

## 47 Stopping or Suspending Payments

**Note:** These instructions will evolve. Please ensure you are always working from the most recent version.

### Advanced Claimant Support: Stopping or Suspending Payments

1. Stopping or suspending payments may create serious hardship for a person who is vulnerable, for example claimants with very complex needs, including mental health concerns. See: Vulnerability
2. By building a **pause** before payments are stopped or suspended, we can continue to make payments while we consider vulnerability and next steps.
3. You might:
  - Defer the original intervention prompting the stop/suspension of payment
  - Escalate internally via vulnerable claimant escalation routes
  - Reach out to external partners who can provide additional support for the claimant
  - Submit a visit referral

This list is **not** exhaustive.

4. Following these steps, a case conference should be held to allow a review of all circumstances and information to agree next steps before a decision is made on stopping or suspending payments.
5. In each case a record should be made of the reasons behind the decision made, so that we are able to explain this to the claimant and other interested parties as necessary.
7. Below are some steps you might consider, though this is not exhaustive.

### Actions to take when stopping payment stage is reached

1. **Is the claimant receiving regular payments?**
  - If **No**, follow normal process and update system with action taken.
2. **Does the claimant have a Power of Attorney or Appointee?**
  - If **Yes**, follow normal process and update system with action taken.

## **Consider the reason for stopping or suspending payments**

1. If payment suspension is considered for a change of circumstances or due to a change in underlying entitlement follow normal process and update system with action taken.
2. Consider contacting the claimant if vulnerability has been identified to explain why you are stopping/suspending benefit and to offer advice/signpost to external partners who can provide additional support.
3. If payment suspension or stopping payment is considered for a compliance issue **do not** stop payment at this stage.
4. Conduct an initial review by checking Notes on PIPCS Person Page to see if there is any information about claimant being vulnerable or needing 'Advanced Claimant Support'.
5. For Reassessment cases check DLACS for the Disability Code and any notes recorded in DA110. Utilise the Checklist to identify additional considerations using information where possible from DWP systems.
6. If **no** vulnerability concern is identified, follow business as usual instructions.

## **Vulnerability concern has been identified**

1. If a vulnerability concern is identified discuss with Team Leader and utilise Complex Needs Toolkit/District Provision Tool.
2. Follow next step as agreed with Team Leader Person.

## **Next Steps – Contacting the claimant**

1. Identify escalation routes and take action as agreed with Team Leader. Examples include:
  - Telephone call to the claimant
  - Contact the Vulnerable Claimant Champion (VCC)
  - Visiting officer (VO) referral
  - Advanced Claimant Support Senior Leader (ACSSL)
  - This list is not exhaustive; your next steps should be determined by the conversation with your team leader

## **Telephone call to the claimant**

1. Call the claimant. If the claimant has an Alternative Format or a Reasonable Adjustment recorded, contact the claimant using an alternative method of communication.
2. Attempt to call the claimant 3 times over 48 hours at different times. Note PIPCS with a record of the Outbound Call.
3. If unable to contact the claimant update the system with all action taken.

4. If the call **is** successful explain purpose of the call, for example if a change of circumstance has occurred explain why you are stopping/suspending benefit. If you have a compliance case obtain any information required or agree timescales for evidence to be provided. Defer case and update PIPCS with all action taken.
5. If we have the information required within the agreed timescales to complete the case, follow normal process and update PIPCS with action taken.
6. If we **don't** have the information, discuss next steps with Team Leader.
7. If you no longer have vulnerability concerns, follow normal process and update PIPCS with action taken.
8. If you still have vulnerability concerns, follow agreed next steps which may include one, or more, of the other options detailed below.

### **Contact the Vulnerable Claimant Champion**

1. Contact the Vulnerable Claimant Champion (VCC).
2. VCC will review appropriate information and provide insight on next steps.
3. Consider reconvening as a case conference, if required.
4. Follow next step as agreed with VCC.

### **DWP Visiting Referral**

1. Make a Visiting Officer (VO) referral.
2. Follow the instruction for where visits are effective/ineffective. For compliance cases **Do not stop or suspend payments**. A Visit is undertaken by a Visiting Officer from DWP Visiting.
3. If an **Effective visit** occurs, follow normal process and update system with action taken.
4. If the visit is **Ineffective** a Second visit is undertaken and if this is effective follow normal process and update system with action taken.
5. After two Ineffective visits the case is referred back to VO referrer. For compliance cases **Do not stop or suspend payments**.

### **Contact the Advanced Claimant r Support Senior Leader**

1. Following a discussion with your Team Leader, consider contacting the Advanced Claimant Support Senior Leader (ACSSL).
2. The ACSSL will collaborate with relevant organisations where appropriate.

3. Consider reconvening as a case conference, if required.

4. Follow next step(s) as agreed.

## **Next Steps**

1. Discuss the case in more detail with Team Leader as part of the case conference. Consider including other relevant parties, for example any VCC or ACSSL that has been involved.

2. For compliance cases, once all reasonable steps have been taken, use all the available information to decide whether payment should be suspended/stopped as per normal process.

3. In each case a record should be made of the reasons we have made a decision, so that we are able to explain this to the claimant and other interested parties.

4. Update system with all action taken.

## **Checklist for Stopping or Suspending Payments**

### **Please read before Stopping or Suspending Payments**

1. Stopping or suspending payments may create serious hardship for a person who is vulnerable, for example claimants with very complex needs, including mental health concerns.

2. By building a pause before payments are stopped or suspended, we can continue to make payments while we consider vulnerability and next steps.

