst attendance and participation in the HWC are mandatory any actions agreed are voluntary.

53053 It is a mandatory requirement to participate in the HWC under current legislative provisions for Wfl's¹ and the guidance in DMG 53013 to 53046 applies with regard to

1. requirement to participate in the HWC (see 53013)

2. notification of the requirements to participate in the HWC (see 53018)

3. failing to participate in the HWC (see 53028 et seq) **and**

4. whether the claimant can show good cause (see 53036).

1WR Act 2007, sec 12; ESA Regs, reg 54(1)

53054 Where a claimant fails to participate in the HWC without good cause a reduction in the amount of ESA will apply¹ under the normal rules for failing to participate in a Wfl (see guidance at DMG 53100 et seq).

1 ESA Regs, reg 63

53055 – 53070

Work-related activity 53071 - 53099

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Introduction

53071 WRA is activity which makes it more likely that the claimant will obtain or remain in work, or be able to do so¹. WRA includes work experience or a work placement².

1 WR Act 07, s 13(7); 2 s 13(8)

53072 Where a claimant is required to undertake a work placement as part of their WRA action plan, this is **not** paid or unpaid work. The guidance in DMG Chapter 41 about work¹, including exempt work² and remunerative work³, does **not** apply.

1 ESA Regs, reg 40 & 44; 2 reg 45; 3 reg 41

53073 Claimants will not be required to undertake work experience as part of their WRA action plan, although they can participate on a voluntary basis. DMs should note that where a claimant fails to undertake work experience, as this is not a failure to undertake WRA, the guidance about reduction of ESA in DMG 53060 et seq does **not** apply.

53074 – 53075

Requirement to undertake WRA

53076 The Secretary of State may require claimants to undertake WRA as a condition of continuing to be entitled to the full amount of ESA¹ where they are

- 1.** required to take part in or have already taken part in one or more WFIs² (see DMG 53013 – 53014) **and**
- 2.** not a lone parent who is responsible for and a member of the same household as a child under the age of 3 **and**
- 3.** not entitled to CA **and**
- 4.** not entitled to a CP³.

See DMG Chapter 43 for the meaning of “child”, “lone parent”, and “member of the same household as a child”, and DMG Chapter 44 for guidance on CP. See DMG 53084 for guidance on how the requirement

is notified.

1 WR Act 07, s 13; ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 3(1) & (2); 2 ESA Regs, reg 54; 3 Sch 4 para 8

53077 A requirement to undertake WRA must be reasonable in the view of the Secretary of State taking into account the claimant's circumstances¹. The claimant cannot be required to

1. apply for a job or undertake work, whether as an employee or otherwise **or**
2. undergo medical treatment².

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 3(4)(a); 2 reg 3(4)(b)

53078 "Medical treatment" means medical, surgical or rehabilitative treatment, including diet or other regimen¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 2(1)

53079 Where the claimant

1. is a lone parent **and**
 2. in any week is responsible for and a member of the same household as a child under the age of 13
- they may only be required to undertake WRA during the child's normal school hours¹.

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 3(5)

Requirement ceases to have effect

53080 The requirement to undertake WRA ceases to have effect if the claimant becomes a member of the support group¹. See DMG 53011 for the meaning of "member of the support group".

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 3(3); WR Act 07, s 24(4)

53081 The requirement to undertake WRA ceases to apply where the claimant no longer satisfies any of the conditions in DMG 53076.

Directions about WRA

53082 Where

1. a claimant is required to undertake WRA **and**
2. the circumstances in DMG 53083 apply

the Secretary of State may direct that the activity specified in a direction given to the claimant is the only activity which is regarded as WRA in that claimant's case¹.

1 WR Act 07, s 15(1)(a)

53083 The circumstances in DMG 53082 **2.** are¹ that

- 1.** the claimant has been identified by the Secretary of State as having a barrier to work, and in the view of the Secretary of State has refused to address that barrier **and**
- 2.** the Secretary of State considers that the activity specified in the direction is a prerequisite to the claimant's ability to obtain or remain in employment.

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 4(2)

Notification of WRA and action plans

53084 The Secretary of State must notify the claimant of a requirement to undertake WRA by including the requirement in a written action plan given to the claimant¹.

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 5(1)

53085 The action plan must specify

- 1.** the WRA which the claimant is required to undertake **and**
- 2.** any other information that the Secretary of State considers appropriate (see DMG 53086)¹.

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 5(2)

53086 Examples of other information which may be included in the action plan are

- 1.** the date and time on or by which the person is required to undertake such work-related activity
- 2.** the evidence which the person is required to provide to show that the requirement to undertake the WRA specified has been complied with.

Requirement to undertake WRA at a particular time not to apply

53087 Where

- 1.** the claimant is required to undertake WRA at or by a particular time **and**
- 2.** in the view of the Secretary of State it would be or would have been unreasonable to require the claimant to undertake the activity at or by that time

the requirement to undertake WRA still applies, but the Secretary of State may determine that the requirement to undertake the WRA at or by that time does not apply, or is treated as not having applied¹.

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 6

Reconsideration of action plans

53088 The claimant may request reconsideration of an action plan. Where a request is received, the Secretary of State must

1. reconsider the action plan **and**
2. notify the decision in writing to the claimant¹.

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 7

53089 DMs should note that a request for reconsideration in this situation is **not** an application for revision or supersession (see DMG Chapter 03 and 04), and there is no right of appeal against the decision made on that request.

Failure to undertake WRA

53090 Where the claimant is required to undertake WRA but fails to do so, they must show good cause for that failure within 5 working days of the date on which the Secretary of State notifies the failure¹. See DMG 53007 for the meaning of working day².

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 8(1); 2 ESA Regs, reg 2(1)

Good cause

53091 The DM must determine whether the claimant has failed to undertake WRA as required, and if so whether they have shown good cause for the failure¹. In determining whether the claimant has shown good cause, the DM must take account of all the individual facts and circumstances of the case in consideration of what is reasonable (also see the guidance in DMG 53036 et seq).

Note: When considering good cause the DM should also be mindful of the guidance in DMG Chapter 34 on good reason. The principles set out in DMG Chapter 34 apply equally to the consideration of good cause for failures to undertake WRA.

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 8(2)

53092 The following are examples of the circumstances the DM may consider when determining whether the claimant has shown good cause for a failure to undertake WRA:

- 1.** whether the claimant's physical or mental health or condition made it impracticable to undertake WRA at or by a particular time
- 2.** whether the claimant was prevented from undertaking WRA at or by a particular time due to unforeseen circumstances, for example
 - 2.1** attending a medical or dental appointment that could not reasonably be rearranged
 - 2.2** attending a funeral of a relative
 - 2.3** difficulties with caring responsibilities
- 3.** whether the claimant misunderstood the requirement to undertake WRA due to
 - 3.1** a language, literacy or learning difficulty **or**
 - 3.2** any misleading information given or supplied to them by the Secretary of State
- 4.** whether the established customs or practices of the religion, if any, to which the claimant belongs prevented them from undertaking WRA
- 5.** whether the claimant was attending an interview for employment which prevented them from undertaking WRA at or by a particular time
- 6.** whether any difficulty with the claimant's regular mode of transport prevented them from undertaking WRA.

Note: This list is not exhaustive it is for the DM to consider all the individual facts and circumstances of the case in consideration of what is reasonable.

This list is **not** exhaustive, and the DM should consider all the reasons given by the claimant for the failure to undertake WRA.

Example

Georgia has been on the Wp for the past 12 months and is in receipt of ESA.

Her incapacity is agoraphobia and she has been placed in the work-related activity group following the WCA. Georgia has agreed an action plan to engage in work-related activities. She has been made aware and fully understands that her benefit might be affected if she fails to undertake work-related activity when required to do so.

Georgia is issued with an appointment letter to attend a face to face Wp appointment on 18.10.14 as part of her action plan to undertake work-related activity. She does not attend the appointment stating that she did not feel she could leave the house alone and attend the appointment on that day. She has a friend that goes with her to appointments and meetings on most occasions as she has problems leaving the

house, but on 18.10.14 the friend was unable to go with her to the appointment as she was on holiday. Georgia contacted the provider on the morning of 18.10.14 by telephone to rearrange the appointment. The provider arranged to conduct the interview by phone.

The DM considers Georgia can show good cause for the failure to undertake work-related activity on this occasion.

A letter is issued to attend a face to face interview with the Wp provider on 27.1.15. Georgia does not attend the interview and does not phone the provider to explain why. The DM sends a letter to ask Georgia for her reasons for not attending the appointment. Georgia does not reply to the letter. The DM determines Georgia cannot show good cause for the failure and imposes a sanction.

Georgia responds to say she felt that her condition was worse on this particular day and therefore she could not make it to the appointment. She stated that she has discussed with the provider her problems with attending face to face and has at times received telephone interviews but the provider insists on seeing her at face to face interviews as well.

She had attended a face to face appointment in December 2014 accompanied by a friend, which is confirmed on the action plan, but on this occasion she felt too anxious to leave the house.

Georgia confirms that she did not contact the provider on this occasion as she forgot about it because she felt so unwell worrying about leaving the house. As the good cause reason is provided out with the 5 day time limit to provide good cause the decision is not altered and the sanction stands.

A letter is issued to Georgia to attend a face to face interview with the Wp provider on 18.5.15. She does not attend and phones the provider to say she does not feel she could attend the appointment even though her friend is available to go with her. She was all prepared and ready to go to the appointment but at the last minute she panicked and did not feel well enough to leave the house. She has had some bad news about a member of her family this week which has made her feel much more anxious than usual. The DM considers Georgia can show good cause for the failure to undertake work-related activity on this occasion due to her mental health state on the day. It was reasonable in her circumstances and she contacted the provider to let them know she could not attend.

An appointment letter is issued to Georgia to attend a face to face interview with the Wp provider on 8.7.15. She does not attend and provides reasons to say she felt too ill again on this occasion to attend the interview and forgot to contact the provider as she was dealing with another phone call and became distracted and then forgot. The referral from the provider confirms that Georgia did not attend the Wp appointment on 8.7.15 and there is no record of any contact regarding the reasons for her failure.

