



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

## **Minutes of the Serious Case Panel 19 March 2020**

### **Chair**

- Sara Weller, Non-Executive Director (on behalf of Hayley Tatum)

### **Members**

- Peter Schofield, DWP Permanent Secretary
- Emma Haddad, Director General for Service Excellence
- Debbie Alder, Director General for People and Capability
- Neil Couling, Director General for Change
- Simon McKinnon, Director General for Digital
- Jonathan Mills, Director General for Policy
- Joanna Wallace, Independent Case Examiner
- Susanna McGibbon, Director General for Legal
- Laura Squire, Business Strategy Director (on behalf of Nick Joicey)

### **Presenters**

- Fiona Jones, Customer Experience Director
- Victoria Hughes, Customer Experience & Organisational Learning Deputy Director

### **Secretariat**

Redacted

### **Apologies**

- Nick Joicey, Director General, Finance
- Hayley Tatum, Non-Executive Director and Chair
- John-Paul Marks, Director General for Work and Health Services

### **1. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair thanked the group for their attendance at this busy time and emphasised the importance of having this meeting during the Covid-19 emergency to ensure that our customer's experiences and how we can learn from these continues to be a key priority for the Department.

### **2. Governance and Accountabilities**

Victoria Hughes set out the proposed new governance arrangements for the Serious Case Panel and asked the group to agree:

**Decision 1**

The terms of reference – the Panel agreed, subject to some minor clarifications.

**Decision 2**

The proposed governance arrangements – the Panel agreed.

In discussion, the Panel also agreed the following action points:

**Action point 1**

Victoria Hughes to share some examples of how different sources of customer insight would flow through the governance structures, for example, a customer complaint, an issue raised by frontline staff, a coroner contact etc.

**Action point 2**

Victoria Hughes to finalise the Terms of Reference.

**3. Group Discussion – Themes**

**Fiona Jones presented the first of the papers on themes identified through serious cases and customer experience insight – *Paper 2: Stopping payments.***

The Panel discussed the issue where we may stop payments in circumstances where contact cannot be made with a customer and the potential impact of this. The Panel agreed two key actions:

**Action point 3**

The Customer Experience Directorate will lead a cross-cutting assessment of current processes to ensure consistency and ‘best practice’ processes are in place across product lines.

**Action point 4**

The Customer Experience Directorate will start a cross-government dialogue in the adult safeguarding space and suggest that government departments and agencies co-develop a way to join up to support vulnerable citizens where there is no clear lead department to provide that support.

**Action point 5**

Victoria Hughes to set timescales (in light of Covid-19) for the work to take forwards these recommendations.

**Fiona Jones presented the second thematic paper – *Paper 3: Underpayments and paying safely.***

The Panel considered issues around paying customers safely where a customer is due a large or atypical payment and this may present issues for their safety e.g. in case of substance abuse or vulnerability to criminal exploitation.

**Action point 6**

The panel discussed issues of 'customer consent' and agreed that the Customer Experience Directorate should lead a piece of work to develop 'best practice' guidance within the current legislative framework, which will be developed and implemented consistently across product lines.

**Action point 7**

The Panel asked for the timescales and prioritisation of the work to be updated in light of the Covid-19 response work.

**4. AOB and close**

Members of the Panel thanked Fiona Jones, Victoria Hughes and their teams for their work in preparing for the Panel. The Chair thanked the Panel for dedicating attention to this valuable and important discussion at this time of emergency.