

Benefits Series

The Work Capability Assessment

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Please see our website for up-to-date information: www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

If you have concerns, please ring the DSA's Benefits Adviser Helen Wild

Monday & Thursday 10am-4pm Tues & Weds 10am-12.30pm | Telephone: 0333 1212 300

The Work capability assessment for UC and ESA

A DWP decision maker will look at the provided information for ESA or UC to see if you have evidence of having limited capability for work and for work related activity. You should provide a letter from your GP or a note saying that you are unable to work. From this you should be sent the capability for work questionnaire. This will be ESA50 for ESA and UC50 for Universal Credit

There are two groups and this assessment determines which one you will be placed in. These groups are:

limited capability for work LCW

limited capability for work related activity LCWRA

If you are assessed as having LCWRA you will receive an extra amount within your Universal Credit

Completing the work capability questionnaire

Before you complete this, please have a look at the descriptors online:

For ESA: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/228/schedule/1/made>

For Universal Credit: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/376/schedule/6/made>

Scoring for limited capability for work related activity

Activities 1-10 cover physical impairment and 11-17 cover cognitive impairment. You need to score 15 points or more.

If you score 15 points in activity **1a, b, 2a, 3a, 4a,6a, 7a, 8a,b 9a,10a,b. 11a or 12a** you will be classed as having limited capability for work related activity.

About you

Remember you are putting your son or daughters details here. If you are filling the form in for them, you will need to put your details on the declaration at page 18 'Filling the form in for someone else'.

About your GP and other professionals

GPs name and any other healthcare professional that cares for you.

About your health condition, illnesses, or disabilities

As well as writing about Downs Syndrome, it is important to let them know if you are having treatment for any other reason be it related or unrelated to Downs Syndrome. Examples could be heart condition, diabetes or thyroid disorder.

Mention any health issues and if they cause more of an issue because your son or daughter has learning difficulties. For example, if your child is diabetic - do you have to manage their medication and treatment? Are they able to recognise when they need to take medication?

About other treatment

You can write about any hospital, clinic or special treatment you are having here. If this section is relevant to you, you could also say that your son or daughter needs extra supervision and help because they have a learning difficulty - maybe if they are at an age when a person would be able to attend appointments or treatment without being accompanied

How your conditions affect you

Part 1: Physical functions

These functions need to be carried out safely, to an acceptable standard, as often as you need to and in a reasonable length of time. They will not necessarily apply to all our members, but you could mention issues around concentration span and safety awareness.

1. Moving around and using steps

The descriptor here will consider how you move even with the use of an aid such as a walking stick or a wheelchair. This is **without** help from another person

The question asks about the distance you can move *before* being in significant discomfort. Do not count the distance if you are walking in pain.

If you have dizzy spells or are unsteady on your feet, write about this and if you have fallen.

If you use a wheelchair but are unable to operate it unless someone is helping you, then explain that you are unable to use the wheelchair unaided. Do *not* count how far you can move *with* someone's help. This is for distance covered without help from another person.

2. Standing and sitting

If you need help moving from one seat to another or if you cannot stand for more than 30 – 60 minutes, you will score points on this section.

This section is looking at your ability to sit behind a desk and get up at intervals. Again, it is looking at the physical act of doing this.

If you have problems with standing or sitting you should explain how moving between these activities would be difficult and why.

3. Reaching

If you have problems with raising your arms above your head or with putting on a hat or a coat, then you need to explain about this. You need to be able to do this repeatedly and so if you tire or if you would be in pain you need to mention it.

4. Picking up and moving things

This question is judging your ability to move light bulky items and whether you can do this repeatedly. If you have any problems with grip or weakness you should put this here.

It asks if you can lift a 1 pint or 2-pint carton of liquid.

Would they be able to judge what was safe to lift? Although this isn't strictly what they are looking for, it will give insight into potential judgement difficulties.

5. Manual Dexterity

If you cannot operate a keyboard, use a push button telephone or turn the pages of a book without difficulty then you should score points. Mention also if you have difficulty using a pen.

If someone can do all these things but they are unable to write or read the keys on a keyboard you could mention this here. Again, it isn't strictly what they are looking for, but it will build a picture for the cognitive section.

6. Communicating with people

This question deals with the ability to communicate through speech, typing and writing. It asks if you would be able to warn someone of a dangerous situation.

Is poor safety awareness an issue? write about this here. If their speech is not clear or if it is limited -tell them.

7. Other people communicating with you

This is about a person's ability to understand simple spoken or written communication from other people.

If they have problems with comprehension you must mention this. They may give the impression that they understand what the other person is saying to avoid being embarrassed. If they can read, can they understand what is written down? The example given is the location of a fire escape. If difficulties with communication are an issue, then you need to say what they are and how it affects them.

8. Getting around safely

This section addresses visual problems a person may have and their ability to move around in familiar and unfamiliar surroundings.

Is poor eyesight an issue and do they need someone with them to keep them safe?

You could of course also write that although they have no visual problems, they need someone with them for vulnerability and safety issues.

