

Answers to Questions: Case Study 1

- (a) Specification rule 2.6 states the circumstances where work may be undertaken prior to signature of the form and completion of the eligibility assessment. In particular, section 2.6(1)(c) points out that pre-signature work may be claimed where the client had given specific details of their case (and/or had handed over relevant documents) at the time of making the appointment. Please note however, if the client turns out to be subsequently ineligible when the caseworker does the eligibility check then no claim for this or any further work may be made (2.6(2)) unless the interview/attendance can be claimed as a Level 1
- (b) See answer above. It is important to remember that any work for which you are going to claim as direct casework time must in itself have been reasonable and necessary, this would include work prior to signature of the form (2.6(1)(c)). 20 minutes seems a long time to consider a case where you presumably have expertise in the area and without the client being present to aid your diagnosis – an auditor would want to see evidence of what was considered and what came out of it namely, what work was undertaken as a consequence of this consideration
- (c) Writing out an appointment letter to a client is not a claimable activity however, in this circumstance, as the letter also contains specific casework issues (asking them to bring particular documents) then it would be possible to claim it as a standard letter and would be recorded as 1 unit (4.12(1))
- (d) No time is claimable for waiting for a client who does not attend an appointment on time, this is because other work could be undertaken whilst waiting (4.17(1))
- (e) The activities listed here are all claimable although it is your choice whether you itemise them separately or just claim a total amount for all the work done in the interview. It would be possible to separate out the letter confirming advice from the initial client care letter where this seems reasonable and claim for 2 letters (4.13(1)). Ordering the documents might be questionable but as it will probably be necessary to apply your professional acumen to decide which items are relevant and which are not then it should be claimable as part of the overall attendance upon the client, leading as it will to case progress providing this is clear to an auditor. Although rule 4.9(7) states that completing the CW1 is an administrative activity and should therefore not be claimed, it does go on to say that in practice auditors will not separate out any time claimed for completing the form or assessing means from any time claimed for the initial interview. Given this, it might be sensible not to itemise the time claimed for completing the CW1 form separately but rather add it into the total time taken in the interview when noting the time taken on the file record. 3 hours for an initial interview would most likely be seen as excessive unless there were extenuating circumstances and these were identified to an auditor such as volume/complexity (where there were no doubts over any lack of competence on your part) or, some disability/difficulty on

the part of the client (not yourself) which meant that the interview took longer than what would be usual (4.4(4) – although this section is not currently in force, the principle of when claiming excessive time above and beyond other similar cases might be reasonable, may be implied)

- (f) Rule 4.3(5) states that if the discussion occurs as part of supervision, or because the case requires more than one area of expertise then the time may be allowable provided the discussion occurs at a point in the file where there is need to take or consider specific action and provided the discussion progresses the case. Only one person's time should be claimed i.e. the time of the adviser with conduct of the case (not that of the supervisor or whichever person the case was discussed with). It is important to note however, that the LSC assumes that all casework is undertaken by competent experienced personnel and that therefore the discussion was not simply due to inexperience on the part of the caseworker, which would almost certainly be picked up if it occurred routinely (6.6(c))
- (g) Unless there was some discussion about the actual case in hand then this would be classed as an administrative activity and would not be claimable, even as a standard rate item
- (h) Whilst rule 2.10(2)(c) is concerned with situations where someone might sign the form on a clients behalf it is useful here as it points out that a home visit would be unlikely to be reasonable where any inability to visit you at the office was temporary or that the visit could be postponed without damage to the clients case. You do not need the LSC's approval to see a client out of the office (3.1(4)(d)) however the home visit must be justified by reference to rule 2.10(2) i.e. where the client is elderly ill or disabled or is caring for another person who is elderly ill or disabled and as a result is unable to travel to your office. It is possible that the LSC may apply restrictions on whether or under what circumstances you perform home visits if they have particular concerns that might arise out of a cost assessment audit (6.7(7)) or through monitoring the time you are spending on travel as a proportion of your overall time claims for work. At rule 3.2(2) they indicate a figure of 1 and a half hours one-way travel time as a figure where really you should be trying to refer the client to a provider who is more local to the client. Remember that: "time spent traveling on a long journey is time that you cannot spend advising clients or carrying out casework. It is unproductive time as far as you and your other clients are concerned." (3.2(1))
- (i) The LSC recognise at 4.12(3) that some times a more complex letter may of course take longer to prepare and that the length of the letter is not necessarily the most important factor. A well-written concise letter, which may require more preparation time, will often have a greater effect than a longer and less precise letter and the LSC should take this into account when considering the time claimed
- (j) If the reply was standard or routine then 4.14(1) states that you should not claim the time to read it as the 1 unit allowed for the letter out is intended to cover you reading a standard or routine reply. In our scenario here, given the length and content of this letter in it may be possible that you would claim the time taken to read the letter and

consider its bearing on the matter and what actions should now occur as a consequence. The fact that proof of income has not yet been obtained does not automatically cause a problem; providing it is obtained before the matter is reported as closed and this proof relates to the computation period for establishing eligibility at the outset then all time may be claimed. If it is not obtained then the work claim should be limited to 2 hours when the case is ultimately reported; as would also happen if the matter were audited before proof is obtained. The letter asking for proof of income would be classed as an administrative activity and be unclaimable as it does not contain any specific casework reference

- (k) In our scenario, this letter from the client was a reply to a letter out. Given that it concludes the case and is therefore not requesting that you flex your mental muscle it should not be claimed for – the standard claim for the letter out would have included an element to cover this standard or routine reply in. The signing on card would not be adequate proof of income, as it does not necessarily specify the benefit type or amount of award (Annex D). The letter detailing their recent tax assessment would constitute acceptable proof on income and therefore eligibility (Annex D).