

## Core visits and safeguarding

Before you consider making a request for a visit, you need to make sure that you have exhausted all other options.

These could include the following depending on the information needed:

- issuing the relevant letter asking for information and a reminder if a reply to the first one is not received
- issuing of the relevant benefit form to be completed and returned by the claimant and a reminder if a reply to the first one is not received
- three attempts must be made to telephone the claimant where the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have a telephone number unless it is obvious that it is not the right approach, for example, a note states the claimant is hard of hearing

If all of the above ways of contacting the claimant have failed, you must consider if there is evidence that the claimant is vulnerable.

If DWP knows that a claimant has a condition that could affect:

- their ability to understand or comply with their obligations or conditionality; or
- their ability to understand the implications of not complying

a core visit to their home must be considered before any sanction or disallowance decision is made.

For these cases, consideration must be given to the following:

- the context of the interview and whether the interview should be deferred
- encouraging advocacy support if needed
- identifying any relevant issues, where known, that might impact on compliance

A discussion must be held with your line manager regarding vulnerability. If the claimant is considered to be vulnerable, you must consider a request for a visit.

You must make sure that requests for visits include the following information:

- reasons why the claimant is considered vulnerable and a visit is appropriate, this includes when a suspension has been considered and believed not to be appropriate. You must make sure that any elements taken into account in this decision are included in the referral

Note: For more information see: Disclosing personal data for safeguarding and helping customers who require advanced support guidance

- the steps you have taken to try to contact the claimant
- clear details of what information is needed, for example, the completion of specific forms or further evidence needed with full details of dates. For example, verification of civil service pension needed from 1st February 2011 to 5th August 2015 and why it is important to the claim to collect this information
- where the documents are to be returned, put the full address of the Mail Opening Unit (MOU) so that the documents can be uploaded to the Customer Account Management (CAM) system and/or the Document Repository System (DRS). If the original documents are needed, you must include the courier address instead

Note the relevant system stating that a referral for a core visit has been made.

### **Ineffective visits**

An ineffective visit is where the claimant:

- is not at home or does not answer
- refuses to co-operate; or
- lives in an area that DWP visiting believes is unsafe

In cases where visiting officers believe the area is unsafe, you must take the action as if 2 ineffective visits have taken place.

### **2 Ineffective visits**

Where 2 core visits have been ineffective, the claimant's details must be referred to the HEO manager of the person who made it to discuss the case in more detail as part of the case conference.

Pending the outcome of the case conference, the claimant's award must not end or their payments must not be stopped.

Case conferencing will take place between the HEO manager and the referrer, to determine all the facts of the case following 2 ineffective visits before making a decision on the claim.

The case conference will review the information available to them and provide an assurance check. This will include reviewing:

- the circumstances prompting the referral for a visit to be made
- previous contacts with DWP
- attendance at any interventions as part of the conditionality to get their benefit
- any documentation or notes held on systems used regarding the claimant, for example, a medical report following attendance at a Work Capability Assessment (WCA)
- any input from 3rd party organisations, this may include a next of kin or organisations such as Social Services

- whether, based on the claimant's circumstances, a deferral of the appointment is appropriate at this stage

The case conference will also consider whether to involve the local partnership manager who may be aware of local organisations that can offer support.

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

The HEO must review the information and note the relevant systems of the actions considered and reviewed. This is to satisfy that they have confirmed all actions have been taken whilst considering safeguarding action.

Following the case conference, if a safeguarding concern is still recognised, the claimant's award must not end and payments must 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 will then be referred to a senior safeguarding leader to liaise with the relevant agencies including, but not limited to, Social Services, the Local Authority (LA) or the Police.

Note: For more information and contact details of the senior safeguarding leader in each region see: Safeguarding leads.

A review date will be set to consider the next steps following the referral to the senior safeguarding leader.

Once all reasonable steps have been taken as outlined above, the referrer will then gather the relevant documentation so that the case can be sent to the Decision Maker (DM). This must include:

- details of safeguarding steps taken such as referrals to other organisations, for example, the Police; and
- the outcome of the case conference and any subsequent actions

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