9. Controlling your bowels and bladder and using a collecting device.

If there are any continence issues then you need to write it down, even if these are just occasional accidents. Tell them what would happen, would they be able to deal with washing and changing themselves or do you help them?

10. Staying conscious when awake

This would apply to people who lose concentration, maybe if they have epilepsy or if they have diabetes.

Explain about what happens and how often.

Part 2: Mental, cognitive and intellectual functions

11. Learning how to do tasks

The example given is setting an alarm clock. You will need to tell them about difficulty telling the time, let alone set an alarm clock if this is the case.

The washing machine example does not mean the parent setting the programme and the person pressing the start button. If they would be unable to work the machine and set the appropriate programme, then tick No.

If you must repeatedly show how to do things, even simple tasks, after explaining before, then explain this to them. It is very common for people who have Down's syndrome to forget a task even after being shown or taught, maybe not immediately, but they may need showing again the next day or time.

12.Awareness of hazards or danger

In this section you can explain about any lack of safety awareness and vulnerability issues. For example, you could use cooking hazards - what has happened or could happen without supervision.

Examples could be answering the door to a stranger, running a hot bath, putting metal implements in a microwave, using knives, locking doors etc.

13.Starting and finishing tasks

This is to see how you plan and organise yourself. It is about the ability to plan and so if someone must do this for them, then you should tick *never*.

If you need to prompt someone frequently so they get themselves up and dressed. Then prompting again so they have their breakfast and they also need prompting to keep them on task all day, then you need to write this. If they cannot execute two actions in a row and you find that you must break instructions down step by step, please let them know about this.

If they are easily distracted and become bored, then write about this also.

14.Coping with changes

Many people who have Down's syndrome like to have a routine and a change can upset them. This can be worse if your son or daughter also has autistic traits. If you know that they cannot cope with change, even small, expected change then tick No.

Explain what would happen if they missed their bus, who would they ring, are they able to ask someone else? Can they understand the bus timetable? These are just some examples.

If anxiety is an issue, mention this here.

15.Going Out

Most people who have Down's syndrome would not be able to go out on their own and you should tick that they would need someone with them in both familiar and unfamiliar places.

Explain about vulnerability issues here and the potential for becoming lost etc.

16. Coping with social situations

You need to think about whether being anxious meeting unfamiliar people is an issue.

Would they be able to cope in a noisy environment or would they be scared or distressed? If they become overwhelmed and unable to cope, you should write about it.

You could write about any potential communication difficulties here too.

17. Behaving appropriately

If there is any history of aggressive or unusual behaviour, then you need to put this down.

Examples could include hitting or, conversely, hugging if it were deemed inappropriate.

Part 3. Eating and drinking

18. Eating and drinking

This section deals with feeding yourself and the ability to chew and swallow your food.

If someone needs help to cut up their food, then put this here. Are they able to judge if something is too big to put into their mouth?

Are they able to cut their food into pieces small or safe enough to chew?

Face to face assessment

This page asks for phone details so an appointment can be made for you to see an assessor. These assessments are mainly taking place via phone or video call.

They may ring to arrange the assessment. They can ring anytime between 9.00-8.30 Monday to Friday and between 9-5pm on a Saturday. It doesn't give you an option for the best time to call and so if there is a best time to ring, there is no harm in mentioning this time here.

You may be asked to attend an assessment and you will be asked the same questions as on the *capability for work questionnaire* although you may be asked to demonstrate – such as raising your arms up etc.

Do not worry if speech is unclear, that is for the assessors to realise so don't be too quick to jump in with answers.

If they say they can do things which you know they cannot, then you need to let the assessors know. Also explain that you must supervise them etc. in these tasks. This can be awkward as it does little for the confidence of the person in question.

If your son or daughter is in supported living or lives away from home, make sure that the person that goes with them knows to speak up when appropriate if the answers given are not a true picture.

Tell us about any help you would need if you had to go for a face to face assessment

Here you can write about the difficulties that would occur. Do they understand the implications of the assessment and need help to get up and dressed in time? Do they need someone with them to get to the assessment, can they use public transport without help, could they read the map or understand directions of where they need to go? Is their speech clear, will they say 'yes' - just so that they can do things just to get out of the interview as soon as possible? Mention this here.

Other Information

Anything that you think hasn't been fully explained, please put here. You can attach additional sheets but please remember to put your National Insurance number and name on each sheet in case it becomes detached. You may want to enclose supporting letters from your GP or other healthcare professional, again make sure they have your name and reference number on them.

Supporting Evidence

It may be helpful to provide medical evidence from your GP or other health care professional. You can also send a letter from someone who knows your situation well.

First check that the letter is relevant to the claim. It needs to be a letter stating what they have difficulties with rather than one stating what they are capable of.

What happens next

A decision maker will look at the assessors report and also your completed questionnaire. They will decide about whether you have limited capability for work (you can do some form of work or limited capability for work related activity (you are unable to work)

You can appeal if you are placed in the limited capability for work group and you think you have limited capability for work related activity. You have one month to do this.

Contact us

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