

Summary

1. These instructions will help you deal with individuals with complex needs, or individuals who require additional support, to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services
2. For DWP purposes the description of Vulnerability is “An individual who is identified as having complex needs and/or requires additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services”
3. “Individual” refers to claimants, customers, clients, service users, anyone who accesses benefits and uses our services.
4. “Complex needs” are difficult personal circumstances and/or life events that affect the ability of the individual to access DWP benefits and use our services

Social Justice (SJ) and the DWP approach to vulnerability

1. Social Justice is about giving individuals and families, facing multiple disadvantages, the support and tools they need to turn their lives around through tackling the root causes of poverty and disadvantage to deliver real and sustained change. Identification of these individuals is important so that we can provide tailored support to help them to access and use our services, meet their individual responsibilities and receive an appropriate service outcome.
2. DWP has developed the DWP approach to vulnerability to support the Social Justice principles and there is a range of policies and procedures in place to help these individuals with difficult personal circumstances and/or life events (multiple disadvantages) access benefits and use our services.

DWP approach to vulnerability

1. The aim of this approach is to ensure:

- we are consistent in offering individual responses when needed;
- the response is always joined up and meaningful for the individual and
- we deliver appropriate service outcomes.

2. The aim of this approach is to ensure that the targeted additional support to individuals enables them to

- access benefits and use our services and
- meet their individual responsibilities.

3. This approach consolidates existing DWP practices and will not result in any changes to existing policy or procedures.

4. The DWP approach to individuals with complex needs and those who require additional support includes:

- one description of vulnerability
- consistent use of language and terminology throughout DWP
- focus on life events and/or personal circumstances rather than customer group
- identification of these individuals and recording the support required to enable them to access benefits and use our services
- a clear DWP support offer is in place, to address the impact of those life events and personal circumstances (including health issues and disability) that affect the ability of the individual to access DWP benefits and use our services
- clarity of timeliness and suitability of DWP support offer:
- not all individuals with life events/personal circumstances/health issues/disability will require support.
- individuals may have one or multiple reasons why they may require support.
- support offered should be tailored to individual needs.
- support may be put in place once, for a short, medium or long period of time
- individuals may move in and out of situations where they do/do not require support
- signposting – using stakeholders to help, enable and support individuals
- a coordinated, defined, overarching strategy
- staff Learning & Development products reflect this approach
- integrated and consistent approach in all Customer Journeys to provide additional support to enable individuals to follow standard Customer Journeys.

Identification

How to identify those individuals who may need additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services

1. Individuals now contact us through a variety of channels. Identification of support needs will depend on the channel used.

2. An individual may require additional support to enable them to:

- access benefits and use our services (may be unable to use on-line claim facility, unable to read claim forms for ESA, JSA, PIP, PENSIONS, etc)
- prove eligibility (may not understand or remember what evidence they have to provide, to prove they are eligible to claim)
- maintain conditionality (may not understand the requirement to attend an interview in the jobcentre)
- maintain their claims (may not understand when to provide change of circumstances information)
- maintain their finances (be in severe financial hardship/debt, may not have the ability to understand money/numbers)

3. An individual might experience difficulties with:

- understanding information
- interpreting situations
- making decisions
- giving consent
- communicating information or their views
- requesting specialist or additional help and support

4. When making a judgment about whether an individual requires additional support, it is essential that you communicate with them and record their additional requirements. If, and what, support is required can only be determined as part of a measured assessment.

5. Some individuals may be unwilling to reveal that they are experiencing difficult life events or personal circumstances

6. You should use a flexible approach to put additional support/special arrangements in place that are tailored to the specific needs of the individual. This will provide them with equal access to our products and services and enable them to follow the standard Customer Journeys.

7. This support may be put in place once; for a short, medium, long period of time; or recurring dependant upon their needs.

8. Examples of special arrangements or additional support (not an exhaustive list):

- assisted telephony service
- offering a face to face appointment
- implementing benefit easements where appropriate (for example for victims of domestic violence)
- [reasonable adjustments](#) must be put in place if required for disabled people and individuals with health issues

9. All service providers, including DWP, have a legal duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure their services are accessible to disabled people.

10. [LMS markers and hotspots](#) – Working age. It is essential that you update markers/hotspots accurately and when required. Markers and hotspots that are not completed, or hold inaccurate information, can have a significant impact how DWP addresses the needs of an individual. The marker information, if used correctly, will help us to target support where most needed, keep all staff informed in hand off/over situations and reduce the need to obtain this information time and time again. Incorrect marker information can result in the individual not receiving the correct payments or not getting the additional support they require. Some of the life events and personal circumstances require the LMS markers/hotspots to be completed and staff should follow the appropriate guidance to complete them:

- Disabled Person (DP)
- Benefit Cap
- Ethnicity
- Incident or PV
- Domestic Violence and abuse
- Care Leaver
- Work Focused Support for Carers (WFSC)
- Alcohol Misuse
- Drug Misuse
- Refugee
- Ex-Offender
- Person Without Accommodation
- Parent
- Lone Parent WFI
- Child Details and Childcare Barrier to Work
- LA Families Programme (Offices in England only)

DWP strategy / policy on offering

support to enable an individual to access and use DWP services

1. You are required to identify and make judgements about those individuals for whom it would be more appropriate to put additional support in place to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services. You are also required to identify those situations where there is a need for support, record this and then put it in place. For example, offering a home visit or face to face service if it is more appropriate, because the individual has complex needs or requires support to enable them to use our services.

2. DWP has customer service standards in place to ensure all individuals receive equal access to our products, services and benefits.

Legal requirements

1. Some of the products and services we offer are underpinned by legal requirements. For example the Equality Act 2010 states that Disabled people need to be identified so that DWP can:

- meet its obligations as a provider of goods and services, by giving access to specialist disability service help if needed, as a result of a person's disability
- meet its obligations as a provider of goods and services by making reasonable adjustments to its services for disabled people
- ensure that we do not discriminate, or allow others to discriminate, against disabled people in vacancy handling
- satisfy Treasury that funds devoted to us for the provision of disability services are used appropriately

2. For further information see:

- [DP \(Disabled person\) marker guidance](#)
- [Instructions. Equality Act 2010 – Access to Services](#)