Department for Work & Pensions

Advanced Customer Support

Learning and improving from serious cases 2023/24

Contents

Learning from serious cases

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is an organisation that currently has around 24 million customers supported by millions of interactions every year including more than 52 million phone calls

DWP continuously takes learning from its most serious cases. To achieve this, DWP has implemented systems where it can consistently act on feedback, ensuring that when it learns that its customers' experiences have fallen below expectations, it uses this learning to make changes that improve its services.

One of the ways in which DWP looks to learn when things have gone wrong, is by completing Internal Process Reviews (IPRs) which help identify where improvements could be made across its many services.

What an Internal Process Review (IPR) is

IPRs are a thorough review of customer cases that seek to understand if DWP's interactions with customers have followed the correct operational processes. They are not an admission of guilt or fault, and they do not seek to replicate the depth and breadth of scrutiny by the coroner or safeguarding boards.

Evidence is gathered and reviewed by an Investigator, who undertakes factfinding discussions with stakeholders relevant to the customer journey, to identify if there are improvements that could be made to DWP's operational services.

To get the best possible learning from every case that is reviewed, IPRs look at every area of a customer's contact with DWP, not just the event that may have been the initial prompt for a review to be started. This means that IPRs can identify issues, including those that have happened in the past, that a customer may not even have been aware of but nevertheless could be improved upon.

IPRs are not a review of clinical processes, such as those carried out by Health Professionals, neither are they designed to identify or apportion blame and cannot consider events or circumstances in a customer's life that DWP is not aware of. Not all customers choose to share information with DWP and so it is not always able to offer the help and support that may be available.

IPRs are a tool to enable DWP to identify any lessons to be drawn from how it discharged its operational responsibilities, rather than a process for assessing culpability for the incident being investigated. Other bodies, including the Coroner's Courts in England and Wales, have such responsibilities.

For a case to be considered for an IPR there is a criteria that must be met. IPRs can only be referred internally, but colleagues may become aware of the customer's case from information received from outside DWP, such as through correspondence from MPs, Local Authorities, and customers' families.

Criteria for conducting an IPR

There is a specific criteria which must be met before a case is accepted. This has been updated over time, to reflect changing circumstances, and the criteria for the IPR cases completed in the 2023-24 year is below.

An IPR will be conducted in all cases where:

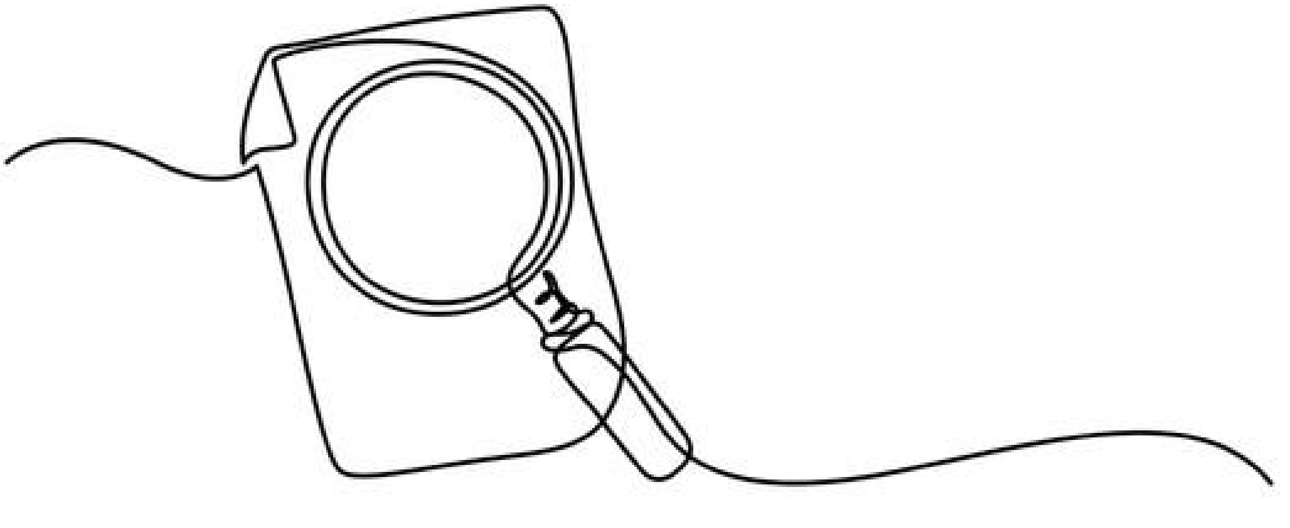
- there is a suggestion or allegation that the Department's actions or omissions may have negatively contributed to the customer's circumstances, AND a customer has suffered serious harm, has died (including by suicide), or where it has reason to believe there has been an attempted suicide.

Or

- the Department is asked to participate in a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR), a Significant Case Review (SCR, Scotland only), a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) or is named as an Interested Party at an Inquest. An IPR will be conducted regardless of whether there is an allegation against the Department.

Not every case that is referred for an IPR meets the specific criteria for it to be reviewed. However, it is still important to identify any learning or improvements that can be made, in all instances where the criteria have not been met, a feedback process provides the referrer with an explanation of why the criteria are not met. Additionally, the cases are shared with appropriate colleagues in DWP, such as Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders, who can ensure learning is captured and shared from all serious cases and not just those that meet the criteria for an IPR.

Although citizens cannot refer cases for an IPR, if they are unhappy with the service provided by DWP they can make a complaint. Information can be found on [Complaints procedure - Department for Work and Pensions - GOV.UK]



Information being published

DWP cannot publish full IPR reports as its investigations can involve sensitive and personal information in relation to its customers. DWP has a legal duty to protect that information appropriately so that individuals are not identifiable, even when they are no longer alive. In the same way that customers may choose not to disclose all their personal circumstances to the department, they may also choose not to share information with those closest to them and that is a fact that must be respected.

DWP is publishing information from completed IPRs in a way that is as transparent as possible, whilst maintaining the confidentiality that is expected of it. This will show what DWP identified from completing IPRs on cases, the improvement activity that was agreed, and the outcome or ongoing progress made relating to that activity.

The learning identified from the completed IPRs, what the agreed activities were in relation to them, and what the learning outcomes were, are set out by DWP Service Line in the following sections of this document.

It is important to note that, whilst each piece of learning identified during the completion of an IPR is discussed with the relevant service line, not all learning will result in a new agreed activity being taken forward.

Because IPRs are a review of historic interactions between a customer and DWP, they may identify learning that has already been addressed by the service line since the event occurred. Therefore, the learning has already been implemented, and additional activity is not required.

Similarly, the service line may provide details of improvement activity already underway, that would address the learning being discussed but has yet to be completed. Again, no new activity would be required, but the learning from the IPR would be fed into the work being taken forward, to provide additional insight and review the scope of the work being developed.

To deliver maximum transparency, each case presented shows details of both new activities started because of the identified learning, and that currently underway or already delivered.

Data on IPRs completed in 2023/24

Across 2023/24	Number
Total number of IPRs completed [1]	87
Of these, the number that were also subject to external scrutiny (such as SABs, SCRs, DHRs or Coroners) [2]	15
IPRs completed by Service Line[3]	
Universal Credit (UC)	54
Personal Independence Payment (PIP)	40
Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	19
Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	5
Child Maintenance Services (CMS)	4
State Pension (SP)	4
Pension Credit (PC)	2
Carer's Allowance (CA)	1
Income Support (IS)	1

Notes

1 – IPR data included within this publication relates to IPRs completed in the 2023/24 year. This differs from the data presented in the 2023/24 Annual Reports and Accounts, which focuses on IPR referrals received and accepted as meeting criteria.
2 – It should be noted that cases could have become subject to external scrutiny at a later date.
3 – There were 130 primary service lines in relation to the 87 IPRs completed across 2023-24 due to some customers being in receipt of more than one benefit or service at the time of the event that has led to an IPR being conducted.

