

Freedom of Information request 2014-3800

Date received 1 September 2014

Date of response 2 April 2015

Information request

Please could you provide me with information you hold on the following. Alternatively, please provide me with help and assistance to obtain the information from another source.

1. In relation to claims made in November 2013, the average waiting times for the work capability assessment which should take place within 13 weeks of the claim.
2. Help available (such as counselling) to get claimants back into work.

DWP response

In response to your query, the table below shows the average number of days between claim start date and the assessment date for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claims started in November 2013.

Please note that figures supplied are derived from unpublished information and have not been quality assured National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

Average number of days between claim start date and assessment date for ESA claims started in November 2013

	Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	Incapacity Benefit Reassessment (IBR)
Average Number of days	225	152

Source: Department for Work and Pensions and ATOS Healthcare.

Notes:

1. Average number of days is the median number of calendar days.
2. The assessment date is the date on which ATOS make their recommendation, which is usually the date of the face-to-face

- assessment, if there is one, or the date on which they make their paper-based recommendation if there is no face-to-face assessment.
3. Data is for claims that started in November 2013 and does not include those who have yet to have an assessment completed.

With regard your question on help available to help claimants back into work, the support provided by Jobcentre Plus, and the nature of the level of engagement required, is largely determined by the outcome of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA).

Prior to the outcome of the WCA, claimants can voluntarily access support through a personal adviser and will have access to the range of support detailed below.

If the claimant is found to have no limited capability for work the claimant's ESA claim will be closed. Support may still be available through the Jobcentre if the claimant claims another benefit (e.g. Jobseeker's Allowance).

If the claimant is placed in the Support Group because they have Limited Capability for Work Related Activity, they are not required to engage with Jobcentre Plus, but may do so on a voluntary basis and will have access to the range of support detailed below.

If the claimant is placed in the Work Related Activity group they are required to take part in work focused interviews with a personal adviser, and will have access to a range of support to help them prepare for suitable work.

The support available from the Jobcentre consists of work focused interviews, the frequency and duration of which is decided by the adviser and access to a flexible menu of back to work support. The latter will consist of a range of national and local opportunities that aim to meet the needs of a wide range of ESA claimants.

The personal adviser will work with an individual claimant to identify the support appropriate to meet that individual's need and, wherever possible, secure suitable opportunities to address that need.

In addition to any locally sourced support there are a number of National Initiatives that ESA claimants have access to:

- Sector Based Work Academies. These usually consist of:
 - pre-employment training;
 - work experience placement; and
 - (optional) guaranteed job / apprenticeship interview with an employer in the sector or support with an employer's recruitment processes.

- Work Clubs – an initiative which aims to support the development of a network of community based Work Clubs.
- Work together - to help unemployed claimants improve their chance of securing work by encouraging and promoting the take-up of voluntary work.
- Enterprise clubs - an initiative that aims to support the development of a network of community based clubs offering support to unemployed people interested in becoming self employed or setting up their own business.
- New Enterprise Allowance (for WRAG claimants) - claimants will receive the support of a local business mentoring organisation. The mentoring organisation is responsible for assessing the quality of the claimant's business idea and its suitability for support through NEA. The claimant is able to apply for NEA financial support once they have a business plan approved by the mentoring partner organisation and ended their benefit claim to commence trading.
- Work choice - aim is to provide a voluntary, tailored, coherent range of specialist employment services which can respond more flexibly to the individual needs of disabled people and their employers and make better use of resources.
- The Work Programme (Post WCA only) - providers have complete flexibility to innovate and to design support that addresses the needs of the individual and the local labour market.
- Skills conditionality- claimants who have a skills need which is their main barrier to gaining employment attend, take part and complete skills provision to address their skills need.
- Work trials - to help claimants overcome any remaining suitability doubts an employer and/or disadvantaged group claimant may have following a formal interview for a vacant post. In simple terms, for both parties, Work Trial is an opportunity to 'try before you buy'.
- Work Experience and Work Placements for ESA claimants.
- Permitted Work - rules allow claimants to try some paid work as a stepping stone back into full-time employment, whilst still receiving ESA.