



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Advanced Customer Support

Learning and improving from serious cases

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Learning from serious cases

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is an organisation that supports over 20 million people every year through interactions with its different services.

DWP continuously takes learning from its most serious cases. To achieve this, DWP has implemented systems where it can consistently act on feedback, ensuring that when it learns that its customers' experiences have fallen below expectations, it uses this learning to make changes that improve its services.

One of the ways in which DWP looks to learn when things have gone wrong, is by completing Internal Process Reviews (IPRs) which help identify where improvements could be made across its many services.

What an Internal Process Review (IPR) is

IPRs are a thorough review of customer cases that seek to understand if DWP's interactions with customers have followed the correct operational processes. This sees evidence gathered and reviewed by an Investigator, who undertakes factfinding discussions with stakeholders relevant to the customer journey, to identify if there are improvements that could be made to DWP's operational services.

To get the best possible learning from every case that is reviewed, IPRs look at every area of a customer's contact with DWP, not just the event that may have been the initial prompt for a review to be started. This means that IPRs can identify issues, including those that have happened in the past, that a customer may not even have been aware of but nevertheless could be improved upon.

IPRs are not a review of clinical processes, such as those carried out by Health Care Professionals, neither are they designed to identify or apportion blame and cannot consider events or circumstances in a customer's life that DWP is not aware of. Not all customers choose to share information with DWP and so it is not always able to offer the help and support that may be available.

IPRs are a tool to enable DWP to identify any lessons to be drawn from how it discharged its operational responsibilities, rather than a process for assessing culpability for the incident being investigated. Other bodies, including the coroner's courts in England and Wales, have such responsibilities.

For a case to be considered for an IPR there is a criteria that must be met. IPRs can only be referred internally, but colleagues may become aware of the customers case from information received from outside DWP, such as through correspondence from MPs, Local Authorities, and customers' families.

Criteria for conducting an IPR

There is a specific criteria which must be met before a case is accepted. This has been updated over time, to reflect changing circumstances, and the criteria for the IPR cases completed in the 2022-23 year is below.

An IPR will be conducted in all cases where:

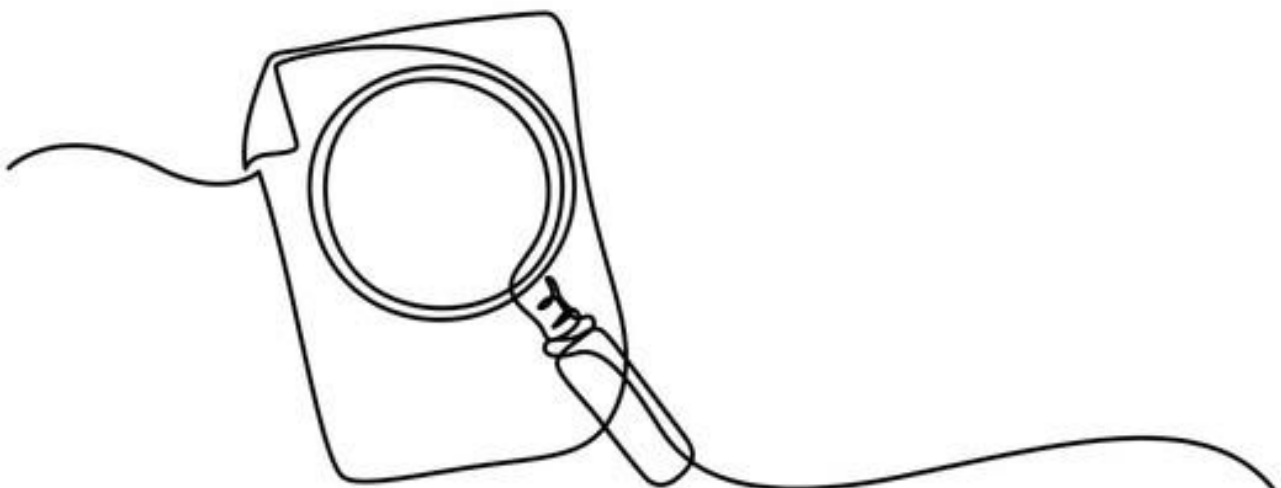
- there is a suggestion or allegation that the Department's actions or omissions may have negatively contributed to the customer's circumstances, AND a customer has suffered serious harm, has died (including by suicide), or where it has reason to believe there has been an attempted suicide.

Or

- the Department is asked to participate in a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR), a Significant Case Review (SCR, Scotland only), a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) or is named as an Interested Party at an Inquest. An IPR will be conducted regardless of whether there is an allegation against the Department.

Not every case that is referred for an IPR meets the specific criteria for it to be reviewed. However, it is still important to identify any learning or improvements that can be made, in all instances where the criteria have not been met, a feedback process provides the referrer with an explanation of why the criteria are not met. Additionally, the cases are shared with appropriate colleagues in DWP, such as Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders, who can ensure learning is captured and shared from all serious cases and not just those that meet the criteria for an IPR.

Although citizens cannot refer cases for an IPR, if they are unhappy with the service provided by DWP they can make a complaint. Information can be found on [Complaints procedure - Department for Work and Pensions - GOV.UK](#)

