

## **Briefing on findings from Disability Benefits Consortium (DBC) survey #UCandMe**

### **Experience of the Work Capability Assessment under Universal Credit**

May 2019



### **About the DBC**

The DBC is a coalition of over [80 different disability organisations](#) working towards a fair benefits system.

### **About this briefing**

This is a summary of findings from the #UCandMe survey organised by the DBC, which ran until the end of February 2019.

It is one of three briefings on different aspects of the findings. The other two are “Experience of moving onto Universal Credit” and “Experience of Work Coaches under Universal Credit”.

### **Overview/ background of respondents**

- 476 who responded to the survey said that they are claiming or have claimed Universal Credit (UC) in the past, and 395 of those eventually received UC.
- 64% of respondents claiming/ having claimed UC were female.
- 87% of respondents claiming/ having claimed UC were aged between 26-64.
- 81% of respondents claiming/ having claimed UC were in England, 13% in Scotland, 4% in Wales and almost 2% in Northern Ireland.
- 73% of respondents claiming/ having claimed UC said they lived alone, with 27% saying they lived with a partner.
- 21% of respondents claiming/ having claimed UC said that they lived with dependent children.
- Close to 70% of respondents claiming/ having claimed UC said that they were in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.
- 50% of respondents claiming/ having claimed UC said they were too unwell to work, with no plans to work in the future.
- Of the 395 respondents who eventually received UC, 85% said all or most of their income came from UC.
- 43% of those claiming or having claimed UC said that they had previously received Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

## Large groups responding included:

- Mental health (depression) – 211
- Mental Health (anxiety) – 199
- Osteoarthritis – 110
- Mental health (other) – 80
- Fibromyalgia – 82

However, responses were received from a wide variety of disability and condition groups.

## Experience with the Work Capability Assessment under UC

(All respondents below are claiming or have claimed UC in the past).

### Claim forms:

- **Over 60% of respondents said that they found the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) difficult or very difficult to complete.**
- **Almost 30% of respondents said that they did not find 4 weeks to complete the claim form enough, with over 77% of those saying that they were waiting for someone to help them fill in the form (either someone they knew or an advice appointment).**
- **Almost 30% of respondents said they had to wait over 12 weeks for their WCA after submitting their questionnaire.**

### Face-to-face assessments:

- **Over 73% of those going for a face-to-face assessment said that they were not made aware that they could have a home assessment.**
- **Just over a third of said that they were not made aware that they could have someone with them during the face-to-face assessment.**
- **35% of respondents said that they agreed with the outcome of their WCA, 28% of respondents did not agree, and 37% answered they don't know.**

### Quotes by respondents

“It was extremely stressful and I had to pay for a therapy session in order to complete it (which cost me £45) as I couldn't face it on my own. I tried to sit and do it with a friend but kept breaking down; my GP couldn't spare the time to sit and do it with me either. So I paid and wasted an entire hour of therapy on it. I was extremely anxious from the day it came through in the post”.

“The form is deliberately set out so that you appear to be contradicting yourself. You are awarded points for one question, which are later reduced/ removed when you answer what appears to be a similar/ same question”.

“The answers being written had no similarity to my words and were often completed before I finished speaking”.

“Overall condition was not considered, just how you were on the day. I felt that because I was able to access the venue on the day, I was considered to be fit for work”.

“No, the assessor had no idea about my neurological disorder and told me I hadn't committed suicide so it was more a "cry for help". Despite being wheelchair bound she asked me to repeatedly walk”.

## **Conclusion**

This survey by the DBC brings some concerning insights into disabled people's experiences of the WCA. Not only are claimants finding it difficult to complete the WCA forms, they also struggle with the timeframes they are given, as they need help filling them in.

As the Department for Work and Pensions is looking to improve the WCA, it must address the extremely long waiting times that some claimants experience; the reasons why people are finding claiming difficult; as well as the fact that only a third of respondents seem to agree with the outcome of the assessment.