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The UK work experience survey for Persons with Rheumatic Conditions (UK WES-RC) Manual v2

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THE UK WORK EXPERIENCE SURVEY
for
Persons with Rheumatic Conditions
(UK WES-RC)

A Structured Interview for Identifying Barriers
to the Career Maintenance of
Persons with Rheumatic Conditions

MANUAL v2

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The UK WES-RC was adapted by Alison Hammond, Sarah Woodbridge, Rachel O'Brien and Mary Grant from the Work Experience Survey for Persons with Rheumatic Conditions developed by Prof Saralynn Allaire, ScD, Boston University, Boston, MA USA

The UK-WES-RC Manual was adapted by Alison Hammond, Sarah Woodbridge and Rachel O'Brien from the original Work Environment Survey (WES) Manual (1995) developed by Prof T Roessler, University of Arkansas, USA. It has been adapted with permission.

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Further copies of this manual are available from the first author.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The original Work Experience Survey (WES) and its associated manual were developed by Roessler, Reed and Rumrill (1995) in the United States. The WES is a structured interview tool to identify work-related barriers and formulate solutions to these. It can be administered anywhere, it addresses a broad range of workplace barriers (in addition to work station and task barriers), and it was designed for all types of disabilities (Allaire and Keysor 2009). The WES can be administered through either a face-to-face or telephone interview. After collecting background information about their employment, the administrator helps the client identify work barriers using the WES checklists, to prioritize these barriers and form solutions for those the client considers the most significant barriers. The validity of the WES was demonstrated through studies that confirmed its theoretical base and show that barriers vary according to disabilities' unique effects (Roessler et al 1995).

Several limitations of the WES for people with rheumatic conditions have been identified (Allaire and Keysor 2009):

1. As the WES was designed for all types of disabilities, it includes barriers not relevant for rheumatic conditions. This could reduce its efficiency when used for patients with these conditions.
2. Some barriers reported in the literature for patients with rheumatic conditions (Verstappen et al 2004; Hammond 2008) are not listed in the WES.
3. Although it assesses a broad range of workplace barriers, it does not include non-workplace barriers, such as commuting difficulty, which are important predictors of rheumatic condition work disability (Verstappen et al, 2004)

1.2 Development of the WES-RC in the United States

The WES was thus revised by Prof Saralynn Allaire and Dr Julie Keysor in the United States for use with people with rheumatic conditions and was named the WES-RC. Its aim is to comprehensively yet efficiently assess work barriers associated with rheumatic conditions. The US WES-RC was developed through:

1. Literature search to identify work barriers associated with rheumatic conditions
2. Conducting focus groups and telephone interviews with people with rheumatic conditions to identify their perceived work barriers (n=32). This commenced with an open-ended question and then used questions based on the structure of the original WES sections.
3. Findings from the literature review and themes from the qualitative study were synthesised to develop the WES-RC.
4. Focus groups were conducted with ten therapists (six physiotherapists and four occupational therapists) to identify their views on the WES-RC.
5. Each therapist then administered the WES-RC to two patients with rheumatic conditions to identify if any content was missing and its clinical utility.
6. Therapists were re-interviewed following administering it to identify their views of the WES-RC.
7. Data from the WES-RC was evaluated to identify the effectiveness of work barrier solutions identified.

This process led to the addition of several new barrier sections:

- getting ready for work;
- travelling to and from work;
- time, energy and emotional job demands;
- and balance between work and home life.

WES items rarely cited by participants with rheumatic conditions were identified and replaced with ones which were (eg social job demands: renamed as relationships with others at work). Participants rarely cited problems with job mastery (ability) concerns or job satisfaction so many items in these WES categories were omitted. The nature of some work physical barriers was also changed eg door entrance specified to refer to the weight of doors and turning door knobs. The disability effects section of the WES was replaced with common symptoms experienced by people with rheumatic conditions.

Further details of the application of the WES-RC in practice are discussed in Allaire and Keysor (2009). It has been used in several job retention studies in arthritis (Allaire and LaValley, 2003 a and b; Allaire et al 2005).

1.3 Development of the UK-WES-RC

The WES-RC was revised for use in the UK using a similar process to that in the USA.

i) A literature search and review was conducted of work-related barriers experienced by people with rheumatoid (RA) and inflammatory arthritis (Hammond 2008).

ii) A focus group was conducted with five service users with RA, all members of the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS). They were asked to identify common work barriers experienced and then to review each section of the WES-RC in turn to identify if there were any additional items need; any linguistic modification required to be appropriate for the UK; any work barriers appropriate to the UK needed adding; and any barriers that were inappropriate to the UK.

iii) Four occupational therapists with experience in vocational rehabilitation practice or research then reviewed the WES-RC content to identify any changes needed.

iv) The authors reviewed these findings and revised the WES-RC accordingly for use in the UK. Relatively few changes were needed

The consensus from people with RA and OTs was that the WES-RC was applicable for UK use. Additions made by the NRAS focus group and VR therapist panel were minor such as:

- a) job: job history; shift work patterns;
- b) travel: managing car park barriers;
- c) workplace access: key pads/locks, using taps, accessing “disabled toilets”;
- d) work activities: lone working;
- e) environmental factors: ventilation, noise, flooring, cold areas at work;
- f) company policies: not enough flexibility in changing shifts, discussion of Fit Note/s, performance reviews, access to occupational health, company sickness benefit pay/ exemption from sickness absence policy due to a long-term condition.