Data on learning identified from IPRs in 2023/24

Across 2023/24	Number
Number of IPRs completed where learning was identified [1]	68
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	182
Service lines relating to the agreed activities	Carer’s Allowance Child Maintenance Services Contract Management Partner Delivery (CMPD) Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt (CFCD) Employment and Support Allowance Personal Independence Payment State Pension Universal Credit

Notes

1 – This differs from the total number of IPRs completed in the 2023/24 year as not all cases had learning identified following the investigation.

Employment and Support Allowance learning from serious cases

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a legacy benefit paid if you have a disability or health condition that affects how much you can work. It has been replaced by Universal Credit and New Style ESA (paid if you are sick and have sufficient National Insurance contributions).

Across 2023/24	Number
Number of cases in which ESA learning was identified[1]	12
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	23

Notes

1 – Includes cases where learning was also identified relating to other service lines which are published in the Cross-Benefits section.

Customer 1

Learning identified

Customer's circumstances were not explored before closing the claim and a corporate appointee was not considered.

Agreed activity

- Change of circumstances improvement activity has already been undertaken.
- Learning from this IPR will be fed into the review of the end-to-end appointee process, and local sessions to be delivered to raise awareness and upskill colleagues on current processes.

Learning outcomes

Improvements to claim closure processes were put in place and corporate appointee upskilling sessions have been delivered.

Customer 2

Learning identified

Insufficient system notes were recorded by ESA and payments ended without consideration of vulnerabilities. Work Available Reports not actioned correctly, causing delays and eligibility for Severe Disability Premium not considered.

Agreed activity

- Working Age (WA) to explore solutions to improve system notes recording and undertake improvement activity.
- WA to explore solutions to improve knowledge and actions to take regarding 'exclusions' and undertake improvement activity.
- Improvements to actioning Work Available Reports already undertaken.
- WA to explore automation solutions when customers are eligible to Severe Disability Premium.

Learning outcomes

Campaign undertaken to improve quality of system notes and guidance on stopping payments updated and communications issued. Performance management of Work Available Reports has been strengthened and Severe Disability Premium process strengthened via system improvements.

Customer 3

Learning identified

Stopping payments guidance not followed and payments suspended without seeking support or advice around vulnerabilities. Entitlement to Severe Disability Premium not considered properly on two occasions.

Agreed activity

- WA to deliver upskilling sessions and communications to improve 'Stopping Payments' considerations and actions.
- WA to deliver communications to improve suspension actions and escalating for further internal support.
- WA to explore automation solutions when customers are eligible to Severe Disability Premium.
- Individual upskilling has been delivered to increase knowledge of Severe Disability Premium eligibility.

Learning outcomes

Stopping payments guidance updated and a communication campaign delivered. Severe Disability Premium process strengthened via system improvements and upskilling provided to relevant colleagues.

Customer 4

Learning identified

Vulnerability checks or appointee action were not considered.

Agreed activity

- WA to review guidance and deliver upskilling sessions to improve knowledge and considerations of vulnerabilities.

Learning outcomes

Guidance strengthened and vulnerabilities upskilling session delivered to colleagues.

Customer 5

Learning identified

An explanation of Permitted Work rules was not considered.

Agreed activity

- WA to circulate communications highlighting the need to improve the quality of conversations around Permitted Work.

Learning outcomes

Communications to raise awareness of Permitted Work rules were delivered to all relevant colleagues.

Customer 6

Learning identified

Customer was a victim of benefit fraud. ESA systems and procedures enabled payment to be diverted into a third-party account, and the issue was not escalated when identified.

Agreed activity

- DWP HR processes were reviewed in response to fraud activity.
- ESA processes have been strengthened, ensuring this type of fraud activity does not reoccur.
- ESA guidance has been strengthened, including 'Missing Payment' guidance which clarifies the steps to take.

Learning outcomes

Annual mandatory learning in place for fraud identification and reporting, with refresher campaigns undertaken and ‘Missing Payment' guidance was strengthened.

Customer 7

Learning identified

A Work Capability Assessment (WCA) referral was not made throughout the claim.

Agreed activity

➤ WA will undertake review and assurance with Service Planning and Delivery (SPD) of the whole journey when a case is sensitive to understand process, instructions and capability.

Learning outcomes

Health journey communication campaign was delivered and learning shared to support future service design.

Customer 8

Learning identified

Customer found completing the WCA form triggered trauma flashbacks.

Agreed activity

➤ Insight to be fed into the Trauma Informed Approach project.

Learning outcomes

Insight from this case was fed into design and improvement activity.

Personal Independence Payment learning from serious cases

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) can help with extra living costs if you have both:

- a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability
- difficulty doing certain everyday tasks or getting around because of your condition

You can get PIP even if you're working, have savings or are getting most other benefits.

Across 2023/24	Number
Number of cases in which PIP learning was identified[1]	14
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	24

Notes

1 – Includes cases where learning was also identified relating to other service lines which are published in the Cross-Benefits section.

Customer 1

Learning identified

Six-Point Plan action not considered when suicidal ideation was expressed. Customer's reasons for withdrawing their claim not explored and the customer was unable to inform PIP they were detained in hospital (under the Mental Health Act). A mandatory reconsideration request was not escalated.

Agreed activity

- The Six-Point Plan toolkit has been introduced to support customers and agents since this case to prevent similar occurrences.
- PIP Customer Experience Advance Support Team (CEAST) to produce and deliver a colleague communication campaign on claim withdrawal.
- PIP SPD to explore improvements to the PIP customer journey for customers who are admitted to hospital, particularly those detained under the Mental Health Act.
- Reminders to be issued to operations on the process to follow for Warm Handover Calls relating to reconsiderations and appeals.

Learning outcomes

Six-Point Plan Toolkit was implemented, improved and refresher and new starter training regularly rolled out. Customer Support Standards launched and claim withdrawal communication campaign delivered to colleagues. Additional Support Marker highlights mental health conditions. The Handover Support pack was updated and re-issued to colleagues.

Customer 2

Learning identified

The customer's vulnerability was not recorded or supported throughout the PIP claim.

Agreed activity

- Links into a project underway regarding communication of vulnerabilities between Assessment Providers and PIP.

Learning outcomes

A process to allow Assessment Providers to escalate concerns directly to the appropriate advanced support teams was implemented.

Customer 3

Learning identified

No formal procedure in place to pass on details about customer's current situation to other active benefits. The PIP assessment report was not of the required standard.

Agreed activity

- IPR Team to share insight with Shared Channels Experience to inform future digital development of Colleague View.
- Learning from this case to be shared with Assessment Provider.

Learning outcomes

A new digital service is now being developed that will allow colleague access to customer information across benefits. Learning was shared with Assessment Providers and safeguarding sessions delivered to Health Professionals.

Customer 4

Learning identified

The PIP assessment report was not of the required standard, and the decision maker did not take into account all available information. Customer vulnerability information was not recorded correctly, and guidance was not followed when payments ended.