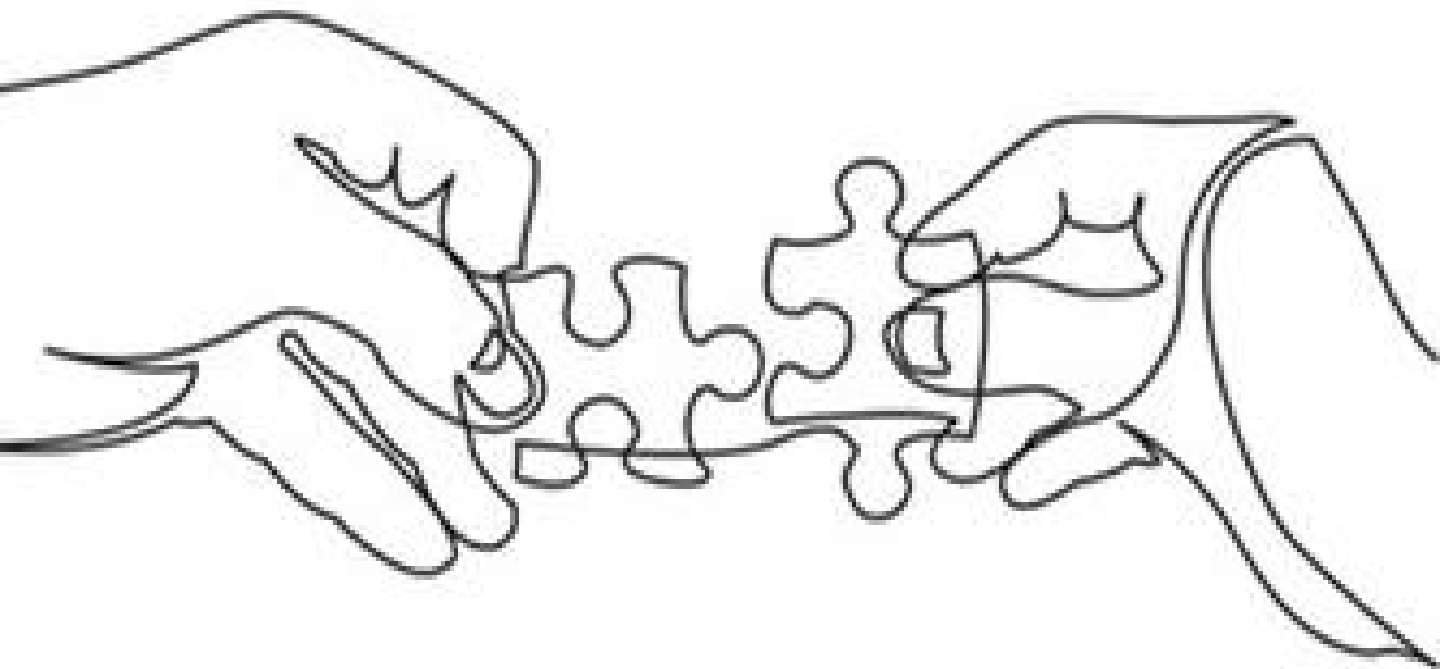


Information being published

DWP cannot publish full IPR reports as its investigations can involve sensitive and personal information in relation to its customers. DWP has a legal duty to protect that information appropriately so that individuals are not identifiable, even when they are no longer alive. In the same way that customers may choose not to disclose all their personal circumstances to the department, they may also choose not to share information with those closest to them and that is a fact that must be respected.

DWP is publishing information from completed IPRs in a way that is as transparent as possible, whilst maintaining the confidentiality that is expected of it. This will show what DWP identified from completing IPRs on cases, the improvement activity that was agreed, and the outcome or ongoing progress made relating to that activity.

Information on IPRs completed in 2022/23 is the first IPR information being published, and there will be future publications for IPRs completed after 2022/23, as well as historical information on IPRs completed back to 2020.



Data on IPRs completed in 2022/23

Across 2022/23	Number
Total number of IPRs completed ¹	47
Of these, the number that were also subject to external scrutiny (such as SABs, SCRs, DHRs or Coroners) ²	15
IPRs completed by Service Line³	
Universal Credit	34
Personal Independence Payment	15
Employment and Support Allowance	8
Child Maintenance Services	3
Disability Living Allowance	2
Carer's Allowance	1
Jobseeker's Allowance	1
Pension Credit	1
State Pension	1

Notes

- 1 - IPR data included within this publication relates to IPRs completed in the 2022/23 year. This differs from the data presented in the [2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts](#), which focuses on IPR referrals received and accepted as meeting criteria.
- 2 – It should be noted that cases could have become subject to external scrutiny at a later date.
- 3 – There were 66 primary service lines in relation to the 47 IPRs completed across 2022-23 due to some customers being in receipt of more than one benefit or service at the time of the event that has led to an IPR being conducted.

Data on learning identified from IPRs in 2022/23

Across 2022/23	Number
Number of IPRs completed where learning was identified ¹	35
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	91
Service lines relating to the agreed activities	Child Maintenance Services Contract Management Partner Delivery Disability Living Allowance Employment and Support Allowance Incapacity Benefit Personal Independence Payment Universal Credit

Notes

1 – This differs from the total number of IPRs completed in the 2022/23 year as not all cases had learning identified following the investigation.

The learning identified from these IPRs, what the agreed activities were in relation to them, and what the learning outcomes were, are set out by DWP Service Line in the following sections.

Employment and Support Allowance learning from serious cases

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a legacy benefit paid if you have a disability or health condition that affects how much you can work. It has been replaced by Universal Credit and New Style ESA (paid if you are sick and have sufficient National Insurance contributions).

Across 2022/23	Number ¹
Number of cases in which ESA learning was identified	10
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	20

Notes

1 – Includes cases where learning was identified across a number of benefits (published in the Cross-Benefits section).

Customer 1

Learning identified

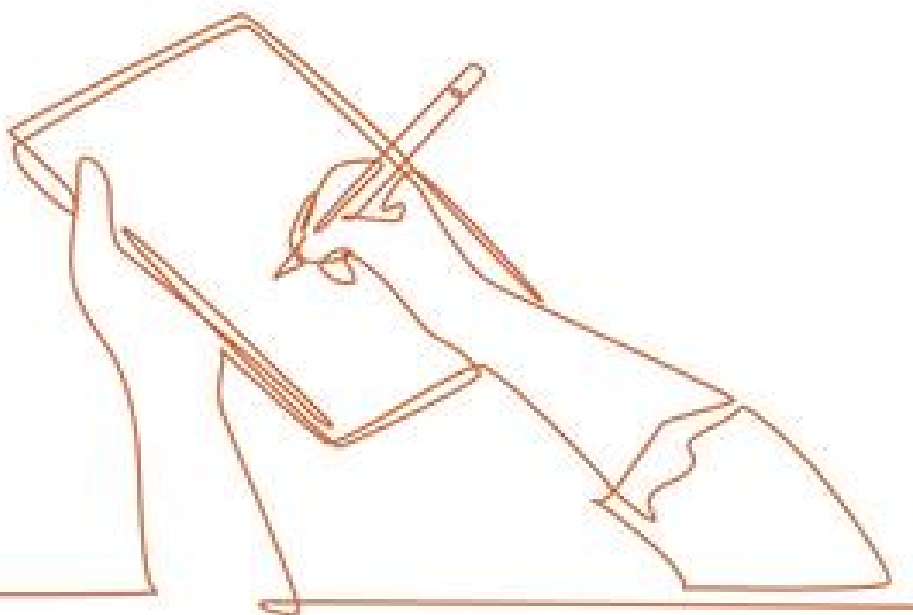
- Following the customer's death a notification about their ESA overpayment was sent to the wrong team in DWP.

Agreed activity

- ESA to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions for referring overpayments following the death of a customer.

Learning outcomes

- Reminders about the correct process to follow were sent out to ESA colleagues.





Customer 2

Learning identified

- Delays to the claim were caused by ESA not taking the right action on deciding whether the customer was a resident of the UK.
- The customer's claim was closed without considering the customer's circumstances.
- When their ESA claim was closed, the customer was not told about other benefits they may be entitled to.
- The reasons why the customer didn't attend an appointment were not passed to the Decision Maker.
- A report detailing steps to take was not actioned.

Agreed activity

- ESA and SPD to assure IPRG that they will review operational instructions on habitual residency.
- ESA and W&H Decision Making to assure IPRG they will highlight the importance of following Stopping Payments operational instructions prior to stopping payments of benefit and ensure the issue, and the need to monitor, is reflected in new iterations of quality checks.
- IPRG to explore whether sufficient signposting to working age benefits is in place for legacy benefit customers at the end of their claim.
- ESA to assure IPRG they will consider aligning operational instructions for Telephony Agents with WCA Outcomes guidance to ensure a consistent approach is delivered.
- ESA to assure IPRG they will raise awareness of the operational instructions for the completion of case controls and ensure the issue, and the need to monitor is reflected in new iterations of quality checks.

Learning outcomes

- Instructions and guidance on areas where improvements were identified was updated and made more accessible to colleagues. Quality checks were used to monitor the work and awareness sessions undertaken on what support is available to customers.



