

Date: 31/07/08
Our Ref: FOI 367

Dear Mr Core

Further to the letters from (reference FOI 367) and the response to your Internal Review Request from (reference FOI 473), the Information Commissioner has been in contact with the Department which has given us an opportunity to reconsider your original request which was received on 16th April 2008. I have detailed your original questions in bold with my replies to these questions below.

- 1. The number of medical advisers employed by DWP to advise in regard of the ongoing review of claimants for Disability Living Allowance under Special Rules;**
- 2. The full names of the medical advisers advising DWP in regard to the ongoing review of claimants' entitlement to Disability Living Allowance under Special Rules;**

The approved healthcare professionals who are involved in the Pension, Disability and Carers Service review of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) awards made under the Special Rules are listed below. I have included their General Medical Council (GMC) Reference numbers for information:

Name	GMC No.
Dr D Coker	2613921
Dr A Davie	1347294
Dr S Fairhead	3012693
Dr N Flanagan	0256650
Dr M Gay	2269140
Dr P Houghton	1711268
Dr T Nixon	1475007

Although information on those doctors involved in the review under Special Rules is not held by DWP centrally, we have now been able to source this information from our medical services provider, Atos Healthcare. Please accept my apologies on behalf of the DWP for not supplying this information when previously requested.

3. The date those named in answer to (2) qualified to practice medicine and the areas of medicine they specialise in;

Doctors' primary qualifications are held in the public domain and appear on the General Medical Council's website. Please refer to www.gmc-uk.org then click on "check a doctor's registration" and complete the appropriate fields.

The DWP Chief Medical Adviser approves healthcare professionals to carry out examinations and to provide impartial advice to Decision-Makers within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Approval is dependent on a strict recruitment criteria, completion of a course of training in disability assessment medicine approved by the Chief Medical Adviser and evidence of satisfactory performance. Minimum experience criteria for recruitment are laid down, covering both employed and contracted doctors which includes full unconditional General Medical Council registration and in addition they must have at least 3 years post full registration (GMC or EEA – European Economic Area equivalent) experience as a minimum. In individual cases, solely at the discretion of the Chief Medical Adviser, the requirements that no conditions be attached to registration and that Medical Personnel must have a minimum of 3 years post registration experience, may be waived.

In order to provide independent, accurate and authoritative advice and reports on the effects of disability it is not necessary for approved healthcare professionals to hold specialist registration with the General Medical Council.

4. Whether any of the medical advisers advising DWP regarding the ongoing review of claimants for Disability Living Allowance under Special Rules came out of retirement for this purpose or are within three years of the current age of State retirement pension according to their gender;

The doctors utilised in the Special Rules review are existing Atos Healthcare approved healthcare professionals. The date of birth of a named doctor is held by Atos Healthcare and constitutes that person's personal data. Disclosure of this information is refused in accordance with section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as disclosure would breach that persons right to privacy under the Data Protection Act 1998.

In applying this exemption the Department has balanced the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information and consider there is no overarching public interest argument in favour of releasing this information.

5. *the names of all medical advisers advising DWP regarding the ongoing review of claimants for Disability Living Allowance under Special Rules who are specialists in the area of treatment and study of HIV/AIDS;*
6. *the full qualifications, where and when obtained, in the area of treatment and study of HIV/AIDS for those identified in answer to question (5).*

Atos Healthcare approved healthcare professionals are not required to be Specialists but are specifically trained to provide decision making authorities with independent, accurate and authoritative advice and reports on the effects of disability. As detailed above, doctors' primary qualifications can be accessed via the General Medical Council's website.

If you are still not satisfied with my handling of your request please tell me why within two calendar months of the date of this letter. I will also arrange for a copy of this letter to be sent to the Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Officer