Other minor changes in wording were made for the UK eg cell to mobile phone. The developer (SA) agreed to the modifications. These are summarised in Hammond et al (2011).

1.4 Application of the UK WES-RC

The UK WES-RC can be used both with people who have disclosed their condition to their employer and those who have not. A wider range of solutions can be implemented if the person has disclosed. Thus an important part of the assessment process is identifying whether the person has informed their employer, and if not, their reason for not doing so. If they have not done so, part of the treatment process will be providing information (eg about their employment rights) to enable the person to reflect on this decision and gain the confidence to successfully request job accommodations.

The WES-RC, and the solutions identified to resolve problems prioritised by clients, aim to empower clients. Thus an important part of the job retention VR process is supporting clients to take action themselves.

2.1 The UK Work Environment Survey – Rheumatic Conditions Manual

The original WES manual (Roessler et al, 1995) discussed American legislation that is not appropriate in the UK. With kind permission from Prof Roessler, this manual has been adapted by for use in the UK by the authors as part of a research project evaluating a job retention vocational rehabilitation intervention delivered by occupational therapists: “Work Rehabilitation in Inflammatory Arthritis” funded by Arthritis Research UK, (Chief Investigator: Alison Hammond, Professor in Rheumatology Rehabilitation, Salford University).

2.2 WES applications

The career maintenance and advancement difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities substantiate that the WES-RC can be used in a wide variety of employment applications, for example, disability / workplace health management programmes, vocational rehabilitation, and psychosocial services to counter the effects of disabilities on work. Each of these applications is described in more detail in the paragraphs to follow.

2.2.1 Using the WES in condition / disability management.

Data from the WES enable employers to improve the services of their condition/ disability management programmes. Schwartz et al (1989) defined disability management as the use of ‘services, people, and materials to:

- (a) minimise the impact and cost of disability to employers and employees, and
- (b) encourage return to work for employees with disability.’

Information from the WES helps the employer and the employee to collaborate in identifying cost-effective accommodations that have the potential to control rising disability costs, which are consuming an increasing share of employer resources. Furthermore, the WES is as appropriate for use

with older workers as it is for people with disabilities, an important point given the increasing number of older individuals in the labour force, and of the provisions of the Equality Act (2010). Information from the WES also helps employers retain trained workers, and workers with a disability increase their job stability.

2.2.2 Using the WES to support employment legislation relating to people with disabilities

Use of the WES is compatible with the intent of the Equality Act (2010), in that the WES provides information that enables people with disabilities to maintain productive vocational roles. But equality legislation does more than simply place a value on employment; it requires employers to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate employees with disabilities. Data from the WES are useful throughout the process of resolving problems that people with disabilities face in performing job roles.

Feldblum's (1991) description of the steps for the accommodation of disability within the American employment system has many parallels with the British system:

1. The employee or applicant may initiate the request for an accommodation to which the employer is required to respond.
2. The individual and the employer collaborate in a process of identifying the barriers that limit the workers' abilities to perform essential functions of the job.
3. Using the person with a disability as a source of information, the employer identifies a variety of accommodations.
4. The employer assesses the cost effectiveness of each of the accommodations to determine which ones can be made with the least economic hardship to the business.
5. The employer implements the most appropriate accommodation with due consideration to the persons preferences in the case of two or more accommodations deemed equal in cost effectiveness.

Information from the WES can help the employee understand specifically what his or her work limitations are, the priority to place on those limitations, and examples of reasonable accommodations. This information is useful throughout the five steps of the accommodation process. Moreover, the WES enables the employer to involve the person with a disability in the accommodation process, as Feldblum suggested in step three.

2.2.3. Using the WES to respond to disabilities intrusiveness.

Finally, at a more general level, completing the WES enables respondents to gain a greater control over the intrusiveness of illness and disability into the workplace. In addition to their physical effects, chronic illnesses and severe disabilities are intrusive psychosocial stressors that increase role strain, disrupt economic and vocational stability, and create a sense of helplessness and external control (Devins and Seland, 1987; Gecas, 1989). Through the WES interview, people with disabilities can assume leadership roles in the accommodation process. Hence, they gain a greater sense of self-efficacy, that is, the belief that they have the power to achieve desirable outcomes and avoid negative ones (Bandura, 1986). Experiences that enhance self-efficacy are desirable antidotes to the negative impact of disability and chronic illness on personal control.

3. Sections of the UK Work Experience Survey- Rheumatic Conditions

By completing the WES-RC, people with disabilities identify their job barriers to accessibility and productivity, formulate feasible solutions to those barriers, and prepare an accommodation plan. The accommodation plan describes how techniques such as job restructuring, work site modification, self-management, and/or the addition of new technology would enable the person to maintain productivity. Barrier identification, solution generation, and accommodation planning are demonstrated in the WES-RC sections to follow.

