

Safeguarding vulnerable claimants—DWP staff survey

Introduction

On 8 April 2024, the Work and Pensions Select Committee launched a survey for DWP staff to gain an understanding of how the people working within the Department, whose job it is to execute its policies and interact with its customers, felt about DWP's safeguarding policies, practices and culture.

The survey was distributed via the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) to DWP staff who were PCS members. Therefore, we accept that we were only able to reach a limited pool of DWP staff and expect that the majority of responses have come from staff who were members of PCS, although these staff were able to share the survey link with other, non-union member colleagues. We also shared a link to the survey with the Department when alerting them that it was taking place (though we did not have any expectation that they would share it with DWP staff).

All responses to this survey were anonymous and no personal information was gathered.

Response

1,711 people responded to the survey, of these 80% (1,377) had direct contact with claimants.

Below is a table showing the distribution of responses across different job roles:

Job role	Direct contact with claimants				Total
	No	%	Yes	%	
Child Maintenance Service (CMS) staff	27	54%	23	46%	50
Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt (CFCD) staff	56	34%	109	66%	165
Decision maker	53	45%	65	55%	118
Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) staff	8	20%	32	80%	40
Jobcentre staff	43	5%	841	95%	884
Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) staff	3	14%	18	86%	21
Pensions (Retirement Services Directorate (RSD)) staff	24	47%	27	53%	51
Personal Independence Payment (PIP) staff	21	33%	43	67%	64
Universal Credit Case Manager (telephony & journal)	31	21%	119	79%	150
Universal Credit Review (UCR) staff	6	18%	27	82%	33
Visiting officer	0	0%	23	100%	23
Other	62	55%	50	45%	112
Total	334	20%	1,377	80%	1,711

Results

Section 1: Safeguarding training and guidance

Question 1: I received adequate safeguarding training to enable me to deal with safeguarding issues appropriately before commencing my role.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	189	14%	239	14%
Agree	468	34%	593	35%
Neither agree nor disagree	174	13%	243	14%
Disagree	352	26%	408	24%
Strongly disagree	188	14%	219	13%
Total	1,371	100%	1,702	100%

Question 2: I have received adequate safeguarding training to enable me to deal with safeguarding issues appropriately at regular intervals since I started in my role.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	165	12%	218	13%
Agree	401	29%	502	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	218	16%	294	17%
Disagree	386	28%	459	27%
Strongly disagree	195	14%	224	13%
Total	1,365	100%	1,697	100%

Question 3: The safeguarding guidance for frontline staff is clear, comprehensive and easily accessed.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	143	10%	179	11%
Agree	351	26%	432	25%
Neither agree nor disagree	264	19%	386	23%
Disagree	412	30%	471	28%
Strongly disagree	197	14%	227	13%
Total	1,367	100%	1,695	100%

Question 4: When a safeguarding concern is identified, I feel confident about how to handle the situation and understand the steps I should take.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	211	15%	257	15%
Agree	433	32%	535	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	228	17%	323	19%
Disagree	318	23%	370	22%
Strongly disagree	177	13%	214	13%
Total	1,367	100%	1,699	100%

Question 5: If I realise that I have made a mistake with a safeguarding issue, I know what to do and who I can ask for help.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	185	14%	229	14%
Agree	430	32%	531	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	232	17%	309	18%
Disagree	345	25%	416	25%
Strongly disagree	171	13%	210	12%
Total	1,363	100%	1,695	100%

Section 2: Safeguarding policies and practices

Question 6: Safeguarding is seen as a priority within Job Centres.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	219	16%	272	16%
Agree	377	28%	446	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	356	26%	489	29%
Disagree	255	19%	300	18%
Strongly disagree	145	11%	167	10%
Total	1,352	100%	1,674	100%

Question 7: In my experience, safeguarding procedures are followed properly by all staff in every instance.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	96	7%	116	7%
Agree	247	18%	302	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	364	27%	489	29%
Disagree	466	34%	542	32%
Strongly disagree	194	14%	244	14%
Total	1,367	100%	1,693	100%

Question 8: I am encouraged to proactively offer the additional support measures which are available to claimants (such as Discretionary Housing Payments and Alternative Payment Arrangements).

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	193	14%	224	13%
Agree	425	31%	491	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	337	25%	496	29%
Disagree	258	19%	301	18%
Strongly disagree	152	11%	174	10%
Total	1,365	100%	1,686	100%

Question 9: I know which agencies I can refer claimants to if a safeguarding concern arises.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	193	14%	225	13%
Agree	468	34%	557	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	266	20%	366	22%
Disagree	263	19%	331	20%
Strongly disagree	172	13%	204	12%
Total	1,362	100%	1,683	100%

Question 10: I am required to communicate safeguarding concerns about a claimant with other agencies that have responsibilities for safeguarding (such as the NHS and Social Services).

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	178	13%	208	12%
Agree	399	29%	475	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	349	26%	484	29%
Disagree	265	19%	317	19%
Strongly disagree	172	13%	201	12%
Total	1,363	100%	1,685	100%

Section 3: Staff capacity and level of responsibility

Question 11: I often interact with claimants whose circumstances give rise to safeguarding concerns.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	497	40%	527	35%
Agree	442	36%	488	32%
Neither agree nor disagree	203	16%	325	22%
Disagree	83	7%	122	8%
Strongly disagree	19	2%	47	3%
Total	1,244	100%	1,509	100%

Question 12: I have enough time in my day to deal with safeguarding concerns carefully, correctly and in a timely manner.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	62	5%	75	5%
Agree	161	13%	192	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	188	15%	312	21%
Disagree	383	31%	434	29%
Strongly disagree	452	36%	498	33%
Total	1,246	100%	1,511	100%

Question 13: It is appropriate for Work Coaches to be expected to identify and manage the needs of people requiring extra support.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	186	15%	225	15%
Agree	338	27%	393	26%
Neither agree nor disagree	286	23%	406	27%
Disagree	244	20%	270	18%
Strongly disagree	188	15%	212	14%
Total	1,242	100%	1,506	100%

Question 14: There is sufficient support from management and Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders (ACSSLs) to help ensure that effective safeguards are in place for vulnerable claimants.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	82	7%	103	7%
Agree	221	18%	263	17%
Neither agree nor disagree	314	25%	437	29%
Disagree	305	25%	352	23%
Strongly disagree	318	26%	349	23%
Total	1,240	100%	1,504	100%

Question 15: My managers recognise the impact of dealing with safeguarding concerns on my mental health and offer me appropriate support.

Response	Of those with direct contact with claimants	%	Total	%
Strongly Agree	145	12%	171	11%
Agree	289	23%	354	24%
Neither agree nor disagree	239	19%	340	23%
Disagree	247	20%	278	18%
Strongly disagree	322	26%	362	24%
Total	1,242	100%	1,505	100%