

Commercial in Confidence

Frank Field MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

25 May 2018

Dear Frank Field MP,

Thank you for your letter dated 14th May 2018. In order to fully answer your questions, we would like to give you some background about the normal day to day expectations for our Disability Assessors (DAs).

We aim to create a working environment that is both rewarding for our assessors and underpins the DWPs expectations with regard to quality of service for claimants.

Our DAs receive an annual basic salary of £34,000 when they join us. There is an initial comprehensive five-week training programme that all new DAs must complete and pass before they are able to undertake assessments. Following this training, each report a DA completes is internally audited to ensure it meets the expected quality standard. Once a DA reaches a consistent standard of quality report writing, they become fully approved by the DWP and their basic salary increases to £35,000 per annum.

After this approval, we continue to audit their reports in line with the process outlined later in this letter. We believe our DA annual salary is comparable in the market place and ensures a good guaranteed basic income for our staff. This salary is aimed to drive strong retention rates which in turn provides a more experienced workforce to provide a consistently high standard of service.

A DA based in a clinic is scheduled to conduct an average of 17 assessments per week (3.4 per day). However, due to claimants failing to attend their appointments, the number of reports completed is, ordinarily, below this figure. Where a DA undertakes home visits to complete assessments, travel time needs to be factored in, so a DA is scheduled to conduct, on average, 14 assessments per week (2.8 per day). The rest of their time is dedicated to preparing for assessments, writing up reports and keeping up to date with CPD training. On average, a DA will spend 2.5 hours on each report, as outlined in our response to the Committee, answer 7c, to ensure that we spend adequate time representing each claimants functional needs.

I hope this gives you a sense of the normal daily workload of our DAs. Please see below the detailed answers to the questions you raised in your letter.

1 Confirm whether you offer, or have ever offered, financial incentives for assessors to complete more assessments—for example to counter peak demands in applications?

Our number one priority is completing quality reports and we do not compromise volume for quality. Consequently, we have an ongoing incentive scheme that is focussed on both the quality as well as the quantity of assessment reports.

Under the Capita designed scheme, DAs can achieve supplementary incentive payments if clearly defined quality and quantity (15 cases per week in clinic, 14 home based appointments) targets are achieved. Including both components ensures that quality of output is not compromised in the achievement of quantity. It is worth emphasising that if the quality aspect of the programme is not met, then the incentive is not paid. The maximum available incentive under this programme is £3,000 per annum.

In order to help with unforeseen circumstances, on occasion, we offer voluntary, time-limited financial incentives for overtime or weekend work.

For example, we offered an incentive scheme for the month of March for any weekend appointments a DA was able to carry out. This was put in place due to the volume of appointments that needed to be cancelled due to the poor weather conditions earlier in the year which had made travel hazardous for both our claimants and our people. The additional weekend appointments allowed us to reschedule the cancelled claimant appointments at the earliest opportunity.

This was a completely voluntary scheme and there was no pressure placed on any of the DAs to undertake overtime work. However, as a responsible employer, we wanted to recognise the work completed by our DAs that went above and beyond normal day to day requirements and enabled us to provide a timely service to claimants.

Paper Based Review Disability Assessors

Some of our DAs focus solely on completing paper based assessments (cases for which we can complete a report without seeing a claimant by reviewing the evidence provided with the application). These DAs are allocated time to complete 12 reports per week, and also undertake other duties to make up the remainder of their time.

We recently operated a temporary, voluntary incentive scheme for any paper based reports which were completed above the expected volume. This ran during March and April this year.

It is important to note that all reports, irrespective of whether they were completed as part of an incentive exercise are still subject to the same strict quality assurance checks. There is no incentive for an individual to rush and compromise quality in the pursuit of quantity. In fact, quite the opposite, as again, for the incentive to be paid both the quality and quantity targets have to be met. Likewise, at a business level there is no incentive for Capita to produce volume at the expense of quality because of the significant financial deductions that can be levied by the Department on the Provider.

Historic incentive schemes

During 2014, working to guidance from the DWP, DAs were incentivised on volume in order to manage a peak demand in applications. This was a scheme approved and monitored by the DWP. This particular scheme ended in July 2015.

2. Outline the steps taken to ensure assessors do not feel rushed to complete assessments.

The length of an assessment will depend on a claimant's circumstances. We do not impose any time constraints on the duration of assessments and assessments take as long as necessary in order to fully understand how a claimant's condition impacts their daily life.

The DWP PIP Service Specification estimates that an assessment carried out by an experienced DA will take on average 55 minutes. The average duration of assessments we

have undertaken from the start of the contract to date is in line with the DWP PIP Service Specification. This does not include preparation time or write up time.

While we do not impose time constraints for assessments, we do allocate a time of 75 minutes per assessment for scheduling purposes. As assessment time schedules are fixed there is no incentive for an assessor to rush to finish more quickly. If an assessment takes less than the allocated time then the DA has more time to prepare for the next case. Likewise, if the claimant does not turn up then the DA will use the time to do further preparation for the next assessment, write up the report for the previous assessment or undertake CPD Training.

If an assessment takes longer than the allocated time, then it's highly unlikely this will have a significant knock on effect with the subsequent assessments (on the basis that we schedule more time than the average assessment actually takes). This model therefore reduces any likelihood of an assessor feeling the need to rush.

All assessment reports are subject to a robust audit regime by both ourselves and the DWP to assure quality. We have a robust and clearly defined Quality Assurance Framework to underpin a high standard of service. This is defined by a number of key features, including a robust multi-tiered assurance regime; clearly defined triaging process; a comprehensive training and development programme and a clinical oversight team. The combination of these features provides strength in depth and a comprehensive control environment to assure quality of service. Below is an outline of the various audits procedures that are currently in place.

1. **Approval Related Audit** - 100% check of all new DA entrants, to support them in reaching a consistent standard of quality report writing.
2. **Lot Wide Audit** – random sample check on reports conducted by DWP, based on a statistically valid model that drives service level performance over month period.
3. **Rolling Audit** – A random percentage check carried out monthly on all DAs.
4. **Performance Audit** – 100% check of any DA's in need of continued support.

Quality is a key performance measure for assessors, which strongly discourages any behaviours that would negatively affect the high standard of a report (i.e. rushing, inadequate care and attention). As noted above, all reports irrespective of whether they are produced as part of an incentive scheme are subject to exactly the same rigour and checks.

In addition to the quality assurance measures above we also operate within a clearly defined framework of controls, these include a code of conduct, speak-up (whistleblowing) policy, clear segregation of duties, regulatory governance, intensive training environment and an internal audit regime.

I hope this provides you with the necessary assurance that the appropriate use of incentives is a positive mechanism to deliver the service expected by the DWP and claimants.

Yours sincerely



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Simon Freeman

Managing Director, Capita Personal Independence Payment