

## Chapter 7 - Accessing Jobcentre Customer Services

# Introduction - Accessing Jobcentre Customer Services

1. As managers, both the Jobcentre Customer Service Manager and Work Coach Team Leader are responsible for the overall customer experience in your Jobcentre Plus office, managing the way claimants access our services.

2. You do this by:

- ensuring the Front of House area is managed effectively and all control measures are implemented including that initial contact with visitors is done by DWP staff and not security;
- ensuring the flow of claimants through the office is managed, avoiding queues, reducing waiting times and minimising callers without appointments;
- ensuring claimants are directed to appropriate channels and are appropriately signposted;
- ensuring claimants with complex needs, including those with hidden impairments, are identified immediately and given the help and support they need. This may involve allowing a friend or family member to accompany the claimant as their representative or, where possible, giving the claimant the opportunity to have a face to face intervention;
- ensuring claimants who attend the office without an appointment are directed to the relevant source of help and are made aware of the self-help channels available where appropriate;
- ensuring incoming telephone calls are answered within 30 seconds and that the standard greeting is used at all times;
- ensuring claimants who telephone the office are signposted to the appropriate help in a professional and efficient manner and that the use of 0800/0345 numbers are promoted at all times;
- ensuring your people are familiar with the Jobcentre Plus telephony and how to manage their handsets;
- ensuring suitable provision to communicate with claimants and customers who do not speak English or Welsh (for people residing in Wales), or who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired is used; and
- ensuring your people are aware of the Bogus Caller policy and do not disclose sensitive personal information about claimants over the telephone.

3. Every time a claimant visits a Jobcentre Plus office, we need to establish their reason for calling and deal with their queries in the most effective way. The Service Delivery Coach is responsible for managing this process and making sure callers into the jobcentre are dealt with in the most appropriate way.

## Key roles in Jobcentre Customer Services

### Service Delivery Coach

4. The role of the Service Delivery Coach is to deliver a professional and engaging service to claimants, when not participating in activities with their work coach, to enable them to find and secure employment or support for work preparation. They will provide a welcoming environment for partners and employers who are working with us and ensure suitable space is provided whenever possible.

5. They also have responsibility for the health and safety of colleagues, customers and visitors and are responsible for undertaking Health and Safety Incident Control Officer duties. This role is a key control measure for health and safety purposes and **must** be maintained as a minimum at the level of the site specific risk assessment. The Service Delivery Coach's full responsibilities are set out in the job description in the Jobcentre Operating Model Roles.

6. The Service Delivery Coach manages the Service Delivery Support colleagues undertaking work search reviews for Work Programme participants, payment/cashier activity, making non-complex decision making and appeals decisions, new claims bookings, financial assessment duties and signposting/supporting customers. Service Delivery Coaches will also manage the

public areas and deal effectively with complex queries and identify individuals with complex needs or those who require additional support to enable them to access benefits and use our services.

- The Service Delivery Coach's full responsibilities are set out in the job description Jobcentre Operating Model Job Roles.

## **Service Delivery Support**

7. Service Delivery Support colleagues are line managed by the Service Delivery Coach and support the delivery of an effective service either on site or as part of a centralised team. Service Delivery Support colleagues provide an effective first point of contact for claimants entering the jobcentre, establishing visitor needs and signposting as appropriate. They will conduct financial assessment activities for new claims, action reports and schedules, prepare for, preview and conduct face to face appointments with relevant claimants, conduct work search reviews with Work Programme claimants and handle decision making and appeals submissions in accordance with operational instructions.

8. Further information on the Service Delivery Support job role can be found in the Jobcentre Operating Model Job Roles.

## **Customer Computers (also known as Web Access Devices (WADs))**

9. Customer computers provide internet access in jobcentres to aid claimants in their job search activity and support making on-line claims. Staff can use customer computers to help claimants navigate around the internet, assist with job search or making on-line claims and show them useful websites.

10. The devices are wireless computer terminals; they allow claimants to search the internet, create email accounts and update or create their CV. Unlike traditional computers, they do not hold any user information or files. They do have active USB ports, which allow claimants to save their activities and work to a memory stick.

**Note:** Printing facilities from a Web Access Device (WAD) is not available as there aren't any dedicated printers attached to them and due to how they are set up, they can't be linked to any network printers in the office.

11. Claimants can either book a slot to use a customer computer or just turn up. Work coaches can refer claimants to a customer computer and are encouraged to accompany them to the suite to support them whenever possible. This also helps work coaches improve their own skills in using the internet.