3.1 Preliminary information (section 1)

Through the collection of information concerning demographics, health and work history, this section helps you develop a picture of the individual you are working with. It is important to understand their work history and the basic skills they have, as well as the how their health condition impacts on their daily routine. The remaining sections all focus on barriers (problems) encountered in the workplace.

Section 1. Demographic, Health and Work History Information

Demographics

1. Age _____ 2. Gender _____ 3. Marital/family status _____ -

4. Age left school _____

5. Highest level of formal education received:

No formal educational qualifications

CSE/ O Level/ GCSE

City & Guilds/ GNVQ

A Level/ BTEC

Diploma

Degree

Other _____

6. Other vocational/ professional training (details): _____

Health

7. Primary rheumatic condition (diagnosis) _____

8. Number of years has had primary rheumatic condition _____

9. Other health conditions/disabilities _____

10. Medications _____

11. Health symptoms or issues: check any that are a problem in regards to work.

___ Pain

___ Fatigue or low energy

___ Sudden changes in symptoms and ability to do things

___ Stress/ nervousness/ worry

___ Poor sleep/ irritability

___ Depression/ anxiety

___ Medication side effects (describe)-

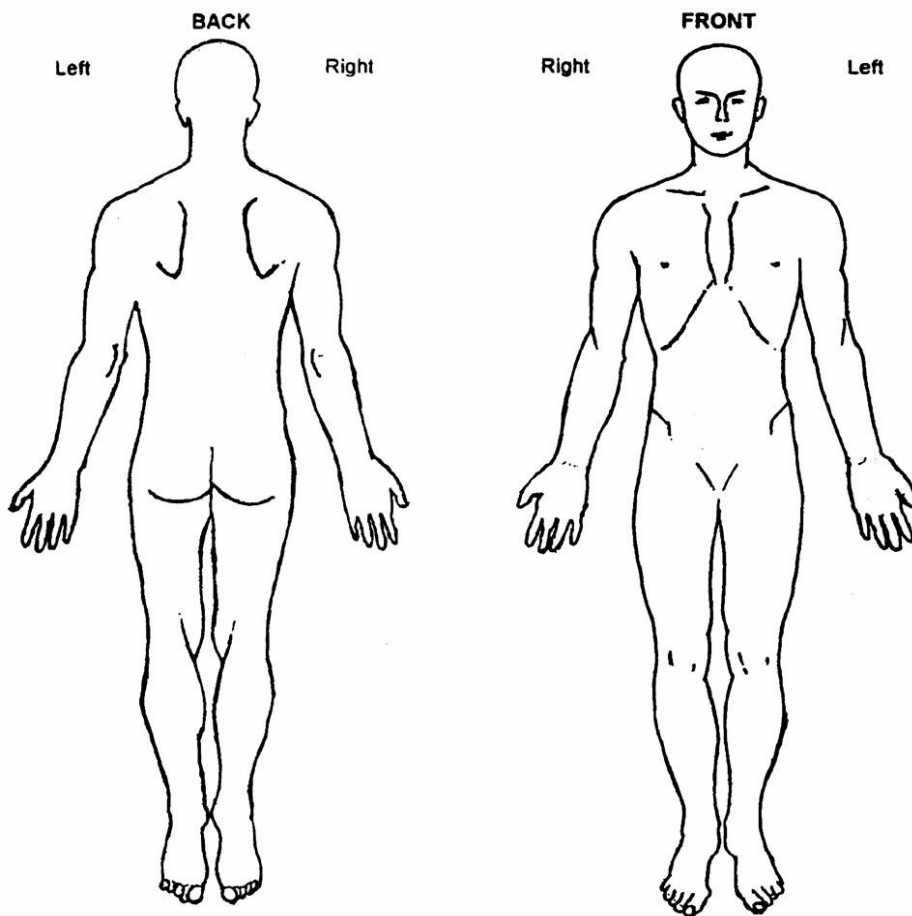
___ Check if side effects are a problem at work

___ Other (describe)

Complete the diagram below to identify which joints/areas are problematic. Record any specific problems identified in addition to those due to inflammatory arthritis, eg R knee OA; L deQuervains; R carpal tunnel syndrome. (Note: this can be completed by the OT).

SECTION A

This question is about recent pains you have experienced. Please shade in the diagram below any ache or pain which has lasted for one day or longer **OVER THE LAST MONTH**. (Please do not include pain occurring only during the course of feverish illness such as flu).



Additional Notes

Work History

12. Number of jobs held currently _____

13. Self-employed? Yes _____ No _____

14. Title of main job

15. List 3 activities performed regularly in main job

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

16. Number of hours worked per week in all jobs _____

17. Number of years worked in main job _____

18. In the past 10 years, list the jobs you have had and about how long worked in each:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

f. _____

19. Do you do shift work? _____

20, If yes, pattern of shift hours:

20. Retirement issues:

3.2 Getting ready for work and travelling to work (section 2)

This section was not in the original WES, but practically needs to be considered as part of the working day. The common problems have been listed but any others can then be added in the space provided. The final question asks the person to circle any major problems within the activities identified as problematic. Solutions to these problems are explored at the end of the interview when all the major problems have been identified and ranked.

