

Core Visits

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Guidance continues to evolve as we develop these processes. You must therefore make sure that you are using the latest version when considering any action.

106. If DWP knows that a claimant has a condition that could affect their ability to understand or comply with their obligations or conditionality, or to understand the implications of not complying, a Core Visit to their home must be considered prior to any sanction or disallowance decision being made. In such cases, consideration must be given to the following:

- the context of the interview or assessment and whether the interview or assessment must be deferred
- notifying the claimant of the date, time and place of the interview or assessment and asking them to get in touch if they cannot make it
- encouraging advocacy support if needed
- identifying any relevant issues where known that might impact on attendance
- contacting the claimant before the interview or assessment to remind them that it is due.

To mitigate the risk of hardship to claimants where we have advanced customer support concerns, consideration must also be given to contacting (where relevant and appropriate):

- the claimant's appointee, Power of Attorney (PoA) or next of kin
- the claimant's Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN)
- social services
- the police.

Any steps taken must be noted to inform those who interact with the claimant.

Note: The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) does not allow for these people or organisations to report back to DWP the outcome of any investigations they choose to undertake.

Data protection laws do not prevent you from disclosing personal data to the relevant authorities when you are acting in good faith about a genuine concern.

For more information, refer to DWP's policy and procedures regarding sharing data with relevant authorities when we have concerns about a person's safety or wellbeing. For more information see: disclosing personal data for safeguarding.

107. A Core Visit is not necessarily undertaken in every case where a claimant has failed to interact with the DWP. The considerations relevant to the decision as to whether to undertake a Core Visit are discussed further at paragraphs 111 and 112 below.

Check if there are any indicators, such as a mental health marker and consider if further action is required before any sanction is applied or disallowance decision made.

This can include the following situations:

- fails to attend (FTA) a mandatory interview
- fails to attend (FTA) a Work Capability Assessment (WCA)
- fails to provide medical evidence or further evidence to continue their claim to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- contributory benefit is due to exhaust and there is no response from the claimant following issue of a claim form
- fails to undertake (FTU) Work-Related Activity (WRA)

This list is not exhaustive.

Note: DWP Visiting do not conduct visits to a care of address. If you are unable to trace a confident address, take action as if two ineffective visits have taken place (see paragraph 123 onwards below).

108. A Core Visit is undertaken by a Visiting Officer from DWP Visiting to help the claimant understand why they have to attend and take part in an interview or assessment, or undertake any WRA agreed with their Work Coach, and the implications of not doing so. The Visiting Officer will record good cause for non-attendance or participation reasons if applicable. The Visiting Officer does not conduct any mandatory interviews.

109. If the claimant has an Appointee or someone with Power of Attorney (PoA), assume that the appointee or PoA fully understands the mandatory requirements and is therefore being proactive in assisting the claimant to comply. Core Visits must still be undertaken in these cases and include the appointee or PoA.

110. Consider the possibility that the claimant's non-attendance at mandatory interviews, assessments or providing evidence might be an indication that the appointee or PoA is not fulfilling their responsibilities, in which case take the appropriate action, see: Appointee Instructions.

111. If a claimant has not responded to any correspondence from the DWP, check whether the claimant has a mental health condition or learning difficulty that might affect their understanding of their obligations and the consequences of failing to comply, or that might affect their ability to act on that understanding.

Refer to [the](#) ESA Incapacity Reference Guide if you are unsure whether the claimant's condition is a mental health condition or learning disability.

Note: If contact has been made with a claimant suffering from one of the appropriate conditions and you are confident that the claimant has understood the process and is able to comply, make a note in the relevant systems to that effect, and that they consider a Core Visit is not required. However, if you have any doubt you must refer for a Core Visit.

112. If paragraph 111 above applies a Core Visit must be arranged as soon as possible, and no further action must be taken regarding the claimant's non-attendance at mandatory interviews, assessments or missing evidence until the outcome of the Core Visit is known.

You must refer the case to the Visiting Officer in accordance with Core Visits process, detailed in the Core Visits Guide using the DWP Referral tool. The referrer is required to include, if known, the following information:

- claimant's condition
- claimant's representative or third party (these could include social worker, health visitor, family member or friend and so on)
- details of action taken to contact the claimant or representative
- escalation details to Vulnerable Customer Champion (VCC), Working Age Customer Experience and Advanced Support Team (WACEAST) or Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders (ACSSL's)
- if a previous visit has been undertaken
- if good cause has been considered
- for Failure to Undertake WRA, details of the activity the claimant was directed to undertake must be included, and the date it was to be completed by
- request the Visiting Officer to check if the claimant is a Lone Parent with a child under one, if this information is not already known
- a follow up of 10 working days must be set on the relevant system to check the outcome of the visit. If this matures and the DWP Referral tool has not been received, follow up the referral in line with local procedures and consider extending the review date.

