

# JCP Core Visit Referral Guidance

## DWP Visiting – Who are we and what do we do?

1. DWP Visiting help those customers/claimants who are unable to complete their business transaction through any of the other channels. This may be due to their vulnerability or the complexity of the transaction required, or may be driven by a legislative requirement that some activities **MUST** be handled face to face. DWP Visiting will support the customer/claimant by undertaking home visits

## What is the difference between Customer Compliance and DWP Visiting?

2. Responsibility for undertaking Core Visits transferred from Customer Compliance to DWP Visiting in February 2011.
3. Customer compliance undertake robust office interviews and visits with customers in order to ensure their benefit is correct, uncover irregularities, prevent possible future fraud and encourage customers to report changes promptly. They look at all types of fraud in respect of all benefits; e.g. 'Working whilst in receipt', 'Doubtful disability' and 'Living as a couple' etc.
4. Information on the visits that are undertaken by customer compliance officers (CCO) can be found in the **Customer Compliance Guide**. These visit types are only undertaken by DWP Visiting when requested by the compliance team and they should not be referred direct.
5. ALL other visiting activity is carried out by DWP visiting. The following guidance (**Overview of Core Visits**) details a set of scenarios where a core referral is appropriate, and where relevant native benefit processing guidance identifies the need for visit intervention, HOWEVER, it cannot identify every scenario where a visit would be the best approach, and for this reason staff should apply a degree of judgement to each situation and consider whether a referral to DWP Visiting may be the best approach

## Overview of Core Visits

6. In the majority of cases, a Core Visit will involve a vulnerable customer/claimant. The **Core Visits type** list indicates when a Core Visit is appropriate however referrals may also be applicable for other customers/claimants and scenarios (see **Non Core Visits**).
7. Due to the vast range and technicality of the benefits and services dealt with by the Department and the requirement to keep abreast

of all changes, it is not possible for Visiting Officers to deliver all services at a home visit. They will deliver certain key services which are described in the guidance for each Core Visit type.

8. If the visit is to a vulnerable customer/claimant or a customer/claimant with a mental health or learning difficulty, **two attempts** at an effective visit will be made. In all other cases, one attempt will be made.

## Core Visit types

9. The following list shows the different types of Core visit that DWP Visiting will undertake, however remember this list is not exhaustive. For further information click on the appropriate link:

- Benefit Cap
- Benefit Integrity
- Bereavement Benefit
- Civil Penalty (Overpayment)
- Delivery of Overpayment Recoverability Notification
- Employment and Support Allowance
- ESA 50
- Incapacity Benefit (including IB (IS) reassessment)
- Income Support
- Industrial Injuries and Disablement Benefit
- Learning Focused Interviews
- Lone Parents/Lone Parent Obligation Changes
- Safeguard visits
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Universal Credit
- Work Focused Interviews

10. A desk aid containing a brief summary of the following is available – [Core Visit Referral Desk Aid](#)

## Benefit Cap

1. DWP Visiting Areas will be involved in visits to vulnerable claimants to answer Benefit cap questions following the claimant having had Benefit cap applied, signposting to the relevant organisation as required and visits to assist with completion of "Grace Period declaration" where requested.
2. Aim of visit: To explain to the claimant the impact that Benefit cap will have or has had (if the Benefit cap has been applied) on their benefit claim, signposting them to the relevant services available

and, in phased rollout Areas, to assist with completion of "Grace Period declaration

### **Benefit Integrity Cases (BIC) for ESA and IS**

3. Where appropriate: vulnerable claimants who fail to respond to a benefit integrity case review letter. The definition of a vulnerable claimant will be determined by the benefit type.
4. Aim of visit: to find out why the claimant has not responded to the review letter; to ensure the claimant understands their obligations in complying with the review; to carry out a full review and complete either ESA2 or A2.