Barriers (problems)

Section 2. Getting Ready for Work and Traveling to and from, or for

Work

Please check the items that are sometimes, or always, a problem for you.

Getting ready for work

- Getting out of bed
- Extra time needed for dressing, preparing breakfast, etc.
- Getting children, other family members or pets ready
- Doing stairs at home
- Other (describe) _____

Traveling to and from, or for work

- Using public transport (describe) _____
- Walking to work
- Driving - check which items are problems
 - Turn head as needed for rear view
 - Get in and out of vehicle
 - Turn key in ignition
 - Shift gears
 - Hold or turn steering wheel
 - Sit a long time
 - Stay alert or concentrate on driving
 - Clear snow and ice in winter
 - Pick up and drop off children or others
 - Managing car park barriers
 - Driving for work (describe hours)
 - Other (describe) _____
- Time/energy use
- Stress of getting to work on time
- Travel for business (describe) _____
- Lifting and/ or carrying things
- Other (describe) _____

Are any of the items you checked major problems for you? Yes No

If Yes, please circle the items that are major.

(Major means often or fairly bothersome)

3.3 Workplace access (section 3)

Adapted from a checklist published by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (1985), the accessibility section addresses barriers that the worker may experience in entering the works site, using necessary services and facilities, and exiting in emergency situations. Should an accessibility issue not be on the checklist, a box is provided for the respondent to list any other accessibility problems.

Section 3. Workplace Access

Please check the items that are sometimes, or always, a problem for you.

Getting into or around your place/s of work

- Parking (eg location; width of space)
- Walking
- Stairs
- Opening doors - check which items are problems
 - Door weight
 - Turn doorknobs
 - Key pads/ door locks
- Other (describe) _____

Using workplace facilities

- Using staff/public toilets
 - Taps
 - Low toilet
 - Access to "disabled" toilet
 - Other (describe) _____
- Access to food/eating places(eg staff canteen)
- Emergency evacuation routes
- Other (describe) _____

Are any of the items you checked major problems? Yes No

If Yes, please circle the items that are major.

(Major means often or fairly bothersome)

3.4 Assessing essential job functions (sections 4-7)

The original WES was adapted from the RehabMatch programme and Department of Labor Research (Greenwood et al, 1988), in which their section on essential job functions was divided into six categories: physical abilities, cognitive abilities, task related abilities, social abilities, working conditions, and the company policies. This section has been revised by both Allaire and LaValley (2003) and Hammond et al (2011) to improve the clarity of what information is being sought. Each section is self explanatory.

Completing job activities (section 4)

This first category explores the physical demands, mental, energy and emotional demands of the job.

Section 4. Completing Job Activities

Please check the items that are sometimes, or always, a problem for you.

Physical job demands

- Standing or being on feet too long
- Prolonged sitting
- Getting and up and down from sitting (describe) _____
- Lifting, pulling, pushing, or moving materials, equipment or people
- Carrying things
- Bending, kneeling, squatting, or picking things up from low places
- Reaching, raising arms above shoulders, or holding objects up
- Climbing, ladders for example
- Use computer or other keyboard devices – check which items are problems
 - Positioning (describe) _____
 - Typing, keyboarding or using the mouse
 - Holding or turning papers while typing
 - Other (describe) _____
- Other hand or wrist use - check which items are problems
 - Holding things like tools or telephone, or opening things like jars or drawers
 - Handling objects, for example, turn pages, use mobile phone, chop food, etc.
 - Picking things up
 - Writing
 - Hands get cold
 - Other (describe) _____
- Body position issues (describe) _____
- Being able to move quickly
- Doing repetitive activities
- Strength or endurance issues (describe) _____
- Seeing well or other vision issues (describe) _____
- Talking or other voice issues (describe) _____
- Hearing or listening issues (describe) _____
- Other (describe) _____

Are any of the items you checked major problems? Yes No

If Yes, please circle the items that are major.

(Major means often or fairly bothersome)

Section 4. Completing Job Activities (continued).

Please check the items that are sometimes, or always, a problem for you.

Mental job demands

- Staying alert or sustaining attention
- Remembering
- Thinking quickly
- Focusing or concentrating on work activities
- Planning or organizing
- Other (describe) _____

Time, Energy and Emotional job demands

- Working your regular hours
- Working extra or overtime hours
- Working shift hours
- Starting on work activities soon after you get to work
- Work pace or scheduling issues
- Meeting time or production quotas or deadlines, or perform under stress
- Emotional demands of working with children, customers, etc.
- Other (describe) _____

Any other job demands

- Lone worker (some or all of time) (describe) _____
- Other (describe) _____
- Other (describe) _____

Are any of the items you checked major problems? Yes No

If Yes, please circle the items that are major.

(Major means often or fairly bothersome)

If necessary, take notes of any specific activities that cause problems for the client.