Whilst a pattern of non-compliance is emerging here for Georgia the medical condition is agoraphobia. Past non-compliance is not always an indication that the claimant doesn't have good cause for the failure under consideration.

It is important to bear in mind that people's health conditions may fluctuate frequently and vary

significantly for both mental & physical health conditions so care has to be taken when considering a failure to undertake work-related activity where health conditions are involved and the claimant raises their health condition in their reasons. Georgia may not know until the day of appointment that she cannot leave the house and actually thinking of leaving the house may exacerbate the condition.

However, being housebound does not mean that it is not reasonable to expect Georgia to ring up when she cannot attend an interview. The notification from the provider would have informed her to make contact if for any reason she could not attend, she was fully aware of and understood the consequences of failing to undertake work-related activity.

Therefore whilst it is reasonable to accept Georgia's health condition may have provided good cause for her not to attend the appointment as required on 8.7.15, it is also reasonable to have expected Georgia to inform the provider she could not attend. There is no evidence to suggest she was unable to use her phone on 8.7.15.

The DM considers Georgia cannot show she had good cause for the failure to undertake work-related activity on 8.7.15.

Contracting out

53096 The following functions of the Secretary of State can be carried out by, or by employees of, any person authorised by the Secretary of State¹:

- 1.** requirement to undertake WRA
- 2.** notification of WRA and action plans
- 3.** requirement to undertake WRA not to apply
- 4.** reconsideration of action plans
- 5.** cessation of reduction.

Note: Providers do not have authority to make determinations on good cause or to impose sanction decisions. Those decisions are determined by the DM.

1 ESA (WRA) Regs, reg 9

Reduction of Employment and Support Allowance (Sanctions) 53100 - 53129

[Period of reduction](#) 53100 - 53119

[When the reduction begins](#) 53120 - 53124

[Cessation of reduction](#) 53125 - 53129

53100 Where the DM has determined that a claimant has failed without good cause to

1. attend or participate in a Wfl **or**

2. undertake WRA

(“a failure determination”) then where the claimant is entitled to the WRAC the amount of ESA payable to the claimant will be reduced by 100% of the prescribed amount for a single claimant in the ESA main phase¹. See DMG [Chapter 44](#) for guidance on prescribed amounts.

Note: A reduction of benefit is commonly referred to as a sanction. Throughout this Chapter reduction and sanction have the same meaning. Payment of benefit is reduced for a fixed period.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(1) & (2); Sch 4, Part 1, para (1)(a)

Example 1

Eric is entitled to ESA(IR) of £139.60 a week, including the WRAC, for himself and his partner Julia. Eric fails without good cause to attend a Wfl. His award of ESA is reduced by £71.00 a week, leaving £68.60 in payment.

Example 2

Mavis is entitled to ESA(Cont) of £99.15 weekly, including the WRAC. She has an occupational pension of £95 a week, and £5.00 is deducted from her ESA award leaving £94.15 in payment each week. Mavis fails without good cause to undertake WRA. Her award of ESA is reduced by £71.00 a week, leaving £23.15 in payment.

53101 In any benefit week the amount of ESA payable should not be reduced below 10p or by more than 100% of the amount of the prescribed amount for a single claimant in the ESA main phase¹ by virtue of the claimant failing to attend a Wfl or to undertake WRA. Only one failure determination relating to a Wfl or WRA can be in place at the same time². However, should the claimant’s partner fail to attend a Wfl then benefit can be reduced by more than 100% of the prescribed amount for a single claimant in the

ESA main phase³. Benefit is reduced by an amount equal to 20% of the IS applicable amount for a single claimant aged 25 or over as at the date the reduction begins. See DMG Chapter 05 for further guidance. Benefit cannot be reduced to a sum that is less than 10 pence a week⁴.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(3)(a) & (c); 2 reg 63(3)(b); 3 SS (JPIfP) Regs, reg 11(2) & (3); 4 reg 11(4)

53102 Where a claimant is entitled to both ESA(Cont) and ESA(IR) then any reduction must be applied first to ESA(Cont). Only if there is any amount outstanding is it to be applied to ESA(IR)¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(4)

53103 For the purposes of determining the amount of any ESA(IR) payable, a claimant is to be treated as receiving the amount of ESA(Cont), including new style ESA¹, which would have been payable but for any reduction made².

1 ESA Regs, reg 2(1); 2 reg 63(5); WR Act 07, s 11J

Example 1

Nathan is in receipt of ESA(Cont) of £84.50. He fails, without good cause, to attend a Wfl. After 4 weeks his benefit is reduced to £60.50. No ESA(IR) is payable because £84.50 would be payable but for the reduction.

Example 2

Clark is entitled to ESA(IR). He is joined by his partner Lois, who is entitled to new style ESA including the WRAC. Her award of £100.15 a week is taken into account as income when calculating Clark's award of ESA(IR).

Lois fails with no good reason to attend a Wfl on 21.8.13. She contacts the adviser on 28.8.13 and agrees to attend a Wfl on 10.9.13. Her award of new style ESA is reduced for a total of 14 days (7 days + 7 day fixed period). The daily reduction rate is £10.20, and her award of ESA is reduced by £71.40 a week to £28.75 for two weeks. The full amount of £100.15 is taken into account as income for the purpose of calculating Clark's ESA(IR) entitlement.

53104 – 53109

Period of reduction

Meaning of compliance condition

53110 Where the claimant has failed to take part in a Wfl, "compliance condition" means

1. taking part in a Wfl or

2. agreeing with the S of S to take part in a Wfl at an agreed date¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(11)(a)

53111 Where the claimant has failed to undertake WRA, “compliance condition” means

1. undertaking the WRA specified in the action plan **or**

2. undertaking an alternative activity where notified to do so by the S of S **or**

3. agreeing with the S of S to undertake the WRA in the action plan or the alternative activity at an agreed date¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(11)(b)

Meaning of current failure

53112 Current failure means a failure to

1. take part in a Wfl **or**

2. undertake WRA

which may lead to a reduction as in DMG 53100, but where the DM has yet to determine whether the amount of ESA should be reduced¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(11)

Period of the reduction

53113 The period of the reduction is¹

1. one week for each 7 day period during which the claimant fails to meet a compliance condition (see DMG 53110 – 53111) **and**

2. a further fixed period of 1, 2 or 4 weeks (see DMG 53115).

But see DMG 53114 for when **1.** does not apply.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(6)

53114 DMG 53113 **1.** does **not** apply where

1. a failure determination is made **and**

2. the claimant meets a compliance condition (see DMG 53110 – 53111) within one week after the date of the failure.

The claimant's ESA award is only subject to the fixed period reduction.

Note: Where the claimant recompiles before a sanction determination is made, the open ended period of the sanction has not started so there is nothing to lift and only the fixed period sanction can apply (see example 2).

Example 1

Fadi fails to attend an initial Wfl on 18.1.13. He contacts the DWP on 21.1.13 to say he forgot, and agrees to attend a Wfl on 23.1.13, the next available appointment. Fadi takes part in the Wfl on 23.1.13. ESA has been paid to 24.1.13. The DM determines on 30.1.13 that Fadi had no good cause for his failure to attend on 18.1.13. but as he met the compliance condition within one week after the date of the failure on 18.1.13, his ESA award is reduced only for the one week fixed period from 25.1.13.

Example 2

Kylie fails to attend a Work Programme appointment on 18.7.13. She recompiles and attends a rearranged appointment with her provider on 31.7.13. ESA has been paid to 3.9.13 and the DM is making a sanction determination on 10.9.13. The DM determines Kylie had no good cause for the failure to attend the appointment on 18.7.13 and imposes a one week fixed period sanction from 4.9.13.

Kylie had complied with the requirement on 31.7.13 before the DM made the sanction determination on 10.9.13 so no open ended sanction applies. It cannot be determined that she failed to meet the compliance condition up to the date the DM made the determination.

Length of fixed period

53115 The fixed period is

- 1.** one week, where there has been no failure that falls within DMG 53116¹ **or**
- 2.** two weeks, where there has been one failure that falls within DMG 53116² **or**
- 3.** four weeks, where there have been two or more failures (whether or not they fall within DMG 53116), and the most recent of those failures

3.1 falls within DMG 53116 **and**

3.2 resulted in a reduction for two or four weeks, or would have done but for the maximum reduction rules in DMG 53101³.

Note: The fixed reduction periods that apply are provided for in a table⁴. The circumstances of the failure are described in the first column of each table and has effect for the period in the second column.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(7)(a); 2 reg 63(7)(b); 3 reg 63(7)(c) & (8)(a) & (b);

53116 A failure falls within this paragraph if it is a failure¹

1. for which a reduction

1.1 was imposed **or**

1.2 would have been imposed but for the fact that the maximum reduction rules in DMG 53101 apply² **and**

2. which occurred on or after 3.12.12 **and**

3. which is within 52 weeks but not two weeks of the current failure.

1 ESA Regs, reg 63(8); 2 reg 63(3)

Example 1

Jeanette was placed into the ESA WRAG in January 2013. Her ESA award had been subject to a one week reduction in March 2013 for failing to attend an initial Wfl. She fails to attend a further Wfl on 2.5.13, and is notified of this failure by post on the same day. On 14.5.13 the DM determines that Jeanette had no good cause for the failure to attend the Wfl on 2.5.13. Jeanette's last ESA payment was made on 1.5.13. Her award of ESA is reduced from 9.5.13.

Jeanette phones on 20.5.13 to re-arrange her appointment, but cannot be seen until 23.5.13. She attends the Wfl on 23.5.13. The period of reduction includes a two week fixed period reduction, as she has had a previous one week reduction within the last 52 weeks. The reduction ends on 29.5.13.

Example 2

Jules was placed in the WRAG in February 2013. He fails to attend an initial Wfl on 20.2.13, and on 25.2.13 makes an appointment for another Wfl to take place on 28.2.13. Jules fails to attend the Wfl on 28.2.13. He contacts the DWP and arranges a further appointment for 5.3.13, which he attends. His next ESA payment is due on 8.3.13. The DM determines on 15.3.13 that Jules had no good cause for either failure.

Jules's award of ESA is reduced for the period 9.3.13 – 15.3. Both failures are for a one week fixed period reduction, as the second failure was within two weeks of the first. As the reductions begin on the same date, they run concurrently.