### **Bereavement Benefit**

5. Where appropriate: vulnerable customers/claimants who are not collecting their payments; all Habit and Repute cases (applies to Scotland only); all verification of a marriage (referrals made by the Relationship Validation Unit).
6. [Habit and Repute cases (applicable to Scotland only) may require up to 4 visits per case, as the customer/claimant and up to three witnesses will need to be visited. See the Habit and Repute guide for further information on how to deal with these cases.]
7. Aim of visit: To assist the customer/claimant as requested in the visit referral

### **Civil Penalty (Overpayment)**

8. Where appropriate: vulnerable claimants that have been identified as having an overpayment caused by claimant error where more information is required from the claimant to determine whether a Civil Penalty will apply.
9. Aim of visit: To gather information for the Decision Maker to determine whether a Civil Penalty will apply.

### **Delivery of Overpayment Recoverability Notification**

10. Where appropriate: vulnerable customers/claimants due to receive an overpayment recoverability notification. NB: Although the customer/claimant's claim may be dormant they are still a customer of DWP and a visit will still be required.
11. Aim of visit: to issue the overpayment recoverability notification and to ensure that:
  - the customer/claimant is made aware of the overpayment in a sensitive manner;

- the customer/claimant will not be alone when learning of the overpayment;
- the subject of the expected repayment can be discussed.

### **Employment and Support Allowance – Legislation Changes: entitlement due to exhaust**

12. Where appropriate: ESA claimants with a mental health condition or learning difficulties, whose ESA (C) case is due to exhaust.
13. Aim of visit: to check their potential entitlement to ESA (IR). If it is considered that the claimant may be entitled to ESA (IR) after their ESA (C) exhausts, the claimant should be helped to complete an ESA3.

### **Employment and Support Allowance – Failed to Attend Work Capability Assessment**

14. Where appropriate: ESA claimants with a mental health condition or learning difficulties, and who have failed to attend all or part of their WCA which could result in a full disallowance or sanction of their ESA.
15. Aim of visit: to ensure the claimant fully understands the requirements placed on them by Jobcentre Plus in satisfying the conditions of entitlement to benefit and the implications of not attending their WCA, including recording good cause for non attendance reasons. Appointments for WCA are issued directly to the Claimant by ATOS Medical services.

### **Employment and Support Allowance – Failed to Attend Work Focused Interview:-**

16. Where appropriate: ESA claimants with a mental health condition or learning difficulties, and who have failed to attend all or participate in any mandatory WFI and may also have failed to undertake work related activity.
17. Aim of visit: to ensure the claimant fully understands the requirements placed on them by Jobcentre Plus in satisfying the conditions of entitlement to benefit and the implications of not attending their WFI, including recording good cause for non attendance reasons and the implications of not undertaking Work Related Activity when directed to do so.

## Employment and Support Allowance – other scenarios

18. In addition to the above the following visit types are appropriate for claimants with mental health conditions or learning difficulties who need help with any of the following –

- appeals
- appointee action
- claim form enquiries
- customer/claimant complaints
- MP enquiries
- misdirection cases
- SDP awards
- security visits (eg Lost papers/documents or valuables reported as not received by Jobcentre Plus)

## ESA 50

19. Where appropriate: vulnerable claimants who need help to complete an ESA50 (Consideration before making a referral). **NB** The claimant must be made aware that the Visiting Officer will provide a transcribing service only to help manage their expectations of the Visiting Officers role in supporting them.
20. Aim of visit: to provide a transcribing service to complete an ESA50 recording exactly what the claimant says in response to the questions as worded on their questionnaire. **Refer to the attached link Baselined Core visit guidance- ESA50 for guidance**

## Incapacity Benefit

21. Where appropriate: claimants with a mental health condition or learning difficulties and who need help with any of the following –
- appointee action
  - claim form completion
  - customer/claimant complaints
  - MP enquiries
  - misdirection cases;
  - security visits (eg lost case papers)
  - conditionality visits (eg where Claimant fails to comply with process)

## Income Support

22. Where appropriate: all IS claimants who require appointee action, AND vulnerable claimants who need help with any of the following -

