



Employment and Support Allowance –  
Incapacity Benefits Reassessments:  
Outcomes of Work Capability  
Assessments, Great Britain

Department for Work and Pensions:  
Quarterly official statistical bulletin



Issue: 6 November 2012

# Executive Summary

## The bulletin

This report presents information on the reassessment of incapacity benefits claimants for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in Great Britain. This report shows outcomes of completed reassessments, claims still in progress and claims closed before the process is complete.

Its focus is on the 3 months' worth of information for claimants starting reassessment between December 2011 to February 2012. It also provides a full time series since the start of the reassessment process and updates figures provided in previous releases, to reflect additions to and revisions of the source data. The publication uses the final DWP Decision Maker's decision, or the recommendation made by the Atos Healthcare Professional, when the Decision Maker's decision is not available – please see 3.2.2. Note that robust data is only available for claims that were referred at least 8 months ago due to the time required to arrange and complete assessments and record and process data. Thus only claims referred before end February 2012 are included, but statistics can present actions on them to August 2012.

## Important notes

This is the second time the Department has published information on incapacity benefits reassessments on a national level. Robust data is only available for the first twelve months of the national roll-out due to the time required to complete assessments and record and process data, and so can only give only a provisional picture. In particular it is likely that not all appeals made in relation to these claims will have been heard. Future releases will revise the statistics shown in this publication.

This release does not contain statistics on *new* claims to ESA. These are published separately at the following link: [http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa\\_wca](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_wca)

## Headline figures

**Figures in this issue cannot reflect the final outcomes, because they do not include:**

- effect of appeals still lodged in the legal system; and
- claims with no outcome yet recorded.

**For these reasons it is likely that the statistics underestimate the proportion of claimants who will ultimately be awarded ESA, by greater amounts for more recent periods.**

Outcomes of initial assessments adjusted to account for outcomes after appeals for incapacity benefits claimants referred for reassessment between December 2011 and February 2012 show:

- **91 per cent of claimants have an outcome i.e. decisions have been made on their claims;**
- 3 per cent of claimants had their claim closed before having an outcome; and
- 6 per cent of claimants were still undergoing assessment.

**Claimants with an outcome for their claim can be broken down as follows:**

- **64 per cent of claimants were entitled to the benefit. Within this –**
  - 39 per cent of claimants were placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG), and
  - 25 per cent of claimants were placed in the Support Group (SG); and
- **36 per cent of claimants were assessed as Fit for Work (FFW) and are not entitled to ESA.**

An explanation of outcomes is given in at 1.2, and more details are given at 2.4 in this document and table 1.

**Future publications**

At this point it is only possible to publish outcomes of the initial assessments by month, and by Local Authority adjusted to account for any appeals so far heard. Future editions will include outcomes by reason of claim and outcomes of appeals as further data becomes available, but this may be some months in the future.

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# 1 Background

## 1.1 Introduction

In October 2008, existing benefits paid on grounds of incapacity and disability, that is Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) and Income Support (IS) on the grounds of incapacity, were replaced with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for all new claimants. The new benefit is more aligned with Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA):

- placing greater emphasis on assessment of an individual's functional capabilities; and
- providing support and encouragement to move more claimants with health conditions towards employment.

Starting from October 2010 most claimants who receive IB, SDA and IS paid on the grounds of illness or disability will be assessed to see if they qualify for ESA.

The reassessment commenced with a trial in the Aberdeen and Burnley areas in October 2010. These trials provided an indication of claimant and staff reactions to the reassessment process and have been used to inform the national roll-out.<sup>1</sup> This started with a limited introductory phase at the end of February 2011 and reached full scale in April 2011.

This reassessment will not affect claimants if:

- they are entitled to ESA already; or
- they are due to reach State Pension age before 6 April 2014.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 Reassessment process

Jobcentre Plus contacts IB, SDA or IS claimants when their benefit becomes due for reassessment to tell them about the changes. The key part of the reassessment of IB, SDA or IS claimants is the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) process, which is used to assess capability for work and determine eligibility for ESA.