Example 3

Agyness is entitled to ESA including the WRAC. She has had a sanction imposed including a one week fixed period for a failure to attend a Wfl in January 2013, and a further sanction including a two weeks fixed period for a failure to undertake WRA in May 2013. On 2.8.13 she fails without good cause to attend

a follow-up Wfl. The period of reduction for the latest failure will include a four week fixed period, as the latest failure was within 52 weeks of a previous two week fixed period reduction.

Example 4

Ethan is entitled to ESA including the WRAC. He fails to attend a Wfl on 2.1.13. Ethan phones on 8.1.13 to say that he forgot the appointment, and a further Wfl is arranged for 14.1.13. Ethan again fails to attend. He calls the Jobcentre on 22.1.13 and arranges a further appointment for 24.1.13 which he attends. A one week fixed period sanction is imposed for the first failure, and a two week period sanction is imposed for the second failure. This includes a one week fixed period, as the second failure is within two weeks of the first.

Following the Wfl on 24.1.13, Ethan is required to undertake WRA. The provider arranges a follow-up appointment to check progress on 6.1.14, which Ethan fails without good cause to attend. When considering what fixed period reduction to apply after Ethan complies, the DM has regard to the previous failure on 14.1.13, and adds a two weeks fixed period to the period of reduction.

Example 5

Julie is entitled to ESA including the WRAC. She fails without good cause to take part in an initial Wfl on 11.12.12, and the DM imposes a one week fixed period reduction after Julie phones on 13.12.12 to arrange a further Wfl. The next appointment is made for 3.1.13, and Julie again fails to attend. The DM determines that Julie had good cause for this failure, and makes another appointment for 8.1.13 which Julie attends. Julie is referred to the Work Programme and required to undertake WRA.

On 21.3.13 Julie fails without good cause to attend an interview with the provider where she was required to produce her CV, and the DM imposes a two week fixed period reduction after Julie agrees on 26.3.13 to attend a further appointment.

On 28.1.14 Julie fails without good cause to attend a further meeting with the provider. Since Julie's entitlement to ESA began, she has had two failures for which a reduction was imposed. The most recent of those failures resulted in a two week fixed period reduction and took place within the previous 52 weeks, so the DM determines that a four week fixed period reduction will apply once Julie has complied with the WRA requirement.

53117 - 53119

When the reduction begins

53120 A decision awarding ESA may be superseded where there has been a failure determination¹. A failure determination is a determination by the DM that the claimant has failed without good cause to satisfy a requirement to take part in a Wfl or undertake WRA². The supersession (see DMG 53121) begins the period of reduction in DMG 53112.

53121 The effective date of the supersession is¹

- 1.** the first day of the benefit week in which the failure determination is made where, on the date of the determination, the claimant has not been paid ESA since the failure to which that determination relates **or**
- 2.** the first day of the benefit week after the end of the benefit week in respect of which the claimant was last paid ESA.

See DMG Chapter 04 for further guidance on supersession.

1 SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 7(36)

53122 - 53124

Cessation of reduction

53125 Any reduction of ESA imposed as a result of a failure determination which resulted from a failure to take part in a Wfl or to undertake WRA ceases to have effect if¹

- 1.** the claimant subsequently ceases to meet the requirements in DMG 53014 **or**
- 2.** the claimant subsequently ceases to be subject to a requirement to undertake WRA **or**
- 3.** the Secretary of State decides that it is no longer appropriate to require the claimant to undertake WRA². See DMG 53091 and Chapter 04 for guidance on supersession where a reduction ends.

1 ESA Regs, reg 64(1) & (2)

53126 A decision as in DMG 53085 **3.** must be notified to the claimant in writing¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 64(1A)(b)

53127 – 53129

Revision, supersession and appeals 53130 - 53139

53130 A decision awarding ESA is superseded where the amount payable to the claimant is reduced on account of their failure to attend a WfI or to undertake WRA¹. See DMG 531 and Chapter 04 for further details.

1 SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 6(2)(p) & 7(36)

53131 The supersession decision imposing the reduction can be superseded again to end the reduction where the conditions in DMG 53125 are satisfied¹. It can be revised at any time if it contains an error to which the claimant did not materially contribute². See DMG Chapter 03 for guidance on revision, and DMG Chapter 04 for guidance on supersession.

Note: For all other reductions, no further decision is required to end the reduction. This is because a fixed period reduction is applied on compliance (see DMG 53112).

1 SS CS (D&A) Regs, reg 6(2)(q) & 7(37); 2 reg 3(5C)

53132 The supersession decision imposing the reduction following the failure determination carries a right of appeal to a FtT. See DMG Chapter 06 for guidance on appeals.

1 SS Act 98, s 12(1)(a)

53133 - 53139

Hardship 53140 - 53230

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Introduction

53140 Hardship payments are payments of reduced rate ESA(IR) made to ESA claimants

1. whose ESA has been reduced as in DMG 53112 **and**

2. who satisfy the conditions in DMG 53102¹.

Note: See DMG 53146 et seq for guidance on hardship where a claimant is disqualified from receiving ESA through misconduct.

1 ESA Regs, reg 2(1)

53141 Hardship is not defined in the law. It should therefore be given its normal everyday meaning¹ of “severe suffering or privation”. Privation means a lack of the necessities of life.

Note: The test for hardship is not related to the WCA which is the functional assessment to determine eligibility for ESA. A claimant is judged to be in hardship if they have insufficient funds to meet their immediate, essential and basic necessities of life, i.e. accommodation, food, heating and lighting, clothing and hygiene requirements.

1 R(SB) 19/82

53142 When deciding if hardship will occur the DM should consider all the circumstances of the claimant or members of the claimant's family. There are certain factors that the DM must consider (see DMG

53111 – 53115). DMs should bear in mind that they are deciding the likelihood that hardship will occur if the full amount of ESA is not paid.

Note: For the meaning of family¹ see DMG 43004.

1 ESA Regs, reg 2(1).

53143 - 53149

Record of the DM's decision

53150 DMs should record

1. the reasons why hardship will or will not occur **and**
2. the factors and evidence considered

as part of the decision on hardship payments.

53151 DMs must record their reasons for

1. rejecting any evidence **or**
2. deciding what evidence to accept if faced with conflicting evidence.

When a hardship payment is made

53152 A hardship payment is made where **all** the following conditions are satisfied¹:

1. the DM is satisfied that the claimant is or will be in hardship unless hardship payments are made (but see DMG 53110) **and**
2. the claimant's ESA has been reduced as in DMG 53112² **and**
3. the claimant meets the conditions of entitlement to ESA(IR) – see [DMG Chapter 41](#) **and**
4. the claimant completes and submits a form approved or accepted by the DM in such manner as the DM determines **and**
5. the claimant provides such information or evidence as the DM requires, in such manner as the DM determines.

1 ESA Regs, reg 64A; 2 reg 63

53153 - 53159

When is a claimant treated as being in hardship

53160 For the purposes of DMG 53152 **1.**, a claimant is treated as being in hardship if

1. their partner **or**

2. a child or qualifying young person for whom they or their partner are responsible

is or will be in hardship unless a hardship payment is made¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 64B

Matters taken into account when determining hardship

53161 The DM must take the following into account when determining whether a person is or will be in hardship¹:

1. whether the claimant's partner or a person in the claimant's family satisfies the requirements for

1.1 the SDP or EDP² **or**

1.2 an element of CTC for a disabled or severely disabled child or young person³

2. the resources which are likely to be available to the household without a hardship payment

2.1 including resources from people who are not members of the household⁴ **and**

2.2 excluding payments in DMG 53162⁵

3. the difference between the likely resources and the amount of a hardship payment that the claimant would receive

4. whether there is substantial risk that without a hardship payment the household

4.1 will not have access to essential items (including food, clothing, heating and accommodation)
or

4.2 will have access to such essential items at considerably reduced levels

5. the length of time that the factors at **1.** – **4.** are likely to continue.

Note: See DMG Chapter 43 for guidance on membership of household, and DMG Chapter 44 for guidance on ESA amounts, including the SDP and EDP.

1 ESA Regs, reg 64C(1); 2 Sch 4, Part 2, para 6 & 7;

3 Child Tax Credits Regs 02, reg 8; 4 ESA Regs, reg 156; 5 reg 64C(2)

53162 When considering resources, the DM should disregard payments of

1. CTC¹ or

2. CHB²

paid to the claimant or partner in respect of a child or young person who is a member of their household or family³.

1 ESA Regs, Sch 8, para 7(1); 2 para 7(2); 3 reg 64C(2)

Example

Sean is entitled to ESA at a reduced rate from 6th February because of a failure to attend a Wfl. He and his partner Sarah have a 17 year old child Molly and foster a ten year old child Evie for whom they receive a weekly allowance from the LA.

When considering whether Sean is a person in hardship the DM disregards the CHB and CTC that Sean receives for Molly. The DM takes into account the allowance Sean receives from the LA for Evie, even though she is not a member of the household.

53163

Resources

53164 “Resources” is not defined in the law. The word should be given its normal everyday meaning¹ of the means available or a stock or supply that can be drawn upon. See DMG 3 Chapter 35 for further guidance on resources.

1 R(SB) 19/82

Example

Danny is entitled to ESA(Cont) of £99.15 weekly, including the WRAC. He has an occupational pension of £56.45 a week. Danny fails without good cause to undertake WRA. His award of ESA is reduced by £71.00 a week, leaving £28.15 in payment.

Danny applies for hardship. The DM decides that hardship is not appropriate. Although Danny would meet the conditions for ESA(IR), the DM considers that his available resources of £84.60 weekly (ESA of £28.15 + occupational pension of £56.45) are sufficient to meet his need for essential items without awarding the hardship amount of £42.60.

Essential items

53165 For full guidance on essential items, see [DMG](#) Chapter 35.

Example

Carolyn is a lone parent with two children aged 2 and 7. Carolyn's heating is electric, and she pays for her electricity by pre-paid meter which is partly reducing an earlier fuel debt. From 20.1.13 her award of ESA of £99.15 is reduced to £28.15 weekly after she fails without good cause to undertake WRA. Carolyn applies for a hardship payment. The DM establishes that Carolyn has no resources apart from the reduced rate ESA, as well as CHB and CTC which are disregarded. The DM determines that Carolyn's children would be at substantial risk due to inadequate heating, and awards £42.60 in addition to the £28.15 in payment.

