



Work and Pensions Committee

17 January 2025

Dr Gail Allsopp
Chief Medical Advisor
Department for Work and Pensions

Dear Dr Allsopp,

Thank you very much for [giving evidence](#) to the Work and Pensions Committee during its session on safeguarding vulnerable claimants. We recognise the time and effort required to prepare for these sessions and the number of people involved.

In the session we discussed, amongst other topics, your role in reviewing policies in the disability services area from a clinical governance perspective, and how this relates to the Department's approach to safeguarding. It would be helpful if you could answer the following questions:

- Are prospective changes to DWP policies, that are not included in the disability service area, automatically reviewed from a clinical governance perspective by any other team? If not, when and how are policies that fall outside the disability services area reviewed? For example, in the session you indicated that your team was not involved with winter fuel changes at the beginning of when policies were being changed, however, you were subsequently brought in.
- During the session, you said that when joining DWP, you appointed a safeguarding clinical lead for the Department. What work does the safeguarding clinical lead undertake?
- Are all DWP frontline staff, include Work Coaches, required to undertake the mandatory safeguarding training for healthcare assessors?
- From a clinical governance perspective, what are the main barriers involved in moving people who have been out of work on health and disability benefits into work?
- From a clinical safeguarding perspective, would removing the "substantial risk" descriptor from the Work Capability Assessment put some vulnerable claimants at risk?

I would be grateful for your response to these questions by 5 February. As is usual practice with the Committee's correspondence, I will be publishing this letter and your response on the Committee's website.

Yours sincerely,

Debbie Abrahams MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee