Disability Living Allowance New Claims Test
Wembley Disability Benefits Centre (DBC) from 22nd September 2003

Background:

1. Following presentation to Ministers of a new vision for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) benefit delivery, work was approved to test a new simplified claiming process.

2. A new clerical AA claim form has been tested and evaluated in a rolling programme at Bristol, Glasgow and Edinburgh DBCs since March 2002. The new form will be replacing the current DS2 form in the near future.

3. Following the success of the AA test, work has been approved to simplify the clerical claiming process for DLA.

4. This test is based on postal claims and is separate from the interactive (telephone claiming and IT based) DLA claim form currently being tested at Glasgow DBC.

Aim:

5. The aim of the project is to simplify the clerical new claims process by tailoring it more specifically to the characteristics of the individual customer.

6. A major part of that aim has been the development of a new claim form, tailored to obtain only appropriate evidence based on the individual characteristics of the claim. In other words, the form has been designed to encourage a more focused description of the problems experienced by the customer, rather than under headings which may or may not be relevant (as in the current form). Design has been informed by extensive research and the aim is to ask questions that are relevant to most customers. This will ensure that customers get through the claiming gateway by a more streamlined process.

7. This focused questioning from the outset has the knock-on effect of being able to inform the gathering of further evidence from the
most appropriate source, where such evidence is considered necessary.

The form – main differences:

8. There is a single claim form to complete as opposed to the separate sections 1 and 2 under the present system. This change does not deny the customer the 6-week claiming window currently afforded where the claim form has been obtained from an appropriate office. An application to extend the time for claiming can still be made to the Secretary of State where difficulties are experienced obtaining all the information necessary to complete the form.

9. Parts 4 and 5 of the new form are designed to obtain more specific and relevant information about the nature of the disability and the level of intervention from health care professionals and carers, relatives, etc. This information will help to build up a picture of the severity of the overall disability. Some additional questions are included such as identifying which part(s) of the body are affected by arthritis/rheumatism, more details about medication and more specific information about people involved in the welfare of the customer. This information will help to identify the most appropriate source of further evidence, where necessary.

10. The crux of the principal change is the inclusion of “filter” questions to help identify immediately where help is needed. Each of the tick boxes in Parts 7 and 8 are based on the conditions of entitlement. This will focus the customer to give only information that is relevant to their individual circumstances. The customer is then signposted to give a full description of their needs under each “filter” heading. Clear signposting as to the kind of information required is also given. This “filtering” will help the Department to manage the customer’s expectations of the claim being made and where those expectations have not been fulfilled, a reasoned decision will be given.

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