

## Information on the Work Capability Assessment

Usually, when you have made your initial claim for Employment and Support Allowance (**ESA**) and completed the ESA50 form you will be asked to go to an assessment with a **Healthcare Professional**. This assessment is called a **Work Capability Assessment**.

If you have applied for Universal Credit (**UC**) and cannot work due to an illness or disability you will need to complete a UC50 form to explain how your condition affects you. You may then need to have a Work Capability Assessment.

## Purpose of the Work Capability Assessment

The purpose of the Work Capability Assessment is to help the Department of Work and Pensions (**DWP**) decision maker to decide whether you meet the criteria for having limited capability for work. If you are found to have limited capability for work they will also consider whether you have limited capability for work-related activity.

You need to be found to have limited capability for work in order to qualify for ESA (and you will be put into the work-related activity group). If you also have limited capability for work-related activity you will be put into the support group and will be entitled to an extra support component in your weekly benefit payment.

If you claim UC and are found to have limited capability for work then only the work-focused interview and work preparation requirements will apply to your claimant commitment. If you are found to have limited capability for work-related activity no work-related requirements will apply to your claimant commitment and you will get an additional work-related activity component included in your benefit award.

This factsheet explains how to prepare for the assessment and what to expect when you are there.

## Arranging the assessment and getting there on the day

After you have claimed Employment and Support Allowance/ Universal Credit and completed the ESA50 or UC50 questionnaire as applicable, you will be asked to go to a face to face **Work Capability Assessment**.

The assessments are run by the Health Assessment Advisory Service who will contact you to arrange your assessment.

They can be contacted by:

- phone **0800 288 8777** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

- email [customer-relations@chdauk.co.uk](mailto:customer-relations@chdauk.co.uk)



The assessment usually takes place at an assessment centre, but if you have an illness or impairment that makes it difficult to travel to the assessment centre, you can ask for it to take place at home.

If you spend money on travelling to an assessment centre you can claim those costs back. You will need to fill in and submit an expenses form when you go for your assessment. Just make sure you bring the details of your travel costs with you to the assessment. This includes things like train or bus tickets, or details of how many miles you have driven in the car.

You can claim mileage costs if you have come **by car**, plus parking costs (**make sure you keep the parking ticket**).

If you can only travel **by taxi** you need to telephone the assessment centre to let them know.

## Planning for your assessment

The **Healthcare Professional** will be checking how your disability or health condition affects your ability to work. Think about how your illness or disability affects you on bad days. A lot of this information will have been written on your ESA50/ UC50 form when you first applied for ESA or UC, but before the assessment, it is a good idea to remind yourself of:

- the kind of things you have difficulty with, or cannot do at all (e.g. walking up steps without help or remembering to go to appointments)
- what a usual day is like for you and how your condition affects you from day to day
- what a bad day is like for you

If it is helpful, you can write a list of things that you find difficult and take this with you on the day of your assessment.

## What to take with you

You will need to take identification with you to your assessment. A passport is usually best. If you do not have a passport, you need to take along 2 different types of identification, such as:

- your birth certificate;
- your full driving licence;
- a recent bank statement that shows your name and address;
- a gas or electricity bill.

You should also have with you:

- any pills or medication you need
- any aids and appliances that you use (e.g. glasses, hearing aids or walking stick)

If you made and kept a copy of your ESA50/UC50 form, you can take this into the assessment if you want to. This will help make sure you do not miss anything out when you are telling the assessor about your condition.

## Who can come with you

You can bring a friend, family member or support worker with you on the day of your assessment. They can also come into the room for the actual assessment if you want them to.

The assessor will be asking you the questions, but it is your right to have support from a friend or family member if you are finding it difficult to answer questions. They can tell the assessor things for you if you are struggling.

Be clear in the assessment why you need their support.

## What happens at your Work Capability Assessment

During the assessment, a Healthcare Professional will check how your illness or disability affects your ability to work. They use the information you have given on your ESA50/UC50 form and will also draw conclusions and make assumptions from what you do on the day.

For example, they might ask you how you got to the assessment centre. If you say you came on the bus on your own, they will make a note that you can travel alone on public transport.

If you say you go shopping in a supermarket they may assume you can walk around the supermarket, unless you make it clear that you cannot or need help.

You may be asked how long you have been sitting in the waiting room before the assessment. If you say 'half an hour', they will make a note that you can sit on an ordinary chair for at least 30 minutes. In this example, it may be helpful to give more information if relevant; e.g. that you waited for half an hour but had to walk around because you could not sit for that long.

You might also be asked to carry out some physical tasks during the assessment. The Healthcare Professional might also examine you in a similar way that a doctor would.

Do not feel that you have to do things during the assessment or say you can do things on the day of the assessment that you would not otherwise be able to do. If you cannot do something comfortably, make that clear.

The assessor may talk to you about the things you have said on your ESA50/ UC50 form. You will be able to check back to the answers you gave on the form if you have taken your copy with you. You can explain these again to the assessor and you can also give other examples of things you find difficult.

The assessor will be trying to find out whether you score enough points to be considered to have limited capability for work criteria using specific criteria which can be found here.

You need to score a total of **15 or more** points to be awarded ESA or to be considered to have limited capability for work for UC purposes. It is important that you look at these descriptors before your assessment and work out which criteria apply to you – this is what the assessor will be working from.

Their questions will be based on the criteria.

This is an example of an activity that they will be looking at and how points can be scored:

### Activity 11: Learning tasks

- (a) Cannot learn how to complete a simple task, such as setting an alarm clock **(15 Points)**
- (b) Cannot learn anything beyond a simple task, such as setting an alarm clock. **(9 Points)**
- (c) Cannot learn anything beyond a moderately complex task, such as the steps involved in operating a washing machine to clean clothes. **(6 Points)**
- (d) None of the above apply. **(0 Points)**

## Tips for your Work Capability Assessment

### Do:

- Always answer questions fully. Tell the Healthcare Professional everything you can that is relevant to your illness, health condition or disability, even if it is already on your form.
- Back up what you have said on the ESA50/ UC50 form with any evidence you can, like a doctor's letter or examples of things that have happened to you
- Ask for any help you need it (it can make the assessment less stressful). This includes having a friend, relative or supporter helping you answer questions if you find it difficult.

### Don't:

- Do not assume that the Healthcare Professional has read everything that was written on your ESA50/UC50 form or that they have a complete understanding of your condition and how it is likely to affect you
- exaggerate your condition(s)
- feel you have to do anything you normally would not be able to do
- expect the assessor to be 'on your side' – they are there to ask questions, not to make sure you are found to have limited capability for work or limited capability for work-related activity.

The Healthcare Professional does not make the final decision about whether you will be found to have limited capability for work and/or limited capability for work related activity- they make a recommendation to the DWP after your assessment. They will not be able to tell you what they are going to recommend at your assessment.

You can get a copy of your assessment report by asking the DWP office that is looking at your claim. The phone number will be on any letters you have had from them about your ESA/UC claim.

After your assessment, the DWP decision maker will look at the recommendation made by the Healthcare Professional and use this to decide if you have limited capability for work and/or limited capability for work-related activity.