As part of the WCA claimants will first be sent a limited capability for work questionnaire (ESA50) by the service contractor, Atos Healthcare, to complete and return. The contents of the questionnaire and any other evidence supplied will be used to decide if the claimant needs to attend a face-to-face assessment. Claimants with the most severe functional impairments as a result of their health condition or disability or who are terminally ill will be fast-tracked into the Support Group (SG) on the basis of paper evidence rather than having a face-to-face appointment.

When face-to-face assessments are required, they are carried out by a trained healthcare professional (HCP) working for Atos Healthcare. They then make a recommendation for each claimant to the DWP's decision maker who in turn makes the final decision based on all available evidence. An IB, SDA or IS claimant can have three possible outcomes:

Individuals can be found fit for work –

in this case their IB, SDA and/or IS claim closes. The claimant may be entitled to JSA, IS on grounds other than incapacity for work, or Pension Credit (PC). If the claimant disagrees with the decision they can ask the DWP decision maker to

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<sup>1</sup> See Adams, L. et al. (2011), 'Trial incapacity benefits reassessment: customer and staff views and experiences'. <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2011-2012/rrep741.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The State Pension age for women will be between 61 years and 11 months and 62 years. For men it is 65 years.

reconsider the decision or appeal to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS). ESA can be paid at the assessment phase rate pending the outcome of the appeal;

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work –

in this instance their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim and they are placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). Claimants in the group are expected to take part in work-focused interviews (WFIs) with their personal adviser. They are not expected to work, but are provided with help and support to prepare for work and eventually move into work where possible. Claimants can ask for the placement into the WRAG to be reconsidered, or appealed; and

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work and in addition, limited capability for work related activity –

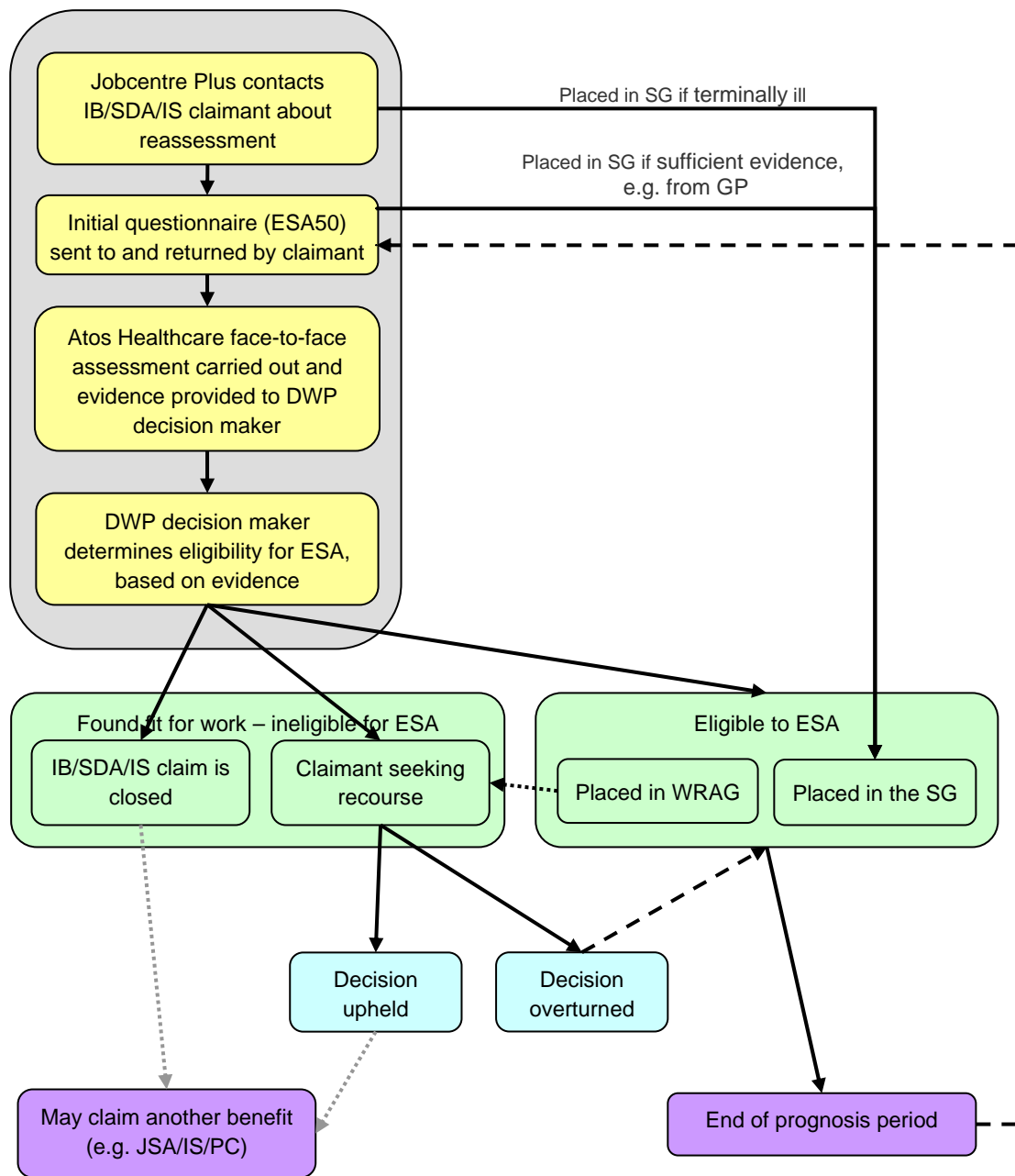
in this situation their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim and they are placed in the SG. Those in this group have the most severe functional impairments and so are provided with unconditional support and receive a higher rate of benefit than people in the WRAG.

