

From: Ed Humpherson
Sent: 11 April 2014
To: Donna O'Brien
Cc: David Frazer; Neil McIvor

Subject: Statistics on DLA

Dear Ms O'Brien

Thank you for your email of 17 February 2014 and the additional information you sent to us on 19 March 2014. We have made enquiries with officials in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about the claims made in the press releases you refer to.

DWP has accepted that the statement "more than 50% of decisions are made on the basis of the claim form alone without any additional corroborating medical evidence" was ambiguous and had not been rechecked by the Department's analysts as is the usual practice. DWP told us that by "additional corroborating medical evidence" they mean that a GP Report or a Medical Examination Report was obtained by the Department to make a decision on Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Table 1 of the DWP statistical release 'Evidence Use and Duration on Benefit for DLA claimants aged 16-64, 2012/13' shows that such reports were obtained in 46 per cent of decisions, and DWP told us that this figure is the basis for the statement (i.e. 54 per cent of decisions were made without additional corroborating medical evidence). Table 1 also shows that for 45 per cent DLA decisions, "other sources of evidence" are used. This category includes reports from physiotherapists, occupational therapists, opticians, hospital test results and care plans. DWP told us that its management information system does not allow them to break down this group to a detailed level, i.e. it does not contain information to allow them to present the percentage of claims for each type of evidence. DWP acknowledged that some of these other sources of evidence could be viewed as medical, however they do not currently classify this category as "additional corroborating medical evidence".

We consider that future DWP statements which refer to "the claim form alone" should use the 10 per cent figure from Table 1. Statements which refer to "additional corroborating medical evidence" should clearly indicate what this category refers to.

With regards to the statement "71% of claimants get indefinite DLA awards without systematic reassessments", DWP told us that this figure refers to the total proportion of the DLA caseload which had an 'indefinite award' as at August 2010. Table 3 of the DWP statistical release 'Analysis of Disability Living Allowance' (link below) confirms this figure. However, Table 8 of the same release shows that for those who joined the benefit during 2010, the proportion who were given an indefinite award was 23 per cent. DWP told us that the difference between these two figures is due to the changes which occur during the lifetime of a claim. Those who are initially given a 'fixed term award' are invited to fill in a renewal form at the end of this fixed period and may then either end their DLA award or move onto an indefinite award. The total DLA caseload is made up of both recent joiners to the benefit and those who have been in receipt of DLA for many years, so among the total DLA caseload there is a higher proportion of people who have long term conditions and therefore have indefinite awards.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/223063/analysis_of_disability_living_allowance_DLA_awards.pdf

We consider that the statement "71% of claimants get indefinite DLA awards without systematic reassessments" should have been phrased differently, to convey the fact that it refers to the total 'stock' figure rather than the proportion of new claims which result in an

indefinite award (23 per cent in 2010). We consider that it would be helpful if DWP were able to provide a historic time series of the numbers and percentages of fixed/indefinite awards for new claims by calendar year.

I am, by copy, inviting David Frazer, Head of Profession for Statistics at DWP, and Neil McIvor, Deputy Head of Profession at DWP, to consider and respond to these points.

Yours sincerely,

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