- appeals
- customer/claimant complaints
- misdirection cases
- MP enquiries
- security visits (eg lost papers/documents or valuables reported as not received by Jobcentre Plus)
- SDP awards

## **Industrial Injuries and Disablement Benefit**

23. Where appropriate: claimants diagnosed as suffering from Mesothelioma (Prescribed Disease (PD) D3) or Asbestosis/lung cancer caused by Asbestos (Prescribed Disease D8/D8A)
24. Aim of visit: to ascertain entitlement to Constant Attendance Allowance (CAA). [All PD D3 and many D8/D8A cases become entitled to IIDB without the need for a medical examination because of their short life expectancy. Those who become entitled to IIDB without an examination will require a visit to ascertain CAA entitlement.]

## **Learning Focused Interviews - 16/17 year olds, non-JSA Claimants**

25. Where appropriate: vulnerable claimants who have failed to attend one appointment for their initial or life event trigger Learning Focused Interview (LFI), and all claimants who have failed to attend one appointment for their initial or life event trigger Learning Focused Interview and have not had the LFI conditionality requirements explained to them.
26. Aim of visit: to take action as detailed in the 16/17 Year Old ESA Claimants Guidance. In addition if during the course of a LFI visit the Claimant agrees to attend a LFI, the VO will attempt to telephone the referring section to arrange an appointment for the LFI and will issue the appropriate letter to the claimant at the visit to confirm the appointment.

## **Lone Parents**

27. Where appropriate: all Lone Parent claimants on Income Support who have not attended a WFI, have not attended an Options and Choices Event or have failed to attend a voluntary interview.
28. Aim of visit: to ensure the claimant understands the requirements placed on them by Jobcentre Plus in satisfying the conditions of entitlement to benefit and the implications of not attending the interview

## **Lone Parents Obligation (LPO) Changes**

- 29. Where appropriate: all Lone Parents whose benefit is due to cease within 4 weeks, and where there have been at least two attempts to contact the claimant
- 30. Aim of visit: to ensure the claimant fully understands the Lone Parent Obligation changes, what it means for them and to prevent the inappropriate termination of their benefit and to explain to the Claimant that their Income Support is coming to an end because of the changes to the law in respect of the age of their youngest child and that they should contact their Advisor at the Jobcentre for more details or for further help and support.

## **Safeguard Visits**

- 31. Where appropriate: to ensure that vulnerable claimants have the opportunity to be seen face to face to have the implications of failing to comply with the WCA requirements.
- 32. Aim of visit: to ensure that the claimant fully understands the requirements placed on them by Jobcentre Plus in satisfying the conditions of entitlement to benefit and the implications of not attending or complying with their Work Capability Assessment (WCA), including recording good cause for non attendance reasons.
- 33. Also if during the course of a WCA visit the claimant agrees to attend or comply with a WCA appointment, to advise the claimant that they may be referred for further assessment.

## **Severe Disablement Allowance**

- 34. Where appropriate: all claimants in receipt of SDA where appointee action is being considered
- 35. Aim of visit: refer to Agents Appointees Attorneys and Deputies Guide

## **Universal Credit**

- 36. Where appropriate: For Pathfinder Jobcentres, a referral for a visit may be made at any point along the UC claim journey and will follow the existing JCP Core visit Guidance considerations for both Core visit referral types and non core visits depending upon the claimant's vulnerability requirements.
- 37. Aim of Visit: To assist the claimant as requested in the visit referral

## **Work Focused Interviews – ESA Claimants**

- 38. Where appropriate: all ESA Claimants who have failed to attend or failed to participate in a mandatory WFI (either a New Joiner's Work Focused Interview (NFWFI) or a Flexible Intervention) and have not had the requirement to attend WFIs explained to them verbally, OR Claimants with mental health conditions or learning difficulties who have failed to attend or failed to participate in a mandatory WFI, even if there has been verbal contact at the pre WFI contact stage.
- 39. Aim of visit: to ensure the Claimant fully understands the requirements placed on them by Jobcentre Plus in satisfying the conditions of entitlement to benefit and the implications of not attending their WFI, including recording good cause for non attendance reasons and the implications of not undertaking Work Related Activity when directed to do so.
- 40. Also, where the Claimant agrees to do so to arrange and agree a new WFI.