53166 - 53169

Amount of hardship payments

53170 Once an ESA claimant is determined to be in hardship, the amount of hardship payable is

1. 80% of the prescribed amount for a single claimant in the main phase where the claimant

1.1 has an award of ESA which does not include the WRAC **and**

1.2 or any other member of their family, is pregnant or seriously ill **or**

2. in any other case, 60% of the prescribed amount for a single claimant in the main phase¹.

Note 1: These rates only apply to people put into the WRAG on or after 3.4.17 who no longer receive the additional work related component. Prior to 3.4.17 the amount of hardship payable is 60% of the prescribed amount for a single claimant in the main phase.

Note 2: See **Memo DMG 6/17** for guidance on when the WRAC is not included in ESA awards.

Note 3: For the meaning of family² see DMG 43004.

Note 4: See Appendix 1 for an illustration of the decision making process for determining ESA hardship amounts.

1 ESA Regs, reg 64D(1); Sch 4, para (1)(a); 2 ESA Regs, reg 2(1)

53171 Where the amount in DMG 53170 is

1. not a multiple of 5p, it is rounded to the nearest multiple of 5p **or**

2. a multiple of 2.5p but not 5p, it is rounded to the next lower multiple of 5p¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 64D(2)

Pregnancy

53172 The DM should establish whether a claimant, or a member of their family, is pregnant, before applying the hardship amount at 80%.

53173 If the DM has any doubts that the claimant, or a member of their family, is pregnant, the claimant should be requested to produce further evidence such as a certificate of the expected date of confinement.

Note: See DMG 53184 for further guidance on evidence.

Meaning of 'seriously ill' for hardship purposes

53174 'Seriously ill' is not defined in legislation. For the purposes of determining the rate of ESA hardship payable, the consideration of 'seriously ill' is whether the claimant is able to demonstrate that

1. they or

2. a member of their family

will incur additional day to day living costs due to a medical condition in order to receive 80% instead of 60% of the basic ESA rate.

53175 Within the hardship context, 'seriously ill' is not a test of whether a particular medical condition is serious or not. It is a test of whether, due to a medical condition, additional day to day costs are incurred.

Note: It is acknowledged that the claimant, or a member of their family, may have more complex and expensive needs that require additional costs for essential items such as heating, hygiene, dietary needs or travel costs that means without the 80% higher rate of hardship payment to meet those extra costs their health would be impacted. For example, a person with a severe mobility problem may need more heating, or a person with severe diabetes may have more complex and more expensive needs to provide certain foods or a person with psoriasis may need to change and wash bedding and clothing more frequently than normal.

53176 Each case should be considered carefully on its own facts and circumstances. DMs should bear in mind that

1. additional costs that are not necessary for one individual may be necessary for another **and**

2. what is regarded as a reasonable additional cost may well vary

2.1 in each individual case

2.2 over time **and**

2.3 depending on other factors, for example symptoms may be worse at certain times of the year due to seasonal weather or allergens (also see 53179).

53177 It is important that the DM gathers the appropriate and relevant information to be able to determine the rate of hardship to be paid at the face to face hardship interview to avoid any delay in payment. The claimant has to demonstrate on their application for hardship

1. the relevant medical condition **and**

2. how or why the medical condition incurs additional costs.

Note 1: Care should be taken with claimants who have mental health conditions who might lack the insight to appreciate the extra costs that might be associated with their illness, or that of a member of their family.

Note 2: See guidance at DMG 53184 regarding evidence that may show additional costs will be incurred.

53178 The claimant should be the expert of

1. their own, or the relevant member of their family's, medical condition,

2. how it affects them **and**

3. how it incurs additional costs.

However, if it is unclear, improbable or self contradictory the DM can ask the claimant to provide additional information on why and how a certain medical condition incurs extra costs.

Note: The DM should not require the claimant to incur any costs to provide further evidence, see DMG 53184.

53179 The DM also has to consider all relevant facts and circumstances that may impact the medical condition and contribute to the claimant having to incur additional costs. Certain symptoms, for example, may vary in response to the season, i.e. may be worse in cold, damp weather or exposure to allergic reactants such as pollen, dust or animal fur. If the application is made during the summer months or a period of warm weather it may be difficult for the claimant to justify their assertion that they will incur additional heating costs unless the claimant or a member of their family has a serious respiratory illness or a condition that seriously restricts their mobility or the condition of the dwelling is such that the claimant, or a member of their family, are more likely to suffer an impact on their health from a lack of heating despite prevailing weather conditions.

Note: See further guidance at DMG 53184 regarding evidence and the illustrative examples at DMG 53189.

53180 Guidance on the effects of some common medical conditions that may result in additional costs being incurred is given in Appendix 2 to this Chapter. This is not an exhaustive or prescribed list of conditions that will qualify a claimant to receive the 80% rate of ESA hardship automatically. The DM should consider all the facts and circumstances of the individual case.

Note: The DM can also find information regarding medical conditions in the Customer Case Management disability guidance.

Prescribed medication or treatment

53181 It is essential that the claimant and members of their family

- 1.** have sufficient supplies of any prescribed medication (see **Note 1.**) **and**
- 2.** continue any course of treatment arranged by a recognized health professional which requires attendance at a health establishment (see **Note 2.**).

Note 1: Claimants in receipt of ESA(IR) should be able to obtain free NHS prescriptions under the Low Income Scheme but the DM should establish if, where free prescriptions are not available to the claimant, that the claimant and members of their family have an adequate supply of any prescribed medication when considering what additional costs may be incurred.

Note 2: If a claimant, or member of their family, is currently undergoing a systematic course of treatment needing attendance at a treatment centre twice or more times a week, it is important to continue that treatment for their recovery and prevent any decline of their condition, or indeed they may live remotely with no reliable or regular public transport and as such they may incur additional or more expensive transport costs (e.g. using taxis) – see Example 4 at DMG 53139.

53182 Illnesses such as colds or coughs are not normally serious on their own, but the DM should decide if for the claimant, or a member of their family, any illness

- 1.** has any impact on any other existing health conditions or personal circumstances **and**
- 2.** will mean additional daily living costs will be incurred.

For example, the effect of a common cold on someone who suffers with a respiratory disease such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease can have a serious impact on their general health and could mean additional costs for heating are incurred.

Note: For common minor ailments such as coughs and colds, sufferers often buy treatments over the counter rather than requesting prescriptions. This should be taken into account when considering what additional costs may be incurred.

When is ‘seriously ill’ test satisfied

53183 The DM must determine if the ‘seriously ill’ test is satisfied at the date

- 1.** entitlement to hardship payments begins **or**
- 2.** a request for revision of the amount of hardship payments is made.

Note 1: The DM should not determine if additional costs are likely to occur in the future. The claimant can apply for increased hardship payments if a medical condition deteriorates (for example they suffer a flare up of a fluctuating condition) and/or circumstances change such that it means they will incur additional day to day living costs (see Example 8 at DMG 53139).

Note 2: This is not a revision of the claimant's entitlement to ESA or of the determination of whether the claimant is in hardship. This is a revision of the amount of hardship payable and whether a claimant is able to demonstrate at a later point that they incur additional day to day living costs as a result of a change that means they may qualify to receive 80% from that point (also see Example 11 at DMG 53139).

Evidence

53184 The DM will determine the amount of hardship based on the claimant's statement on their application for hardship (see DMG 53127). The DM should not request further evidence unless

- 1.** there is contradictory or conflicting evidence that puts the claimant's statement in doubt **or**
- 2.** it is inherently improbable **or**
- 3.** there is insufficient evidence to make a decision

in line with the normal rules on evidence (see DMG Chapter 01 – Principles of decision making and evidence).

Note: Decisions should normally be based on the evidence that is provided on the hardship application. DMs should bear in mind that the claimant's direct evidence should be accepted unless the conditions at **1.**, **2.** or **3.** apply.

53185 If the DM has doubts that the claimant, or member of their family, is 'seriously ill' for hardship purposes, the claimant may be asked to provide further evidence about how the relevant medical condition incurs additional costs. For example, they may be able to provide a letter already in their possession from a doctor, health care professional or case worker that confirms the medical condition and how it is likely to incur additional costs.

Note 1: The DM should not expect the claimant to incur any costs to provide further evidence. See DMG 53138 for examples of evidence the claimant may be able to provide.

Note 2: The DM should not delay payment of hardship to await further evidence (also see DMG 53137).

53186 Any evidence should be contemporaneous with the application for hardship and it will be for the DM to decide what

- 1.** evidence is required **and**
- 2.** is reasonable and practicable for the claimant to provide

taking into account any incurred costs that may be involved to provide any evidence and whether evidence will be available in a particular case.

Note 1: A DM may want to confirm, for example, that incontinence pads or gluten free products are, or are not, available on prescription in a certain area as provision of such products can vary geographically. This may be easily resolved by telephoning the local surgery or NHS services for general information regarding the availability of certain products without talking to the surgery about a specific claimant.

Note 2: See Appendix 2 for further examples of some conditions that may incur additional costs.

53137 If in exceptional circumstances the DM

1. needs to confirm evidence **or**

2. requires some further evidence

payment of hardship should not be delayed to await that evidence and hardship should be put into payment at 60% until such time as the evidence is provided regarding the additional costs incurred and the amount payable can be adjusted to 80% if and as appropriate when any further evidence has been provided and evaluated.

53187

Examples of evidence to support ‘seriously ill’ test for hardship

53188 Examples of evidence the claimant, or member of their family, may have in their possession that confirms the relevant medical condition which could be provided to show the ‘seriously ill’ test is satisfied, if required, are

1. the ESA claim form

2. the statement of circumstances form for hardship payments (i.e. the ESA hardship application)

3. any letters or written statements regarding the claimant, or member of their family’s, medical condition

4. any records of interviews with the claimant, or member of their family, with the relevant medical condition

5. records held by the DM about relevant incapacity test results or recent DLA, AA, IIDB or SDA claims

6. any medical certificates or statements from any of the doctors treating the claimant, or member of their family, with the condition

7. any medical reports from people treating the medical condition, together with any interpretation from a Medical services HCP

8. any reports from a Medical services HCP about the condition and its likely effects

9. evidence from the Disability Employment Advisor if the claimant is on a Disability Employment Advisor's case load.

