

## Core Visits

1. If a claimant has a condition that could affect their ability to understand and comply with conditionality, a Core Visit to their home must be arranged before any sanction decision is considered.
2. A Core Visit should be considered each time a claimant FTA/FTP in a mandatory interview or fails to undertake WRA, in order to safeguard those claimants with fluctuating mental health conditions.

**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.

3. A Core Visit is undertaken by a Visiting Officer from the DWP Visiting, to ensure the claimant fully understands why they have to attend and take part in the mandatory interview and also undertake any Work Related Activity agreed with their Adviser. The Visiting Officer does **not** conduct the mandatory interview.
4. If the claimant has an Appointee or someone with Power of Attorney (POA), assume that the Appointee/POA fully understands the mandatory interview 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.
5. Consider the possibility that the claimant's Failure to Attend (FTA) 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.
6. If a claimant has FTA an interview and not responded to the FTA letter, the Adviser reviews the case to check whether the claimant has a mental health condition or learning difficulties, or conditions affecting cognition such as stroke, autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit disorder that might affect their understanding of mandatory interview requirements and the consequences of failing to comply.
7. If there is such evidence, a Core Visit is arranged as soon as possible, and no further action should be taken regarding the claimant's FTA until the outcome of the Core Visit is known. The Adviser:
  - Refers the case to the Visiting Officer in accordance with Core Visits process, detailed in the Core Visits Guide, on form MF37 which must include:
    - 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
  - Sets a personal workflow in LMS for 10 working days to check the outcome of the visit. If this workflow matures and the MF37 has not

been received, follow up the referral following local procedures and consider extending the workflow.

**Note:** It is essential that the MF37 is fully completed and that telephone number included in the referring officer contact details will be manned as the Visiting Officer will need to use this to rearrange the interview during the visit. This number can also be given to the claimant for them to get in touch direct.

8. The Visiting Officer will undertake the Core Visit to establish whether the claimant understands the requirement to attend and participate in the mandatory interview and/or undertake the WRA and gather information.
9. The Visiting Officer contacts the Adviser to have the mandatory interview rebooked, or book an interview to review the WRA, by agreeing a date and time with the claimant and the Adviser. The Visiting Officer will not undertake any mandatory interview activity or make any decisions relating to deferral, good cause and so on
10. The Visiting Officer contacts the Adviser immediately if it appears deferring the mandatory interview might be appropriate, where possible this should be by telephone at the time of the visit.
11. Where the Adviser confirms the appointment has been booked, the Visiting Officer completes an appointment letter.
12. Once the visit is completed, the Visiting Officer returns the MF37 and all the information to the Adviser for good cause consideration.
13. 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**

14. 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**

15. 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 Adviser within five working days.
16. If the claimant makes contact within five working days of the ineffective visit, the Adviser notifies DWP Visiting so that they do not make an unnecessary second visit.
17. 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**

18. DWP Visiting must attempt to undertake a Core Visit if the claimant has a mental health condition, learning disability or health condition which affects cognition but this may not be possible where the claimant lives in an area that DWP Visiting deem unsafe.
19. In these cases the HEO should continue to take the action as if 2 ineffective visits have taken place, including ensuring the safety of the

claimant and that we have taken all reasonable steps to safeguard the claimant.

20. Where two Core Visits have been ineffective, the claimant's details must be referred to the HEO to consider whether Jobcentre Plus have taken all reasonable steps in safeguarding these claimants.

### **Other consideration**

21. It is important the HEO considers the welfare of claimants who suffer from mental health conditions, learning disabilities or health conditions which affect cognition before imposing any sanction on benefit. Refer to the ESA Incapacity Reference Guide if unsure whether the claimant's condition is a mental health condition or learning disability.

22. To avoid any hardship to claimants in a vulnerable group every attempt must be made to ensure the claimant's welfare. In the event of two ineffective visits, the HEO must attempt to contact the following sources to establish the claimant's welfare:

- Claimant's Appointee/POA/next of kin,
- Claimant's Community Psychiatric Nurse,
- Social Services,
- Police.

**Note:** The contact with these people/organisations is to ensure a claimant's welfare (we have a moral obligation to make organisations aware of potential incidents around vulnerable claimants) and not to gather information to support the Labour Market process. The Data Protection act does not allow for these people/organisations to report back to DWP the outcome of any investigations they choose to undertake.

23. Supplying a claimant's details to Social Services or the Police in these circumstances does not contravene the Data Protection Act. Providing that there is evidence to support the referral, the sharing of information falls under the exemption category.

### **Next steps**

24. If the HEO considers that the claimant continues not to provide good cause or it has not been possible to establish contact then they should review information (mainly from LMS) to inform the decision maker of the steps taken, including:

- Considering the context of the interview and whether the interview should be deferred.
- Notifying the claimant of the date, time and place of the interview and asking them to get in touch if they cannot make it.
- Offering a more convenient location or a home visit where appropriate and encouraging advocacy support if needed.
- Identifying any relevant issues where known that might impact on attendance.
- Contacting the claimant before the interview to remind them that it is due.
- Visiting those claimants with whom there has been no verbal contact prior to the interview.
- Visiting every claimant with a stated mental health condition or learning disability, with their representative if appropriate, to ensure they

understand their responsibilities, and details of the attempts made to visit the claimant and the reasons they are not effective.

25. Jobcentre Plus's commitment to safeguard claimants means that all these steps should have taken place and so it is important that they are carried out and noted to inform the adviser.
26. The adviser will then gather the relevant documentation so that the case can be sent to the LM DM, including details of safeguarding steps taken. This will enable the LM DM to make an informed decision about whether a sanction is appropriate, even where a claimant is deemed vulnerable. LMS prints should not be included as the LM DM has access to LMS.