Agreed activity

- Learning from this case to be shared with Assessment Provider.
- A personalised learning journey has been fed back with regards to holistic decision making.
- Disability Services (DS) to review use of Stopping Payments guidance following a review leading to a nil award when PIP previously in payment.

Learning outcomes

Learning from this case was shared with the new Assessment Provider and coaching on holistic decision making was provided. Reminders on stopping payments guidance were issued to relevant colleagues.

Customer 5

Learning identified

There were delays in implementing the customer's appeal outcome and a complaint letter was not responded to appropriately. The customer's vulnerabilities were not taken into account when requesting information and there was a payment delay due to a lack of appropriate guidance.

Agreed activity

- Scan filters have been broadened, which will prevent re-occurrence.
- Disputes Resolution Service (DRS) to feed back to their Leadership Team sharing the customer letter and response, check what guidance is in place and if quality standards would now pick this up.
- DRS to feed back to their Leadership Team and identify if there is a key message about escalating e.g. Vulnerable Customer Champion (VCC) or ACSSL when a vulnerable customer cannot obtain evidence that is urgently required.
- DRS to investigate with PIP experts to understand if guidance exists and if not, if guidance can be put in place. Whether ad hoc descriptors can be input until actual descriptors received.

Learning outcomes

System scan filters were updated to identify appeal outcomes and guidance was updated to include actions to take if an appeal decision contains errors. Upskilling sessions were delivered on supporting customers with additional needs and appropriate complaints responses.

Customer 6

Learning identified

Death arrears payee was not correctly updated, and arrears were initially sent to customer's account in error.

Agreed activity

- Guidance has been strengthened, including 'Missing Payment' guidance which clarifies the steps to take.

Learning outcomes

Guidance and processes for action upon notification of death was strengthened and delivered to colleagues, with notifications cleared by a dedicated team.

Universal Credit learning from serious cases

Universal Credit (UC) is a primary benefit for individuals below State Pension (SP) age who have low income, are unemployed, or are unable to work. As of October 2023, over 6 million people were claiming UC.

Across 2023/24	Number
Number of cases in which UC learning was identified [1]	42
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	101

Notes

1 – Includes cases where learning was also identified relating to other service lines which are published in the Cross-Benefits section.

Customer 1

Learning identified

Six-Point Plan action not taken by UC when the customer wrote and threatened self-harm and sanction decision made without considering the customer's mental health.

Agreed activity

- The Six-Point Plan toolkit has been introduced to support customers and agents since this case to prevent similar occurrences.
- UC to explore sanctions issues and progress with Policy and decision-making colleagues.

Learning outcomes

Six-Point Plan Toolkit was implemented, updated and refresher training commissioned. Cross benefit Customer Support Standards were launched and the sanctions process improved to include the identification of vulnerability.

Customer 2

Learning identified

Appropriate action not taken when the customer messaged and said they were suicidal and customer was not identified as vulnerable. Claimant Commitment not tailored, Explicit Consent procedures were not understood, and no financial support or budgeting advice offered.

Agreed activity

- UC Transformation & Delivery (UCTD) to provide a progress update on the Six-Point Plan refresh.
- Improvement activity on tailoring Claimant Commitments has been delivered.
- UCTD to provide a progress update on the use of the Explicit Consent tab.
- UCTD to provide a progress update on the user research into the Advanced Support tab.

Learning outcomes

Six-Point Plan Toolkit was implemented, improved and refresher training commissioned. Cross benefit Customer Support Standards launched and included Claimant Commitment improvement activity. UC system was updated to improve recording of both Explicit Consent and complex needs, and Budgeting Support guidance was reviewed.

Customer 3

Learning identified

Support Worker's information not considered, and UC arrears were issued without following large payments guidance. Medical Services Referral System (MSRS) not updated with new address details.

Agreed activity

- UC to work with design teams on improving use of 3rd Party support tab, system functionality and validation linked to the 3rd Party support tab.
- UC to examine the current process to establish if elements that rely on agent compliance can be strengthened, reducing error and impacts on customers.
- UCTD to provide an update on the future plans relating to MSRS, and to consider whether changes to prevent future change of address issues are appropriate.

Learning outcomes

Recording complex needs, making large payments and health journey guidance was updated, strengthened and delivered to colleagues. UC system now has a feature to record Explicit Consent, and an additional support campaign was delivered to colleagues.

Customer 4

Learning identified

Not recorded if customer was offered additional support or financial guidance.

Agreed activity

- Assurance required that all agents have access to financial and budgeting support guidance.

Learning outcomes

Budgeting support guidance available for all colleagues, reviewed regularly, and includes sources for customers to use.

Customer 5

Learning identified

The Additional Support tab not used to record customer's needs. Information about domestic abuse support added to the joint claim account instead of customer's new single person claim.

Agreed activity

- Analysis is being undertaken on the use of the Additional Support tab. UC are planning a relaunch to improve uptake/completion of the tab.
- UC to review what domestic violence awareness agents receive on the subject of not recording messages on the journal of a joint claim.

Learning outcomes

Additional Support Space was updated to add details of complex needs and guidance was revised to include references to domestic violence and joint claims, including journal message awareness.

Customer 6

Learning identified

Possibility of a third child exception due to non-consensual conception not explored. Delays when recoverable hardship payments were requested and failed to attend guidance not followed.

Agreed activity

- UC to consider refreshing the process to improve actions when consideration of a third child exception due to non-consensual conception is required.
- Assurance required that improvements made to the recoverable hardship payment process are now in place.
- Assurance required of the improvements made to the 'failure to attend' and sanction processes.

Learning outcomes

Changes to verification process of third child exception were delivered and improvements to hardship processes implemented with decision delays resolved. Sanctions process improved with checks to identify vulnerability.

Customer 7

Learning identified

UC system allowed duplicate applications. No evidence of a referral to Local Authority when the customer became homeless.

Agreed activity

- UC to undertake work to understand the reasons why the UC system allows duplicate live claims, the scale of duplicate claims and whether the function can be removed/restricted in the future.
- Improvement activity is already underway regarding homelessness.

Learning outcomes

Digital process strengthened for closing the correct claim if duplicate claim made in error. The additional support space now has guidance links to ‘duty to refer’ actions.

Customer 8

Learning identified

No evidence extra support considered when the customer became homeless, and no action taken to update MSRS with change of address. Financial support guidance not consistently followed.

Agreed activity

- UC to look at making it more clear on the UC service when a customer is homeless.
- UC to consider the need to refresh UC colleagues' awareness of the bitesize learning covering the impact on the customer of our most common errors in the health journey.
- Assurance required that all agents have access to financial and budgeting support guidance.

Learning outcomes

The additional support space now has direct guidance links to homelessness actions. Health journey and budgeting support reviewed and improved.

Customer 9

Learning identified

Customer was not referred to an Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader (ACSSL) when appropriate. Work Capability action not started when a fit for work note received and customer was still required to attend appointments despite health conditions.

Agreed activity

- UCTD to provide an update on progress of promoting the escalation routes available to support vulnerable customers, including the role of the ACSSL.
- UCTD to consider communications on robust referral on the health journey.
- UCTD and Advanced Customer Support (ACS) Transformation to provide feedback on the scale of the sanction issue and progress with Policy and Debt Management colleagues.

Learning outcomes

Awareness of additional support for complex needs has been delivered and health journey guidance updated. Sanctions process strengthened to identify customer vulnerability.