Note 1: This is not an exhaustive list and some of the sources of evidence may not be available in a particular case. The DM should make a decision based on the evidence that is available.

Note 2: The DM should not expect the claimant to incur costs to obtain further evidence.

Illustrative examples

53189 The following are examples for illustrative purposes only in consideration of the amount of ESA hardship to be paid.

Note 1: For the purposes of these examples the claimant has an award of ESA which does not include the WRAC, has had a sanction imposed and qualifies for a hardship payment.

Note 2: Also see the guidance in Appendix 2 for further examples of medical conditions that may incur additional costs.

Example 1

Pauline is 45 years old and suffers from depression and rheumatoid arthritis. She says she needs to have her heating on constantly because she lives in a draughty old house and even in the summer months any damp or cold can exacerbate and cause a worsening of her arthritis.

Pauline provides a letter from the occupational health services verifying she needs a constant and comfortable temperature even in the summer months due to her severe rheumatoid arthritis.

The DM considers Pauline can demonstrate she will have additional day to day heating costs due to her medical condition and will receive 80% of the ESA rate.

Example 2

Dev is 29 years old and suffers from depression. He lives in a flat with his older sister and qualifies for hardship payments. He applies for ESA hardship in August following a sanction being imposed.

The flat has gas central heating and Dev says he has no money to put in the gas meter. The flat has an electric hob, microwave and kettle.

The DM considers that the lack of heating in August for a single man aged 29 years with no mobility restrictions or respiratory problems would not impact on Dev's medical condition and he has alternative cooking facilities available to cook a meal.

Although his GP has advised him to lose weight to help with his general health, Dev does not follow a

special diet that would require additional costs.

The DM determines Dev will receive 60% of the ESA rate.

Example 3

Flavia is a 40 year old lady who suffers from anxiety and coeliac disease. She says that she has additional costs in order to be able to buy gluten free food products which are more expensive than similar non-gluten free products.

Flavia says she risks a deterioration in her health if she does not eat gluten free food. She says only gluten free biscuits and flour are available free from her local NHS services which alone do not meet her dietary needs.

The DM considers that Flavia will have additional costs for food because of her medical condition.

The DM determines Flavia will receive 80% of the ESA rate.

Example 4

Dorian suffered a spinal injury and has severe mobility problems. He lives in a remote village with a sporadic bus service and no supermarket. He says the nearest supermarket to shop for food is seven miles away and he normally uses a taxi to do his shopping and also to attend regular physiotherapy appointments at the clinic in the nearest town three times a week. He cannot walk to the nearest bus stop without severe difficulties and there is not a regular bus service. He does not own a car and lives alone.

The DM considers due to his medical condition it is reasonable for Dorian to use taxis to go to the supermarket and the clinic for his appointments and that this will be at an additional day to day cost to pay for taxis.

The DM determines Dorian will receive 80% of the ESA rate.

Example 5

Shirley suffers from Detrusor Instability (Urge Incontinence) and depression. She says she needs to use the toilet frequently, at least 15 to 20 times per day, and often has 'accidents' which means she frequently has to wash and change her clothing, wash soiled bedding and underwear/clothes and clean up after 'accidents'. Her condition causes her to feel depressed and her depression would get worse if she cannot follow her normal hygiene routine.

Shirley takes a prescribed mild anti-depressant for her depression and has an adequate supply.

Shirley says her local NHS services do not provide free incontinence pads which the DM confirms by phone call to Shirley's local surgery.

The DM considers Shirley has additional costs due to her medical condition as she needs to buy incontinence pads and wash her clothes and bedding more frequently.

The DM considers Shirley will incur additional day to day costs to buy essential cleaning products, e.g. soap, toilet paper and washing detergent as well as incontinence pads and without those products her health could deteriorate.

The DM determines Shirley will receive 80% of the ESA rate.

Example 6

Aarif suffers from epilepsy. He has prescribed medication for the condition. He has no other known medical conditions and lives with his parents.

Due to his epilepsy Aarif qualifies for free prescriptions so he will not suffer any additional day to day costs due to his illness and his medical condition will not deteriorate as he has access to his normal medication.

The DM determines Aarif will receive 60% of the ESA rate.

Example 7

Ryan suffers from sciatica. He lives with his partner and his young daughter. His daughter suffers from diabetes and has to follow a special diet and eat consistently and regularly to control her blood sugars.

To provide a special diet would incur additional costs and if not followed could have an adverse impact on Ryan's daughter's health.

The DM considers Ryan will incur additional day to day costs to pay for his daughter's specialist diet and determines he will receive 80% of the ESA rate.

Example 8

Emma has crohns disease and depression. She has recurrent episodes of diarrhoea and abdominal pain during a flare up of her condition. Although relatively symptom free from her crohns disease at present, her symptoms tend to flare up every three to six months and during those episodes she has to shower several times a day and use pads for minor leakage.

The DM considers that Emma may incur additional water heating and laundry costs during a flare up of her condition and that if she were unable to shower and change this might result in a worsening of her depression. She says incontinence pads are not provided free by her local NHS services. Emma lives alone and has an adequate supply of her prescribed medication.

The DM considers at present Emma would not incur additional day to day costs and determines she will receive 60% of the ESA rate.

However, should Emma suffer a flare up of her symptoms such that it means she will incur additional day to day living costs for laundry and incontinence pads, Emma can apply for increased hardship payments at the 80% rate.

Example 9

Mel is 33 years old and suffers from spondylosis of the neck. He lives with his partner and baby son.

Mel says his son has been medically diagnosed with lactose intolerance and soya baby milk is much more expensive than ordinary baby milk. The DM confirms that Mel should be entitled to free soya milk for his baby son on NHS prescriptions.

The DM considers Mel would not incur additional day to day costs and will receive 60% of the ESA rate.

Example 10

John is a 50 year old man with OCD who has obsessions and associated ritual compulsive activity relating to contamination and dirt. He says that he has to shower several times a day and use freshly laundered towels on each occasion.

The DM considers that he has additional water heating and laundry costs and that if he were unable to shower frequently this would result in an increase in his anxiety and a worsening of his OCD.

The DM considers John will incur additional day to day costs because of his medical condition and will receive 80% of the ESA rate.

Example 11

Sonny suffers from sciatica. He lives with his partner. There is no evidence provided that Sonny or his partner has a medical condition that will mean he will incur additional day to day costs.

The DM determines Sonny will receive 60% of the ESA rate.

Four weeks later Sonny has still not complied with the compliance condition to end the sanction and contacts the office to say his partner is pregnant and provides a certificate of the expected date of confinement.

The DM determines that Sonny will receive 80% of the ESA rate from the date of the change of circumstances.

When a hardship payment begins

53190 Hardship payments can begin from the date the claimant becomes a person in hardship by satisfying **all** the conditions in DMG 53102.

When a hardship payment ends

53191 Entitlement to a hardship payment ends when the period of the reduction ends.

53192 - 53230

Disqualification for misconduct 53231 - 53255

[Treatment](#) 53239 - 53241

[Rules of behaviour](#) 53242 - 53244

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53231 Claimants entitled to ESA are disqualified for receiving it for a period decided by the DM up to a maximum of six weeks if they¹

- 1.** have LCW through their own misconduct (except in a case where LCW is due to pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease) **or**
- 2.** fail without good cause to attend for or submit to medical or other treatment (excluding vaccination, inoculation or major surgery) recommended by a doctor with whom, or a hospital or similar institution with which, the claimant is undergoing medical treatment, which would be likely to remove the limitation on the claimant's capability for work **or**
- 3.** fail without good cause to refrain from behaviour calculated to retard recovery **or**
- 4.** are absent without good cause from their place of residence without leaving word where they may be found².

1 ESA Regs, reg 157(2) & (1)

53232 Guidance on misconduct may be relevant if the misconduct being considered would have resulted in dismissal from employment and disqualification for receiving JSA. Conduct which is blameworthy, reprehensible, wrong or wilful should be distinguished from involuntary behaviour due to other factors¹.

1 R(S) 2/64

53233 Alcoholism is one example of behaviour which may be misconduct if a claimant has LCW as a result of excessive drinking on one occasion. But the mental and physical effects of alcoholism can be a condition requiring long spells of treatment, including psychiatric help.

53234 If a claimant has LCW as a result of an accident which occurred while intoxicated but which could have happened if the claimant was sober, LCW would not be due to misconduct.

53235 Drug addiction is similar to alcoholism in that the uncontrolled use of addictive drugs leads to a progressive deterioration in physical or mental condition which can be incapacitating.

53236 Disqualification should be applied to the exceptional cases where there is clear evidence that temporary LCW or the addiction resulted from a deliberate decision by a healthy person to experiment with drug taking.

53237 When deciding whether to disqualify for receiving ESA the DM should judge how far the claimant's actions have been deliberate and unreasonable rather than thoughtless.

53238 Someone who is injured or contracts a disease while committing an illegal act for which they are convicted by a court of law, is subject to being treated as not having LCW.

Treatment

53239 Treatment as at DMG 53231 **2.** has to be for the cause of LCW¹. Medical treatment means medical, surgical or rehabilitative treatment (including any course or diet or other regimen)².

1 R(S) 3/57; 2 ESA Regs, reg 2(1)

53240 The claimant has to prove

1. good cause **and**

2. that a refusal of treatment was reasonable in the circumstances.

53241 If the objection to treatment is on religious grounds, evidence of a firm personal belief is needed to support good cause¹.

1 R(S) 9/51

Rules of behaviour

53242 One example of behaviour considered under both these rules was a person with influenzal bronchitis, who drove 60 miles from home to business and was not well enough to return for several days. It was decided that the person had

1. undertaken a journey calculated to delay recovery **and**

2. also been absent from home without leaving word.

In view of certain circumstances the period of treating as capable of work was limited to two weeks¹.

1 R(S) 21/52

53243 In DMG 53231 **3.** the word “calculated” does not mean that the claimant deliberately intends to delay recovery. The question is whether the delayed recovery is likely to result from the behaviour¹.

