

Core Visits

Guidance will be evolving as we continue to develop these processes. You should therefore ensure 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 should be given to the following:

- the context of the interview or assessment and whether the interview or assessment should 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 safeguarding concerns, consideration should 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 should 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 safeguarding 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 will not necessarily be 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 paras 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 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 will not conduct visits to a 'care of' address. If you are unable to trace a confident address, please take action as if two ineffective visits have taken place (see para 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 / 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/POA fully understands the mandatory requirements and is therefore being proactive in assisting the claimant to comply. Core Visits should still be undertaken in these cases and include the Appointee/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/POA is not fulfilling their responsibilities, in which case take the appropriate action - see the Agents, Appointees, Attorneys and Deputies Guide (link is external).

111. If a claimant has not responded to any correspondence from the DWP, the member of staff checks 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 they 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 the member of staff is 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 the member of staff has any doubt they should refer for a Core Visit.

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

The member of staff should 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/third party (these could include social worker, health visitor, family member/friend and so on)
- Details of action taken to contact the claimant or representative
- 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 should 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 will undertake 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 should 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 should contact the referrer immediately if it appears deferring a mandatory interview might be appropriate. Where possible this should be by telephone at the time of the visit.

116. Where the referrer confirms the appointment has been booked, the Visiting Officer should complete an appointment letter.
117. Once the visit is completed, the Visiting Officer should 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, or
- lives in an area that DWP Visiting deems unsafe.

First Visit Ineffective

120. In the event of an ineffective visit, the Visiting Officer will leave 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 HEO should continue to take the action as if two ineffective visits have taken place.

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 will not end and payments will not be stopped.

Case conferencing will take place between the HEO 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 will review the information available to them and provide an assurance check. This will include 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/appointment is appropriate at this stage until safeguarding enquiries are made

The case conference will also consider whether to involve the local partnership manager 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/agreed.

Following the case conference, if it is recognised that there is still a safeguarding 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 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 or the police.

For more information and contact details of the Senior Safeguarding Leader in each region see Safeguarding Leaders page.

A review date will be set to consider the next steps following the referral to the Senior Safeguarding Leader.

126. 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 DM, including details of safeguarding steps taken, such as referrals to other organisations for example the police, 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.