Both WRAG and SG claims run until the initial or latest 'prognosis period' ends, which is usually but not always a standard length of time such as 3, 6, 12, 18 or 24 months based on the individual claimant's health and then have a repeat assessment.

### **1.3 Claimant journey**

Figure A below depicts the process of incapacity benefits reassessments – starting with claimants being informed about the reassessment process, taking in the functional assessment, and ending with an initial decision, a decision after reconsideration or appeal, or a repeat decision after a prognosis period.

**Figure A: High level reassessment journey**



### 1.4 Decision-making basis

The decision on ESA entitlement after the reassessment is based on functional impairment.

#### 1.4.1 Reasons for WRAG assignment

The possible recorded reasons for a claimant placement in the WRAG are:

- scored 15 points or more at the face to face assessment (due to physical functions or mental, cognitive and intellectual functions or a combination of both); or
- medically diagnosed with non-functional descriptors or limited capability for work or a combination of both before or at the face to face assessment.

#### 1.4.2 Reasons for SG assignment

The possible recorded reasons for a claimant placement in the SG are:

- undergoing chemotherapy;
- deemed to be mental or physical health risk;
- having a pregnancy risk;
- having a severe functional disability; and
- being terminally ill, with an expected life expectancy of 6 months or less.

#### 1.5 Closed and live claims

A small proportion of pre-existing incapacity benefits claims were closed before the reassessment process was complete, and a small proportion were still in progress at the time the data were extracted. Current data does not allow anything conclusive to be said about the destinations of closed and in progress cases, nor to infer what would have been or would be the outcome of assessment.



## 2 Results

### 2.1 The publication

This report presents information on incapacity benefits reassessments in Great Britain, but not Northern Ireland which has its own benefit system. It does this through statistics on:

- volumes for outcomes of completed assessments and for status of claims still in progress and claims closed before the assessment process is complete; and
- percentages for outcomes of the completed assessments.

The publication's main focus is on the 3 months' worth of information for claimants starting reassessment between December 2011 to February 2012. It also provides a full time series since the start of the reassessment process and updates figures provided in previous releases, to reflect additions to and revisions of the source data. The publication uses the final DWP Decision Maker's decision, or the recommendation made by the Atos Healthcare Professional, when the Decision Maker's decision is not available – please see 3.2.2. The data is not available until at least 8 months in arrears because of time needed to:

- allow time for all decisions to be made and recorded; and
- enable processing of data sourced from inside the department and outside it from Atos Healthcare.

Thus only claims referred before end of February 2012 are included, but statistics can present actions on them to August 2012.

This publication incorporates claims referred before end of February 2012 in order to align it with the ESA WCA statistics which have been release on 23 October 2012. Future publications are expected to be released quarterly.

### 2.2 Important notices

This is the second time the Department has published information on incapacity benefits reassessments on a national level. This release covers the first twelve months after the national roll-out, and so can only give a provisional picture of the process for pre-existing incapacity benefits. In particular it is likely that not all appeals made in relation to these claims will have been heard. Future updates will revise the statistics shown in this publication.