1 R(I) 26/51

53244 Good cause for the behaviour was not proved by a person who had dermatitis of the hands and was whitewashing the kitchen, because the doctor had advised against getting wet¹. Ignorance of the rules of behaviour is not good cause².

1 R(I) 26/51; 2 R(S) 21/72

Absence

53245 DMG 53231 **4.** does not apply unless the claimant has somewhere to live. Once the relevant facts are established the claimant has to prove good cause such as a genuine difficulty in leaving a message¹.

1 R(S) 7/83, R(S) 6/55

Period of disqualification

53246 The length of the period of disqualification can be from one day to six weeks. The length of the disqualification depends on the circumstances of the case. The DM has to give reasons for the choice of period¹.

1 R(U) 8/74, R(S) 1/87, R(U) 4/87

53247 For misconduct the period of disqualification can begin on

- 1.** the day following the date of the act of misconduct **or**
- 2.** from the date of the decision if benefit has continued in payment¹.

If the misconduct is repeated, a fresh period of disqualification may be imposed.

1 R(U) 12/59, R(S) 4/61

53248 The period of disqualification for failure to observe the rules of behaviour depends upon the number of times, and the period over which the failure has occurred. Any extenuating circumstances can be taken into account even though good cause has not been proved¹.

1 R(S) 21/52

53249 If, during the period of disqualification, a claimant

1. submits a closed doctor's statement **and**

2. then makes a further claim

any disqualification continues for the outstanding part of the original period, unless the determination has been set aside on supersession or appeal.

53250 Disqualification does not apply if the person is a "person in hardship" or is disqualified for receiving ESA under certain legislation¹ (loss of benefit provisions).

1 ESA Regs, reg 157(3) & Social Security Fraud Act 2001, s 7

Person in hardship

53251 A claimant is a "person in hardship"¹ if they have informed the DM of the circumstances on which they rely to establish that fact and

1. the claimant is pregnant **or**

2. a member of the claimant's family is pregnant **or**

3. the claimant is a single person aged less than 18 **or**

4. the claimant is a member of a couple and both members are aged less than 18 **or**

5. the claimant or their partner is responsible for a child or young person who is a member of the claimant's household **or**

6. the claimant or their partner has been awarded

6.1 an "AA" **or**

6.2 DLA care component (higher or middle rate)² **or**

6.3 AFIP **or**

6.4 PIP **or**

6.5 SADLA care component (higher or middle rate)³

7. the claimant or their partner has claimed either

7.1 "AA" **or**

7.2 DLA **or**

7.3 CDP or

7.4 AFIP or

7.5 PIP or

7.6 ADP or

7.7 SADLA

and the claim has not yet been determined (see DMG 53167) **or**

8. the claimant or their partner devotes a considerable portion of each week caring for another person who has been awarded

8.1 “AA” or

8.2 the higher or middle rate care component of DLA **or**

8.3 the higher or middle rate care component of CDP **or**

8.4 AFIP or

8.5 PIP or

8.6 ADP or

8.7 SADLA care component (higher or middle rate)

9. the claimant or their partner devotes a considerable portion of each week caring for another person who has claimed

9.1 “AA” or

9.2 DLA or

9.3 CDP or

9.4 AFIP or

9.5 PIP or

9.6 ADP or

9.7 SADLA

and the claim has not been determined (see DMG 53167) **or**

10. the claimant or their partner has reached the qualifying age for SPC (see DMG Chapter 77).

Note 1: For a definition of “AA” see DMG Chapter 44.

Note 2: The guidance at **9.** applies from 6.4.10. Before that date the claimant or their partner has to be aged 60 or more.

1 ESA Regs, reg 158(2) & (3); 2 reg 158(7); 3 reg 158 & SA(SADLA) Regs 2025, reg 6(4)

53252 A claimant who is a “person in hardship” **only** because they or their partner

1. have claimed any of the benefits in DMG 53166 **7.** and the claim has not yet been determined **or**

2. devote a considerable portion of each week caring for another person who has claimed any of the benefits in DMG 53166 **9.** and the claim has not been determined

can only be a “person in hardship” for a maximum of 26 weeks from the date of the claim¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 158(4)

53253 A claimant is also considered to be a “person in hardship” if the DM, having regard to all the circumstances and in particular those at DMG 53254, is satisfied that the claimant or a member of the claimant’s family will suffer hardship unless ESA is paid¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 158(5)

53254 The circumstances referred to in DMG 53253 are

1. the resources which are likely to be available to the claimant and their family and the length of time for which they might be available **and**

2. whether there is a substantial risk that essential items such as food, clothing and heating will

2.1 cease to be available to the claimant or a member of the claimant’s family **or**

2.2 only be available at considerably reduced levels **and**

the length of time that this might be so¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 158(6)

53255 The amount of ESA payable in hardship cases is reduced by 20% of the claimant’s applicable amount¹.

1 ESA Regs, Sch 5, para 14

Disqualification for imprisonment - ESA(Cont) 53256 - 53300

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[Imprisonment or detention in legal custody abroad](#) 53283

[Suspension of payment of ESA\(Cont\) during imprisonment](#) 53284 - 53300

Introduction

[See Memo DMG 07/20]

53256 A claimant is disqualified for receiving ESA(Cont) for any period during which they are undergoing imprisonment or detention in legal custody

- 1.** in connection with a charge brought or intended to be brought in criminal proceedings **and**
- 2.** pursuant to any sentence **or**
- 3.** pursuant to any order of detention.

Note: See DMG Chapter 54 for guidance on how imprisonment affects ESA(IR).

1 WR Act 07, s 18(4)(b)

53257 Payment of ESA(Cont) is suspended from the first day of imprisonment or detention in legal custody. If a decision is subsequently made to disqualify the claimant for receiving ESA(Cont), that

decision will apply from the first day of imprisonment or detention in legal custody.

Treating a claimant as not having limited capability for work

53258 The claimant is to be treated as not having LCW if they are disqualified for receiving ESA(Cont) during a period of imprisonment or detention in legal custody if that disqualification is for more than 6 weeks¹ (see DMG Chapter 42).

1 ESA Regs, reg 159(1)

Exceptions to the disqualification provisions

53259 There are exceptions to the provisions disqualifying ESA(Cont) on imprisonment or detention in legal custody¹. These are where

- 1.** no penalty is imposed (DMG 53260) **or**
- 2.** the person is suffering from mental disorder (DMG 53268).

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(2) & (3)

No penalty imposed

53260 There is no disqualification for receiving ESA(Cont) for imprisonment or detention in legal custody unless at the end of criminal proceedings the court imposes

- 1.** a penalty **or**
- 2.** a penalty for fine default¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(2)

Meaning of court

531261 Court means¹ any

- 1.** Court in
 - 1.1** UK
 - 1.2** Channel Islands
 - 1.3** Isle of Man
 - 1.4** any place to which certain legislation applies² **or**

2. Court-Martial within the meaning of certain legislation³ **or**

3. Courts-Martial Appeal Court.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(5)(a); 2 Colonial Prisoners Removal Act 1884; 3 Courts-Martial (Appeals) Act 1968

Meaning of penalty

53262 Penalty¹ is

- 1.** a sentence of imprisonment
- 2.** detention in a young offenders institution
- 3.** an order for detention in a young offenders institution
- 4.** detention in GB as a result of any order made under certain legislation².

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(5)(c); 2 reg 160(5)(d); Colonial Prisoners Removal Act 1884

53263 The term penalty includes a suspended sentence of imprisonment at the end of criminal proceedings, even if it has not taken effect¹.

Note: A suspended sentence does not disqualify a claimant who is not in prison or detained in legal custody.

1 R(S) 1/71

53264 The following are not penalties and so no disqualification is imposed for the period before the end of criminal proceedings during which the person is remanded in custody when

- 1.** a fine is imposed (see DMG 53267)
- 2.** the charge is withdrawn
- 3.** there is a conditional or absolute discharge or acquittal
- 4.** the claimant is detained in hospital by court order following conviction
- 5.** an order putting a person under guardianship is made
- 6.** a Community Rehabilitation order is made.

Note: This list is not exhaustive

Penalty cancelled

53265 Where a penalty has been imposed, a Higher Court can later

1. quash the conviction **or**
2. substitute another penalty

with an order which is not a penalty. The effect is as though no penalty had been imposed.

53266 Disqualification will therefore be removed for any relevant period of imprisonment or detention in legal custody. See DMG Chapter 04 for further guidance on supersession for a relevant change of circumstances and when the decision takes effect.

Imprisonment for non-payment of fines

53267 Imprisonment for non-payment of a fine can be the result of civil proceedings. The DM should consider the nature of the original offence if a person is imprisoned for non-payment of a fine. If the original offence was a criminal action, the DM should

1. regard the imprisonment as a criminal offence **and**
2. disqualify from benefit.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(2)(b)

Mentally disordered persons detained in legal custody

53268 Subject to the exceptions in DMG 53271 disqualification does not apply¹ for any period during which a person is detained in legal custody at the end of criminal proceedings, if it is a period during which that person is liable to be detained in a hospital or similar institution as a person suffering from a mental disorder.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(3)

53269 Hospital or similar institution means¹ any place in which people suffering from mental disorder may receive care or treatment but not at or in a

1. prison
2. young offenders institution
3. secure training centre
4. secure accommodation in a children's home

5. remand centre.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(5)(b)

53270 If a person is found to be insane during criminal proceedings so that they cannot be tried or their trial cannot proceed, those proceedings will be treated as completed¹. There will be no disqualification.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(5)(e)

53271 The exceptions referred to in DMG 53268 are where the person is

1. detained¹ (or liable to be detained) under specific legislation² which allows a court, which has imposed a term of imprisonment, to direct that the offender be detained in a hospital or similar institution instead of a prison where that offender suffers from a psychopathic disorder.