You might:

- Defer the original intervention prompting the stop/suspension of payment
- Escalate internally via vulnerable claimant escalation routes
- Reach out to external partners who can provide additional support for the customer
- Submit a visit referral

This list is **not** exhaustive.

3. Following these steps, a case conference should be held to allow a review of all circumstances and information to agree next steps before a decision is made.

4. In each case a record should be made of the reasons we have made a decision, so that we are able to explain this to the claimant and other interested parties as necessary.

5. Below are some steps you might consider, though this is not exhaustive.

## Identify

6. If Stopping/Suspending Payment Stage is reached:

- Identify the circumstances that the payment will be stopped or suspended

7. Does the claimant have support, for example Power of Attorney/Appointee?

- If **yes**, follow Normal Process and update system with all actions taken

8. Are you stopping/suspending payments for payability or a change of circumstances which includes a change in underlying entitlement? Examples include:

- Prison
- Hospital/Hospice
- Residential accommodation/Residential school
- Absence abroad
- Death
- No longer satisfies residence and presence
- No longer satisfies underlying entitlement conditions
- Change to domestic circumstances
- Condition no longer supports entitlement

This list is **not** exhaustive.

9. If **Yes**, then follow normal process and update system with all actions taken.

10. Consider contacting the claimant if vulnerability has been identified to explain why PIP is being stopped/suspended.

11. Offer advice/signpost to external partners who can provide additional support.

12. Conduct an initial review by checking Notes on PIPCS Person Page to see if there is any information about claimant being vulnerable or needing 'Advanced Claimant Support'. For Reassessment case check DLACS for the Disability Code and any notes recorded in DA110.

### **Are you stopping or suspending payments due to compliance?**

13. This list is **not** exhaustive:

- Missing evidence
- Failed to attend (FTA) disability/health assessment
- Failure to return enquiry/claim pack (FTC)
- Failure to notify change of address (dead letter office)

14. If **yes**: Continue assessing the claimant's circumstances.

- **Do not** stop or suspend payment at this time.

## Listen

15. Review information on PIPCS or DLACS if case is a Reassessment, looking for key indicators that may demonstrate vulnerability. This includes (but is not limited to) concerns about:

- risk of injury,
- ill treatment, neglect,
- domestic violence,
- physical or sexual abuse,
- psychological or emotional abuse
- exploitation of children or vulnerable adults,
- modern slavery

Additional considerations, this list is **not** exhaustive:

- is additional support noted
- where a claimant has current or recent substance use and misuse issues
- where a claimant is at risk of financial exploitation
- where a claimant is homeless; is there no address held/correspondence address
- where a claimant has a gambling addiction
- where a claimant has learning disabilities or difficulties or mental health issues; checking CIS for entitlement to other benefits such as ESA may provide new insight
- where a claimant has financial management challenges; is it noted they struggle to budget effectively

## Consider

16. If **no** concerns identified:

- Follow Normal Process ensuring case notes fully updated to reflect action.

17. If Concerns **are** identified:

- If you have a compliance case you must **not stop** or suspend payments at this stage.

You can consider the following :

- Discuss concerns with Team Leader

- utilise Complex Needs Toolkit/District Provision Tool
- does the claimant have Alternative Format or a Reasonable Adjustment recorded? If so, consider if we need to utilise an alternative method of communication
- consider if case needs to be escalated to a Vulnerable Claimant Champion (VCC) or Advanced Claimant Support Senior Leader (ACSSL) at this stage.
- consider whether a referral to DWP Visiting is required at this stage.
- Follow steps as discussed with your Team Leader

## **Outbound call**

18. Call the claimant to have an informed discussion, explain the purpose of the call for example if a change of circumstance has occurred explain why you are stopping/suspending benefit.
19. Three attempts must be made over 48 hours at different times of the day.

### **Claimant contact successful**

20. If you have a compliance case and the claimant is able to provide additional information, update system notes as appropriate.
21. If the claimant is unable to provide the information requested at point of contact, agree timescales for the evidence to be supplied, utilising the Complex Needs Toolkit/District Provision Tool (DPT) to signpost them to suitable supporting agencies.
22. Explain the importance of providing the information requested to support compliance/continuation of payment.

### **Claimant contact unsuccessful**

23. If an Outbound Call action fails discuss with your team leader and decide next steps. Consider further escalation, for example to a VCC or ACSSL, or whether to refer to DWP Visiting.

## **Contact the Vulnerable Claimant Champion (VCC)**

24. Follow the latest PIP instruction and contact a VCC. The VCC will review appropriate information and provide insight on next steps. See: Contact the VCC link

### **DWP Visiting Referral**

25. Request a visit using your benefit specific processes through the DWP Visiting Referral Tool:
  - Refer to the Visiting Officer Referral Tool User Guide
  - Follow PIP instruction if visits are ineffective.

## **Contact an Advanced Claimant Support Senior Leader (ACSSL)**

26. Follow the latest guidance and contact the appropriate (ACSSL). ACSSL play a key role and can collaborate with external organisations who can support the claimant further.

## **Review**

27. Has the claimant responded and complied with our requests for information / evidence within agreed timescales?

28. **Claimant has now complied with our requests:**

- Follow normal process and update PIPCS with all action taken

29. **Claimant has not complied with our requests:**

- Record all activity on PIPCS.
- Once all reasonable steps have been taken, use all available information to decide whether payment on a compliance case should now be suspended or stopped.
- In each case a record should be made of the reasons we have made a decision, so that we are able to explain this to the claimant and other interested parties.