This release does not contain statistics on *new* claims to ESA. These are published separately at the following link:

[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa\\_wca](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_wca)

### 2.3 Future publications

At this point it is only possible to publish outcomes of the initial assessments by month and by Local Authority area, adjusted to account for any appeals so far heard. Future editions will include outcomes by reason of claim and outcomes of appeals as further data becomes available, but this may be some months in the future.

The Department would welcome feedback from users for future publications using the contact details at the back of this report.

## 2.4 Supplementary tables

Tables from which statistics in this report are drawn are available on the departmental website at the following link:

[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa\\_ibr](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_ibr)

## 2.5 Statistics

139,200 incapacity benefits claimants have been referred for reassessment in the period from December 2011 to February 2012. Since the start of the reassessment process up to February 2012 a total of 462,100 incapacity benefits claimants had been referred for reassessment.

### 2.5.1 Status of claims closed before assessment and those still in progress – Table 1

In the period from December 2011 to February 2012 9 per cent of incapacity benefits claims that were referred for reassessment had not completed the WCA process by August 2012; of these 3 per cent were closed before a decision was made and 6 per cent were still in progress.

### 2.5.2 Comparison with claims closed before assessment and those still in progress of new ESA claims

Comparing uncompleted assessment processes for reassessment referrals and new claims shows that:

- a small proportion of reassessed claims were still in progress at the time the data were extracted, which is lower than for new ESA claims; and
- a much lower proportion of reassessed claims were closed before the process was complete than for new ESA claims.

The lower proportion of work in progress for reassessed claims in comparison to new ESA claims can be explained by different claimant journeys covered in the statistical releases. For reassessed claims the total process is shorter, as the statistics only show reassessed claims once they have been referred to Atos Healthcare. For new ESA claims the statistics also include the period covering the initial contact of a claimant to set up an ESA claim. For reassessed claimants this part of the claimant journey does not apply as they already have established benefit claims for IB, SDA or IS. Due to this shorter claimant journey one would expect fewer claims still in progress at the time the data was extracted.

Current data does not allow anything conclusive to be said about the destinations of closed and in progress cases, nor to infer what would have been or will be the outcome of assessment. However, the department has published research<sup>3</sup> that investigated why some new ESA claims closed before assessment. It found that:

*“An important reason why ESA claims in this sample were withdrawn or closed before they were fully assessed was because the person recovered and either returned to work, or claimed a benefit more appropriate to their situation.”*

### 2.5.3 Outcomes of reassessments – Table 1

These results exclude claims closed before assessment or those still in progress. They are adjusted to account for outcomes after appeals where an appeal has been heard.

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<sup>3</sup> Barnes, H. et al (2011), ‘Unsuccessful Employment and Support Allowance claims – qualitative research’. <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2011-2012/rrep762.pdf>

Table 1 on outcomes of completed reassessments which were referred in the period from December 2011 to February 2012 shows:

- 64 per cent of claimants were entitled to ESA. Within this –
  - 39 per cent of claimants were placed in the WRAG, and
  - 25 per cent of claimants were placed in the SG; and
- 36 per cent of claimants were assessed as FFW.

#### 2.5.4 Comparison with the initial outcomes of new ESA claims

These figures show a higher proportion of claims entitled to ESA than for new ESA claims.

It is hard to attribute this difference to particular causes, but it *is likely* that IB, SDA and IS claimants being reassessed for ESA differ from new ESA claims, with a greater proportion having long standing and multiple health conditions resulting in a limited capability for work decision at the time the reassessment is completed.

The statement should not be interpreted to mean that the above is anything more than a possible reason behind the differences, and there may also be other undetected factors at work.

#### 2.5.5 Comparison with previous figures

The above figures represent a decline of 2 percentage points in the proportion entitled to ESA compared with the previous quarter and also a decline compared with period covered in the previous publication<sup>4</sup>. The proportion of those assigned to the WRAG declined by 4 percentage points, whereas the proportion assigned to the SG increased by 2 percentage points.