3.5 Relationships with people at work (section 5)

Section 5 focuses on workplace relationships including those with managers, colleagues, and clients.

Section 5. Relationships with People at Work – Supervisors, Co-workers, People You Supervise, Customers, or Persons You Teach or Care For

Please check the items that are sometimes, or always, a problem for you.

- Supervisor, or management, is not supportive
 - You are unable to explain your condition
 - You are treated differently, or not in the way you want
 - You fear being thought of as less valuable
 - Other (describe) _____

- Co-workers are not supportive
 - They don't help when you ask for it
 - You don't want/ or are afraid to ask for help
 - You feel guilty about taking time off, or about doing less work, due to your health
 - Co-workers resent you taking time off due to your health
 - Other (describe) _____

- Reactions of people you supervise to your health (describe) _____

Others don't value your role/ contribution at work

- Feeling the need to hide your health condition from others
- Feeling self-conscious about your health condition, limitations, or appearance
- Explaining or handling reactions of others to your health, limitations or appearance
 - Lack of understanding from others about your limitations
 - Being afraid or hesitant to ask for a job accommodation
 - Being pleasant and upbeat with others when in pain or tired
 - Wearing the right kind of clothes/ uniform or shoes for your work
 - Other (describe) _____

Are any of the items you checked major problems? Yes No

If Yes, please circle the items that are major.

(Major means often or fairly bothersome)

3.6 Environmental Factors and company policies (section 6)

The impact of the physical environment and the company policies that regulate the work are explored here.

Section 6. Environmental Factors and Company Policies

Please check the items that are sometimes, or always, a problem for you.

Environmental factors

___ Lighting - check which items are problems

___ Fluorescent lights

___ Sunlight – work outdoors

___ Low or dim light

___ Other (describe) _____

___ Cold temperature or drafts - check which items are problems

___ Air conditioning/ ventilation

___ Cold areas at work (eg cold storage)

___ Work outdoors

___ Other (describe) _____

___ Hot temperature

___ Humidity

___ Smoke or other fumes/ scents/ dust

___ Noise

___ Flooring

___ Other (describe) _____

Company Policies

___ Needing to arrive at a certain time

___ Sick days

___ No or not enough sick days

___ Needing to take a lot of sick days

___ Supervisor or management frowns on use of sick days

___ Other (describe) _____

___ Not enough flexibility in hours

___ Not enough flexibility in changing shift patterns

___ Not enough chance to do some work at home

___ Not enough chance to take rest breaks

___ No or not enough time off for health care appointments

___ No or not enough discussion of Fit Note (or return to work interview) following sick leave

___ No modified or light work available (eg following discussion of Fit Note)

No or not enough performance reviews

Difficulty meeting targets arising from performance reviews

Employer is not supportive about job accommodations

No or not enough access to occupational health and/ or human resources/
personnel support

Lack of company retirement benefits

Limited or no company sickness benefit/pay

No or not enough flexibility in or exemption from company sickness absence
policy if have a long-term condition

Other (describe) _____

Are any of the items you checked major problems? Yes No

If Yes, please circle the items that are major.

(Major means often or fairly bothersome)

3.7 Job, career, and home life (section 7)

This section explores the employee's ability to work, the satisfaction they gain from working, and whether they can achieve a work life balance that is both acceptable to them and compliments their condition management.

Assessing job ability is difficult as it is influenced by a person's opinion of themselves. The job ability / mastery scale (coefficient Alpha = 0.74) was adapted from the Career Mastery Inventory developed by John Crites (1990). In addition to providing his permission for use of the items, Crites determined that the content of the items used in the original WES was appropriate for assessing job mastery concerns. These included items representing the six domains of the Career Mastery Inventory: getting the job done, fitting into the workforce, learning the ropes, getting along with others, getting ahead, and planning the next career step. This section has been further abbreviated to maintain the focus of the interview on functional activity within the workplace, but not to the exclusion of how the person integrates into the workplace. In the WES-RC this section was abbreviated to focus on staying in work and making adjustments to accommodate the effects of a medical condition.

In the original WES the job satisfaction section was much larger and was adapted from the Minnesota Theory of work adjustment developed by Dawis and Lofquist (1984). In that version, respondents evaluate their satisfaction with their current jobs in terms of the 20 work reinforcers in the Minnesota theory. An example of a work reinforcer "I'd do things that make use of my abilities" may be responded to in one of three ways: (a) too little, (b) about right, and (c) too much. Allaire converted this system into a yes / no set of questions, similar in format to the rest of the interview. In this way the construction of the interview consistently leads the person towards identifying major problems with their employment, and not become sidetracked with the important but less fundamental issues linked to job satisfaction, which in turn is linked to job ability and work life balance.

Maintaining a work like balance is important for both our physical and mental health. As with getting ready to go to work, the original WES did not look at life away from the workplace. However, with many conditions pacing, diet, rest and exercise, and medication, are key condition management tools that need to be considered over a 24-hour day and not just at work. This set of questions are not intended to pry into a person's private life but to understand how home and work impact on each other and whether the person has a good understanding of how to manage their condition.