Customer 3

Learning identified

- The customer handover process was not followed correctly, which caused delays to the customers benefit claim.

Agreed activity

- ESA to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions regarding the use of the Handover Telephony Tool for all customer phone queries, to ensure customer queries are correctly prioritised.

Learning outcomes

- Guidance was reviewed to ensure customer queries are correctly prioritised.



Customer 4

Learning identified

- Appropriate checks were not made before the customer's claim was closed for not attending an appointment.

Agreed activity

- ESA Decision Making to assure IPRG that they will consider all evidence available when making decisions.

Learning outcomes

- Quality assurance checks were introduced to ensure all available evidence is considered when making decisions.



Customer 5

Learning identified

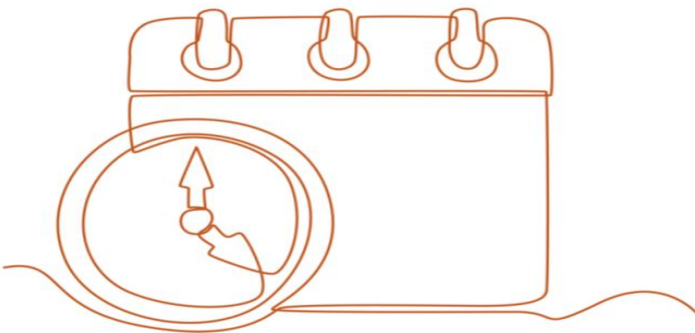
- The correct steps were not taken to follow up on a request for information the customer said they were going to provide.

Agreed activity

- ESA to assure IPRG, where a change in circumstances is notified that could affect a customer's benefit award, case controls are set in line with operational instructions, to ensure follow up actions are taken, and this action is embedded in the Quality Assurance Framework to improve compliance.

Learning outcomes

- Guidance on the correct process to follow was updated and quality checks used to ensure improvement.



Child Maintenance Services learning from serious cases

Child maintenance covers how a child’s living costs will be paid when one of the parents does not live with the child. It’s made when a parent is separated from the other parent or if they’ve never been in a relationship.

This is a financial arrangement between one parent and the other parent of the child.

Across 2022/23	Number
Number of cases in which CMS learning was identified	2
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	8



Customer 1

Learning identified

- There was no evidence to show any additional support was considered when the Paying Parent indicated they may harm themselves.
- Follow up action was not taken on the case after the Receiving Parent made contact requesting an update on case.
- Action was not taken to corroborate evidence of payments provided by the Paying Parent.

Agreed activity

- CMG to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions using the Complex Needs Toolkit, regarding the completion, processing and recording of forms where declarations of attempted suicide have been made, and this action is embedded in the quality assurance framework to improve compliance and recording.
- CMG to assure IPRG that operational instructions are followed regarding timescales for contacting Paying Parents when information was overdue and that colleagues are compliant, and quality assurance is embedded.
- CMG to assure IPRG that correct processes are followed on receipt of vital evidence provided by the customer and respond accordingly.

Learning outcomes

- Training was delivered to all CMS colleagues and operational instructions updated. In addition, online services for customers were improved.



Customer 2

Learning identified

- A complaint made by the customer was not actioned.
- Correspondence sent in by the customer was not dealt with properly.
- The wrong amount of arrears was calculated when the case was referred for a Liability Order application.
- CMG did not attempt to call the customer about a reported change.
- Operational instructions were not followed when a Deduction from Earnings Order was imposed.

Agreed activity

- CMG to assure IPRG they will raise awareness of operational instructions regarding identifying and handling disputes and dissatisfactions.
- CMG to assure IPRG operational instructions for handling inbound correspondence are communicated.
- CMG to assure IPRG operational instructions about calculating the arrears prior to application for a Liability Order are communicated.
- CMG to remind colleagues about the principles for making outbound contact with a customer.
- CMG to assure IPRG that colleagues are reminded about the operational instructions, to complete an unlikely to pay check, when a customer requests to move onto a non-enforced method of payment.

Learning outcomes

- The agreed actions were all completed with instructions and guidance on each area reviewed, updated and sent out to all colleagues, alongside customer service skills training where needed. Changes were made to the system for calculating the arrears amount for Liability Orders and the online service for customers to report changes and supply evidence has been improved.

Universal Credit learning from serious cases

Universal Credit (UC) is a primary benefit for individuals below State Pension age who have low income, are unemployed, or are unable to work. As of October 2023, over 6 million people were claiming UC.

Across 2022/23	Number ¹
Number of cases in which UC learning was identified	25
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	53

Notes

1 – Includes cases where learning was identified across a number of benefits (published in the Cross-Benefits section).

Customer 1

Learning identified

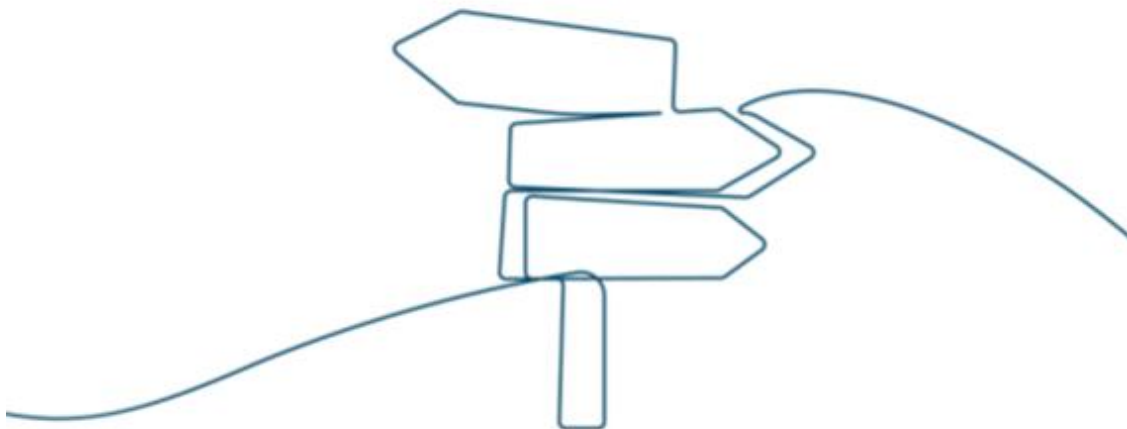
- The customer's needs and vulnerability details were provided, but opportunities to support them and refer to other services were missed.

Agreed activity

- UC to review support provided to vulnerable customers and the need to monitor, is reflected in new iterations of quality checks.

Learning outcomes

- Guidance on identifying customer vulnerabilities was reviewed and updated.





Customer 2

Learning identified

- Customer had difficulty accessing their journal, but messages were still communicated via this channel.
- The guidelines regarding the reclamation of ESA while receiving UC were not adequately communicated to the customer in a clear manner.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that staff are reminded about supporting claimants who have restricted access to the internet / devices, offering ways of encouraging interaction via the journal with support from UC agents via telephony channels or in Jobcentres.
- UC to assure IPRG that they will ensure that staff properly communicate the rules regarding claiming UC so that they are understood by customers who previously claimed ESA.

