

# ***INCAPACITY BENEFIT***

## The **Personal Capability Assessment**

A guide to completing the **questionnaire** and attending the **medical examination**

## **The Personal Capability Test**

### INTRODUCTION

Use these notes in conjunction with the checklist found in the booklet called the All Work Test (IB214). (This is the former name for the Assessment.) This booklet is available from Sevenoaks CAB.

Page 9 of the booklet gives groups that are exempt from the Personal Capability Assessment. Those not exempt will be sent a questionnaire (an IB50). This is about your ability to perform certain activities. The questions for each activity are called 'descriptors'. Each descriptor is given a points score. These are set out in the IB214 booklet that should be used along with these advice sheets. **If you do not complete the questionnaire you will be judged capable of work and your benefit will cease.**

TO QUALIFY FOR BENEFIT THE FOLLOWING SCORES PROVE INCAPACITY: -

Physical/Sensory                      15 points

Mental Health                        10 points

Combined Disabilities\* 15 points

\* This category acknowledges the effect of mental health problems on physical activities. However the minimum mental health score is 6 points.

You will be called for a medical examination under the following circumstances: -

1) the Benefits Agency (BA) cannot find you incapable of work on the basis of the

questionnaire; or

2) if you do not score enough on the physical disabilities scale you will be offered a medical examination so that the BA doctor can go through the mental health assessment with you.

If the information on the claims form suggests that you are suffering mental health problems, the Benefits Agency will contact your GP to assess the severity of these. If the problems are mild or moderate, the general questionnaire (IB50) will be sent to you in the normal way and you will be asked to attend for examination by a Medical Services doctor. The tips on the next pages may help you complete the questionnaire.

## COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- Read the notes on the form first.
- Take time to answer the questions. Write them on a separate sheet of paper first and do not write on the form until you are absolutely sure of what you are going to say.
- Be truthful about your problems but do not understate them. If your condition varies, answer on the basis of what you can do on very bad days and add that sometimes your condition is not as bad as this. Give all the detail you can in the space provided.
- Get someone who knows you well to check your answers.
- Compare your draft answers with the check in IB214 and work out what your score is. Recheck your answers if necessary.
- If you have previously had to give up jobs for medical reasons, give details of your previous employers.
- If you need help in completing the form go to the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- If you have difficulty with reading or writing English, you must get someone other than the Benefits Agency to help you complete the form.
- Make a copy of your answers and keep this in a safe place before returning the original form to the Benefits Agency.

## **EXAMINATION BY THE MEDICAL SERVICES - some suggestions**

After you have returned the questionnaire you may be sent an appointment for an examination by a Medical Services doctor. You will also be sent details of how to get to the Medical Services Centre and Form AL1C that explains what will happen at the examination. You will be asked to take with you: -

- all the tablets, inhalers or other medicines you are using
- any walking aids you use
- any hearing aids you use
- your glasses and/or contact lenses
- hospital appointment cards and admission letter

Also you may ask: -

- to be seen by a female doctor if you are a woman
- to have an interpreter if your main language is not English.

You will be given at least 7 days notice of the appointment (but usually longer). If you cannot keep the appointment you should immediately telephone the Client Help Desk at the Medical Services Centre (the 'phone number will be at the top of the appointment letter) to ask for a more convenient time. However, if you are too ill to travel you should ask to be examined at home. Confirm whatever arrangements you make in writing and keep a copy.

## **EXAMINATION BY THE MEDICAL SERVICES - further suggestions**

To claim your expenses for going to the medical examination you should complete Form FF40B. Public transport costs or mileage allowance for private car will be paid routinely but if you must travel by taxi or minicab you should get permission before you travel ('phone the Client Help Desk and confirm the conversation in writing - keep a copy).

If you fail to attend an examination having had at least 3 days written notice you

will be treated as capable of work and your benefit will be stopped indefinitely unless you have a good reason for having missed the appointment. If so, you should ask for another appointment as soon as possible because if your Incapacity Benefit stops for more than 8 weeks you might no longer meet the necessary contribution conditions.

The examination will take about 40 minutes (unless you suffer from mental health problems). You will be examined and asked about your condition and your medical history. The following list may be helpful: -

- Follow the instructions on Form AL1C. Take all medicines and other aids to the appointment with you.
- Although you may be able to do what the doctor asks you to do, remember to tell the doctor if this would cause you pain or discomfort if done repeatedly or over a lengthy period.
- Let the doctor know if your condition is sometimes worse than it is on the day of the appointment.
- Before the appointment write down everything you want to tell the doctor. Leave this note with the doctor if you like (but keep a copy).
- Take a friend or adviser with you to the examination for moral support and to witness what was said during the examination.
- If your main language is not English it is vital that you take someone with you to the examination who has a good knowledge of English.

If you are unhappy with the way the examination went, write down what was said whilst it is still clear in your mind. This may be helpful in the case of an appeal.

You can also report a problem to the receptionist at the time of the examination and/or contact the appropriate Medical Services Centre at a later date.

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