

Vulnerable persons

What is a vulnerable person?

Adults

Babies and Children

Proactive Disclosure – providing information to third parties without the customer's consent

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What is a vulnerable person?

Anyone can be classed as a vulnerable person depending on their situation. This can include individuals that are not DWP customers, for example a:

- baby
- child
- teenager

But they may be part of a DWP customer's family or household.

Adults

Vulnerable adults are people who are at greater than normal risk of abuse. They may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. They may have difficulties with dealing /complying with DWP processes which could affect their welfare and well-being and/or that of their family. Vulnerable adults include people who are open to abuse or they may find it difficult to access DWP services because of:

- learning difficulties,
- physical disabilities
- mental illness
- age, especially those older people who are unwell, frail, confused and unable either to stand up for themselves or keep track of their affairs.

Babies and Children

Because of their age, babies and young children are classed as vulnerable.

Proactive Disclosure – providing information to third parties without the customer’s consent.

If you are satisfied that a child or vulnerable adult faces clear and significant risks to their welfare or safety, you are explicitly empowered by DWP policy and relevant legislation to take any reasonable steps which you feel are necessary in order to address these risks. This includes concerns about the risk of injury, ill treatment or neglect. The expectation is that action will be taken without any undue delay. You may wish to alert your management to the disclosure.

In the case of a baby or child, information may be provided without the consent of the parents if a child’s welfare is at risk. You do not have to tell the parents about the disclosure.

You may volunteer information which is directly relevant to the issue of concern to Social Services, Social Work Department in Scotland or the police, as appropriate, without the customer’s consent.

Any information given must be factual and relevant. You should provide an outline of the facts of the case and your concerns to the relevant body, and only provide personal information such as name and address once they have confirmed that they can take the issue forward. It is unlikely to be necessary to disclose full details of the benefit claims or signing on details, for example.

In some areas of the country, Social Services ask DWP to tell our customer that we have informed Social Services. There is no obligation for DWP to inform our customer that we have approached Social Services. Additionally, some Social Services departments state that they have to disclose the source of allegations made to them. If you have any concerns about this, remember that you do not have to disclose any further details if you feel that this would put your own safety at risk. This is particularly the case when staff are disclosing information about PV/UCB customers where it may be obvious to the customer where the information has come from, e.g. a face to face meeting in their home, or signing on appointment.

Vulnerable Customer Hub

For more guidance about Vulnerable customers please go to the [Vulnerability Hub](#).

What to do if a customer threatens self-harm or suicide

If a customer threatens self-harm or suicide, please see the guidance within the [Managing Customers Suicide and Self Harm Declarations – policy framework for managers](#)

Serious Case Review

Local Authorities must have a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to provide effective local co-ordination of activity to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. One of the roles of the LSCB is to undertake Serious Case Reviews (SCR).

You may be asked to take part in a SCR. DWP staff can take part in these reviews but you will need to discuss with the local authority whether you will be able to add value to the review. If you need further advice about taking part in a SCR, please check the Department’s guidance ‘[What is a](#)

[Serious Case Review](#)'.