Learning outcomes

- All agreed activities were successfully completed, with guidance on customers struggling with online claims updated and issued to all colleagues A reminder of the additional support in place to assist vulnerable customers was issued.



Customer 3

Learning identified

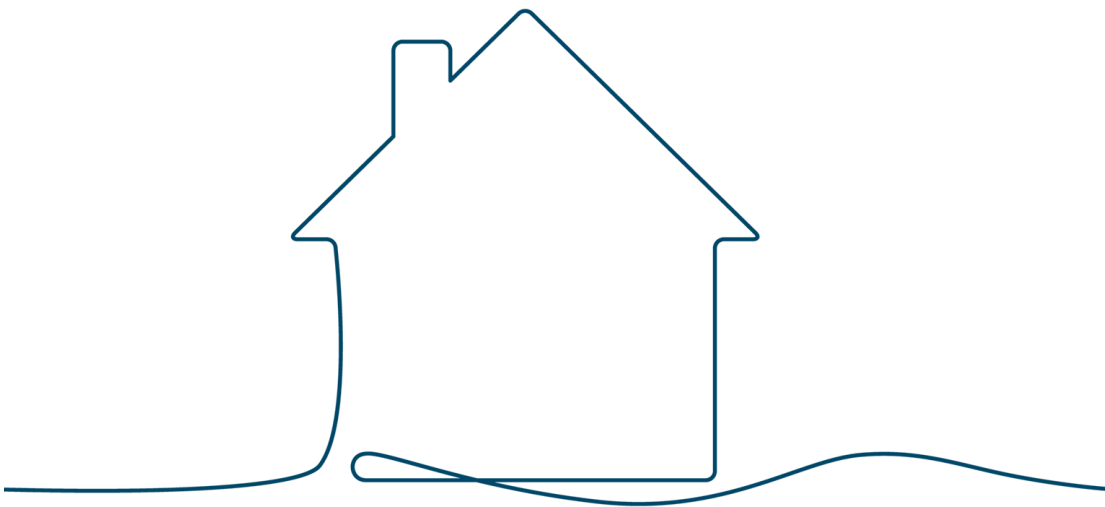
- The UC agent created a 'to-do' for a date in the future when the customer would have eligibility for support with their mortgage interest, but did not explain to the customer that they would need to contact us at that time.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG they will consider strengthening the telephony script to prompt customers to make contact when the Support for Mortgage Interest eligibility date is reached.

Learning outcomes

- The instructions for informing customers about Support for Mortgage Interest and the need to contact the Department were reviewed.



Customer 4

Learning identified

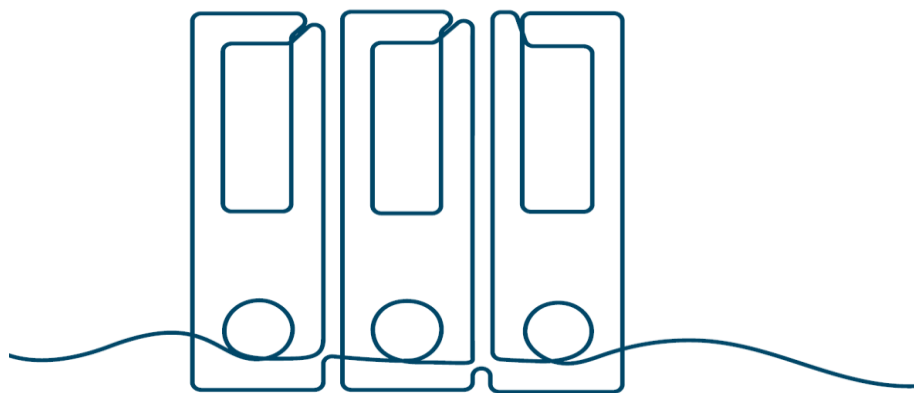
- No action was taken by UC to refer a benefit overpayment to Debt Management following notification of the customer's death.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that the operational instructions for referring an overpayment to Debt Management due to the death of a customer are communicated to all staff.

Learning outcomes

- The relevant benefit overpayment referral guidance was updated.



Customer 5

Learning identified

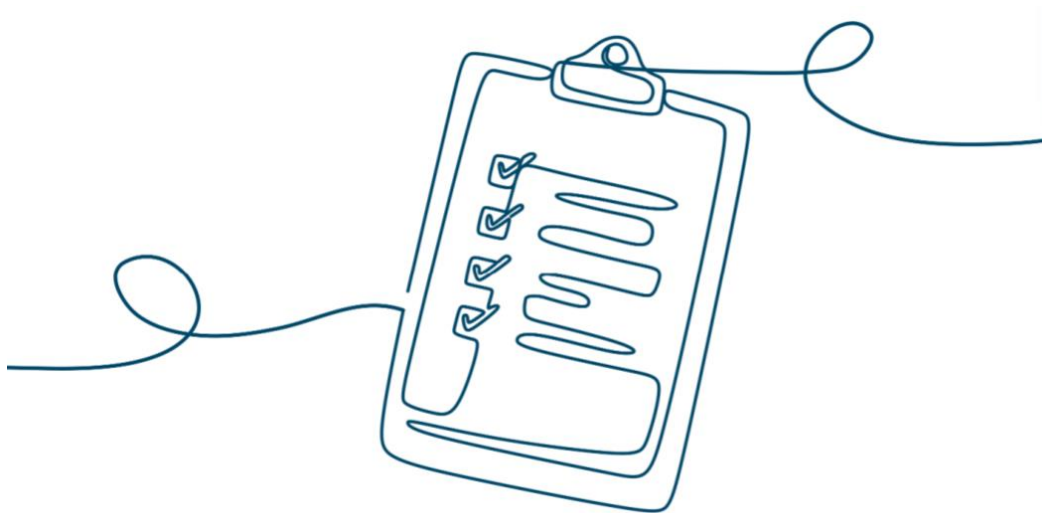
- The correct action was not taken when the customer declared they had health conditions.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that they will consider the use of safeguards to ensure all health journey “to do’s” are processed in a timely manner.

Learning outcomes

- Improvements were made to ensure tasks were completed when dealing with customers with health conditions.





Customer 6

Learning identified

- The correct process was not followed when the customer declared that they may attempt to harm themselves.
- Although DWP was aware the customer was unable to handle their own business, there was no evidence of any investigations being made about the customer needing an appointee.
- The customer's work coach did not contact the customer as requested relating to previous ESA entitlement.
- Correct information regarding their Budgeting Advance repayments was not sent out to the customer.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure the IPRG that the guidance and training available to staff around supporting customers with mental health conditions is extended from the current Six Point Plan to include, not only threats of suicide or self-harm, but steps that should be considered where a customer is in significant distress. And that the Six Point Plan considers threats made by means other than face-to-face or over the phone.
- UC to assure IPRG that colleagues are sufficiently trained to identify and provide appropriate support or signposting to customers with complex needs: and to consider Appointeeship where appropriate.
- UC to assure IPRG that responses to customer call back requests will be made in the manner and timeframes agreed.
- UC to assure IPRG they will communicate Budgeting Advance eligibility operational instructions to all staff including outsourced telephony agents and explore system improvements to prompt user consideration of entitlement.

