

# Analysis of Work Capability Assessments outcomes: Detailed medical condition breakdown after the effect of appeals

September 2011

# Background

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on the grounds of incapacity for new claims from 27th October 2008. The introduction of ESA for new claimants in October 2008 was accompanied by a new assessment, the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The WCA is based on advice delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) assessment services contractor, Atos Healthcare.

ESA claimants begin the functional assessment process shortly after starting their claim. Atos Healthcare undertakes an assessment and following the assessment, their recommendation is passed on to DWP to make a final decision on the claimant's ESA status. This will be one of the following:

- Support Group – For those with the most severe disabilities or health conditions which mean it would be unreasonable to expect them to engage in work-related activities. They receive a support component in addition to the basic ESA rate and are not required to engage in any work-focussed interviews or work related activity, although they may volunteer for support if they wish;
- Work Related Activity Group – For those who are capable of moving towards employment. They are mandated to engage in work related activity to help them prepare for a return to work and receive a work-related activity component in addition to the basic ESA rate;
- Fit for Work – For those assessed to be able to be capable of undertaking work. Their ESA claim will cease and they may claim Jobseekers Allowance for support to help them return to work.

More information on Employment and Support Allowance is available on the DirectGov website at the following link:  
[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/esa/DG\\_171894](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/esa/DG_171894).

# Publication

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

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

This publication shows the outcomes of the initial WCA, for new ESA claims between October 2008 and November 2010 broken down by medical condition. The outcomes include the results of any appeals heard. It is consistent with the information contained in Table 4 of the July 2011 publication.

# Methodology

## Medical Condition

- The detailed medical conditions are based on the International Classifications of Diseases, 10th Edition, published by the World Health Organisation.
- Entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is based on functional capabilities, not on condition per se. The medical condition recorded on a claim form does not in itself confer entitlement to ESA. So, for example, a decision on entitlement for a customer claiming Employment and Support on the basis of alcoholism would be based on their ability to carry out the range of activities assessed by the Work Capability Assessment, or on the effects of any associated mental health problems.
- The data on health conditions is based on the information recorded on the medical certificate ('fitnote') provided by a person's GP when they first make a claim for ESA. This represents what their GP considers to be the reason a person cannot work at that time. However, many people applying for ESA will in fact have more than one condition, and these conditions may affect each other. Where someone has more than one diagnosis or disabling condition, only the predominant one is currently recorded.

## Rounding

- All caseload figures have been rounded to the nearest 100;
- A zero is used to denote categories that have very few, or no entries; and,
- As a result of rounding, summing the rows or columns in a table may not exactly match the totals shown.

## Source Data

The data presented in this publication combines three main data sources:

- Benefit claims data held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) covering new ESA claims that started between October 2008 and November 2010;
- Functional assessment data sourced from Atos Healthcare covering assessments completed up to February 2011; and
- Appeals data sourced from Tribunals Service covering appeals heard up to April 2011 (and which link to ESA claims up to the end of May 2010). Note that data from Tribunals Service does not record the reason for appeal and we must infer this from the original JCP DM Decision. This is typically a fit for work decision.

# Results

For all new ESA Claims from 27 October 2008 to 30 November 2010, the breakdown of initial WCA outcomes including the effect of appeals heard to date are shown below:

- Support Group - 7%
- Work Related Activity Group - 21%
- Fit for Work - 34%
- Claim closed before assessment complete - 36%
- Assessment still in progress - 1%

Please see the accompanying spreadsheet for the breakdown of these results by detailed medical condition.

**Daniel Groves (daniel.groves@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)**  
**Department for Work and Pensions**

**September 2011**