12. These devices are outside the Department's secure environment and whilst staff can use customer computers for business related activity, claimant/sensitive data must not be entered into these devices unless it is by the claimant themselves. Staff cannot use customer computers for personal use even in their own time.

## **Claimant Experience**

13. All claimants accessing Jobcentre Plus services must be dealt with in accordance with the Customer Charter. Managers must ensure that every claimant who visits a Jobcentre Plus office is greeted by our people who will:

- wear a name badge and greet claimants in a friendly, businesslike way;
- always try to see claimants on time if they have an appointment;
- arrange another appointment as soon as possible if the claimant needs one;
- use a private interview room, where possible, if the claimant needs privacy;
- try to immediately help claimants without an appointment. Where not possible, explain why, and arrange an individual appointment as soon as possible; and
- treat all claimants as individuals, identifying their needs and requirements.

14. Jobcentre Plus needs each contact with claimants to count, ensuring that claimants receive the information, advice and guidance that they need. These services are developing all the time as Jobcentre Plus is looking ahead to the future and the improvements it will bring.

You also need to understand varying levels of claimant attendance including scheduled appointment traffic as well as other ad hoc visits. Be aware of peaks and troughs at different times and on different days.

## **Birth, marriage or death certificates to support a Bereavement Benefit claim**

15. If a customer calls at a jobcentre **with** a BB1 Bereavement Benefit Claim Form and documents to support that claim (e.g. Life Event Certificates, Forms BF194/BF195 or MF2), then photocopy all original certificates and return to the customer; certify the copies and note with the customer's **Name** and **National Insurance** Number; date and stamp **with** your office stamp; and send with the BB1 Bereavement Benefit Claim form in the courier to:

**Bereavement Benefit Centre (Dover), Telford MOU, Unit E, Stafford Park 12, Telford, TF3 3BJ.**

If a customer calls at a jobcentre with a BSP1 Bereavement Support Payment (BSP) claim form and documents to support that claim then follow the same action as before. However you must send the documents along with the BSP1 BSP claim form by courier to: **Bereavement Benefit Centre (Dover), Kidderminster MOU, Unit 1, Easter Park, Kidderminster, DY11 7AR.**

16. If a customer calls at a jobcentre with documents to support a Bereavement Benefit or BSP claim (e.g. Life Event Certificates, Forms BF194/BF195 or MF2), but **without** a BB1 Bereavement Benefit claim form or BSP1 BSP claim form, then please scan all original certificates and return to the customer; **attach** the scanned documents to an email and send to the Bereavement Benefit Team in Dover. The correct email address is: [Redacted]

[Redacted] [Redacted under exemption S] The subject box of the email must state – BB Documents/BSP documents and in the body of the email you must confirm if the certificates were originals and clearly state the customer's **Name** and **National Insurance Number**.

17. If you or the customer have any questions, please feel free to contact us on the National Bereavement Benefit Advice Line - **0845 608 8601**.

## **Customer access to Jobcentre staff toilet facilities**

18. DWP has an obligation to make **reasonable adjustments** under the Equality Act 2010 for disabled customers. For some of these customers coming into a jobcentre or DWP office may prove more difficult if their disability includes incontinence issues and/or mobility related problems.

19. Given that all of our jobcentres are unique it isn't possible to design a generic approach for the customer use of toilets on our premises that will ensure we meet our obligations. It is therefore important that each jobcentre or DWP customer facing office risk assess the impact of granting our customers access to toilets for their particular office and handle these situations and issues on a site by site basis. Customer access to toilets must be factored into the Jobcentre Customer Facing Risk Assessment (JCFRA) process for each site. To be clear the use of toilets is not for general customer use but considerations must be in place for every jobcentre/ DWP customer facing office so staff are prepared for when these situations arise.

20. The Health & Safety Community are fully supportive of our managers using their discretion in these types of situations providing adequate control measures are in place and it will not compromise the safety of others.

21. For further information on this and the impact of the Equality Act please see the Delivering Equality for Customers – Access to Services guidance.

## Breastfeeding rights of mothers attending DWP premises

22. You will also need to ensure all jobcentre staff are made aware that, where possible, every effort must be made to provide a mother wishing to breastfeed her baby with a suitable area to do so.

23. It is important to be fully clear on what to do or how to act should you encounter a situation where a woman wishes to breastfeed a child in a jobcentre or other public building ] where DWP staff may be located.

24. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against mothers who are breastfeeding a child of any age. This means that we must not directly or indirectly ask a woman to leave a DWP building because she is breastfeeding and we must allow women customers who are in jobcentres to breastfeed in public if they want to. Please note that in Scotland it is a criminal offence to prevent or stop breastfeeding under the Breastfeeding etc. (Scotland) Act 2005.