Learning outcomes

- All the agreed activities from this case were completed. Guidance on supporting vulnerable customers and how to deal with threats to self-harm were reviewed and updated as was the call back process. In addition, Budgeting Advance instructions were revised.



Customer 7

Learning identified

- Payment was delayed when information was not requested regarding a previous ESA claim.
- Action was not taken to initiate a MR when requested and the customer was asked to provide duplicate information.
- An incorrect clerical benefit calculation was made which caused delays in a payment of arrears to the customer.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions on new claim procedures for ESA customers to ensure existing WCA decisions are applied promptly.
- UC to assure IPRG they will highlight the importance of following the correct process when a MR is requested or identified.
- UC to assure IPRG that quality assurance processes have sufficient rigour to ensure that manual calculations are calculated accurately.

Learning outcomes

- Colleagues were reminded of the correct procedures to follow for processing new claims and customer disputes. Training was delivered on the calculation tool with quality checks put in place to confirm arrears amounts.



Customer 8

Learning identified

- Available escalation processes were not used to support the customer.
- Concerns around the customer's welfare were not raised with the appropriate team.
- Job support activities, agreed with the customer, were not undertaken.
- Operational instructions for a referral to RESTART provision were not followed.
- The correct process was not followed when the customer failed to make contact.
- Colleagues did not respond sensitively when it was reported that customer had attempted suicide.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that all colleagues are reminded of the Operational Guidance to support vulnerable customers by seeking ACSSL support to escalate Work Capability Decisions when there is substantial risk.
- UC to assure IPRG that colleagues are aware of the process of who and how to refer to ACSSLs for support by reminding Operational colleagues of the importance of identifying vulnerable customers.
- UC to assure IPRG that identified actions are undertaken when agreed with customers. Reminders to be incorporated in the ongoing Journal notes upskilling activity.
- UC to assure IPRG that RESTART Operational instructions are cascaded and reminders are given at regular National RESTART calls.
- UC to assure IPRG that they will remind operational colleagues, as part of complex needs training, to consider welfare checks if repeated nil response from vulnerable customers and raise with senior managers, as appropriate.
- UC to assure IPRG that colleagues are reminded of the need to respond sensitively to vulnerable customers / circumstances.

Learning outcomes

- All agreed learning activities were completed with training and reminders issued to all relevant staff on how to refer vulnerable customers to the dedicated additional support available. Additional training was delivered on ensuring agreed job support actions are completed, and performance was monitored.



Customer 9

Learning identified

- The customer declared health conditions but was not referred for a WCA as they had not submitted medical evidence to support this.
- A MR was not registered when the customer said they were unhappy with a decision.
- The customer's Claimant Commitment was not tailored, based on their personal circumstances.
- No steps were taken to speed up the WCA process, when it was appropriate to do so.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that operational instructions regarding the actions to take when a customer declares a health condition are cascaded across local leaders to ensure Work Coaches prompt the customer to provide a Fit note or supporting medical evidence at Day 8; when the self-certification expires.
- UC to assure IPRG they will highlight the importance of following the correct process when a MR is requested or identified.
- UC to assure IPRG that operational instructions regarding easements and tailoring the Claimant Commitment are cascaded across local leaders to ensure Work Coaches regularly review and consider tailoring the commitment to meet each customer's specific needs.
- UC to assure IPRG that communications are re-cascaded to ensure WCAs for customers are expedited when there is an exceptional need to do so.

Learning outcomes

- Guidance on actions to take for customers with health conditions, and the process to follow when a customer is unhappy with a decision, was updated and delivered to all staff.

Customer 10

Learning identified

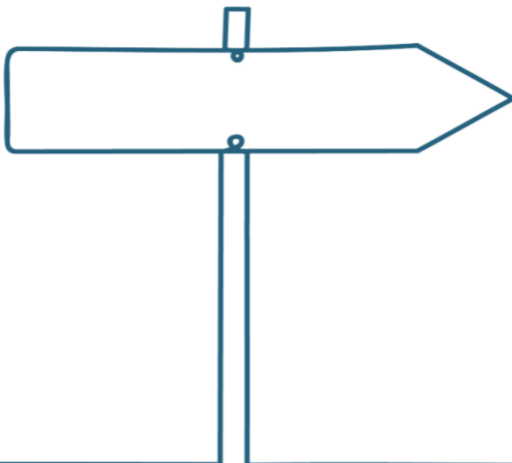
- Payments continued to be made to the landlord, following the customer's death.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that Operational instructions are re-circulated to confirm relevant “To Do’s” are actioned on claims after notification of an unverified date of death.

Learning outcomes

- Guidance on actions to take after the death of a customer were re-issued to all operational staff.





Customer 11

Learning identified

- There were delays to the claim when the correct action was not taken on receipt of the customer's Capability for Work Questionnaire.
- The correct action was not taken when advised the customer was in hospital.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that Journal messages are responded to, and action taken where appropriate. UC to respond to journal messages in a timeous manner in line with the case management approach.
- UC to suspend decision action, pending further information, when notified that a customer is in hospital and the customer cannot be contacted directly. Decision Makers to be reminded that cases where they are unable to contact the customer and there are indications that they are in hospital, should be referred to the Visiting Teams or ACSSLs as appropriate. Vulnerable Customer Champions within UC Decision Making is being trialled. All UC Decision Makers to have access to PIP Document Repository System which is the document repository where medical reports and all associated evidence. This is to support their UC decision evidence gathering and consideration.

Learning outcomes

- Operational instructions have been developed to improve journal message standards, and all staff have been reminded of the dedicated support available to vulnerable customers.

Customer 12

Learning identified

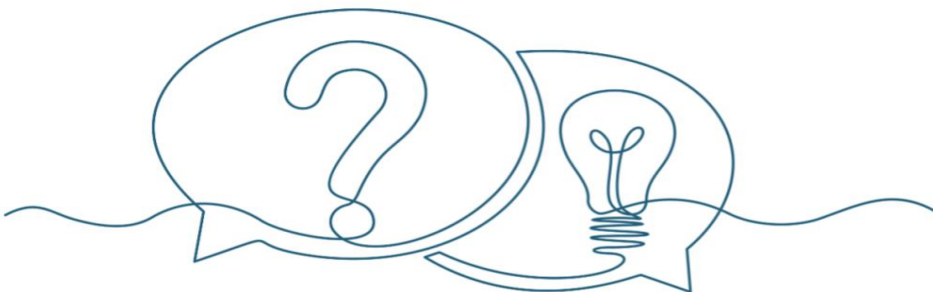
- The Assessment Provider did not take immediate action when made aware that the customer was at risk of self harm.

Agreed activity

- UC Assessment Provider to assure IPRG that if an indication of suicidal ideation within a UC50 that is, or suspected to be, unknown to the GP or others involved in a claimant's care, will consider implementing safeguarding processes within operation guidance.

Learning outcomes

- Improvements were made to the processes to be followed when a customer declares they may may be at risk.



Customer 13

Learning identified

- The customer's Claimant Commitment was not reviewed after their Fit Note expired.
- The customer's case was not referred to Advanced Customer Support for advice.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that operational instructions are cascaded to local leaders to reiterate the process for 'Switched Off' to ensure the customer's Claimant Commitments are regularly reviewed.
- UC to assure IPRG that operational instructions are cascaded to local leaders to reiterate that vulnerable customers with complex needs should be referred to the ACSSL for advice when they continue to be disengaged from the benefit process.

