

Gatekeeper Memo / Information Alert

To: Senior Leaders in
Operations

From: Head of Health and Disability Assessments
(Operations)
Contracted Customer Services Directorate

Cc:

Date: 20 January 2014

Admin Use: Gatekeeper Number	01.14.09
---	-----------------

ACTION: FOR URGENT CASCADE

Control of the Referral of Repeat Work Capability Assessments

Issue

Announcement of the decision to defer routine repeat work capability assessment referrals for Employment and Support Allowance from 20 January 2014.

Timing

Immediate

Action

For immediate cascade to all Operational staff

Background

A Written Ministerial Statement issued on 22 July outlined that in the drive to continually improve the Work Capability Assessment process and bring down waiting times for claimants, DWP had decided to seek additional capacity to deliver Work Capability Assessments.

We are working towards having new provision in place – it will of course take some time for that to become fully operational.

The number of cases currently with Atos Healthcare has grown.

A decision has therefore been taken to control the referral of repeat work capability assessments. Therefore, with effect from 20 January 2014, further routine repeat assessments referrals to Atos will be deferred until further notice.

Controlling the volume of repeat Work Capability Assessments should help us to reduce delays for new claimants and those that have already been referred.

What does this mean for operational staff?

There are no changes to the Work Capability Assessment process - it will be **business as usual for DWP Operations and staff should continue to follow current processes and guidance.**

Scans will be run from 18 January to identify and defer Employment and Support Allowance repeat referrals. The impact of this should be seen from 20 January.

The scans will be managed centrally and will result in a reduction in the number of Work Available Reports. Operational staff should continue to follow current guidance on calculation of prognosis periods and entering details in JSAPS.

Operations **must** still manually **refer cases where there has been a reported change in condition** (for example, a claimant placed in the Work Related Activity Group whose condition worsens and might be expected to move into the Support Group).

A list of questions and answers is provided at Annex A.

Questions and Answers

1. Why has the decision been made to defer referral of repeat work capability assessments?

The number of cases currently with Atos Healthcare has continued to grow.

Controlling the volume of repeat Work Capability Assessments should help us to reduce delays for new claimants and those that have already been referred.

2. From what date will repeat assessments stop being referred?

Scans will be run from 18 January to identify Employment and Support Allowance repeat referrals. The impact of this should be seen from 20 January

3. Will deferring repeat assessments mean a further reduction in the number of reports being received back from Atos Healthcare in the future?

No. Atos Healthcare capacity is not affected by this decision.

4. Will Operations staff need to take any specific action?

No. The scans will be managed centrally and will result in a reduction in the number of Work Available Reports. Operational staff should continue to follow current guidance on calculation of prognosis periods and entering details in JSAPS.

5. Will all repeat Work Capability Assessments be deferred?

We will defer any referrals for repeat assessments until further notice. However, operations should still manually refer cases where there has been a reported change in condition (for example, a claimant placed in the Work Related Activity Group whose condition worsens and might be expected to move into the Support Group).

6. Will you be notifying claimants of the decision to defer referrals for repeat assessments?

No. The decision to control the referral of repeat assessments is an operational decision and not a policy change and as such there are no planned external communications to notify external stakeholders such as claimants, claimant representative groups, Members of Parliament, etc.

7. Will the decision to defer repeat Work Capability Assessment referrals impact on off-flows?

There will be an impact as the Work Capability Assessment is the main trigger for off-flows from the Employment and Support Allowance load. We will continue to assess the potential for alternative interventions on those whose repeat Work Capability Assessments are deferred to seek to manage this consequence.

8. Is the decision to defer referrals for repeat assessments linked to the quality issues outlined in July 2013?

No. DWP has been working closely with Atos Healthcare to resolve the quality issues outlined in July 2013.

9. Does this impact on Atos Healthcare's delivery of Personal Independence Payment assessments?

No. Personal Independence Payment assessments are unaffected by this decision.

10. Does the decision to defer repeat Work Capability Assessment referrals impact on Work Programme Providers?

No because the capacity of Atos Healthcare has not been affected by this decision.

11. What is the line to take if claimants enquire about the date of their next Work Capability Assessment?

Although the Department will periodically review a person's Limited Capability for Work, there is no set date for this to happen.

The timing of this review is at the discretion of the Decision Maker acting on behalf of the Secretary of State and is influenced by the evidence available to them, which can mean on occasion longer periods between face to face assessments.

Manual referral can still take place where there has been a reported change in condition (for example, a claimant placed in the Work Related Activity Group whose condition worsens and might be expected to move into the Support Group).