Customer 10

Learning identified

UC Risk Review Team can only be contacted via a handover. Customer must be available for a call, or the process has to start again. Habitual Residence Test decision processes do not include updating other departments or signposting to alternative support.

Agreed activity

- Risk Review Team to consider a solution to customer contact.
- UC to review signposting resources for colleagues.

Learning outcomes

Insight from the learning was shared to support development of the future vulnerable customer guidance and telephony improvements. Signposting resources were reviewed and includes sources for customers use.

Customer 11

Learning identified

Explicit Consent guidance not followed and in-work customers reporting a health condition are not checked for WCA eligibility. Guidance for phone claims not followed, medical evidence was not input, and claim was closed in error.

Agreed activity

- Work is in progress to create a system feature to record Explicit Consent.
- Improvements to the health journey are underway.
- UC to provide an update on the work underway to review process for telephone claims.

Learning outcomes

UC system enables the recording of Explicit Consent, and the health journey was strengthened and guidance updated. Process implemented to convert online claims to phone claims and guidance updated.

Customer 12

Learning identified

There was insufficient awareness of Flexible Support Fund (FSF) awards and Low Value Provision (LVP) funding. Requests for a reasonable adjustment were not resolved.

Agreed activity

- This will form part of the FSF review including costs of identification documents.
- UCTD to undertake an end-to-end review of FSF, including LVP.
- Plans to improve the Additional Support Space are in place.

Learning outcomes

FSF and LVP guidance reviewed and updated. Improvements were implemented in the recording of both complex needs and reasonable adjustments.

Customer 13

Learning identified

FSF was not considered when appropriate and there is no notification to advise customers that journal messages are only responded to in business hours.

Agreed activity

- As UC have confirmed the process was followed properly, the next step is to explore any potential improvement in the scope of FSF based on learning from serious cases, including this scenario.
- Commissions have been raised a) for an auto response to journal messages that include trigger key words and b) to review the location of the strapline message to ensure customers see the message earlier.

Learning outcomes

Use of FSF was promoted with quality assurance in place. Assurance received that UC journal advises customers of DWP opening hours and that responses are only provided during these hours.

Customer 14

Learning identified

Customer was not prompted to submit fit notes, health journey did not start, and additional support was not considered when appropriate.

Agreed activity

- UC will be running upskilling sessions for WCA Leads in Jobcentres to help with the WCA process.
- UC to deliver upskilling sessions for homeless subject matter experts and to look at making it more clear on the UC service when a customer is homeless.

Learning outcomes

WCA leads were introduced to support or manage WCA customers through the journey. Homelessness was added to Additional Support tab and upskilling provided for duty to refer referral process and recording of notes.

Customer 15

Learning identified

Complaint response not to DWP standards and UC system allowed duplicate applications causing a block to passwords and resets. Pinned notes not used to highlight the account access issues. The health journey did not start because of the duplicate claim and customer was not referred for additional support.

Agreed activity

- Complaints team to review standards and quality of complaint responses.
- UC to undertake work to understand the reasons why the UC system allows duplicate live claims, the scale of duplicate claims and whether the function can be removed/restricted in the future.
- UC to explore what improvements can be made to support customers who are having technical issues accessing their UC account.
- UCTD to clarify with IPR Team the scope of the work already underway to improve the duplicate claim process.
- UC to review the scope of work already underway on building Work Coaches confidence and capability including pinned notes and signposting.
- UC to clarify with IPR Team the scope of the work already underway on building Work Coaches confidence and capability with a view to including duplicate claim process, pinned notes, letters and signposting.

Learning outcomes

New standards in place for drafting complaints responses and processes were revised to support colleagues to close the correct claim if a duplicate claim made in error. Health journey instructions refreshed and strengthened, and guidance was reviewed to support agents help non-digital customers. A new digital task was created to convert online claims to phone claims to improve the process.

Customer 16

Learning identified

Opportunities were missed to start the health journey. Stopping payments guidance not followed and phone claim guidance not followed when required.

Agreed activity

- UCTD to consider communications on robust referral on the health journey and what support the ACSSLs can offer.
- UCTD to consider the strengthening of stopping payments guidance for telephone claims.
- UCTD to make enquiries as to whether a digital claim can be converted to a phone claim.

Learning outcomes

Health journey was strengthened and guidance updated. Claim closure process for considering vulnerabilities and complex needs was updated and guidance improved for converting online claims to phone claims.

Customer 17

Learning identified

Correct process not followed when the customer moved to UC and stopping payments guidance was not followed when needed.

Agreed activity

- Work is already underway to review the form used for the managed migration from a legacy benefit to UC to improve the transfer of information.
- UC do not use generic ACS Stopping Payments guidance. Query to be raised to link UC guidance to ACS Stopping Payments guidance.

Learning outcomes

Migration to UC process was improved to assess any support required and the claim closure process for considering vulnerabilities and complex needs was updated.

Customer 18

Learning identified

Opportunities to start the health journey were not taken and the customer did not receive available support on how to develop their self-employment.

Agreed activity

- UC to advise on the improvement activity on the health journey.
- UCTD to confirm if they can strengthen and improve the District Provision Tool (DPT) further to their initial update.

Learning outcomes

Health journey was strengthened and guidance updated. DPT local content was reviewed and strengthened with provision to support self-employment available locally.

Customer 19

Learning identified

There is no handover process when a vulnerable customer changes work coaches or Jobcentre.

Agreed activity

- UCTD are already working on improvements around the use of the Additional Support tab. UC to look at feasibility of mandating a warm handover process for customers moving between Jobcentres, to include scoping specific circumstances.

Learning outcomes

Changes to processes allow complex needs to be shared when a customer changes jobcentre or work coach.

Customer 20

Learning identified

Customer's complex needs not considered, and welfare checks or a visit referral not considered during periods of no contact.

Agreed activity

- Improvements to the Additional Support Space are underway. ACS colleagues to share learning on recording and considering support needs.

Learning outcomes

System changes were implemented to allow for better recording of complex customer needs. Training and awareness sessions delivered to promote referrals to additional support and in making quality referrals to DWP Visiting Service.

Customer 21

Learning identified

Checks to assess vulnerability not undertaken and no financial support or budgeting advice offered. Guidance for suspending customer's UC not followed correctly and sanctions incorrectly applied. Incorrect advice given regarding Recoverable Hardship Payments.

Agreed activity

- UCTD to provide a progress update on the user research into the Additional Support tab.
- Assurance required that suspension and stopping payments guidance is clear and now contains vulnerability checks.
- Assurance required that ongoing strengthening of sanctions processes and guidance has delivered improvements.

Learning outcomes

Improvements were made to the recording and updating of complex needs and budgeting support guidance was reviewed and improved. Stopping payments guidance, including suspensions, was strengthened to consider vulnerabilities. Sanctions processes were improved and include team leader pre-referral quality checks.

Customer 22

Learning identified

Customer was not contacted during the Covid pandemic. There were delays actioning a request to refresh a link, to provide required evidence.

Agreed activity

- Appropriate processes are in place; however, these were impacted by the Covid pandemic.
- Regular caseload reviews are in place to identify payment blockers.

Learning outcomes

Assurance given that robust processes were in place, compliance of process was impacted by Covid pandemic. Caseload reviews have been implemented, and dashboards introduced to support management of workflow.