### **Work Focused Interviews – Lone Parents**

- 41. Where appropriate: all Lone Parents who have failed to attend their initial WFI and have not had the requirement to attend a WFI explained to them and vulnerable Lone Parents who fail to attend a subsequent WFI
- 42. Aim of visit: to ensure that the Claimant understands the requirements placed on them by Jobcentre Plus in satisfying the conditions of entitlement to benefit and the implications of not attending the interview. (See Lone Parent WFI guidance)
- 43. Also, where the Claimant agrees to do so to arrange and agree a new WFI.

### **Work Focused Interviews – partners**

- 44. Where appropriate: all claimants with partners who have failed to attend their initial WFI and have not had the requirement to attend WFIs explained to them, and vulnerable claimants with partners who have failed to attend a WFI.
- 45. Aim of visit: to ensure that the partner understands the requirements placed on them by Jobcentre Plus in satisfying the conditions of entitlement to benefit and the implications of not attending the interview. (See Failed to Participate Process for WFI(P) and Vulnerable Partners)

### **Non Core Visits**

- 46. The guidance above details a set of scenarios where a Core Visit referral is appropriate, and where relevant native benefit processing guidance identifies the need for visit intervention. HOWEVER, it

cannot identify every scenario where a visit would be the best approach, and for this reason staff should apply a degree of judgement to each situation and consider whether a referral to DWP Visiting may be the best approach.

## **Considerations before making a referral**

47. Before making a non-core referral to DWP Visiting consider whether you have taken all reasonable action to assist the Customer/Claimant.

- Have you already attempted to clear the query by correspondence or by phone?
- Could the customer/claimant be supported using preferred existing customer/claimant support channels within a Jobcentre with a face to face appointment, or telephony support?
- Are there any other channels of support available to assist this customer/claimant's needs eg do they have a family member, support person or carer who can help?
- Is it safe for a Visiting Officer (alone or accompanied) to carry out a home visit

48. If you have tried or considered all of these and a home visit is the only remaining (and safe) option to support the customer or claimant refer to DWP Visiting following the Referral Guidance.

## **Making the referral**

49. A referral can be made to DWP Visiting where it is appropriate and where it is safe to do so and there is no perceived or identified risk to the Visiting Officer.

50. All referrals for a Core Visit should be made using the DWP Referral tool.

51. Before completing the template, the referral officer must check the Staff protection list/Unacceptable Customer Behaviour (UCB) list to confirm any special interest markers.

52. The referrer must include

53. The check for UCB may identify that the Claimant's records are restricted due to having a Special Customer Record (SCR).

54. The Claimant's LMS record may also be noted in accordance with Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) rules.

55. The referring section must ensure that all approved methods of contact have been considered before sending the case for a visit and legacy systems and LMS have been checked for up to date addresses and telephone numbers to prevent unnecessary visits.

## Completing the template

- 56. When it is identified that a case requires a Core Visit, the referring officer must read the See *How to make a referral to DWP visiting - Completion of template* which explains how the form should be completed to ensure the referral includes all relevant information.
- 57. Open the template and save a copy of the form.
- 58. Ensure all mandatory boxes are completed fully, including any appointee or prospective appointee details, as the referral will be returned if the form is incomplete.
- 59. It is essential that prior to referral the referring officer identifies any special indicators, including SCR and MAPPA cases and completes the special indicator tick box. LMS and the SPL (Staff Protection List) should be checked for any evidence that indicates potential risk to the safety of a home visiting officer. This may include reports of erratic behaviour or unacceptable behaviour that have not been logged on the Staff Protection List. Identify and advise Visiting of potential risk, Visiting will determine, based on a risk assessment, how to conduct the visit.
- 60. Completed templates should be sent to the DWP Visiting Team, for more information on how to do this refer to Making the electronic referral.