Learning outcomes

- Training on updating Claimant Commitments was delivered and staff reminded how to refer customers for additional support.





Customer 14

Learning identified

- The customer was not provided with the benefit entitlement information needed to resolve an issue with their Local Authority.
- Appropriate action was not taken to escalate the customers' case to resolve their issues.
- Relevant notes were not recorded on the customers' claim and customer was not notified of issue resolution.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that a customer will be provided with clerical information at the earliest opportunity, if it is clear that system information is incorrect.
- UC to assure IPRG that the case management approach will be refreshed to avoid future missed opportunities to resolve issues.
- A UC e-bulletin has been prepared which covers when to pin and not to pin and a reminder about the need to record actions in UC History.

Learning outcomes

- All agreed activities were completed, changes were made so customers can access relevant benefit information, instructions were updated regarding the escalation process and training was delivered on recording notes.



Customer 15

Learning identified

- The customers' case was not referred to Advanced Customer Support for advice.
- The notes recorded on the system were not reflective of the customer's circumstances.
- An error was made when calculating the start date of a Hardship Payment.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG they will consider if guidance for customers reporting mental health issues via journal is sufficient to prompt further discussion and explore if additional support is required.
- UC to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions for the standards of record keeping on a customer's account to ensure all actions are captured and appropriate support for customers with complex needs is provided.
- UC to explore the feasibility of strengthening operational instructions on the calculation date of Hardship Payments.

Learning outcomes

- Improvements were introduced which allow additional support needs to be identified, recorded and referred to the available support, with training delivered where appropriate. Hardship Payment guidance was reviewed and assured as being correct.



Customer 16

Learning identified

- The correct process was not followed when reviewing customer's placement in the work-related activity group.
- UC did not share all relevant information on customer's mental health with the Assessment Provider.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that local leaders will highlight the importance of following operational instructions about labour market regimes, work related requirements and ongoing contact in the health journey.
- UC to assure IPRG that information about a reported deterioration to a customer's mental health, prior to a WCA, is communicated to the AP.

Learning outcomes

- Guidance on actions to take for customers with health conditions was updated and delivered to all staff.



Customer 17

Learning identified

- UC did not offer digital support to the customer, when they reported issues in accessing their information.
- UC did not request a welfare check on the customer when appropriate.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that staff are reminded about supporting claimants who have restricted access to the internet / devices, offering ways of encouraging interaction via the journal with support from UC agents, via telephony channels or in Jobcentres.
- UC to assure IPRG that they will remind Operational Colleagues, as part of complex needs training, to consider welfare checks if repeated nil response from vulnerable customers and raise with Senior Managers, as appropriate.

Learning outcomes

- All operational staff were reminded on how to support customers with digital needs and training and upskilling was delivered regarding customer welfare checks.

Customer 18

Learning identified

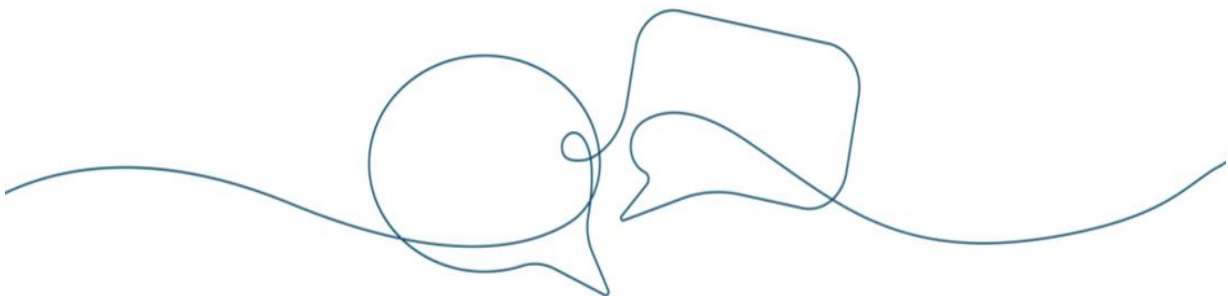
- The customer did not receive responses to journal messages they sent requesting support.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that colleagues are reminded of the need to respond sensitively to vulnerable customers / circumstances.

Learning outcomes

- Work was undertaken to ensure customers needing additional support could be identified from their journal messages and are responded to.



Customer 19

Learning identified

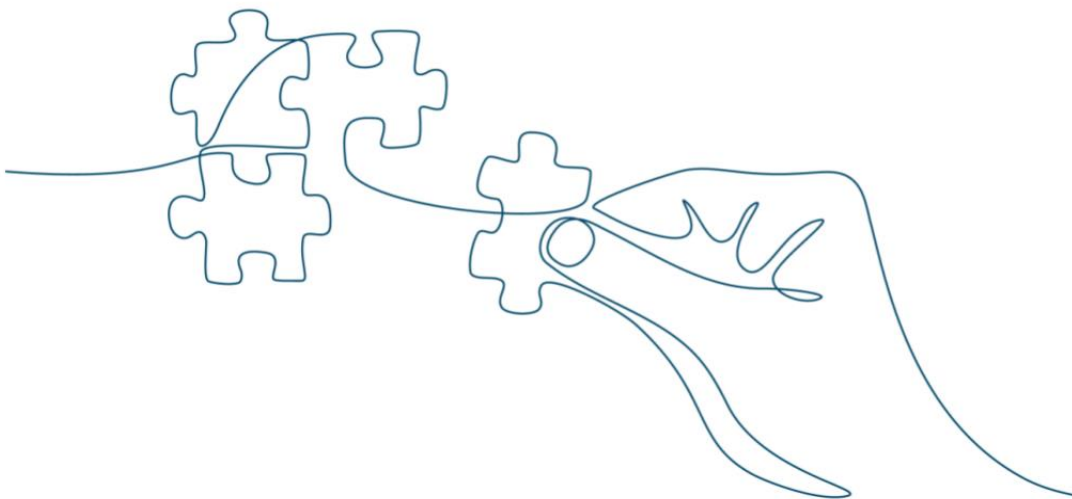
- The customer was not offered support to meet their additional needs, and their Claimant Commitment was not tailored appropriately.

Agreed activity

- ACS to liaise with Service Design to explore the possibility of introducing Vulnerable Customer Champions into UC sites.

Learning outcomes

- Operational instructions on how to refer vulnerable customers for dedicated support has been delivered to all staff.



Customer 20

Learning identified

- UC did not use the available information held across other DWP systems regarding the customer's health and digital issues when trying to contact them.

Agreed activity

- The Advanced Support tab to be relaunched as part of the upcoming Complex Needs Refresh.

Learning outcomes

- New functionality for staff to record additional support needs was introduced with training and guidance delivered to staff.



Cross-Benefit learning from serious cases

Customers can claim more than one benefit or use more than one DWP service, and when an IPR is conducted it looks at the all the services that a customer used. This means that some IPRs will identify learning across these different service lines.

The following table provides details of those additional service lines represented in this section.

