

Freedom of Information request 2014-249

Date received: 16th January 2014

Date of response: 13th February 2014

Information request

I would like to make a Freedom of Information request concerning Work Capability Assessments (WCAs) carried out by Atos Healthcare to determine eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

The final decision regarding eligibility for ESA, or whether a person is placed in the ESA Support or Work Related Activity Group, rests with the DWP. I would therefore like to know the number of decisions made by the DWP since August 2010 that overturn the provisional decision regarding eligibility to ESA made by Atos Healthcare following a Work Capability Assessment.

I would like to know both the number of final DWP decisions that overturn a provisional decision by Atos, following a Work Capability Assessment, that a claimant is 'fit for work' and therefore not entitled to ESA. And final DWP decisions that overturn a provisional decision by Atos that a claimant should be in the Work Related Activity group, when the DWP determines a claimant should be in the Support group.

I would like statistics from August 2010 to as near to the present time as you have figures for.

DWP response

Please note that DWP does not 'overturn' Atos 'decisions' but makes decisions based on advice/recommendation of Atos, who carry out the assessments.

Anyone claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) will undergo the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The WCA is based on the premise that eligibility should not be based on a person's condition, but rather on the way that condition limits their functional capability. Following the WCA, Atos Healthcare's Healthcare Professional (HCP) provides a recommendation of the claimant's eligibility for ESA. The final decision on ESA benefit entitlement is made by a DWP Decision Maker (DM) informed by advice from the Atos Healthcare's HCP and other available evidence

In response to your query, the table below shows the number of ESA DM's decisions compared to the recommendation made by Atos Healthcare's HCP

in Great Britain for assessments made in the period August 2010 to June 2013, which is the latest information available.

Number of Employment and Support Allowance New Claims decisions compared with the initial Atos recommendation: August 2010 to June 2013

Atos recommendation	DWP decision	Number of decisions
FFW	FFW	829,000
WRAG	WRAG	356,200
SG	SG	523,900
FFW	WRAG/SG	158,300
WRAG	SG	14,200
WRAG	FFW	700
SG	WRAG/FFW	2,000

Source: Data in the above table is derived from administrative data held by the DWP and assessment data provided by Atos Healthcare.

Notes:

1. Data is rounded to nearest 100.
2. Figures include initial and repeat assessments for ESA new claims and exclude clerical decisions, clerical cases, and Incapacity Benefits Reassessment cases.
3. FFW= Fit for Work, WRAG = Work Related Activity Group, SG = Support Group.