2. serving³ a sentence of imprisonment and is then detained in a mental hospital under specific legislation⁴ which allows the Secretary of State for Justice or Scottish Ministers to order that an offender, suffering from mental disorder, be transferred from prison to detention in a mental hospital.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(3)(a); 2 MH Act 83, s 45A; Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 95 s 59A

3 ESA Regs, reg 160(3)(b) & (c); 4 MH Act 83, s 47

53272 Where there is a hospital direction as in DMG 53271 **1.** or where the person is transferred from prison to a mental hospital as in DMG 53271 **2.** the person will be disqualified for receiving ESA(Cont)¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(3)(a), (b) & (c)

53273 A person who is transferred to a mental hospital as in DMG 53271 may recover and be sent back to prison; the normal rules disqualifying prisoners from receiving benefits will apply.

53274 Where a person has been disqualified and is transferred to

1. a hospital **or**

2. similar institution

the disqualification will apply up to the date when the person is expected to be released, had the transfer not been made¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 160(4)

53275 Where a prisoner is transferred to a mental hospital and detained under certain legislation¹ the disqualification as in DMG 53272 will continue until the date when they would have been released.

1 MH Act 83, s 45A; s 47; Criminal Procedures (Scotland) Act 1995, s 59A;

53276 In England and Wales, where applicable, the earliest date on which the prisoner would have been expected to be discharged from prison will be notified in a certificate. Where the prisoner was sentenced to life imprisonment the certificate issued is not endorsed with a release date.

53277 In Scotland certificates are not issued on any case because the terms of the prisoner's transfer to mental hospital cease at the point that their sentence would have ended¹. Any further detention would require a fresh order which would not be made under the relevant legislation².

1 CSS/239/07; MH (C & T) (Scot) Act 03 s 136; s 217; 2 s 136

53278 In DMG 53276 - 53277 it is enough to know under what legislation the prisoner is being held in mental hospital. They will be disqualified if it is under the relevant legislation and there is no certificate.

Technical Lifers - England and Wales only

53279 A High Court judgment¹ dealt with the issue of whether there was unequal treatment under Human Rights legislation between those persons

1. sent to hospital for treatment² without having been given a prison sentence and who **are** eligible for benefit **and**

2. those given a prison sentence and are either –

2.1 sent directly to hospital for treatment³

2.2 transferred to hospital from prison⁴

who are **not** eligible for benefit.

1 Regina (EM and others) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions [2009] EWHC 454 (Admin);

2 MH Act 83, s 37 & 41; 3 s 45A; 4 s 47

53280 The Court found that the difference in treatment of those persons termed 'technical lifers' could not be justified.

53281 A 'technical lifer' is an administrative classification. It involves the Secretary of State for Justice accepting that the criminal court that heard the individual's case would have given an order for hospital treatment rather than impose a sentence of imprisonment, if, for example, a suitable bed had been available.

53282 The effect of this is that a person given the status of a 'technical lifer' should be treated, for the purposes of benefit entitlement, as though they had been sent to hospital for treatment without having

been given a prison sentence (see DMG 53279 **1.** above).

Note: The practice of awarding ‘technical lifer’ status to eligible prisoners was abandoned in 2005.

Imprisonment or detention in legal custody abroad

53283 When a person is imprisoned or detained in legal custody abroad¹, the same benefit rules apply for

1. disqualification

2. exception from disqualification.

Note: UK benefit rules apply only for imprisonment for a criminal offence. The DM should decide whether the offence for which the claimant is convicted in the other country would be a criminal offence in the UK. A person detained abroad without trial is not disqualified for receiving benefit but see DMG 53284 if they are detained abroad pending trial.

1 R(S) 2/81; ESA Regs, reg 160(6)

Suspension of payment of ESA(Cont) during imprisonment

53284 The payment of ESA(Cont) to those claimants who are not disqualified for receiving it whilst undergoing imprisonment or detention in legal custody as a consequence of DMG 53259 or DMG 53283 is suspended¹. The suspension covers the period of imprisonment or detention in legal custody and any benefit payable during that period even if it is not in respect of that period.

1 ESA Regs, reg 161(1)

53285 ESA(Cont) is not suspended while the claimant is detained in a hospital or similar institution as a person suffering a mental illness unless DMG 53271 applies¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 161(2)

53286 If ESA(Cont) is suspended for any period, the period of suspension is not to be taken into account in calculating any period in respect of the extinguishment of the right to sums payable which are not obtained within the prescribed time¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 161(3) & SS (C&P) Regs, reg 38

53287 Where a person who is held in custody on remand is given a prison sentence which is less than the time already spent in custody (and is immediately released) they are disqualified for the entirety of the time spent in custody. No benefit is refunded to the value of the extra time spent in prison¹.

Example

Kenneth is detained in legal custody on 1.2.10. The DM suspends payment of his ESA(Cont). On 1.4.10 the DM is notified that Kenneth was given a custodial sentence. Therefore, the DM decides that Kenneth should be disqualified for receiving ESA(Cont) from 1.2.10.

1 WR Act s 18(4)(b)

53288 - 53300

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General

53301 DMs may make advance awards of ESA(IR) when certain conditions are met. These advance awards are unique to ESA(IR)¹. DMs should not confuse them with other advance claims and awards², including other advance awards of ESA(IR) (see DMG Chapter 02 for full guidance).

1 WR Act 07, s 5; ESA Regs, reg 146; 2 SS (C&P) Regs, reg 13

When to make an advance award of ESA(IR)

53302 DMs may make an advance award of ESA(IR)¹ when the claimant

- 1.** is not entitled to ESA(IR) because income exceeds the applicable amount **and**
- 2.** would be entitled to ESA(IR) if there was entitlement to
 - 2.1** the support component **or**
 - 2.2** the WRAC **and**
- 3.** is not entitled to ESA(Cont).

1 WR Act 07, s 5(1)

53303 Where DMG 53302 applies and DMG 53305 is satisfied

- 1.** the claim is treated as made for a period from the relevant day¹ (see DMG 53306) **and**

2. the DM may award ESA(IR) from the relevant day².

1 ESA Regs, reg 146(1)(a); 2 reg 146(1)(b)

53304 Where DMG 53303 applies the DM should make a decision on the original claim. That decision will be that the claimant

1. is not entitled to ESA from the date of claim **and**

2. is entitled to ESA(IR) from the relevant day.

When making that decision the DM will not be able to specify the amount of the claimant's ESA(IR) entitlement. However, the DM does not need to make another decision in order for the claimant to receive payment under the award from the relevant day.

53305 For an advance award of ESA(IR) to be made

1. the DM must be of the opinion that unless there is a change of circumstances the claimant satisfies

1.1 the basic conditions except having LCW **and**

1.2 the additional conditions for ESA(IR)

when ESA(IR) becomes payable under the award¹ **and**

2. claimants must be treated as having LCW because they

2.1 are terminally ill **or**

2.2 receive treatment by way of intravenous, intraperitoneal or intrathecal chemotherapy or are recovering from that treatment **or**

2.3 suffer from a specific disease **or**

2.4 are a carrier or have been in contact with a person suffering from a relevant disease **or**

2.5 are pregnant and satisfy certain conditions **or**

2.6 are a hospital in-patient **or**

2.7 receive regular treatment **or**

2.8 are treated as having LCW until a determination about LCW has been made **or**

2.9 may have entitlement to ESA(IR) while in education because they receive DLA

for the period before ESA(IR) becomes payable under the award².

Note 1: See DMG Chapter 41 for guidance on the basic conditions and the additional conditions for ESA(IR).

Note 2: See DMG Chapter 42 for guidance on being treated as having LCW.

Note 3: Claimants are terminally ill if they are suffering from a progressive disease and their death in consequence of that disease can reasonably be expected within 12 months³. Terminal illness is known as end of life in operational instructions and communications.

1 ESA Regs, reg 146(3)(a); 2 reg 146(3)(b); 3 reg 2(1)

Example 1

Tanya makes a claim for ESA. She is not entitled to ESA(Cont). She receives a LRP which exceeds her applicable amount. However, the DM is satisfied that Tanya would be entitled to ESA(IR) if she had entitlement to the support component or the WRAC. She is also treated as having LCW before the period ESA(IR) would become payable. The DM makes an advance award of ESA(IR).

Example 2

Paul makes a claim for ESA. He is not entitled to ESA(Cont). His partner Alison works part-time. The amount of Alison's earnings that are taken into account exceed Paul's applicable amount. The DM is not satisfied that Paul would be entitled to ESA(IR) if he had entitlement to the WRAC. However, the DM is satisfied that Paul would be entitled to ESA(IR) if he had entitlement to the support component. Paul is also treated as having LCW before the period ESA(IR) would become payable. The DM makes an advance award of ESA(IR).

Example 3

Samantha makes a claim for ESA on 1.12.08. She is not entitled to ESA(Cont). Her civil partner Ella works part-time. The amount of Ella's earnings that are taken into account is £135.00. They exceed Samantha's applicable amount of £94.95 and would still do so even if Samantha had entitlement to the support component of £29.00 or the WRAC of £24.00. The DM does not make an advance award.

Meaning of relevant day

53306 The relevant day is the day after the end of a period of 13 weeks beginning on the first day on which the claimant would be entitled to ESA(IR) if the claimant did not have income which exceeded the applicable amount¹.

1 ESA Regs, reg 146(2)

Example

Sergio makes a claim for ESA(IR) on 24.11.08. His wife Marta has part-time earnings which exceed his

applicable amount until either the support component or the WRAC becomes payable. The DM decides that the relevant day for Sergio's advance award is 26.2.09.

Applicable amount when ESA(IR) becomes payable under an advance award

53307 When ESA(IR) becomes payable under an advance award, claimants do not have to serve another assessment phase as it will have been served already. Instead, they will enter the main phase when the award of ESA(IR) becomes payable. That is the date on which the claimant would have been entitled to main phase if income had not exceeded the applicable amount before the relevant day¹.

Note: See DMG Chapter 44 for full guidance on the assessment phase and the main phase.

1 ESA Regs, reg 146(4)

Changes of circumstances

53308 Except for income exceeding the applicable amount, claimants have to continue to satisfy the conditions of entitlement for ESA(IR) until the relevant day (see DMG 53306). If there is a change of circumstances which means that the claimant no longer satisfies one of those conditions of entitlement, the DM should supersede the advance award (see DMG Chapter 04 for full guidance).

Note: See also DMG Chapter 03 for guidance on revision.