Note: It is essential that the DWP Referral tool is fully completed and that the telephone number is included in the Referring Officer contact details. The Visiting Officer may need to use this to rearrange the interview during the visit so it must be staffed. This number can also be given to the claimant for them to get in touch direct.

113. The Visiting Officer undertakes the Core Visit to establish whether the claimant understands:

- the requirements regarding attendance and participation in the mandatory interview or assessment
- the requirements to undertake WRA
- the requirement to provide evidence and or information requested

114. The Visiting Officer must contact the referrer to have any mandatory interview or assessment rebooked, book an interview to review the WRA, and or inform of the next steps regarding the missing evidence, by agreeing a date and time with the claimant and the referrer.

The Visiting Officer will not undertake any mandatory interview activity or make any decisions relating to deferral, good cause and so on.

115. The Visiting Officer must contact the referrer immediately if it appears deferring a mandatory interview might be appropriate. Where possible this must be by telephone at the time of the visit.

116. Where the referrer confirms the appointment has been booked, the Visiting Officer must complete an appointment letter.

117. Once the visit is completed, the Visiting Officer must return the referral and all the information to the referrer for good cause consideration.

118. Where the claimant is not at home or refused to cooperate, see details of Ineffective Visits. For more information on Core Visits, see: the Core Visits Guide.

Ineffective Visits

119. An ineffective visit is one where the claimant either:

- is not at home
- refuses to cooperate
- lives in an area that DWP Visiting deems unsafe.

First Visit Ineffective

120. In the event of an ineffective visit, the Visiting Officer leaves a letter at the claimant's address asking the claimant to contact the referrer within five working days.

121. If the claimant makes contact within five working days of the ineffective visit, the referrer notifies DWP Visiting so that they do not make an unnecessary second visit.

122. If the claimant does not make contact within five working days of the ineffective visit, the Visiting Officer must attempt another visit to see the claimant face to face.

Second Visit Ineffective or where Core Visits cannot take place

123. A Core Visit may not be possible where the claimant lives in an area that DWP Visiting deem unsafe.

124. In these cases the Higher Executive Officer (HEO) must continue to take the action as if two ineffective visits have taken place. 'For WHDM' See Ineffective Visit Vulnerable Customer Champion (VCC)

Next steps

125. Where two Core Visits have been ineffective, the claimant's details must be referred to the HEO of the person who made the referral to discuss the case in more detail as part of the case conference. Pending the outcome of the case conference, the claimant's award does not end and payments do not stop.

Case conferencing takes place between the HEO, Vulnerable Customer Champion (VCC) if part of your advanced customer support process, and the referrer to determine all the facts of the case following two ineffective visits prior to making a decision on the claim.

The case conference reviews the information available to them and provide an assurance check. This includes reviewing, for example:

- the circumstances prompting the referral for a visit to be made
- previous interactions with the Department, including attendance at any interventions as part of the conditionality to receive ESA
- any documentation or notes available regarding the claimant, for example a medical report following attendance at a WCA
- any information we currently hold from third parties (this may include a next of kin or organisations such as social services)
- whether a deferral of the original intervention or appointment is appropriate at this stage until vulnerability enquiries are made.

The case conference also considers whether to involve the local partnership manager and Working Age Customer Experience and Advanced Support Team (WACEAST), if part of your advanced customer support process, who may be aware of local organisations who can offer support.

The case conference participants must be satisfied that agreed actions have been taken and all relevant information has been adequately considered.

The HEO must review the information and note on the relevant systems the actions considered and agreed.

Following the case conference, if it is recognised that there is still a vulnerability concern, the claimant's award will not end and payments will not be stopped. You **must not** suspend or stop the claimant's benefit payment until further action has been taken and further advice given. The case is then referred to an Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader to liaise with relevant agencies, including but not limited to social services, the local authority or the police.

For more information and contact details of the Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader in each region refer to the ACS Operational Delivery Team page.

A review date must be set to consider the next steps following the referral to the Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader.

126. Once all reasonable steps have been taken as outlined above, the referrer gathers the relevant documentation so that the case can be sent to the decision maker (DM), including details of vulnerability steps taken, such as referrals to other organisations for example the police, the outcome of the case conference and any subsequent actions.

This enables the DM to make an informed decision as to whether to consider a suspension, disallow entitlement or apply a sanction taking into account the full circumstances of the case.