

Mental Health

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Mental health conditions

DWP staff need to be aware about conditions affecting mental, intellectual and cognitive function so they can make an appropriate Medical Services Referral System (MSRS) 'S' referral when required.

For information on mental health conditions see: WCA handbook and NHS choices.

Also, charities such as MIND/Scottish Association for Mental Health have information about mental health conditions and the help and support available.

Important Note: When speaking with a claimant they must **only** be referred to as 'having a health condition' and **not** by their condition. Their condition may be recorded on documentation received from medical experts or on our systems.

Communicating with claimants

DWP has a duty under the Equality Act to offer reasonable adjustments to claimants with disabilities and/or health conditions. DWP Staff also have a duty to provide extra support to claimants suffering from mental health conditions.

It is important to talk, and actively listen, to the claimant to find out what support they need and their preferred communication method. Discuss if a reasonable adjustment or alternative format is needed and if so, what type. For more information, see Reasonable adjustments and alternative formats.

If you believe a claimant has a mental health condition because of the way they are communicating:

- stay calm, slow the conversation down and try to build a rapport
- ask the claimant how you can help – they are the best experts of managing their condition
- build the claimant's confidence, focus on what the person can do – not what they can't
- use careful and sensitive questions and observations to determine what level and type of support may be required

- be flexible – there is no one size fits all approach and it is important that you do not sound like you are reading from a script.

Failure to complete the Capability for Work Questionnaire

When a questionnaire has not been recorded as received by the expiry date (a week after the reminder was sent), the action taken depends on whether the mental health flag is set in MSRS.

Further information can be found in the Capability for Work Questionnaire guidance.

Examples of support for people with a health condition

A claimant with a condition affecting mental, intellectual and cognitive function may benefit from regular face to face meetings to build their confidence.

There may also be occasions when they cannot attend and would benefit instead from a telephone call, online contact or re-arranging the appointment.

There is no need to look up the information about the condition to determine what the individual can do. You should do this by finding out how the condition may affect the claimant and tailor the commitment and adapt the communication method. For example, someone may have spells where they are a fully functioning and therefore they will still be able to undertake work search, work preparation or use the journal - but when they are having a bad spell may struggle with the simplest of tasks.

Useful documents or links

You will find other useful documents within the Health topic on Universal Learning :

- Support for claimants with health conditions
- Severe conditions
- WCA outcomes
- Work and Health programme
- Switching off requirements (Easements) for Labour Market regimes