Reassessment of incapacity benefits

Customer factsheet

Between October 2010 and Spring 2014 customers who receive Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support paid on the grounds of illness or disability will be assessed for Employment and Support Allowance.

If you are due to reach state pension age by the 6 April 2014 and are currently receiving Incapacity Benefit, Income Support paid on the grounds of disability or Severe Disablement Allowance you will not have your benefit reassessed.

Your benefit will not be reassessed if you are already receiving Employment and Support Allowance.

More information about IB Reassessment is available at www.direct.gov.uk/ibchanges or www.direct.gov.uk/newidiadauba for Welsh speaking customers

More information on State Pension is available at www.direct.gov.uk/pensions

If you are affected by the reassessment of incapacity benefits

We will write to you when your benefit is due for reassessment to tell you about the changes.

We will also phone you shortly after this to check you have received the letter. This will provide you with a chance to ask any additional questions and to find out if you need any extra help.

When we will contact you

You do not need to contact us before we write to you. We are planning to have reassessed all incapacity benefits claims by the end of 2014. This means it may be some time before we contact you about this change. You will continue to receive your current benefit, as long as you meet the conditions of entitlement, until we have completed the reassessment of your benefit.

Limited capability for work questionnaire

After you have received the first letter you will then be sent a limited capability for work questionnaire (ESA50) by Atos Healthcare (our medical services contractor) to complete and return to us. This questionnaire asks about how your long term health condition or disability affects your ability to complete everyday tasks. You must complete this questionnaire with as much detail as possible and return it to us by the date provided or your benefit may be affected.

The covering letter which accompanies the questionnaire also tells you where to send any additional information that you would like us to consider, such as evidence from a support worker, doctor or other healthcare professional.

An approved healthcare professional will look at the information provided in the questionnaire.

If they feel that we will need more information to make a decision about your entitlement, the healthcare professional will recommend that you attend a face to face assessment. Atos Healthcare will contact you to arrange a face to face assessment.

You can take a friend, relative or representative to this assessment if you want.

The healthcare professional may also request information, such as a medical report from your doctor, which they will also consider.

The Work Capability Assessment – face to face assessment

The Work Capability Assessment is the main assessment for Employment and Support Allowance. The assessment will concentrate on what you can do rather than only focusing on what you can't.

At the face to face assessment, a healthcare professional will assess how well you can do things like walk, sit and stand up, use your hands, see and hear. If you have a mental health condition, they will assess how it affects things like your mood, the way you behave, the way you relate to the world around you, and how you cope with things from day to day.

If you are asked to attend you must go to the assessment and take part fully, or your benefit may be affected.

After the Work Capability Assessment – face to face assessment

The healthcare professional who conducted your Work Capability Assessment will complete a report (Directgov) and send it to us. Using the information from the questionnaire, the face to face assessment and any other evidence provided, a Jobcentre Plus decision maker will decide if you are entitled to Employment and Support Allowance.

We may call you if we need extra information to make a decision on whether to award you Employment and Support Allowance.

You will continue to receive you current benefit, as long as you meet the conditions of entitlement, until we have completed the reassessment of your benefit.

More information is available at www.direct.gov.uk/benefits

When a decision has been made

If you are eligible for Employment and Support Allowance

If you are eligible Employment and Support Allowance, we will telephone you to let you know and explain what you need to do next. Your benefit will be transferred automatically and there will be no break in the payments you receive. If you are eligible for Employment and Support Allowance and receive more on existing incapacity benefits than you would on Employment and Support Allowance rate, you will receive a top up payment . If you receive less on incapacity benefits than you would on Employment and Support Allowance, your benefit will be increased to the Employment and Support Allowance rate.

There are two groups in Employment and Support Allowance, with different allowances and conditionality:

- Work Related Activity Group
- Support Group

We will inform you at this time which group you have been placed in and confirm this in writing after our call to you.

If you are placed in the Work Related Activity Group

If you are placed in the Work Related Activity Group, you will be expected to take part in work focused interviews with your personal adviser. You will get support to help you prepare for suitable work. In return, you will receive a Work Related Activity component in addition to your basic rate of benefit.

If you refuse to attend the Work Focused Interviews, or to take part fully in them, it may affect your entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance.

If you are placed in the Support Group

If you are placed in the Support Group because you have a severe disability or health condition which affects your ability to work, you will not be expected to take part in any work related activity to receive your benefit, but you may choose to access work related support. You will receive a Support component in addition to your basic rate of benefit.

More information is available at www.direct.gov.uk/benefits

If you are not entitled to Employment and Support Allowance

If you are not eligible for Employment and Support Allowance, we will call you to let you know and discuss your options. You may be entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support for other reasons or Pension Credit. We will also write to you to confirm our decision. If you are eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance, you will be given the option to make a claim when we tell you your entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance has been disallowed.

More information on Jobseeker's Allowance and other benefits if you are on a low income is available at www.direct.gov.uk/benefits

If you are unhappy with our decision

When we call or write to you to tell you about our decision, we will also tell you what to do if you think our decision is wrong.

If you think our decision is wrong you will need to contact us within one calendar month from the date of issue of the decision letter. If you contact us later than this we may not be able to help.

More information on appeals is available at www.direct.gov.uk/appeals