## Completeness

- 61. Definition:- Sufficient information to confirm the identity of the claimant or prospective appointee, establish the reason for the visit and sufficient information to be able to book and perform the visit with all the required outcomes

## Contact Details

- 62. It is essential that the telephone number included in the referring officer contact details section is one that will be manned at all times as the visiting officer may need to use this during the visit to rearrange an office interview.
- 63. It may also be necessary, in exceptional circumstances, for the visiting officer to give this number to the claimant when it is not possible to arrange the appointment at the time of the visit or the claimant contacts the visiting officer by telephone after two ineffective visits to discuss re-engagement.

## Customer Condition

64. When completing the template details of the Claimant's condition must be completed in the notes. If details are not available, for example because the referring officer is unable to access clerical papers held in remote storage, complete the field with 'Information not available'.
65. If the referral is not for a vulnerable customer or an ESA Claimant with a mental health or learning difficulty it must be made clear on the template why a visit is required.

## **Misdirection**

66. If the visit is required following the Claimant making an allegation of misdirection by the department. The referring officer should forward:

- a copy of the letter from the Claimant alleging misdirection
- a summary of the background issues from the benefit sections
- guidance on the questions to be asked at the visit, to provide a structure to obtain the relevant information.
- All documentation relevant to the referral, by courier, to the appropriate Booking Centre on the same day as the electronic referral is made.

67. The documentation must be clearly marked with:

- the Claimant's details, and
- the date of the referral

## **Appeals Visits**

68. Occasionally, a visit will be required to resolve an issue in order for an appeal to proceed satisfactorily. The referring officer will set out the specific purpose, aims and objectives of the visit on the Referral Template. If the purpose of the visit is not clear, it will be returned to the referring officer.

## **Appointee Visits**

69. A visit to the Claimant may be required to establish that an appointee is required. Refer to the Agents Appointees Attorneys and Deputies Guide.
70. The referring officer will complete Referral Template, including if required, the request for the Visiting Officer to carry out a review of the current claim, and forward it electronically to DWP Visiting requesting that a visit is made to establish whether an appointee is required by taking the following action:

71. The referral must contain full details of any prospective appointee including Name, Nino. Address, Contact details and Relationship to claimant. If these are not available the referrer must include an explanatory note in the referral.

Step	Action
1.	emailing the template to DWP Visiting, noting any hard copy documents to follow, where applicable;
2.	updating “notepad” with details of action taken;
3.	upon receiving the template for an appointee referral and any hardcopy documents, DWP Visiting will arrange to visit the Claimant and prospective appointee and;
4.	at the visit, form BF56 is completed as appropriate and review action taken if required.

### No Fixed Abode Referrals/visit address unknown

72. Referrals received without a visit address will be rejected. The referrer must have agreed a visit address with the claimant before making the referral.
73. The visit address does not have to be the claimant’s residential address, however it should not be a Jobcentre or similar Government building as it would be expected that the claimant would be interviewed by the Jobcentre and a visit would not be required.
74. Where the claimant has declared that they are ‘No Fixed Abode (NFA) or Person Without Address (PWA)’, a referral should only be made if a visit address, correspondence address and telephone number has been obtained and there is **reasonable expectation of the Booking Agent being able to contact the claimant by telephone** ie: NFA/PWA referrals where contact with the claimant hasn’t been possible would not be appropriate.
75. A correspondence address is required in all cases in order to send a confirmation letter. This can be the same as the visit address but the referrer must make this clear.

### Making the electronic referral

76. All referrals for Core Visits to DWP Visiting will be dealt with by the local Visiting Team
77. Locate the DWP Visiting Referral tool and:

Step	Action
1.	Input the post code of the Claimant’s address and select ‘Submit’
2.	Contact details for the Booking Centre will display.