However, this comparison should be treated with caution, both because the exclusion of in progress cases would be expected to have more impact on recent months and because the characteristics of those reassessed at the beginning of the process may be different from those reassessed later on. Further the period cohorts for the latest months worth of data adjust the least for the situation after appeal, as many appeal processes are still ongoing. Therefore these statistics are likely to alter in successive statistical reports.

#### 2.5.6 Outcomes of reassessments by region and local authority – Table 2

Table 2 shows a breakdown by government office region and local authority for all incapacity benefits claimants that were referred for reassessment before the end of February 2012. Decisions made on these claims up until August 2012 are included in these statistics.

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<sup>4</sup> The headline figures in the previous publication from March 2012 covered all claims referred for reassessments since the start of the trials up until July 2011.

## 3 Statistical Information

### 3.1 Data sources

Raw data used to identify IB, SDA, IS benefit claimants, WCA process outcomes and statuses, and establish appeals results are:

- DWP's benefit administration datasets covering incapacity reassessments starting from 11 October 2010. This is cleaned (checked for error) by the internal data owner. This cleansing means that the base data available at any issue of the bulletin is lagged; and
- Atos Healthcare's face to face assessment, ESA85, data and limited capability for work questionnaire, ESA50, data – this will cover those cases where the WCA process by Atos is completed. This data is administered on the Medical Services Referral System (MSRS). There is no internal checking of this data, however given the rigor of quality assurance around the assessment it is thought to be robust. This process is also delayed at the point of issue.

### 3.2 Definitional rules

#### 3.2.1 General definitional rules

The data presented in this publication is taken from a dataset which combines the data stated above. The following counting rules and units of analysis are used:

- a claim is a pre-existing IB, SDA or IS claim going through the reassessment process for ESA from 11 October 2010;
- a claimant is anyone who has claimed incapacity benefits;
- an outcome is where the assessment is completed, meaning in most cases that the limited capability for work questionnaire and face to face assessment has been undertaken, and the claimant is found FFW or else placed into the WRAG or SG. Outcomes are the final DWP Decision Maker's decision, or the recommendation made by the Atos Healthcare Professional, when the Decision Maker's decision is not available – please see 3.2.2; and
- a status is where the reassessment process is not completed. This includes cases closed before assessment and those still in progress.

#### 3.2.2 Definition of outcomes and identification of cases

The publication uses the final DWP Decision Maker's decision, or the recommendation made by the Atos Healthcare Professional, when the Decision Maker's decision is not available. This provides a more complete analysis. The Decision Maker's decision may not be available for the following reasons:

- For some cases the DWP decision was not yet available when the data was extracted. The Atos recommendation is classed as outcome. The Atos recommendation will be replaced by the DWP decision once the data is available.
- DWP's benefit administration datasets which underlie this publication do not contain information on all FFW decisions. Information on whether a Decision Maker has found a claimant FFW is only available if the claimant appeals this decision. For claimants who have to date not appealed their fit for work decision only information on the Atos FFW recommendation is available. This will be replaced by the Decision Maker's decision if this becomes available (for claimants appealing) or it is inferred that the Decision Maker agreed with the Atos recommendation if the claim was

subsequently closed.

- A claim will be identified as having started the reassessment process when it is referred to Atos Healthcare by DWP Operations. Upon receipt of the referral at Atos, the claim is recorded on the Atos MSRS dataset. This Atos data is matched with DWP administrative data to identify outcomes or statuses. Data is matched using the encrypted National Insurance number and the dates relating to the assessment and decision making process. Note that small discrepancies in dates are tolerated in the matching process, to allow for the time taken for claims to be transferred between DWP and Atos and any time taken between receipt of case data and when records are updated.

### 3.3 Calculation rules

The following accounting rules are applied to the aforementioned dataset:

- volumes for outcomes of completed assessments and for status of incomplete assessments. These are counts of the outcomes and statuses for particular periods; and
- percentages for outcomes of the completed assessments. These are each of the outcome counts divided by sum of all three outcomes for particular periods.

The percentages are the focus of this release. Note values are rounded; therefore addition of all volumes for outcomes and statuses may not sum to total cases, and addition of all percentages may not sum to 100 per cent.

### 3.4 Notification of changes

The following are known issues, changes and revisions in this release from the last issue:

Since the last release the data production methodology has improved. This improvement resulted in a slight change of the total caseload covered in the last release.

