



DWP Serious Case Panel: Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Panel will meet on a quarterly basis to consider issues arising from serious cases and other insight, impacting DWP customer experience and make recommendations, in order to reduce the risk of these issues reoccurring.

The Panel will not consider the specifics of individual serious cases, which will be managed separately through the appropriate processes (such as Complaints, which can be escalated to the Independent Case Examiner and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman).

Issues considered by the Panel

The Panel will consider themes and trends that are directly informed by serious cases and customer experience insight. The themes and trends will be formulated by considering various sources of insight, for example:

- coroners' reports
- internal process reviews
- complaints
- reports from the Independent Case Examiner
- Parliamentary correspondence
- Ministerial correspondence
- departmental quality data

This is not an exhaustive list – other sources of insight will be considered as appropriate.

The evidence-based themes will be created and presented at each Panel for members to discuss during the meeting.

Accountabilities and objectives

The Panel will agree to recommendations for organisational learning and to drive improvement activity where needed. The Panel will assign Director General or committee accountability for delivering these recommendations within the Department.

The role of the Panel will be to:

- review systemic issues and themes and agree whether and how DWP need to take actions to improve policies, processes and outcomes.
- agree recommendations and assign accountability at a senior level for taking forward improvement activity.
- oversee the monitoring of the delivery and timeliness of improvement activity.
- oversee the monitoring of themes and systemic issues to evaluate the effectiveness of the agreed activity.

- Improve transparency of our review and learning processes and provide appropriate internal and external assurance.

Ministers will be kept updated on the recommendations and progress in implementing these through the appropriate existing channels.

Membership

The panel members include:

Non-Executive Director (Chair), DWP Permanent Secretary, Director Generals of DWP, DWP Legal Advisers, Independent Case Examiner and DWP Chief Medical Advisor.

Frequency

The Panel will meet quarterly.

Attendance

Members are required to attend either in person or virtually. In exceptional circumstances, deputisation may be permitted, subject to the decision of the Chair and on advice of the Secretariat.

Other guests may be asked to attend from time to time, for example to present on specific issues. The Chair will be informed of the role of any guests.

Ways of working

Secretariat will be provided by the Customer Experience Directorate within Service Excellence. Secretariat will aim to circulate papers a week in advance of meetings of the Panel and minutes of each Serious Case Panel will be published on gov.uk in a timely manner.

Public disclosure of information

The Serious Case Panel will be subject to the usual rules around Freedom of Information requests. Any further disclosure of information will be agreed by the Panel and by ministers, and these Terms of Reference will be updated accordingly.

Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually.

Date of latest approval

January 2024