

# DWP SMS Text Policy

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## Introduction

This Policy sets out responsibilities when using Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) devices to send SMS text messages to citizens.

## Scope

This DWP SMS Text Policy applies to all DWP employees and suppliers that text on behalf of DWP.

## Purpose

This policy aims to help users understand what information can be sent to citizens whilst representing DWP.

## 1. DWP SMS Text Policy

1.1 The use of SMS texting is appropriate when it is being used to give citizens routine non-personal business information and reminders.

1.2 SMS texting must not be used for any exchange of personal information with citizens which includes date of birth, bank account details, customers, citizens address, exact benefit payment, child maintenance or pension amount, information on family members and health/medical information. This excludes using the minimum amount of contact information without which, such communication would not be possible (first name only, telephone number) or to confirm receipt of sensitive information, such as a Fit for Work note.

1.3 The use of routine notification SMS communications with citizens must use the template as prescribed by their business area and which have been agreed by the DWP.

1.4 When sending text messages via REACH the local guidance issued by the business area must be followed, free text fields must only be used for the purpose they were created for, these will have been agreed by the business area.

1.5 There may be some circumstances where it would be useful to send text messages but the REACH system is not available/appropriate. Such limited circumstances may be given consideration where text messages are required for a

legitimate business reason, requirements would be considered by requesting an exception to the SMS Text Policy stating the reason for the business need.

- e.g. An outreach environment (where REACH is not available) Previous experience has shown that customers regularly respond to and send text messages to their outreach adviser as a preferred form of communication
  - A requirement for two-way communication which cannot be met by REACH
- The examples shown are not exhaustive.

1.6 Where there is a business need identified to use DWP mobile phones for SMS texting, the business area may request an exception to SMS Text Policy via the Authority. Such requests for SMS texting from DWP mobiles should only support one-way communication from DWP to citizens. If a business case requires two-way communication via DWP mobile phones this must not include or invite any personal information. The protocol for records management of such communication chains must be clearly established and followed. Senior Responsible Officers (SRO) cannot take risk acceptance decisions on this type of business requirement.

1.7 Any use of DWP business mobile phones must apply the following protocols in order to maintain a professional relationship and not risk compromising employee personal safety or citizen information.

1.7.1 DWP employees and contractors of SMS texting must comply with the [Information Management Policy](#).

1.7.2 Contact details must be deleted immediately once there is no longer a business reason to retain them.

1.8 SMS texts must not be sent to landline numbers and should only be sent to mobile phone numbers.

1.9 Users must read the GOV.UK Service Manual for further detail on planning and writing text messages and emails:

<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/design/sending-emails-and-text-messages>

## **2. Compliance**

2.1 Compliance with this SMS Text Policy is mandatory for all users including DWP employees and suppliers, and anyone else required to use a DWP SMS texting service. Employees and suppliers are responsible for understanding the requirements contained in this policy and the consequence of non-compliance as defined here, within the [Civil Service Code](#) and the [DWP Acceptable Use Policy](#).

2.2 It is a manager's responsibility to take appropriate action where non-compliance to policy is identified.

2.3 All SMS text messages which are sent by DWP are monitored for certain content such as personal identifiable information, National Insurance numbers, employee numbers, names, addresses and dates of birth or security classified information.

2.4 Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken against individuals (as well as a criminal prosecution if appropriate).