Across 2022/23	Service Line and Number
Number of cases in which learning was identified	Personal Independence Payment – 5 Contract Management Partner Delivery – 1 Disability Living Allowance – 1 Incapacity Benefit – 1
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	Personal Independence Payment – 6 Disability Living Allowance – 2 Contract Management Partner Delivery – 1 Incapacity Benefit – 1



Customer 1

Learning identified

- Prior to release from prison the customer was given incorrect information in relation to when and how to claim UC.
- Details of the support offered to the customer were not sufficiently recorded.
- A message left on their journal by the customer over the weekend was not responded to until the next working day.
- Assessment provider guidance did not include steps to take if a customer stated in writing that they may harm themselves.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions on new claim procedures for prison leavers to ensure telephony agents are aware of the correct process.
- UC to assure IPRG they will consider if guidance for customers reporting mental health issues via their journal is sufficient to prompt further discussion and explore if additional support is required.
- UC to assure IPRG that robust systems are in place to ensure prompt contact is made with customer's following a risk notification by ACS Support.
- Contracted Health to consider whether changes are appropriate to Assessment Provider instructions concerning statements of suicidal ideation, to align with DWP Advanced Customer Support policies.

Learning outcomes

- All agreed activities were successfully completed. Prison Work Coaches resumed their duties within prisons to assist clients prior to their release and notifications added to Journals to inform clients that messages will be addressed only during office hours. Links between Assessment Providers and DWP were strengthened to better support vulnerable customers.



Customer 2

Learning identified

- ESA did not reply to the customer's letter, asking for an explanation of why they had been moved from the Support group to the WRAG.
- A MR request, sent by the customer, was not registered by ESA.
- There was an error in the MR Notice letter, sent to the customer.
- A letter sent by the ESA complaints team to the customer, contained an error.
- A letter of complaint, sent to PIP, was not sent on to the complaints team.

Agreed activity

- ESA and W&H Decision Making to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions for responding to customer correspondence and this issue, and the need to monitor, is reflected in new iterations of quality checks.
- ESA to assure IPRG they will highlight the importance of following the correct process when a MR is requested or identified.
- ESA Dispute Resolution Services to assure IPRG they will consider if quality assurance processes have sufficient rigour to ensure that factual inaccuracies in written communications are identified prior to issue.
- ESA to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions for written responses to customers complaints and this issue, and the need to monitor, is reflected in new iterations of quality checks.
- Personal Independence Payment to assure Internal Process Review Group they will communicate operational instructions for identifying and referring customer complaints to the Complaints Resolution Team.

Learning outcomes

- Reminders were issued to ESA teams on how to respond appropriately to all post, with guidance updated where needed, supported by monitoring and quality checks. Instructions on how to process complaints were sent out to all PIP colleagues.



Customer 3

Learning identified

- UC did not inform ESA on more than one occasion that the customer had advised of their deteriorating mental health and vulnerability, which could have led ESA to make a faster payment.
- There was a delay in requesting a safeguarding visit after receiving a journal message from the customer advising their mental health had deteriorated.
- An ESA payment that was due to the customer was not made on time after they were late sending medical evidence.

Agreed activity

- UC to consider if any strengthening of guidance is necessary to include when there may be a need to share information with other product lines. Where there is a clear and relevant need to share information with other product lines necessary to support the claimant, UC to consider involving ACS.
- UC to assure IPRG that robust systems are in place to ensure prompt contact is made with customers following a risk notification by ACS. Also, UC to look into the feasibility of adding an advisory message when journal messages are added outside of working hours.
- ESA to assure IPRG that robust systems are in place to make a same day payment when a customer with a mental health condition is late providing medical evidence.

Learning outcomes

- All actions were completed with UC colleagues being reminded that vulnerable customers should be referred to dedicated staff for additional support at all stages of their claim process. Journal messages containing concerning content are highlighted to ensure appropriate support is provided and instructions developed to improve journal usage and standards. Notifications are added to Journals to inform clients that messages will only be seen during office hours. A reminder on the correct payment actions to follow was issued to the ESA teams involved.



Customer 4

Learning identified

- The customer's appointee asked for a call back from PIP which was not received.
- ESA did not call the appointee when requested, after they phoned about a payment.
- An error was made with the customers ESA award, which was not rectified for some time.
- ESA incorrectly calculated areas of benefit owed to the customer.

Agreed activity

- PIP to assure IPRG that colleagues are reminded of the importance of ensuring call backs are made to customers when requested.
- ESA to assure IPRG that colleagues are reminded of the importance of ensuring call backs are made to customers when requested.
- ESA to assure IPRG that customers benefit awards/payments are checked periodically to ensure they are correctly paid.
- ESA to assure IPRG they will communicate the importance of accuracy when calculating overpayment of SDP and this issue and the need to monitor, is reflected in new iterations of ESA quality checks.

Learning outcomes

- Reminders on the correct call back process were issued to both PIP and ESA colleagues, and quality checks were put in place to ensure accurate payment of benefits.



Customer 5

Learning identified

- There was no evidence of any action being taken regarding there being a potential risk to the customer.
- A letter was not sent to the customer to explain why their DLA had been suspended.
- No contact was made with the customer to question why their PIP forms had not been returned.
- ESA premiums continued to be paid even though DLA was not in payment.

Agreed activity

- ESA to assure IPRG they will highlight to all colleagues the importance of using the six-point plan in all instances of customers declaring suicidal intent.
- IB/ESA to assure IPRG they will highlight to all colleagues the importance of using the six-point plan in all instances of customers declaring suicidal intent.
- DLA to assure IPRG that once they resume service in inviting customers to apply for PIP, they will consider communicating the correct operational instructions when a customer has a vulnerable customer marker in place.
- DLA to assure IPRG they will communicate operational instructions for actions to be taken in cases when a case requires a suspension, and appropriate notifications communicated to the customer and that these processes are embedded in the quality assurance framework to improve compliance.
- PIP to assure IPRG that operational instructions are communicated to Case Managers, regarding the setting and actioning of tasks on the PIP Customer System and this action is embedded in the Quality Assurance Framework to improve compliance.
- ESA to assure IPRG they will communicate the importance of checking entitlement to benefit when making disability premiums payments and that these processes are embedded in the quality assurance framework to improve compliance.

Learning outcomes

- Improvements were made to the processes followed when a customer declares an intent to self-harm and when benefit payments are being suspended, with dedicated additional support available, including home visits. Guidance was updated on the setting and actioning of tasks and the award of benefit premiums, with a quality checking system put in place to improve compliance.

Customer 6

Learning identified

- The correct steps were not taken when UC were made aware of the customers health condition.
- New Style ESA did not start a WCA referral when required.

Agreed activity

- UC Local Operational Leaders to ensure robust processes are in place to identify and progress health journey cases.
- ESA to assure IPRG that colleagues are reminded about the guidance when handling dual claims.

Learning outcomes

- Guidance on actions to take for customers with health conditions was updated and delivered to all relevant staff.





Customer 7

Learning identified

- The UC work coach failed to identify that the customer had an appointee and severe health conditions when booking an appointment.
- A notification that the customer had passed away was not shared between PIP and UC.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG they will communicate a reminder to local leaders of the importance of previewing and pinning notes to cases to ensure that vulnerable customers are identified, and appropriate support is provided.
- PIP to ensure that the correct process is promptly followed on receipt of information that a customer has died.

