

# Minutes

**Title of meeting:** DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) Serious Case Panel

**Date:** Thursday 30 January 2025

**Location:** Virtual

**Attendees:** David Bennett, Non-Executive Director (Chair)

Peter Schofield, Permanent Secretary

Barbara Bennett, Director General for Operations

Neil Couling, Director General for Disability, Health and Fraud, Error and Debt

Amanda Reynolds, Director General for Strategy and Transformation

Liz Fairburn, Director for Customer Experience

Catherine Vaughan, Director General for Finance

Julie Blomley, Director General for People and Capability

Henry Ripley, Legal Director

Joanna Wallace, Independent Case Examiner

Katie Farrington, Director General for Social Security, Disability and Pensions Policy (also obo Katherine Green and Sophie Dean)

Jeremy Edwards (obo Helen Wylie)

Dr Gail Allsopp, Chief Medical Advisor

Robert Currens, Deputy Director Advanced Customer Support

**Presenters:** Max Cairnduff, DWP Chief Commercial Officer

Redacted, Advanced Customer Support

Redacted, Advanced Customer Support

**Apologies:** Katherine Green, Director General for Labour Market and Poverty Policy  
Sophie Dean, Director General for Labour Market and Poverty Policy  
Helen Wylie, Chief Digital and Information Officer  
Debbie Alder, Director General for Corporate Transformation

## **1. Welcome and introductions**

1.1 David Bennett opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

## **2. Emerging Issues**

2.1 Liz Fairburn and Max Cairnduff provided an update on the Payment Exception Service regarding the current supplier for this service and the new procurement process commencing this month.

2.2 Peter Schofield provided a verbal update from recent Select Committee sessions and the Public Accounts Committee report, focusing on the department's annual report, fraud, error, and the identification of vulnerable customers.

2.3 Redacted delivered an additional update on the management of improvement activities. This followed the prior agreement that panel members would serve as Director General sponsors for actions arising from panel meetings within their respective areas.

## **3. Making Large Payments**

3.1 Amanda Reynolds, Liz Fairburn and redacted discussed a potential emerging theme from recent serious cases involving large payments to vulnerable customers. It was acknowledged in recent serious cases vulnerability was considered and colleagues who spoke to the customers were professional and empathetic. Panel members agreed to endorse a review to strengthen the guidance on making large payments. They also agreed to work to develop a communication plan to raise awareness about the importance of adhering to this process.

## **4. Improved Transparency**

4.1 Redacted and Robert Currens provided an update on efforts to improve transparency, including the proposed publication of Advanced Customer Support data and Internal Process Review information.

4.2 Discussions focused on the need for more transparency about the work of Advanced Customer Support.

4.3 Panel agreed to explore options to enhance transparency within the published Serious Case Panel minutes.

## **5. Chief Medical Adviser Update**

5.1 Dr Gail Allsopp provided an update on the clinical governance framework, highlighting significant progress in its development and implementation, continuous improvement initiatives, and the establishment of a clinical profession within the DWP. Dr Allsopp outlined her role as the Chief Medical Advisor and Responsible Officer, overseeing clinical governance and the clinical profession within the department. Dr. Allsopp emphasised the cross-cutting support provided across the department, including clinical governance, stakeholder management, and expert advice.

## **6. AOB and Close**

6.1 No additional business was raised. David Bennett and members of the Serious Case Panel thanked the presenters and their teams for their updates.