Customer 23

Learning identified

When a journal message was replied to by wrong member of a joint claim, incorrect action taken and claim closed. Instructions not followed when communicating an overpayment and UC overpayment letter lacked detail and didn't signpost to support. UC legislation does not allow it to use the Real Time Information (RTI) feed to verify pension information.

Agreed activity

- UCTD will be looking at the joint claim journey in the next phase, (April to November 2024) to ensure journals are addressed to correct person.
- UCTD to review overpayment guidance specific to vulnerable customers.
- UCTD to review overpayment notifications.
- As HMRC own the RTI data, IPR Team to escalate the issue for discussion as part of the overpayment's improvement activity.

Learning outcomes

Guidance and learning material was strengthened for joint claims, journal messaging and overpayment guidance and letters were updated and improved with more supportive language, signposting and free text options. Not possible to use RTI for pension income as calculations would not be attributed accurately.

Customer 24

Learning identified

Vulnerable customer instructions not followed to communicate an overpayment. UC overpayment letter lacked detail and didn't signpost to support. UC legislation does not allow it to use RTI feed to verify pension information and no process to verify different categories of pension.

Agreed activity

- UCTD to review overpayment guidance specific to vulnerable customers.
- UCTD to review overpayment notifications.
- IPR team to discuss the intent behind the legislation with DWP Policy. Following the Policy update, IPR Team to agree any other options with UCTD.
- UCTD to raise a commission to review Universal Learning guidance on how different types of pensions affect UC entitlement.

Learning outcomes

Overpayment guidance and letters were updated and improved with more supportive language, signposting and free text options. Not possible to use RTI for pension income as calculations would not be attributed accurately and the pension income guidance was reviewed and updated.

Customer 25

Learning identified

The customer's UC claim was closed without accounting for known vulnerabilities, and the health journey was not started when required.

Agreed activity

- Identified as a one-off agent error, assurance required that learning is incorporated into guidance.
- Work underway for a health journey guidance refresh, assurance required when this work is complete

Learning outcomes

Claim closure and health journey guidance were updated and communicated to colleagues.

Cross-Benefit learning from serious cases

Customers can claim more than one benefit or use more than one DWP service, and when an IPR is conducted it looks at all the services that a customer used. This means that some IPRs will identify learning across these different service lines.

The following table provides details of those additional service lines represented in this section.

Across 2023/24	Service Line and Number[1]
Number of cases in which learning was identified[2]	Carer's Allowance – 1 Child Maintenance Service - 1 Contract Management Partner Delivery – 11 Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt – 2 Multiple Service Lines[3] – 13 State Pension – 1
Number of agreed activities in relation to the learning identified	Carer's Allowance – 1 Child Maintenance Service - 2 Contract Management Partner Delivery – 11 Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt – 4 Carer's Allowance – 1 Multiple Service Lines – 14 State Pension – 2

Notes

1 – Data for the learning related to Employment and Support Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit is recorded in their respective sections.
2 – The total number of cases in which learning was identified is higher than the number of cases completed, due to some individual cases covering more than one service line.
3 – Learning that covers more than one service line.

Customer 1

Learning identified

Guidance not followed when the customer advised they were suicidal and incorrect actions taken with the telephone claim. ACSSL not contacted for advice when customer's vulnerabilities became known, and customer not offered financial support or budgeting advice.

Agreed activity

- The Six-Point Plan toolkit has been introduced to support customers and agents since this case to prevent similar occurrences.
- UC to investigate future improvements and opportunities to ensure customer digital access is supported and improved.
- Upskilling needed for work coaches to have the confidence to liaise with a customer's support workers, including social workers, without the need to refer to an ACSSL.
- Refresher training is required locally to improve agent knowledge of available financial and budgeting support.

Learning outcomes

Six-Point Plan and ACS escalation awareness sessions were delivered, and Six-Point Plan Toolkit was implemented, improved and refresher training commissioned. Upskilling sessions and refresher events held on providing digital support, escalating additional support needs and signposting customers to support.

Customer 2

Learning identified

Carer and appointee suitability not checked when claim made to ensure payments used for the benefit of vulnerable customer.

Agreed activity

- The learning from this IPR will feed into cross-DWP activity to review the end-to-end appointee process to improve and strengthen it.
- Policy, SPD and Carer's Allowance (CA) to discuss the requirement to review guidance regarding the need to check suitability of carers.

Learning outcomes

End to end review of appointee process commissioned with multiple improvements, including digital solutions, to be delivered in phased implementation. CA future policy development to include carer suitability.

Customer 3

Learning identified

Prospective appointee was incorrectly signposted and not referred for a visit. Tell Us Once death notifications not monitored. Wrong information given about suitable medical evidence, Operational Instructions not followed and housing element was not paid. Long delay in awarding PIP contributed to customer remaining in temporary accommodation.

Agreed activity

- Learning from this IPR will be fed into the review of the end-to-end appointee process.
- UC to recirculate the Tell Us Once notification podcast to case managers and SPD to review the Tell Us Once notification process to DWP benefit lines to identify opportunities to improve the timescales for actioning notifications.
- The subject of what constitutes medical evidence to trigger the UC WCA process will be included in the upcoming Health Journey refresh.
- Assurance of process compliance with the verify housing costs task required.
- SPD to review the PIP customer journey to identify opportunities to reduce timescales and improve liaison with other agencies.

Learning outcomes

Upskilling sessions on home visit referrals were undertaken and system improvements delivered on closing claims following notification of a customer death, supported by colleague learning updates. Health journey and housing cost guidance was updated and delivered to colleagues and PIP new claim clearance has been reduced by monitoring and development of task allocation tools.

Customer 4

Learning identified

Guidance for PES payments does not include interventions for vulnerable customers before vouchers expire.

Agreed activity

- IPR Team to investigate PES work being undertaken in ACS and wider DWP. In particular, the process for identifying potentially vulnerable customers before vouchers expire and when they are returned.

Learning outcomes

PES process and guidance was strengthened and an improvement campaign delivered to colleagues.

Customer 5

Learning identified

Appointee suitability was not checked when PIP forms not returned. Existing appointee not contacted to see if they wished to relinquish the role. Mental health marker not recorded on MSRS and ESA claim was disallowed when a questionnaire not returned. ESA systems not updated with new address and appointee details.

Agreed activity

- The learning from this IPR will feed into cross-DWP activity to review the end-to-end appointee process to improve and strengthen it.
- Assurance required that not recording the mental health status of this customer was an isolated error.
- Assurance required that not updating systems with new details was an isolated error.

Learning outcomes

End to end review of appointee process commissioned with multiple improvements, including digital solutions, to be delivered in phased implementation. Assurance received that quality standards were being met for recording of mental health markers and customer details.

Customer 6

Learning identified

Assessment Provider instructions do not advise them to inform ACS of suicidal intent. UC instructions do not advise to say the reason GP details are required on journal messages, if unable to contact a customer by telephone.

Agreed activity

- DWP Contract Management and Assessment Provider to review guidance to allow Health Professionals to identify and share information that would enable DWP colleagues to take appropriate action when customers express suicidal ideation.
- UC to consider amending the wording of the ‘Refer for a WCA Reassessment’ to-do to include an explanation for the request for GP details.

Learning outcomes

Assessment Providers maintain direct contact points with ACS teams, enabling rapid escalation and sharing of critical information. Health journey was strengthened and guidance updated.

Customer 7

Learning identified

No guidance or process for sharing Failed to Attend reasons with Assessment Providers when customers are re-referred, nor when suicidal ideation is contained in a 'to-do'. Customer's vulnerabilities not addressed and no signposting to mental health or financial support organisations.