3.	Open the template hyperlink under the heading 'Making a referral'
4.	Select the email hyperlink.
5.	A new email page will open.
6.	Complete the email subject line in the following order : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Postcode</li> <li>➤ Claimant's surname</li> </ul>
7.	Attach the completed template to the email.

78. The referral officer must note:

- the referral completion,
- the date of the referral
- a brief description why the visit is required
- contact details of the referring officer/section
- details of the Visiting Team sent to
- In:
- D110 if BFD/BDC colleague, or
- LMS if CSD/CCD colleague

## Documentation

79. All documentation relevant to the referral must be sent electronically using the email obtained from the DWP Visiting Referral tool

80. Exceptionally if it is not possible to send the supporting documentation electronically it must be sent, by courier, to the appropriate Visiting Team on the same day as the electronic referral ensuring that the Visiting Team are made aware.

81. The documentation must be clearly marked with:

- the Claimant's details, and
- the date of the referral.

## WFI Interview arranged by DWP Visiting

82. Prior to the visit DWP Visiting will phone the claimant to book the visit, if during this conversation the claimant now agrees to attend the WFI, DWP Visiting will phone the Adviser/DASO giving the claimant's details.

83. The Adviser/DASO must book the appointment and phone the claimant back to confirm the arrangements.

84. The completed report will be returned by DWP Visiting and must be retained until the WFI interview date.

## Customer Agrees to attend WFI during DWP Visiting Booking conversation

85. If the claimant fails to attend the arranged WFI raise a new referral explaining the circumstances leading to the 2<sup>nd</sup> referral, giving the date and time of the failed WFI

## **Cancelling the referral/visit**

86. If following a referral for a Core Visit, and prior to the visit taking place:

- the claimant contacts the advisor, e.g. to book a new WFI appointment, or
- the referral officer receives information that the visit is no longer required, e.g. notification that the claimant has left the country, etc, consider cancelling the Core Visit.

87. Send an e-mail to DWP Visiting to notify the visit is not required; the email address can be located via the DWP Visiting referral tool.

88. The subject line of the email must be in the following order:

- Postcode
- Claimant Surname
- 'Visit not Required'
- Appropriate restricted marking

## **Contact from the Claimant**

89. If a telephone call is received from the claimant following a second ineffective visit, it will be necessary to check the details of why the referral was made and the referring officer/section in:

- D110 if BDC colleague, or
- LMS if CSD/CCD colleague.

90. The claimant's query should be progressed by referring the conversation to the referring officer/section.

## **Tracking a referral**

91. If the referrer has provided a valid email address they will receive regular updates about the referral. If the visit is outstanding more than 21 days the referrer will contact the Visiting Team using the contact details in the DWP Referral Tool

## **Outcome of visit**

92. When the Core Visit action has been completed, the visit outcome will normally be returned electronically to the referring officer, with the exception that if the referral has been made by a contact centre the visit outcome will be returned electronically to the relevant Benefit Centre as identified in the template.

93. If documentation was received, e.g. claim forms etc, the Outcome Report will be printed and attached to the documents and will be returned by courier.
94. Where the Visiting Officer obtains details of any changes affecting benefits, they will record this on the Outcome Report. The Visiting Officer will direct the change in circumstance to the relevant processing site.
95. If the Visiting Officer obtains change of details which do not relate to the benefit claim, e.g. change of telephone number, they will provide full details on the Outcome Report.
96. On receipt of the Outcome Report, any non benefit related changes should be recorded on the appropriate IT system e.g. LMS/OPSTRAT.
97. Note the outcome of the Core Visit with the details from the report in:
- D110 – if BFD/BDC colleagues
  - LMS – if CCD/CSD colleagues
98. Print a copy of the outcome Report and retain it with the Claimant's case papers in line with normal retention rules.

## **Contact with DWP VISITING**

99. If telephone contact is made by DWP visiting staff to Jobcentre Plus colleagues, the caller's identity must be verified.