53309 Also, if there is a change of circumstances which means that the claimant's income no longer exceeds the applicable amount, the DM should

- 1.** supersede the advance award **and**
- 2.** decide entitlement to ESA(IR) in the normal way (see DMG Chapter 04 for full guidance).

However, DMs should note that the assessment phase does not start again. Instead, claimants receive the assessment phase rate of ESA(IR) until the day before the relevant day.

Example

Cecilia makes a claim for ESA(IR) on 15.12.08. Her civil partner Alison has an income from a credit insurance policy which necessitates an advance award. The DM decides that the relevant day is 19.3.09. On 2.2.09 Cecilia reports that Alison received the final payment from the credit insurance policy on 31.1.09. Cecilia's entitlement to ESA(IR) at the assessment phase rate begins the day after the final payment from the credit insurance policy is taken into account under the attribution rules (see DMG Chapter 48) and ends on 18.03.09.

Waiting days

53310 Where a claimant has to serve waiting days, there is no entitlement to ESA for the first seven days of a PLCW¹ (see DMG Chapter 41). When an advance award of ESA(IR) is made, the period before the relevant day (see DMG 53306) is a PLCW. Therefore, claimants do not have to serve waiting days when ESA(IR) becomes payable under the advance award.

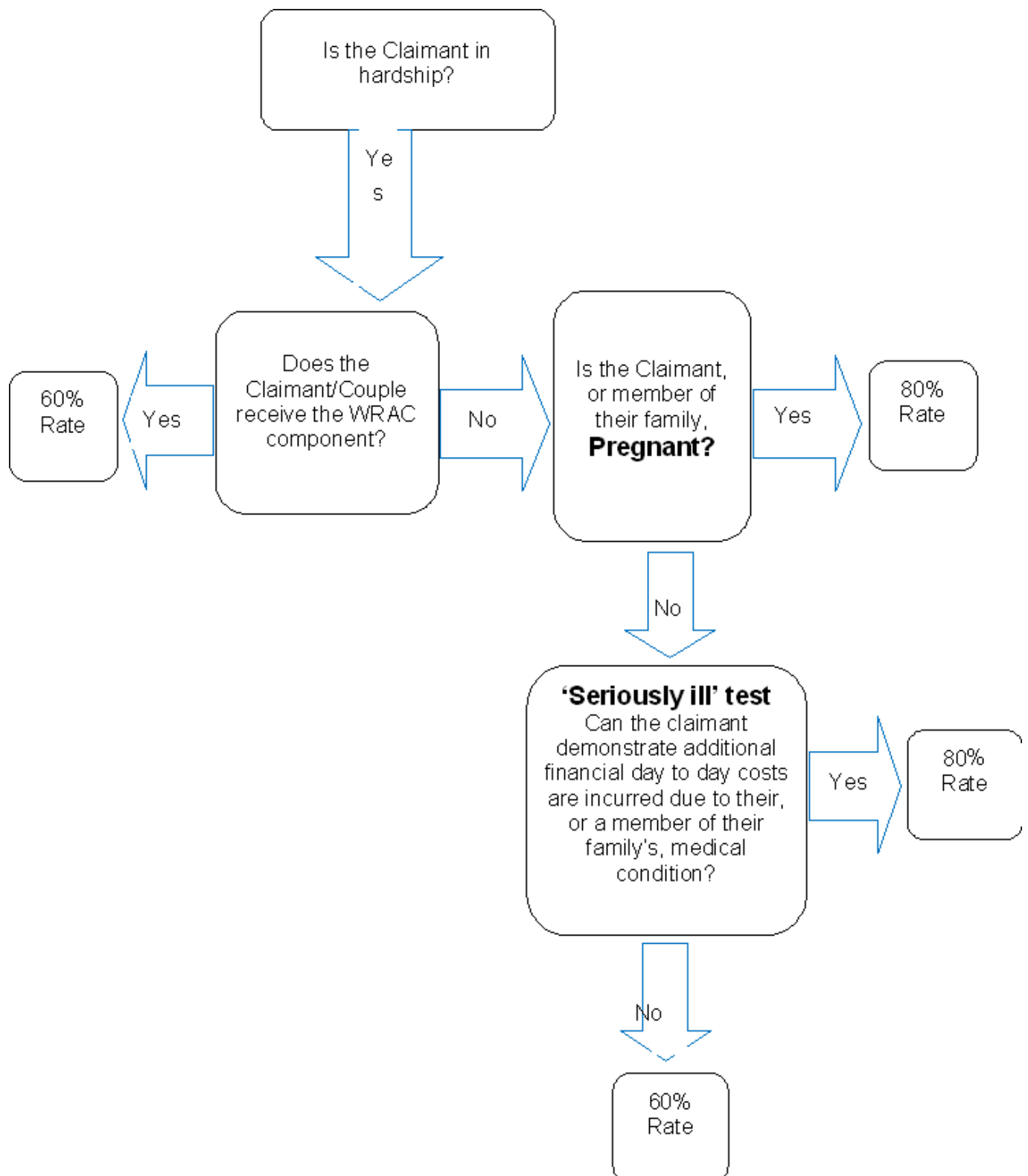
1 WR Act 07, Sch 2, para 2; ESA Regs, reg 144(1)

Linking

53311 DMG Chapter 41 gives guidance on linking rules. These rules also apply to advance awards of ESA(IR) under DMG 53302.

53312 – 53999

Appendix 1 - determining the amount of ESA hardship payable



Appendix 2 - Common examples of medical conditions that may incur additional costs

Some more common factors to be considered when deciding if additional day to day costs may be incurred due to an illness in addition to the illustrative examples at DMG 53139.

This list of medical conditions and examples is not exhaustive, the DM should consider all the facts and circumstances of each individual case when considering the 'serious illness' test to qualify for the 80% rate of hardship.

The test is whether the medical condition incurs additional costs (see DMG 53124).

Diet

Full health depends upon a regular and varied intake of food containing sufficient calories and essential nutrients. The financial costs of a special diet may well be more than those of an average healthy diet and incur additional costs, but some special foodstuffs are available on NHS prescription, for example, gluten-free flour and biscuits.

There are certain medical conditions that require keeping to a strict diet, most commonly

1. diabetes mellitus
2. low protein diet for renal failure
3. gluten free diet for coeliac disease
4. low fat diet for hyperlipidaemia
5. soft diet for conditions causing difficulty in swallowing
6. high fibre diet for diverticular disease
7. cow's milk free diet for lactose intolerance
8. weight reducing diets for obesity may be desirable but it may depend on whether they are being followed due to medical advice from a GP or NHS dietician because of a health condition such as high blood pressure, heart disease etc.

A telephone call to local NHS services may confirm whether or not certain free products are available in a particular geographical area.

Accommodation

1. The impact of loss of

- shelter
- access to cooking facilities
- fuel
- clean water and
- sewage disposal

may need to be considered in terms of their effect on a medical condition. The test is whether day to day additional costs to secure those facilities are incurred.

2. Stable housing is needed for some medical treatments, for example:

- suitable accommodation is needed for people using a kidney machine for dialysis at home which may incur extra electricity operating costs to run
- allergic conditions such as asthma triggered by house dust require clean accommodation where dust control measures may be applied which may incur additional cleaning costs, extra products or special products which are more expensive
- a refrigerator may be required even in winter months for the storage of certain drugs, e.g. insulin, and therefore maintenance of the electric supply would be essential.

3. A plentiful supply of clean fresh water is necessary for good health but a person may have a medical condition requiring higher than average fluid intake, for example, renal stones.

4. The need for adequate cooking facilities is associated with some of the dietary measures outlined above, for example, baking gluten free foods, which may incur additional fuel costs.

5. The usual method of payment for gas, electricity and water may need to be considered if there is a risk that heating, water or cooking facilities may be lost and it is essential for the claimant or a member of the claimant's family.

Heating

The time of year must be considered as lack of heating is only likely to cause health problems at certain times of year for most people. However those with rheumatic or mobility conditions are likely to suffer an increase in the severity and frequency of symptoms in cold or damp weather and may therefore incur additional costs for heating.

Exposure to extremes of temperature presents a risk to all people but certain medical conditions may deteriorate without an ability to control the ambient temperature, such as

1. angina pectoris
2. chronic respiratory conditions such as asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema
3. Raynaud's disease
4. peripheral vascular disease
5. rheumatoid arthritis

and so even in summer months may incur additional heating costs to keep an ambient temperature.

Laundry and personal hygiene

Some medical conditions require a level of hygiene greater than normal or may result in a substantially greater quantity of laundry and the use of incontinence aids or sanitary towels and reliance on a constant supply of hot water for extra showers.

DMs may have to consider the medical need for regular baths or showers and extra laundry that will incur additional costs for water, electric, laundry detergents, soap, incontinence pads etc.

Examples of conditions that may lead to extra washing or laundry are

1. incontinence
2. exudative skin conditions such as eczema or psoriasis which may need bath additives
3. stoma patients
4. bleeding haemorrhoids
5. discharging fistulae or sinuses.

Transport

Some medical conditions will produce long term problems in the ability to walk. People in hardship may need to travel to shop, attend appointments or for other essential reasons and may incur additional costs for taxis or extra journeys.

For example if a claimant is currently undergoing a systematic course of treatment needing attendance at a treatment centre twice or more times a week it is important to continue that treatment for their recovery and prevent a deterioration of their condition or indeed they may live remotely with no reliable or regular public transport and as such they may incur additional or more expensive transport costs (e.g.

using taxis).

The following medical conditions produce a long term restriction in the ability to walk

1. cardio-respiratory disorders causing breathlessness
2. angina causing chest pain
3. neurological disorders affecting the gait
4. arthritis of a weight bearing joint causing pain and possibly a limping gait
5. spinal injuries or back, joint and muscle disorders where the use of the lower limbs in walking or climbing may be affected.

Any course of treatment arranged by a recognized health professional which requires attendance at a health establishment should be considered as essential to prevent a decline in health. DMs should consider if a person with a chronic medical condition would still be able to attend for treatment if ESA hardship is not paid at the higher rate of 80% due to additional costs incurred.

However DMs should bear in mind that refunds of all, or part of, necessary travel costs to and from hospitals for NHS treatment are normally available to people getting ESA(IR).

See DMG 53131 for guidance regarding prescription charges.

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