

Annex 1

The DWP approach to Vulnerability

How we improve the way we define, identify and enable individuals with complex needs and those who require additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services

Description of Vulnerability for DWP purposes is:

“An individual who is identified as having complex needs and/or requires additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services”

Complex Needs

Complex needs are difficult personal circumstances and/or life events that affect the ability of the individual to access DWP benefits and use our services

The aim of this approach

The aim of this approach is to ensure that the targeted additional support to individuals enables them to

- access benefits and use our services and
- meet their individual responsibilities.

The aim of this approach is to ensure DWP:

- is consistent in offering individual responses when needed;
- provide a response that is always joined up and meaningful for the individual;
- deliver appropriate service outcomes;
- uses the appropriate language and terminology now and as we prepare for the introduction of UC, and the future development of PIP;
- embed and reflect this approach in national guidance, products, processes and L&D modules;
- achieve a customer centric service.

This consolidates existing DWP practices and will not result in any changes to existing policy or procedures.

The approach:

- one description of vulnerability - “An individual who is identified as having complex needs and/or requires additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services”
- a consistent use of language and terminology throughout DWP
- a move away from using the term “vulnerable customer”
- a focus on life events and/or personal circumstances rather than customer group

- a focus on identifying these individuals and recording the support required to enable them to access benefits and use our services
- a clear DWP support offer is put in place, to address the impact of those life events and personal circumstances (including health issues and disability) that affect the ability of the individual to access DWP benefits and use our services
- the support offered should be tailored to an individuals needs.
- clarity of timeliness and suitability of DWP support offer by considering:
 - not all people with life events/personal circumstances/health issues/disability will require support.
 - individuals may have one or multiple reasons why they may require support.
 - this support may be put in place once, for a short, medium or long period of time and they may move in and out of situations where they do/do not require support
- signposting available – using stakeholders to help, enable and support these individuals
- a coordinated, defined, overarching strategy for these individuals
- is in Learning & Development products
- is embedded in all the Customer Journeys, so all individuals are supported to follow standard Customer Journeys

List of Life events or Personal Circumstances

There are many differing Life Events, Personal Circumstances and Health conditions/disability that may impact on the individuals' ability to access DWP benefits and use our services. Some individuals **may not** require support even though they are experiencing difficult life events and/or complex personal circumstances, health issues or disability. These Life Events, Personal Circumstances, Health conditions and disability may indicate that an individual requires additional support putting in place to enable them to access the standard Customer Journeys

Individuals may require support to enable them to:

- Access our services/benefits
- Prove Eligibility for our services/benefits
- Maintain conditionality relating to benefit claims
- Maintain claims, use self-service accounts (digital channels)
- Maintain their finances, have difficulties managing money/numerical skills, using banking services

Life Events and Personal Circumstances

Adoption - children

Leaving the Armed Forces and Ex armed forces personnel, their spouses/partners/families

Bereavement, Death - recently bereaved

Children who leave care /

Care Leavers - over 18 care leavers

Crime –Victim of crime

Debt / indebted
 Divorce / termination of Civil Partnerships
 Domestic Violence and abuse
 Just Left hospital
 Homeless
 Race - Immigration status/refugee/asylum seeker/ people arriving from abroad
 Redundancy
 Retirement
 Addiction – Drug and alcohol dependency
 Age - older person
 Age - older person - financial abuse (Pensioners)
 Age - Young Person - 16 & 17 year olds
 Caring responsibilities
 Children - child care
 Cultural Barriers, Language barriers – English not their first language
 Gender recognition/transgender
 Lone Parent
 Offender/ex Offender/ Prisoners/Detainees
 Suicide and/or Self Harm Declaration
 Supported by Troubled Families programme
 Rural Isolation
 MAPPA claimants (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements)

Health conditions/disability

Health conditions/disabilities may mean an individual requires additional support to enable them to access benefits and use our services. We have a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to put reasonable adjustments in place.

Disabilities and there effects are as individual as the person who has them. Ask how you can help if a person says they are experiencing difficulties because of a health condition or disability

Be aware of hidden disability.

Examples of health conditions that might need additional support include:

Health conditions/Disability

Considerations:

Sensory impairments:

Questions to consider:

Problems with hearing or vision

- Does the individual require extra support to communicate with DWP?

Cognitive and neurological impairments:

For example learning difficulty, Parkinson’s disease and dementia.

These conditions may cause difficulties with learning or remembering

Mental health conditions:

For example mood disorder or anxiety. Difficulties experienced are quite variable depending on the nature and severity of the disorder.

Forgetfulness, lack of motivation and distress may affect the ability to make decisions and manage a claim.

Some claimants may lack mental capacity

Physical impairment:

For Example mobility problems

Disabilities and their effects are as individual as the person who has them

- Does the individual require extra support to complete their claim, comply with processes or make decisions about their claim?
- How much support is required and will this change?
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- How much support is required and will this change?
- Do they have mental capacity?
- What mobility problem does the individual have, is the local office accessible?
- Can the individual travel to a face to face and/or
- Can the individual access services in another way and.or
- Can the individual attend at another location?