The following are early notifications of future changes to this series:

No changes for this release.

### 3.5 Statistical series and contact

The current edition of this publication is available at the following link:

[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa\\_ibr](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_ibr)

Enquiries about the statistics should be directed to:

**Kristine Langenbucher**

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email: [ESA.ANALYSIS@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK](mailto:ESA.ANALYSIS@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK)

Tel: 020 7449 5759

## Annex A – Benefit eligibility and structure

### A1 Benefit eligibility – IB, SDA and IS

On 27 October 2008, pre-existing benefits paid on grounds of incapacity and disability, that is IB, SDA and IS, were replaced with ESA for all *new* claimants. Claimants already in receipt of these benefits at the said date could remain on those benefits (if they continued to satisfy the rules of entitlement) until their claims are reassessed to see if they qualify for ESA.

#### A1.1 IB and IS

IB is a contributory benefit payable if the claimant had paid sufficient National Insurance (NI) contributions. People without sufficient NI contributions could claim IS on grounds of incapacity instead. IS could be paid on its own or it could top up IB.

Eligibility for IB and IS was assessed under the Personal Capability Assessment (PCA). The PCA was a points-related assessment of the extent to which a claimant's condition affected their ability to perform a range of activities. It consisted of two parts: a physical/sensory assessment and a mental health assessment. The WCA was a logical development of the PCA.

#### A1.2 SDA

Some claimants still get SDA due to being severely disabled and incapable of work before April 2001.

### A2 Benefit eligibility – ESA

Starting in October 2010, most claimants who receive IB, SDA and IS paid on the grounds of illness or disability will be assessed to see if they qualify for ESA. If they qualify for ESA their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim. For claimants who were previously in receipt of IB or SDA, their benefit will be converted to contributory ESA; if they were previously in receipt of IS their benefit will be converted to income-related ESA. In the same way as with IB, contributory ESA can be paid with an income-related top up and a transitional addition if appropriate.

#### A2.1 Claimant conditions

ESA can be awarded on the basis of low income or NI contributions or both:

- Income-related ESA (ESA-IR) – in this instance a claimant may be entitled to claim the benefit (regardless of how much they have paid by way of NI contributions), if they satisfy the conditions relating to financial position. This means they must have savings of less than £16,000, and if they have a partner or civil partner, this person must work for less than 24 hours per week on average; and
- Contributory ESA (ESA-C) – in this case a claimant may be entitled to claim contributory ESA, if they have paid enough NI contributions.

#### A2.2 Overseas claimants

IB and SDA claimants living overseas will have their claims reassessed following broadly the same process as that for UK residents. However, there are some differences both in the process and in the options available to overseas customers after a decision has been made.

### **A3 Benefit structure**

IB, SDA and IS claimants are assessed through the WCA process to determine their capability for work and eligibility for ESA whilst still on their current benefit. Customers who qualify for conversion to ESA will move directly into the 'main phase' of ESA – please see A3.2. They will immediately be placed in either the WRAG or SG, receiving the relevant personal allowance and component and transitional addition if appropriate – please see Annex B for information on benefit rates.

#### **A3.1 Reassessment of IB, SDA and IS claims**

IB, SDA or IS claimants are informed by Jobcentre Plus when their benefit becomes due for reassessment. The date of a claimant's assessment will be based on the review date of their PCA – please see A1.1. Claimants exempt from undertaking a PCA will have a review date set by Jobcentre Plus.

Claimants will then be assessed through the WCA process. As part of the WCA process claimants are sent a limited capability for work questionnaire (ESA50) and following completion may be invited to a face to face assessment carried out by a trained healthcare professional working for Atos Healthcare. However, depending on the severity of an individual's condition some claimant journeys will differ; for example those who are terminally ill or otherwise have sufficient medical evidence are fast-tracked into the SG on the basis of paper evidence rather than having a face-to-face assessment.

The WCA was developed by medical and technical experts alongside disability organisations. It is subject to continuous review, and has already been reviewed. This assessment process identifies a variety of different reasons for the placement of claimants in the WRAG and SG.

The ESA statistical release for new claims at the following link gives more detail on how the WCA was developed and what are the reasons for assignment into set groups:

[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa\\_wca](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_wca)

Information gathered through the questionnaire and any face to face assessment, together with any other evidence provided by the claimant, is used by the DWP's decision maker to determine whether their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim.