Learning outcomes

- Improvements were made to enable the recording of additional support requirements, with training and guidance delivered. Specialist teams were introduced to process all death notifications and quality checks put in place.



Customer 8

Learning identified

- The customer did not receive appropriate support based on their health conditions.
- The customer requested reasonable adjustments in how UC should contact them, which were not met.
- Repeated attempts were made to contact the customer to attend face to face appointments, despite them being unable to do so, with complaints made by the customer not being responded to.
- UC did not engage with the customers' support workers when it was appropriate to do so.
- The customer requested reasonable adjustments in how PIP should contact them, which were not met.
- The customer's PIP claim was closed, despite the customer responding to requests for information.

Agreed activity

- UC to assure IPRG that instructions for supporting health conditions (including hidden disabilities) are re-circulated and quality checks are included/introduced to encourage compliance and improve standards.
- UC to assure IPRG that all reasonable adjustment requests are noted, pinned and actioned accordingly. Quality checks to be considered to improve compliance. Improvement ticket raised.
- UC to assure IPRG that vulnerable customer needs are taken in to account and issues are resolved or escalated at the earliest opportunity.
- UC to assure IPRG that when identified, vulnerable customers' support network contacts are recorded on the claim and explored to prevent miscommunication and distress to the customer.
- PIP to assure IPRG that all reasonable adjustment requests are noted and actioned accordingly. Quality checks to be considered to improve compliance.
- PIP to assure IPRG that pre claim closure checks are conducted. They will work with Service Planning and Delivery to produce further guidance.

Learning outcomes

- Guidance and operational instructions for supporting customers with health conditions were updated and shared with all staff, alongside the delivery of further training on recording and highlighting key information. Continuous training events and quality checks were put in place to ensure ongoing improvement, and reminders issued regarding correct claim closure procedures and the Advanced Customer Support referral process.

Signposting and support

If you have been affected by any of the topics covered within this publication, there is information and support available online:

Check benefits and financial support you can get – [Check benefits and financial support you can get - GOV.UK](#)

Benefits (Scotland only) – [Benefits - mygov.scot](#)

Challenge and appeal a benefit decision – [Challenge and appeal a benefit decision: step by step - GOV.UK](#)

Get extra help and support to manage your DWP benefits or pension – [Get extra help and support to manage your benefits or pension - GOV.UK](#).

Support for Mortgage Interest – [Support for Mortgage Interest \(SMI\): Overview - GOV.UK](#)

Bereavement help and support – [What to do after someone dies: Bereavement help and support - GOV.UK](#)

Homelessness – [Help if you're homeless or about to become homeless - GOV.UK](#)

Domestic Abuse – [Domestic abuse: how to get help - GOV.UK](#)

Mental Health –

England – [Mental health – NHS](#)

Scotland – [Mental health | NHS inform](#)

Wales – [NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

Suicidal thoughts –

England – [Help for suicidal thoughts - NHS](#)

Scotland – [Getting help with your suicidal thoughts | Suicide | NHS inform](#)

Wales – [NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Suicidal thoughts](#)

Glossary

This glossary helps explain the terms used throughout this publication

Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader (ACSSL)	An ACSSL coaches and engages with colleagues across DWP services to help support our most vulnerable customers.
Appointee	An individual or organisation authorised to act on behalf of a person who is unable to manage their own benefits, often due to age, illness, or disability.
Assessment Provider (AP)	An organisation contracted on behalf of DWP to conduct health assessments for customers.
Budgeting Advance	Provides UC customers access to an interest free payment for one-off items, designed to help claimants with irregular expenses.
Case Control	A reminder set on a case, which sends a prompt to an agent when the date set is reached.
Child Maintenance Group (CMG)	Now known as Child Maintenance Services (CMS). CMS helps ensure that children receive financial support from both parents, even if they are not living together.
Claimant Commitment	An agreement between the customer and DWP outlining the responsibilities and activities the customer must undertake to receive UC.
Complex Needs Toolkit	Used by colleagues to signpost customers who are likely to benefit from extra or face-to-face support to an appropriate service.
Contracted Health	The team that manages the contracts with Assessment Providers.
Debt Management	The part of DWP that is responsible for agreeing a payment plan with a customer to collect debt that is owed.
Deduction from Earnings Order	A voluntary or enforced method used by CMS to collect child maintenance payments directly from the paying parent's wages.
Document Repository System (DRS)	The computer system that holds post that has been electronically scanned.
Domestic Homicide Review (DHR)	Examines the circumstances surrounding citizen deaths, focusing on the actions and responses of agencies and professionals involved.
Habitual Residence	The place where a person has their regular, permanent home.
Handover Telephony Tool	An internal system to escalate urgent telephone calls to the appropriate team. Sometimes referred to as HOTT.
Hardship Payment	Available to customers who have had their regular benefit payments reduced or stopped due to sanctions, intended to help cover essential costs and which is repayable from UC.
Internal Process Review Group (IPRG)	A group made up of DWP colleagues from all service lines, who reviewed the key findings and agreed the activity needed to resolve them.

Journal Message	Used to exchange information and updates between a customer and their Work Coach or agent regarding a customer's UC account.
Liability Order	A court order which says someone owes money. If the court grants a Liability Order, CMS can take legal action to try to collect the money owed.
Mandatory Reconsideration (MR)	The process that allows customers to challenge a DWP decision.
Paying Parent	The parent who doesn't have the main day-to-day care of the child and is responsible for providing financial support.
Quality Assurance Framework	The quality checking process used across DWP to improve service delivery, and target improvements to the quality of service delivered to our customers.
Receiving Parent	The person who receives child maintenance payments and typically has primary custody of the child and is responsible for their day-to-day care and upbringing.
Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB)	Statutory bodies established by Local Authorities to protect adults with care and support needs from abuse and neglect.
Service Planning and Delivery (SPD)	A team responsible for modernising DWP services.
Significant Case Review (SCR, Scotland only)	A means for Adult Protection Committees to learn lessons from reviewing the circumstances where an adult at risk has died or been significantly harmed.
Six Point Plan	DWPs response to instances where customers declare an intent to take their own life or harm themselves.
Support Group	If you're entitled to ESA, you will be placed in the support group if you cannot work now, and you are not expected to prepare for work in the future.
To-Do	Refers to a specific task or action that a UC agent is required to complete.
Universal Credit 50 form (UC50)	A questionnaire used by DWP to gather information to support an assessment of a customer's capability for work and work-related activities.
Universal Credit RESTART Programme	A government initiative designed to support customers who have been out of work for a significant period, helping them re-enter the workforce.
Unlikely to Pay check	A check used to assess whether the paying parent would be unlikely to pay child maintenance directly to the receiving parent.
Work and Health (W&H)	Area of DWP that administers a range of working age, disability and ill health benefits.
Work Capability Assessment (WCA)	The assessment used by ESA and UC, to assess a customer's capability to work when they have declared they have a health condition.
Work Related Activity Group (WRAG)	If you're entitled to ESA, you will be placed in this group if you cannot work now but can prepare to work in the future.



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