

Managing and escalating an Advanced Customer Support concern

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At a glance:

Introduction

Advanced Customer Support

Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders

1. This chapter contains overarching principles relating to managing and escalating an Advanced Customer Support concern.

Introduction

2. If we have a concern about the safety or wellbeing of someone and these concerns cause us to believe that someone faces clear and significant risks to their welfare or safety, we should take reasonable steps to address these risks. This includes (but is not limited to) concerns about:

- risk of injury
- ill treatment
- neglect
- domestic abuse
- physical abuse or sexual abuse
- exploitation of children or vulnerable adults
- modern slavery.

3. If we identify someone at risk of harm or abuse, we should notify a line manager and follow the steps outlined below. We must always consider the potential risk of harm to the person themselves or to others, which may include their family, DWP colleagues or members of the public, and identify the most appropriate authority to contact. This will depend on geographical location and the specific circumstances of the individual at risk. Relevant authorities may include the police, local crisis support teams, or social services.

If we deem that a claimant is at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, we should contact the emergency services by dialling 999.

4. In cases involving children, we do not have to tell the parents or guardian about the disclosure. This is an example of what is known as proactive disclosure.

5. Data protection laws do not prevent us from disclosing personal data to the relevant authorities when we are acting in good faith about a genuine Advanced Customer Support concern. In most cases we should discuss concerns with a line manager and agree an appropriate course of action. Depending on the urgency of the situation we may need to take immediate action.

6. We should only disclose personal data that is relevant and necessary for the relevant authority to deal with the situation.

See: Alternative Enquiry for further support.

Advanced customer support

7. When speaking to a claimant, third party or looking at a claim, there may be times when you identify advanced customer support concerns or vulnerabilities. You may feel confident to deal with these situations, however, in some instances you may feel that you need further support with the concern which is being reported to you, or assistance to understand the appropriate next steps for the claimant.

8. It is important that colleagues feel empowered to trust their instincts. However, situations are not always prescriptive, so if you encounter a scenario that you are unsure of, then you should speak to someone about it, even if it is not immediately clear what is wrong. Talking with a colleague, line manager or your Vulnerable Customer Champion (VCC) may help to decide the best course of action to take.

9. If you identify concerns around immediate risks to the welfare of a claimant then it is important that you take immediate action. Depending on the nature of the concern, this may be to contact the emergency services, or following the Six Point Plan (6PP) for your area in cases of a claimant declaring an intent to take their own life or self-harm.

10. Our response to support claimants you feel at risk from abuse, harm or neglect is built around 4 steps: which can be found at the following link:

Advanced Customer Support Escalation Routes

11. You also have support available within your business area to help you work through these cases, support the claimant, and take appropriate action on the claim.

Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders

12. DWP has recruited Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders (ACSSLs), forming a nationwide network of support that provides clear escalation routes for cases involving claimants at risk of abuse, harm, and neglect. They are present in every DWP Group/District and provide support

when all other business as usual avenues have been exhausted. They will work with sites within their geographical area to build capability around the identification of, and response to, Advanced Customer Support concerns.

13. ACSSLs are instrumental in forming strong, far-reaching external relationships with a range of partner organisations and across DWP's internal teams.

14. Internally, they have a responsibility to raise any service design or delivery issues that are identified as potential cause of negative claimant experience, escalating these to the appropriate teams. Where negative experience has occurred, ACSSLs are expected to play a key role in working with colleagues across the department to understand root causes and recommend steps to avoid reoccurrence.

See: Advanced Customer Support Operational Delivery Team

15. WA CEAST will triage all referrals for Advanced Support and consider escalation to ACSSLs.