#### **A3.2 Outcomes of the WCA process – Main phase**

The WCA process can have three possible outcomes for an IB, SDA or IS claimant:

Individuals can be found fit for work –

in this case their IB, SDA and/or IS claim closes. The claimant may be entitled to JSA, IS on grounds other than incapacity for work, or PC. If the claimant disagrees with the decision they can ask the DWP decision maker to reconsider the decision or appeal to HMCTS. ESA can be paid at the assessment phase rate pending the outcome of the appeal;

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work –

in this instance their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim and they are placed in the WRAG. Claimants in the group are expected to take part in WFIs with their personal adviser. They are not expected to work, but are provided with help and support to prepare for work and eventually move into work where possible. Claimants can ask for the placement into the WRAG to be reconsidered, or appealed; and

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work and in addition, limited

capability for work related activity –

in this situation their IB, SDA or IS claim is converted into an ESA claim and they are placed in the SG. Those in this group have the most severe functional impairments and so are provided with unconditional support and receive a higher rate of benefit than people in the WRAG.

### A3.3 Repeat assessments

All claimants in the WRAG and SG are given a prognosis of when they may be fit for work. Individuals are then again assessed through repeat assessments after the prognosis period expires. Similar reconsideration and appeal arrangements apply where claimants disagree with the decision to that described in the previous paragraph.

The interval between assessments is usually but not always a standard length of time such as 3, 6, 12, 18 or 24 months based on the claimant's health. This is to ensure that they are still eligible to ESA and are allocated to the correct group.



## Annex B – Benefit rates in payment

### **B1 ESA rates for new ESA claimants**

For *new* ESA claims ESA is paid at different rates depending on claimant's situation and stage in the claim process. The assessment phase rate, or basic rate, is normally paid for the first 13 weeks of the claim while a decision is made on the claimant's limited capability for work through the WCA process. In the assessment phase rates are aligned to those for JSA. Additional premiums may be paid as part of income-related ESA to provide support for specific needs for example as a result of disability, age or caring responsibilities.

The main phase starts from week 14 of the claim for individuals who are assessed as having limited capability for work. In the main phase claimants receive an additional Work Related Activity component or Support component on top of the basic rate. In addition to the premiums payable during the assessment phase, anyone receiving income-related ESA in the SG will automatically receive the Enhanced Disability Premium, if they have not previously qualified for it.

### **B2 Transitional protection for IB, SDA and IS claimants**

The structure of ESA and its rate of allowances vary from each of the incapacity benefits it is replacing. Existing awards of IB, SDA or IS will continue to be paid to the day before the conversion decision takes effect, whether or not those awards qualify for conversion to ESA.

IB, SDA or IS cases converted into ESA cases will immediately be placed into the WRAG or SG, receiving the relevant personal allowance and component on the day the claim is converted:

- if IB/SDA/IS claimants qualify for conversion to ESA and they receive more on existing incapacity benefits than the appropriate ESA rate, their existing rate of benefit will be protected at the point of conversion. They will be awarded additional allowances on a transitional basis (equivalent to the shortfall between the two rates) until the rate of ESA catches up; or else
- If claimants who are eligible for ESA receive less on incapacity benefits than the appropriate ESA rate, their benefit will immediately be increased to the ESA rate on conversion.

Claimants will have the right of appeal against a decision not to convert an existing award to one for ESA:

- if a claimant is appealing against a decision that their award does not qualify for conversion, ESA will be paid, pending the outcome of the appeal, at a rate equivalent to the rate that new ESA claimants receive in the 13 week assessment phase; or else
- if a claimant qualifies for conversion to ESA, but they want to appeal against being placed in the WRAG rather than the SG. Then these claimants will receive ESA inclusive of the work-related activity component (and any transitional addition) pending the outcome of the appeal.

### **B3 ESA, IB, SDA and IS rates**

The DirectGov website provides the latest information on ESA, IB, SDA and IS benefit rates at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/what-youll-get>  
<https://www.gov.uk/severe-disablement-allowance/what-youll-get>  
<https://www.gov.uk/income-support/what-youll-get>  
<https://www.gov.uk/incapacity-benefit>  
<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/further-information>