Section 7. Job, Career and Home Life

Please check the items that are sometimes, or always, a problem for you.

Job ability

- Getting the work for your job done
 - Completing tasks as quickly as others do
 - Concern about meeting expectations
 - Loss of self-confidence about your work
 - Other (describe) _____
- Lack of friendly relationships at work
- Considering what work you would do if you needed or wanted to change jobs
- Having the drive or energy needed for promotions

Job satisfaction

- You are unhappy with your job because of your health
- You are unhappy with your job because of job conditions
 - Job does not give a feeling of accomplishment, or opportunity for advancement
 - Low pay
 - Job does not provide for steady employment
 - You don't get enough feedback about how well you do your job
 - Other (describe) _____
- You want or need to change jobs or career

Balance Between Work and Home Life

- Getting household work and/ or shopping done
- Lack of family support (describe) _____
- Doing things with your children, or doing other family, social, sport and recreational activities
- Doing volunteer activities
- Self-managing your arthritis, such as taking medications, getting rest, exercise
- Other (describe) _____

Are any of the items you checked major problems? Yes No

If Yes, please circle the items that are major.

(Major means often or fairly bothersome)

3.8 Problem prioritising and solution development (section 8)

This section gives you a chance to review the interview and begin to draw out problem themes. Through the identification of three key problems or barriers to work, energy can now be focused on finding possible solutions and formulating a plan of action. These solutions may utilise common adjustments for example, restructuring of existing facilities, restructuring of the job, using self-management approaches such as joint protection/ergonomics, positioning, fatigue and stress management, splints and orthoses, remodification of work schedules, reassignment to other roles / positions, modification of equipment, installation of new equipment, and flexible personal leave policies.

The information collected for this section of the WES-RC constitutes the essential elements of an accommodation plan that the person can share with the employer. In presenting information in the accommodation plan to the employer, the client (and rehabilitation professional if included) should emphasise the relationship between barrier removal and increased productivity.

List the 3 most bothersome problems/ barriers to employment.

NB can be a group of related problems, e.g.

“work station (i.e. seating, computer/mouse position, clutter, posture/positioning, filing)”

“travel/parking to/at work and to work-related activities; carrying bags/equipment”

“work scheduling; lack of breaks”

Section 8. Problem Prioritization and Solution Development

Review the problems identified in sections 1-7 and list the 3 most bothersome problems/ barriers to employment. Then describe possible solutions to the 3 problems and resources or people who can help. Be specific.

Problem/barrier 1/ 2/ 3:

List all possible solutions considered:

Resources/ people to help:

: _____

(continue notes overleaf if necessary)

4. Administration of the UK WES-RC

Rehabilitation professionals may administer the WES-RC in a face-to-face (Roessler and Gottcent 1994) or telephone interview (Rumrill, Roessler, and Denny, 1993) with individuals with disabilities who are either employed or about to begin employment. Whether conducted by telephone or in person, the WES-RC interview requires 30 -60 minutes to complete. A study by Allaire and Keysor (2009) confirmed that therapists took on **average** 45 minutes to complete the WES-RC.

Face-to-face contact enables the administrator to elicit more information from the respondent because it provides greater opportunity for feelings of trust to develop and for clarification of responses. Prior to administering the WES-RC, rehabilitation professionals may wish to mentally “walk through” the interview using their own jobs as models.

The general procedure for completing the WES-RC sections 2 -8 is as follows;

1. Encourage the person to identify barriers/ problems encountered in all the elements of a working day from getting up and getting ready to go to work, travelling to work, accessing the workplace, performing essential physical and mental job functions, interacting with others and job satisfaction.
2. Many of the barriers / problems encountered are already listed and just require ticking. Any not included in the checklist should be added next to the heading ‘other (describe)’ _____
3. At the end of each section ask the person to consider whether any of the problems identified could be described as ‘major problems’. These should be circled for discussion later on in the interview.
4. Once all the problems have been identified in sections 2 – 7, the problems which have been highlighted as major problems, or would make a difference to the person retaining their job, should be revisited in section 8.
5. Encourage the person to suggest reasonable workplace adjustments for the problems / barriers; do not hesitate to share knowledge of

adjustments that might prove feasible in the person's employment setting.

6. Identify resources, including financial, equipment and personnel based, which may assist / support with the suggested adjustment.
7. Remind the person that section 8 constitutes the basis for initiating a review of their need for workplace adjustments with the employer. It enables the person to state their barriers to productivity in priority order as well as reasonable adjustments for each barrier.

5. Information on Reasonable Accommodation Strategies and Resources

The WES-RC has been used in previous research on job retention and arthritis. Allaire et al (2003) conducted a trial with employed people who were diagnosed with arthritis and were mildly disabled. The intervention group received two 1.5 hour individual treatment sessions. Barriers were prioritised, potential solutions discussed and action plans were formulated. The control group received information booklets about managing health related employment problems. During the 3.5 year follow up the experimental group had 49% fewer permanent and temporary job losses than the control group and participants were very satisfied with the VR intervention.