25. Although breastfeeding women are entitled to breastfeed in public areas, some women may prefer to breastfeed in a more private area. Where possible, jobcentre managers should accommodate any requests for a private area for mothers to breastfeed. Security matters and Health and Safety concerns must be considered when deciding on a suitable private location.

26. As it is unlawful to discriminate against a woman who is breastfeeding, even if other claimants or members of staff complain we must not stop a woman breastfeeding in public, regardless of the reason for the complaint. However, to protect the breastfeeding woman, anyone who makes a complaint should be asked to move to a different area and/or if they would like to re-arrange their appointment. In this circumstance, we have an obligation to ensure that a woman who is breastfeeding is not treated unfairly.

27. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Equality team on [Redacted] or [Redacted] [Redacted under exemption S31]

## Vulnerable Claimants

28. Vulnerable claimants are those who have difficulty in dealing with the demands of Jobcentre Plus processes at the time when they need to access a service. As a result of this, they are unlikely to be able to use normal channels to access the service they need and are likely to benefit from face-to-face support.

29. When making a judgement about whether a claimant is vulnerable, it is vitally important that you communicate with the person. Vulnerability is not a static state associated with a particular circumstance or situation, it can only be determined as part of a measured assessment. In the jobcentre, this assessment may need to be conducted in a matter of seconds.

30. When communicating with the claimant, you will need to assess whether they are:

- in distress;
- not understanding;
- giving one word responses (e.g. 'yes' or 'no');
- upset; or
- frustrated.

31. It is important to use the skills gathered from the learning and development events you will have attended. Critically, you need to focus on your questioning and listening techniques and avoid making assumptions about the claimant.

32. There are a number of factors below that **may** be relevant to the identification of vulnerable claimant. However, this list is not exhaustive:

- mental health conditions;

- sensory impairments;
- hidden impairments (e.g. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders/Conditions, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia);
- drug/alcohol dependency;
- physical disabilities;
- learning difficulties;
- personal circumstances such as:
  - just left prison; or
  - just left hospital;
- homelessness;
- recent bereavement;
- claimants who have suffered domestic violence or threats; or
- claimants who have recently been a victim of crime.

33. It is likely that 16/17 year old claimants will be vulnerable and it will be usual for them to require face-to-face support.

34. It is important to stress that identification of vulnerable claimants is a matter of judgment. All staff irrespective of their role must be aware of the help that is available for this claimant group.

35. Further information on how to handle contacts with vulnerable claimants can be found in the Hidden Impairments Toolkit and the Vulnerability Instructions – Additional Support for Individuals.

**Note 1:** Although the Hidden Impairments Toolkit was primarily written for use by work coaches, Telephonists and Receptionists/Security/Floorwalkers staff in other jobcentre-based roles may find it useful.

## Telephone Calls

36. The Jobcentre Plus Customer Charter document contains the levels of service a claimant can expect to receive from any jobcentre. With regard to our telephone service, this states that we will:

- provide a quality service;
- establish and publish response times;
- provide the facility for incoming calls for a minimum of 36 hours per week, this applies to both switchboard numbers and to Direct Dial In (DDI);
- answer the phone with a standard greeting and give our name;
- provide contact details, including full DDI number on all local correspondence; and
- provide a text phone service.

### Telephone Language Service

37. DWP's language interpreting service is available from thebigword. This is a telephone based service that enables staff to communicate professionally with members of the public who do not speak English as their first language.

38. Arrangements for providing interpreting services for our claimants have recently been reviewed. See the Interpreting Services intranet site for more details.

### Bogus Callers

39. A bogus contact is an attempt by an individual or an organisation to obtain information about our claimants to which they are not entitled, usually by impersonating a claimant or someone else that the Department may disclose information to.

40. Not only do we have a duty to keep claimant (and staff) information securely, but also we are required to do so by various pieces of legislation. This guidance aims to help explain the problem, and what staff can do to protect claimant information from the threat of bogus calls.

41. The Department's policy has been reviewed to help protect claimant information. Telephone callers can reasonably be expected to know, or have ready access to, information about a claimant's :

- address;
- telephone number;

- date of birth;
- National Insurance number; and
- financial information including bank and building society data.

42. These details must not be disclosed or confirmed by telephone. Similarly, do not disclose or confirm any information that the claimant or caller could be expected to know themselves.

43. The vast majority of bogus contacts are made by telephone. Information obtained during investigations indicates that many thousands of calls are made to our offices yet only around 1,000-1,500 are reported each year. See the Bogus Caller policy for more details