Agreed activity

- Contract Management and Assessment Provider to review information and share practices when suicide intent is declared through any contact after a WCA referral has been made.
- UC to consider if there are potential solutions for systems to automatically identify declarations of self-harm and suicide in a completed customer ‘to-do'.
- ACS to liaise with Service Design to explore opportunities to improve actions and considerations of vulnerabilities.

Learning outcomes

Assessment Providers maintain direct contact points with ACS teams, enabling rapid escalation and sharing of critical information. Additional Support Space was updated to add details of complex needs and guidance on budgeting and mental health support promoted and regularly reviewed.

Customer 8

Learning identified

No process/guidance for UC agents when setting a manual override to trigger a review. Customer not offered support or budgeting advice when struggling with mental health. The Document Repository System not routinely checked by ESA and no process to share its' information across service lines.

Agreed activity

- UCTD to review process when setting work group overrides.
- Refresh training on identifying complex needs required locally.
- IPR Team to share insight with Digital colleagues for future consideration of solutions to improve visibility of information across benefit lines.

Learning outcomes

Manual work group override process reviewed, and a task is now generated to review. Complex needs refresher training was completed and digital solutions explored to allow cross benefit access to customer information.

Customer 9

Learning identified

Claimant Commitment not tailored and WCA decision input incorrectly. Decision error not identified, resulting in incorrect advice being given. A notification advising PIP that customer had died not actioned on time.

Agreed activity

- UCTD to engage with Quality Team to ensure tailoring the Claimant Commitment process is part of the quality framework design.
- UC to review the issue of incomplete decisions and whether changes can be made to alert agents to an incomplete decision.
- UC to consider updating agent actions when contact is made to identify previous errors on the account.
- DS meeting with Product and Planning Team to see what can be done to add an option to send notification after death of customer.

Learning outcomes

Improvement activity on Claimant Commitments was delivered and is part of the Customer Support Standards and assurance received that errors in recording decisions were isolated incidents. Guidance and processes for action following notification of death were strengthened and dedicated teams in place to process notifications.

Customer 10

Learning identified

Information already held not used when State Pension (SP) was claimed and customer not referred for a visit before the claim was closed. Operational Instructions not followed for returned (Payment Exception Service) PES voucher payments.

Agreed activity

- Work is underway to improve sharing verified dates of birth across benefit lines.
- IPR Team to investigate work being undertaken in ACS and wider DWP in PES, in particular the process for potentially vulnerable customers before vouchers expire and when they are returned.
- Visiting referral instruction guidance and processes are being strengthened.

Learning outcomes

Improvements to visiting referral instructions have been implemented and PES process and guidance was strengthened and an improvement campaign completed.

Customer 11

Learning identified

The PIP assessment report was not of the required standard and no contact made with the customer to obtain supporting medical evidence.

Agreed activity

- Learning from this case to be shared with Assessment Provider to take forward to improve investigation and report quality.
- IPRT will share this learning with Assessment Providers for their consideration and seek assurance of decision-making quality in this area.

Learning outcomes

Assessment Provider guidance includes exploration of health conditions and evidence required to produce robust reports. Mandatory calls to support decision making implemented and shared through awareness sessions.

Customer 12

Learning identified

UC Risk Review Team can only be contacted via a handover. Customer must be available for a call, or the process has to start again, and appropriate escalation routes not utilised. Delays checking evidence the customer provided meant the claim remained suspended. When the claim was unsuspended, there was no process to stagger payments based on customer vulnerabilities.

Agreed activity

- IPR Team to liaise with Enhanced Review Team (ERT) in respect of planned telephony improvements and VCC network rollout. ERT are also doing more at team level to monitor contact.
- UC to investigate a solution to staggering payments for unsuspended claim payments.
- Improvements are in place to monitor the age of suspensions, and automatic suspensions no longer happen.

Learning outcomes

Regular case conferences were put in place with expert advice provided for complex or non-standard scenarios involving vulnerable customers. Guidance was updated regarding lifting a suspension and assurance given that cases are no longer automatically suspended.

Customer 13

Learning identified

Customer not started on the UC health journey. The PIP assessment report not of the required standard and customer's vulnerability not identified resulting in a claim disallowance. Customer was sent journal messages when they had no digital access and no attempt made to re-engage after loss of contact.

Agreed activity

- UC to consider communications on the health journey.
- Learning from this case to be shared with the Assessment Provider.
- Sanction improvement work is underway, and assurance of the improvements delivered should include this aspect.
- UC to establish an up-to date picture of where we are with ensuring colleagues have the capability to provide the relevant digital support to customers.

Learning outcomes

Health journey was strengthened and guidance updated. Collaborative sessions were held with Assessment Providers to share learning from serious cases. Sanctions process was updated to improve identification of vulnerability and assurance given that guidance supports agents with non-digital customers.

Customer 14

Learning identified

Pinned notes not used to highlight deteriorating health. Additional evidence not considered and outbound reconsideration call not made when upholding a PIP disallowance decision. The PIP assessment report was not of the required standard and supporting medical evidence not obtained.

Agreed activity

- Work is underway to improve the use of the Additional Support tab.
- PIP DRS to review the quality of decision making and outbound calls. Learning from this case to be shared with Assessment Provider.
- Learning from this case to be shared with Assessment Providers.

Learning outcomes

Additional Support Space was updated to add details of complex needs and mandatory calls to support decision making were implemented. Learning around assessing mental health and suicidal ideation was shared with Assessment Providers.

Customer 15

Learning identified

Enforcement action was undertaken without consideration of known vulnerabilities and opportunities were missed to gather accurate earnings evidence. There is a lack of data sharing with UC relating to earnings information.

Agreed activity

- CMS to develop key messages to promote professional curiosity when they become aware of information which indicates potential vulnerability and explore existing products that this can play into in their ACS refresh i.e. 4 key topics.
- Improvement activity has been implemented on the use of estimated earnings.
- IPRT to share insight with Digital to inform development work underway in this area.

Learning outcomes

Professional curiosity training has been delivered to appropriate colleagues to improve identification of vulnerabilities and process updates have supported the gathering of accurate earnings data. A new digital service is now being developed that will allow colleague access to customer information across benefits.

Customer 16

Learning identified

Customer was referred for a visit by two different teams at the same time. PES payments went uncashed without timely notification and there is no process to regularly review PES payments to check if they are suitable.

Agreed activity

- DWP Visiting Gateway Team to investigate if the process of identifying duplicate referrals for the same customer/reason requires enhancement.
- IPR Team to investigate work being undertaken in ACS and wider DWP in PES, in particular the process for potentially vulnerable customers before vouchers expire and when they are returned.

Learning outcomes

Visiting system improvements were implemented to identify duplicate referrals and the PES process and guidance was strengthened, with an awareness campaign completed.

Customer 17

Learning identified

No process to allow for checks when UC suspension lifted and large payment issued. Customer vulnerabilities not considered during the Compliance process and DWP complaints processes not followed by Counter Fraud Compliance and Debt (CFCD). Delays occurred in referring a UC overpayment to Debt Management and vulnerability operational instructions not followed by UC when the customer was notified. UC overpayment letter lacked detail and didn't signpost to support.

Agreed activity

- Investigation of making large payments process after a suspension is lifted to be completed.
- Compliance leads to provide an update on the ongoing work with quality and policy to bring clarity into the instructions.
- Assurance required that complaint responses are meeting the 15-day service level agreement.
- Guidance to refer overpayment cases to Debt Management has been clear and comprehensive.
- UCTD to review letters and overpayment guidance specific to vulnerable customers.

