



DWP Serious Case Panel: Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Serious Case Panel exists to consider issues identified from serious cases and other relevant sources of insight where customers often have complex needs. The role of the Panel is to provide leadership on DWP's approach to vulnerability, ensuring that issues are discussed and recommendations given to enhance the overall customer experience. By taking accountability for improvement initiatives and their implementation, the Panel leads the activity to mitigate the risk of similar issues recurring in the future.

The Panel will not review the specifics of individual serious cases. Individual cases are managed through established procedures such as Complaints process (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 identified from serious cases as well as other internal customer experience insight. These themes and trends will be gathered from a range of channels including:

- Departmental operational and quality data
- Complaints
- Internal Process Reviews
- Reports from the Independent Case Examiner
- Prevention of Future Death Reports from Coroners
- Parliamentary and Ministerial correspondence

This list is not exhaustive; additional sources of insight may be incorporated as appropriate.

Evidence-based themes will be presented at each Panel meeting, providing members with the opportunity to discuss findings and collectively agree necessary actions.

Accountabilities and objectives

The Panel will assign Director General accountability for delivering agreed actions or recommendations within the Department. Recommendation and action owners will be responsible for providing the panel with regular progress updates and outcomes.

The role of the Panel will be to:

- review issues and themes brought to the Panel, to agree whether, and how, DWP needs to act.
- agree recommendations and assign accountability at a senior level for taking forward improvement activity.

- oversee the delivery, timeliness and effectiveness of improvement activity.
- improve transparency of our review and learning processes.
- receive assurance of outcomes from agreed recommendations.

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

Membership

The panel members include:

The Non-Executive Director (Chair), DWP's Permanent Secretary, Directors General, Legal Advisers, Chief Medical Advisor and the Independent Case Examiner.

Frequency

Panel meetings will be held quarterly.

Attendance

Members attendance at meetings is expected either in person or through virtual participation. In exceptional circumstances, a member may send a deputy, subject to approval by the Chair and guidance from the Secretariat.

Additional attendees will be invited to present the themes to be discussed at the Panel, and the chair will be informed of their role.

Ways of working

The Secretariat will provide papers in advance of Panel meetings, and minutes of each Panel will be published on gov.uk in a timely manner.

Publication of information

Updates and outcomes of key areas of work progressed and delivered by the Panel will be published in DWP's Annual Report and Accounts and other DWP publications.

Any further publication 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

22 December 2025