The Equality Act (2010) aims to tackle disadvantage and discrimination, and has particular importance to people with disabilities. It requires employers to make reasonable adjustments that enable people with disabilities to have the same access to work as those without disabilities. Hence the use of the WES-RC to identify adjustments to remove on the job barriers is consistent with current legislation.

The Equality Act identifies core principles requiring consideration which include:

- Recruitment
- Equality at work pay and benefits
- Career development, training, promotion and transfer
- How you are managed
- Dismissal, redundancy, retirement and after you have left the job
- When your employer is responsible for what other people do
- **The employers duty to make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers for disabled people**
- What to do if you think you've been discriminated against

Subsequent information in this section provides descriptions and examples of each category.

- **Recruitment** --- an employer cannot discriminate against an individual in the recruitment process because of disability. The individual is not forced to disclose any health condition.
- **Equality at work pay and benefits** -- treats employees equally with regard to working hours etc but can treat a disabled person more favourably than other employees. For example and alteration to working hours e.g. reduction or paying an individual for working 35 hours when in fact they only work 30.
- **Career development training, promotion and transfer** – an employer should treat employees equally with regard to training but can treat a person with a disability more favourably because of the barriers they face. For example, an employer has a policy of short-listing and interviewing all applicants with disabilities who meet the minimum requirements for a job on promotion. The law would allow this. It would not be unlawful discrimination against a non-disabled applicant who also meets the minimum requirements but is not short listed because there are better-qualified candidates.
- **How you are managed** – an employer is responsible for harassment etc of employees, and have to demonstrate what steps they have taken to stop this.
- **Reasonable adjustments** – an employer should ensure removal of physical barriers and / providing additional support for the disabled worker so they as far as is reasonable have access to the same conditions as a non-disabled person. This may involve equipment, adaptations, change in working hours, change in organization, practical support, and removal of physical barriers.

In this following section examples are presented of the types of reasonable adjustment that can be made.

5.1 Physical barriers

Any environmental barriers should be assessed and where possible these removed or reasonable modified to accommodate the person's individual needs. This does not imply that all facilities must be entirely accessible to all persons with disabilities. The following show how existing facilities can be restructured to create accessible work environments:

- Installation of a wheelchair ramp at the entrance of a building
- Installation of an electric door
- Reservation of widened parking spaces for wheelchair users
- Renovation of toilets
- Installations of flashing alarm systems for those with hearing impairments
- Installation of grab rails

5.2 Restructuring the job

Job restructuring may include transferring certain tasks to another employee, assigning different tasks to the person with a disability, and eliminating tasks that the person with the disability cannot perform. For example, one aspect of an administrative assistant's position might involve answering telephones for 30 minutes each day. A person who is deaf would be unable to perform that function which would require the employer to assign telephone duties to another employee. Job restructuring is an effective and usually inexpensive means of accommodating an employee with a disability, but it is limited to the marginal or secondary responsibilities of the position. Essential functions, which should be specified in written job descriptions, are not subject to restructuring.

5.3 Modification of work schedules

Modified work schedules offer a reasonable accommodation that is usually inexpensive and often easy to arrange. This option includes both flexible

(working the number of hours on a different schedule) and reduced time assignments. The effects of a disability may seem to necessitate significant changes in an employee's schedule but slight modifications can often yield impressive results. For example, a person with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) may need more time to get ready in the morning and therefore starting their working day a bit later would enable them to continue working.

5.4 Reassignment to another position

In some cases, an accommodation is not possible for the employee's present position but would be feasible for another job. If the employer and employee agree that the other position would be more appropriate, they may consider reassignment to that position as an accommodation option. Reassignment may not be used to limit, segregate, or otherwise discriminate against the employee. The position should be vacant at the time of reassignment or expected to be vacant within a reasonable time frame. If the employee is qualified for the new position, it should be equivalent pay and status to the previous job. If the employee is not qualified for reassignment to an equivalent –status position, the employer may assign him to her to a lower-grade position.

5.5 Modification of equipment

Unless associated costs constitute an undue hardship for the employer, employees with disabilities must have access to the equipment that is routinely used on their jobs. Often, existing equipment can be modified with slight expense and minor inconvenience. Here are some examples:

- A man with a hearing impairment works as a telemarketer but finds it difficult to use a telephone. His employer installs a voice amplifier.
- A woman with a visual impairment works as a computer programmer but finds it difficult to read the monitor. Her employer installs software which enlarges images on the screen.

- A woman with RA as an administrative assistant and experiences difficulty using a keyboard. Her employer installs voice recognition software.

5.6 Installation of new equipment

When existing equipment cannot be modified, the employer must consider new equipment that enables the employee to perform essential functions of his or her job. The employer is only required to provide equipment for that particular job, not equipment to be used outside of work. As with all types of reasonable accommodations, costs of new equipment must not constitute an undue hardship for the employer. In some cases the cost of equipment can be met through the Access to Work scheme.

To apply for help the person must:

- Have a **disability or health condition*** that is going to last for over 12 months
- Be over 16 years old
- Live and work in Great Britain.