Learning outcomes

Lifting suspension guidance was updated, support for vulnerable customers was improved and complaints guidance was reviewed and updated. Overpayment guidance and letters were updated and improved with more supportive language, signposting and free text options.

Customer 18

Learning identified

The customer was given incorrect advice around their PIP claim. Correct action not taken by UC when informed the customer had died.

Agreed activity

- System and process improvements regarding notification of deaths are underway.
- Agent upskilling to improve knowledge of actions to take when a mandatory reconsideration is requested has already taken place.

Learning outcomes

Guidance and processes for action on notification of death were strengthened with upskilling delivered to colleagues.

Customer 19

Learning identified

No process for considering if there is a UC award before paying ESA arrears. No additional support instructions for actioning UC overpayment tasks for vulnerable customers. Training need identified for telephony agents dealing with terminally ill customers.

Agreed activity

- IPR team to liaise with service delivery colleagues in respect of the abatement process.
- UCTD to provide a progress update regarding the query covering the issue of overpayment guidance specific to vulnerable customers.
- Improvements have been made to the 'Terminal Illness' guidance, and communications delivered to case managers.

Learning outcomes

Learning around abatements is being considered for inclusion in future improvements. Overpayments guidance was strengthened with cross-benefit instructions regarding vulnerable customers, and the terminal illness process was strengthened.

Customer 20

Learning identified

The PIP assessment report was not of the required standard and harmful information forms do not trigger any safeguarding actions. There is no functionality in UC to convert an online claim to a telephone claim.

Agreed activity

- Learning from this case to be shared with the Assessment Provider.
- Work is already underway to look at PA7 forms and communication of vulnerabilities between Assessment Providers and PIP.
- System improvements to convert online claims to telephone claims has now been delivered.

Learning outcomes

Collaborative sessions held with Assessment Providers to share learning from serious cases. Assessment Providers can escalate concerns direct to appropriate Advanced Support teams. Process implemented to convert online claims to phone claims and guidance updated.

Customer 21

Learning identified

Support not tailored for the customer's health conditions and a delay in the Alternative Payment Arrangement being put in place. Customer not supported with their lack of digital capability. Health journey not started on receipt of fit-note. The PIP assessment report was not of the required standard.

Agreed activity

- Analysis is being undertaken on the use of the Additional Support tab. UCTD are planning a relaunch to improve uptake/completion of the tab.
- UC will provide an update on the housing process to inform whether this is still an issue.
- UC to establish an up-to date picture of where we are with ensuring colleagues have the capability to provide the relevant digital support to customers.
- The UC health journey is being reviewed and guidance strengthened.
- Learning from this case to be shared with Assessment Providers.

Learning outcomes

Improvements were implemented in the recording of both complex needs and reasonable adjustments, and to management of the housing process. Assurance was given that digital support for customers is available from work coaches and via external sources and health journey guidance was strengthened and updated. Learning was shared with Assessment Providers and safeguarding sessions delivered to Health Professionals.

Customer 22

Learning identified

The PIP health assessment report was not of the required standard and there were delays to starting the UC health journey. A system note was not used to record the customer's name preference.

Agreed activity

- Learning from this case to be shared with Assessment Provider.
- Messages on the correct use of pinned notes to be issued.
- The UC health journey is being reviewed and guidance strengthened.

Learning outcomes

Assessment Provider guidance on exploring health conditions was improved and UC guidance regarding the health journey has been strengthened and shared. Upskilling sessions on the use of pinned notes were issued.

Customer 23

Learning identified

Customer not referred for a WCA by ESA when appropriate and vulnerabilities not considered when the customer did not attend a DLA to PIP medical assessment. Guidance on considering vulnerabilities not followed when PIP Review form issued. Delays by ESA actioning the notification the customer had died, and ESA payments returned by the bank continued to be reissued.

Agreed activity

- Work & Health Decision Making to provide an update on the circumstances leading to the customer not being referred back for a WCA.
- Assurance required on the improvements made to the Additional Support Marker to highlight vulnerabilities and complex needs.
- Assurance required on the improvements made to the Additional Support Marker to highlight vulnerabilities and complex needs when considering claim closures.
- WA Customer Experience and ACS Team to provide an update on why the system downloads did not capture the date of death information for this customer.

Learning outcomes

WCA referral processes were strengthened, and the Additional Support Marker now remains visible on the PIP claim. Improvements were made to the management of notifications of death, and the returned payment process was strengthened to be a priority action.

Customer 24

Learning identified

Customer not advised a premium was ceasing, deductions were due to be taken, or that Severe Disability Premium uplift would not be reinstated. The PIP assessment report was not of the required standard and no contact made to obtain supporting medical evidence.

Agreed activity

- Learning from this case to be shared with Assessment Provider.
- UC to consider improvements e.g. review dashboard management which could deliver improvements.

Learning outcomes

Improvements were made to how agents manage priority tasks and notify customers of award changes. Learning was shared with Assessment Providers and guidance reviewed regarding information gathering, with quality checks in place.

Customer 25

Learning identified

Additional medical evidence was not considered during a PIP Mandatory Reconsideration and customer vulnerabilities identified by the Assessment Provider were not fully recorded and considered during the decision-making process. There were delays in paying Severe Disability Premium as part of the customer's ESA award.

Agreed activity

- DRS to feed back to SLT and agree how to share this learning across DRS as appropriate
- Work is already underway to look at PA7 forms and communication of vulnerabilities between Assessment Providers and PIP.
- DS to address vulnerabilities and use of Additional Support Marker through key messaging.
- Trial underway to automate award of Severe Disability Premium which will resolve issue of Severe Disability Premium not being picked up.

Learning outcomes

Improvements were implemented to the Mandatory Reconsideration process to support disclosure of health conditions, and a new process was put in place to allow Assessment Providers to escalate concerns. Learning on identifying and recording vulnerabilities has been delivered and system updates have improved the timely payments of Severe Disability Premium.

Customer 26

Learning identified

System errors resulted in incorrect deductions from the customer's UC payments and there were delays in making rent payments direct to the landlord leading to rent arrears.

Agreed activity

- UC to investigate incorrect deductions.
- UCTD to review process.
- UCTD to link in with the housing lead to discuss what next steps should be.
- WA have taken this away to investigate what we can do from a technical perspective.

Learning outcomes

System improvements have been implemented to support rent payments being made directly to landlords and work is ongoing to support the implementation of accurate deductions.

Customer 27

Learning identified

There are no processes to check customers' interactions with other product lines.

Agreed activity

➤ IPR Team to share insight with Shared Channels Experience to inform future digital development of Colleague View.

Learning outcomes

A new digital service is now being developed that will allow colleague access to customer information across benefits.

Customer 28

Learning identified

Welfare concerns not raised when PES vouchers were returned uncashed.

Agreed activity

➤ Improvements to the PES process are underway.

Learning outcomes

PES process and guidance was strengthened and an improvement campaign delivered to colleagues.

Customer 29

Learning identified

PIP were not advised customer was in hospital resulting in an overpayment.

Agreed activity

➤ Learning from this case to be used to inform future digital development of Colleague View.

Learning outcomes

A new digital service is now being developed that will allow colleague access to customer information across benefits.

