



## Minutes

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

**Date: 10 February 2026**

**Location: Virtual**

**Attendees:** David Bennett, Non-Executive Director (Chair), Peter Schofield, Permanent Secretary, Neil Couling, Director General, DWP Services and Fraud Group, Sarah Homer, Director General for Corporate Transformation, Julie Blomley, Director General for People and Capability, Catherine Vaughan, Director General for Finance, Sophie Dean, Director General, Welfare and Pensions (also obo Katherine Green), Dr Gail Allsopp, Chief Medical Advisor, Emily Shaw, Deputy Director Legal Group (obo John Ward), Mark Peck, Interim Director for Customer Experience (also obo Barbara Bennett and Helen Wylie, Robert Currens, Deputy Director Advanced Customer Support.

**Presenters:** Redacted, Advanced Customer Support, Redacted, Digital and Transformation Group

**Apologies:** Barbara Bennett, Chief Executive and Director General, Jobs and Careers Service, Joanna Wallace, Independent Case Examiner, John Ward, Legal Director, Helen Wylie, Director General, Digital and Transformation, Chief Digital and Information Officer, Katherine Green, Director General, Labour Market and Skills.

### 1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, including Sarah Homer participating in her first Serious Case Panel (the Panel). The October 2025 minutes and revised Terms of Reference were published on 6 January 2026.

### 2. Emerging Issues

Mark Peck delivered a verbal update on the continuing oversight of serious cases by senior leaders which included a discussion on sanctions as well as making Large Payments. On the latter, which were previously covered at the January 2025 and October 2025 Panel meetings, progress has been made in the review of guidance, and the communication campaign continues to

be delivered to operational colleagues. This supports efforts encouraging colleagues to be professionally curious about customer vulnerability and needs.

Robert Currens provided an update on the Advanced Customer Support Publications, with the second publication, covering the 2024/2025 period, due to be published later this year.

Robert confirmed that ministerial approval was given to publish the Internal Process Review (IPR) information covering the operational years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. This is now available on GOV.UK. Work is underway to prepare the information on the IPRs completed in 2023/2024, with the expectation that this will be ready to publish in Spring this year.

Robert also updated the Panel on the request from the Minister for Social Security and Disability to consider sharing IPR information with customers' families, which remains under consideration.

### **3. Progress on Serious Case Panel sponsored activity**

Redacted provided an update on improvement activities sponsored by the Panel. The Panel was informed of the completion of updates to overpayment notification letters, which now include affordability statements and use a more customer friendly tone. All revised letters have undergone review and are available to colleagues to use.

As part of a wider discussion, the Panel considered ways to measure the impact of its actions, recognising the need to assess effectiveness, and agreed to explore this further.

### **4. Supporting Customer Needs Learning**

Redacted presented an overview of a new standardised learning product which will be delivered across all DWP service lines. This provides modular training and multi-channel support to front-line colleagues who handle vulnerable customer interactions.

This learning offer is aligned with commitments made to the Work & Pensions Select Committee regarding enhancing colleague capabilities to better assist vulnerable customers.

The Panel also discussed incorporating safeguarding content into the material and agreed updates will be made in response to evolving requirements.

### **5. Internal Process Reviews (IPRs)**

Robert Currens and Dr Gail Allsopp updated the Panel on the alignment of clinical reviews with the operational IPR process to enhance customer experience learning. The IPR review focuses on internal processes whereas the clinical reviews evaluate medical aspects, which will include external partners.

The Panel agreed a process supporting two distinct investigations. Work will be progressed to look at the design and process to enable this.

## **6. Callbacks**

Redacted provided the Panel with an update on initiatives aimed at reducing callback volumes and enhancing first contact resolution within telephony services. Telephony transformation is being led by a multi-disciplinary team working collaboratively with outsourced partners. Comprehensive measures are in place to protect vulnerable customers, with the overarching goal of minimising the need for callbacks.

## **7. AOB and Close**

David Bennett and members of the Serious Case Panel thanked the presenters and their teams for their updates.

**Next meeting:** To be confirmed