They may not be eligible if in receipt of certain benefits (check with the AtW scheme):

- Incapacity Benefit
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Income Support
- National Insurance Credits

The scheme provides grants to help pay for the extra employment cost of working with a disability. This can include funding for:

- Special aids or equipment to use in the workplace such as specialist software or computer access equipment including speech recognition software
- Support worker to provide one to one support in the workplace such as a British Sign Language Interpreter or personal reader for dyslexics, blind or visually impaired
- Travel to work if public transport cannot be used due to health or disability and help with adaptations to vehicles
- Travel in work to pay for the extra cost of travel while at work
- Communication support at job interviews for an interpreter or other one to one support for someone who has difficulties in communicating with others
- Adaptations to existing (but not new) buildings

The grant will not cover any items considered as standard equipment in the workplace.

Eligibility can be checked at <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview>

How to apply is also detailed there. This can be done by contacting the relevant Regional Access to Work centre or Local Job Centre Plus. The person is asked to complete an application form. Once they have the person's details, an adviser will discuss their application with them to assess their needs and the level of support required.

The Access to Work grant will pay for 100% of the approved costs if the person:

- Has been in their job less than 6 weeks
- Is self employed

- Is about to start work
- Is working for an employer with less than 10 employees

For those employed for longer than 6 weeks a proportion of the costs will be paid depending on the size of the company with employer contributions for larger companies.

Funding is for three years after which a new application will need to be required.

Here are examples of equipment accommodations:

- A man with arthritis has limited use of his hands. His employer installs a Lazy Susan file cabinet to enable him to reach material more easily.
- A woman with a visual impairment works as a newspaper editor. To assist her with the large volume of reading required, her employer provides a closed circuit magnification scheme.

5.7 Provision of support workers

In some cases support workers are provided as reasonable accommodations for people with visual and hearing impairment or for people with dyslexia and some physical injuries. The full cost of support workers is met through the Access to Work scheme. The support may only be required for a small proportion of the working day.

5.8 Resources: Who can help with Reasonable Adjustments?

The first step is for the person to complete an application form for Access to Work. Once eligibility has been assessed an Access to Work advisor contacts the individual.

If specialist advice is needed then the advisor co-ordinates this, for example if the person needs an assessment from AbilityNET (a UK charity providing advice and support with IT use).

Once the advisor has decided on a programme of support, approval is gained from Jobcentre plus. The employer then receives confirmation of this support. It is the responsibility of the employer to buy the necessary equipment. They are then reimbursed by the Access to Work scheme.

The Access to Work grant system is based on the individual's type of employment: i.e. whether they are unemployed, newly employed or self-employed and also how many employees the employer has. The larger the organisation is, the greater the contribution towards equipment from the employer. This is a potential barrier to securing equipment as it represents an additional cost. However, if the recommendations are not actioned by an employer, this could be classed as discrimination under the Equality Act (2010).

6. Requesting Reasonable Adjustments: An Employee-Initiated Collaborative Process

A disability is defined in the Equality Act (2010) as:

- Physical or mental impairment
- The impairment has a substantial long term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day to day activities

Conditions specifically excluded from being covered are addictions to non-prescribed substances.

Once an employee has completed the WES-RC interview and incorporated suggestions from the rehabilitation professional/s and other resources, they are ready to begin collaborative adjustment planning with their employer.

The steps taken to implement the reasonable adjustments will be dependent on individual need. One scenario is that the individual may require modifications to working hours and this could be done through collaboration with the employer alone. A second example is a person who needs minor modifications to existing equipment and small gadgets which don't incur significant financial cost and therefore Access to Work is not required. For a third individual, the adjustments may involve a support worker for a proportion of their working day, thus involving Access to Work. Finally, a fourth person may require a comprehensive package which involves alteration of working hours, provision of a support worker and specialist equipment. In this case Access to Work would be necessary and the programme may take longer to implement.

7. **Conclusion**

In keeping with rehabilitation's commitment to provide responsive, comprehensive and client centred services for individuals with disabilities, practitioners must develop more effective strategies for promoting long term career development following initial job placement. Developed as part of a job retention intervention for adults with disabilities, the Work Experience Survey-RC is an easy to administer interview that enables the respondent to identify his or her on-the-job barriers and specify resources that can assist in implementing reasonable adjustments.

Although it comprises a powerful intervention in its own right, the WES-RC is intended to be used as a vehicle for participation in a more elaborate intervention – encouraging employees with disabilities to invoke their right to adjustments under the Equality Act (2010). The process begins with the WES-RC but it is most effectively accompanied by:

- a) detailed information about adjustment strategies, and,
- b) introduction to resource agencies that can assist in implementing adjustments (e.g. Access to Work).

By using the WES-RC as an introduction process of identifying, appraising and removing on-the-job barriers to career development, rehabilitation professionals can offer their clients a much needed job retention service.

Further resources to support identifying Work Solutions

can be found in the **WORK-IA Resource Manual** (A Hammond, S Woodbridge, R O'Brien, 2011).

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