Signposting and support

If you have been affected by any of the topics covered within this publication, there is information and support available online:

Check benefits and financial support you can get – Check benefits and financial support you can get - GOV.UK

Benefits (Scotland only) – Benefits - mygov.scot

Challenge and appeal a benefit decision – Challenge and appeal a benefit decision: step by step - GOV.UK

Get extra help and support to manage your DWP benefits or pension – Get extra help and support to manage your benefits or pension - GOV.UK.

Support for Housing – Benefits and financial support if you're on a low income - GOV.UK

Homelessness – Help if you’re homeless or about to become homeless - GOV.UK

Domestic Abuse – Domestic abuse: how to get help - GOV.UK

Bereavement help and support – What to do after someone dies: Bereavement help and support - GOV.UK

Mental Health –

England – Mental health – NHS

Scotland – Mental health | NHS inform

Wales – NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Mental Health and Wellbeing

Suicidal thoughts –

England – Help for suicidal thoughts - NHS

Scotland – Getting help with your suicidal thoughts | Suicide | NHS inform

Wales – NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Suicidal thoughts

Glossary

This glossary helps explain the terms used throughout this publication

Abatement	A DWP benefit overpayment can be offset or taken into account against another benefits underpayment.
ACS Transformation	Focus on the changes that look to improve how we can identify and support our most vulnerable customers.
Additional Support marker (PIP)	Applied to PIP cases where evidence or the customer indicate they need additional support.
Additional Support tab (UC)	Allows colleagues to add, view, update and close a support need after a customer interaction.
Advanced Customer Support (ACS)	ACS focus on ensuring the most vulnerable customers across all DWP service lines are given help and support.
Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader (ACSSL)	An ACSSL coaches and engages with colleagues across DWP services to help support the most vulnerable customers.
Advanced Support	Ensures customers with vulnerabilities are supported appropriately throughout the life of their claim.
Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA)	For customers who cannot or may not be able to manage their single monthly payment and as a result are at risk of financial harm.
Appointee	An individual or organisation authorised to act on behalf of a person who is unable to manage their own benefits, often due to age, illness, or disability.
Assessment Provider (AP)	An organisation contracted on behalf of DWP to conduct health assessments for customers.
Bitesize learning	Small, self-serve learning products, taking no longer than 15 minutes for colleagues to complete.
Budgeting Advance	Repayable interest free payment for one-off items such as furniture.
Budgeting Support	Provides signposting support to customers on UC with managing their budget.
Child Maintenance Service (CMS)	CMS helps ensure that children receive financial support from both parents, even if they are not living together.
Claimant Commitment	An agreement between the customer and DWP outlining the responsibilities and activities the customer must undertake to receive UC.
Colleague View	A digital service that allows colleagues access to a customer's information across different benefits.

Compliance	Action taken to ensure correct information received to confirm reported circumstances, and all relevant changes are reported at the right time.
Contract Management	The team that manages the contracts with Assessment Providers.
Customer Experience and Advanced Support Team (CEAST)	Specialist supporting roles that can help resolve complex cases.
Customer Support Standards	Ensures all agents are delivering a consistently good service to our customers.
Dashboard management	The process for UC case managers to clear outstanding work according to priority.
Debt Management	The part of DWP that is responsible for agreeing a payment plan with a customer to collect debt that is owed.
District Provision Tool	Provides colleagues access to the full range of services that can help support customers.
Document Repository System	The computer system that held post that was electronically scanned.
Duty to refer	Jobcentre agents in England have a legal duty to offer a voluntary referral to customers they consider to be homeless/at risk of homelessness.
Enhanced Review Team (ERT)	Team that reviewed claims that are potentially high risk, including stolen identities.
Exclusions	Name given to system reasons for claim closure.
Explicit Consent	A customer unable to find information held on their account or understand more complex issues, may ask a representative to contact DWP on their behalf to obtain the information.
Flexible Support Fund (FSF)	A budget to supplement UC mainstream services and tailor support to the needs of individuals and the local area.
Habitual Residence Test	Process to check the place where a person has their regular, permanent home.
Health Professional	A trained professional who undertakes health assessments on behalf of DWP.
Housing element	Paid to UC customers liable to make payments on the accommodation they occupy as their home
Internal Process Review Team (IPR Team)	Conduct in-depth investigations into the most serious cases to ensure the Department can learn and take all reasonable steps to prevent similar events happening again.

Journal	Used to exchange information and updates between a customer and their Work Coach or agent regarding a customer's UC account.
Key words	A message containing data including self-harm, which would usually be classed as cause for concern.
Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA)	Element of UC for customers who have such severe health problems there is no current prospect of their being able to undertake work or work-related activities.
Low Value Provision (LVP)	Used to provide short, sharp vocational or occupational training to UC customers who have a job offer or need training to compete for local vacancies.
Mandatory Reconsideration	The process that allows customers to challenge a decision.
Medical Services Referral System (MSRS)	A system to register and monitor electronic WCA referrals.
Outbound Reconsideration Call	A call to the customer in all cases where, based on the evidence held, DWP will not be awarding the maximum award.
PA7 form	Was used by Assessment Providers to notify DWP of harmful information (suicidal ideation) declared by a customer.
Payment Exception Service (PES) payment vouchers	A method of payment used in exceptional circumstances.
Permitted Work	Allows customers to do some work while still receiving ESA.
Pinned Notes	Allows agents to attach important claim notes to the customer's overview page.
Real Time Information (RTI) feed	A database that holds Pay As You Earn (PAYE) information relating to people working for employers and, in some cases, those receiving occupational pensions.
Recoverable Hardship Payment	Repayable financial support for a customer who is sanctioned or has a fraud penalty.
Risk Review Team	Undertake specific pieces of work to either investigate, prevent and/or detect fraud.
Sanction	UC payments can be reduced if agreed work-related activities are not completed without a good reason.
Service Planning and Delivery (SPD)	The team responsible for modernising DWP services.
Severe Disability Premium	An additional amount paid if certain claim criteria were met.

Shared Channels Experience	Enables customers to interact with DWP through new and existing channels.
Six-Point Plan	DWP's response to instances where customers make an intent to take their own life or harm themselves.
Stopping payments guidance	Actions for benefit lines to take before payments are stopped or suspended.
Support needs banner	The customers needs can be added, updated and viewed all in the same place.
Tell Us Once	A service that lets you report a death to most government organisations in one go.
Third child exception	Applies to the third or subsequent children likely to have been conceived as a result of non-consensual conception.
Third party support tab	Now the Additional Support tab, was used if being supported by social services / housing adviser.
To-Do	Refers to a specific task or action that a Universal Credit agent is required to complete.
Trauma informed approach	Designed to understand and respond to the needs of individuals who have experienced trauma.
Universal Credit Transformation & Delivery (UCTD)	Review and action improvements to UC.
Universal Learning Guidance	Holds the most recent updates and changes to Universal Credit policies and guidance.
VOCAL (Voice of the Customer Active Learning)	A learning product produced to take a deep dive into a real-life case.
Vulnerable Customer Champion (VCC)	Provides additional support to customers and colleagues.
Work and Health (W&H)	Area of DWP that administers a range of working age, disability and ill health benefits.
Work Available Report	A report produced daily that lists cases that require action.
Work Capability Assessment (WCA)	The assessment used by ESA and UC to assess a customer's capability to work when they have declared they have a health condition.

Department
for Work &
Pensions

Published by the Department for Work and Pensions
Date: 30th July 2026
www.gov.uk