



Department
for Work &
Pensions

THE RT HON. SIR STEPHEN TIMMS MP

Minister for Social Security and Disability
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London, SW1H 9NA

10 March 2025

Debbie Abrahams MP

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Debbie,

Thank you for your letter dated 26 February 2025. I was grateful for the opportunity to update you on the department's work to support everyone who depends on us, especially those who are vulnerable and have complex needs.

I write to answer the questions raised in the Committee's correspondence. In the session, you asked if it would be possible to share further information with you to confirm: The number of claimants who, as part of managed migration, have been through an Enhanced Support Journey (ESJ), and that have been referred for a home visit.

Our Enhanced Support Journey management data, which is subject to revision, indicates that 82,400 claimants have received an outbound call attempt, up to end of February 2025. Over 15,000 claimants have been referred for a visit up to the end of January 2025

Vulnerability description/definition

Previously, the word "description" was used, but it may be better to refer to a "definition" of vulnerability. In broad terms the department defines an individual as vulnerable if they have complex needs and require additional support to access DWP benefits and use our services safely.

The department does not use a prescribed list that vulnerabilities are attributed to, rather a broad spectrum that can be tailored and is flexible to make sure the department is as inclusive as possible when providing additional support.

This definition is intentionally flexible, acknowledging that peoples' vulnerabilities can change over time. We all have the potential to be vulnerable at different times in our lives, for many different reasons.

Maintaining flexibility is important as it allows the additional support provided under the department's various policies and procedures to be wide reaching, and reflect the different and fluid circumstances people may find themselves in.

Internal Process Review referrals

Cases can only be referred for an Internal Process Review (IPR) by colleagues within the department, and they are encouraged to identify cases where they believe that there are circumstances for an IPR to be considered. The current criteria, shared previously, are:

- 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 we have 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 Internal Process Review will be conducted regardless of whether there is an allegation against the Department.

The department only has one set of IPR criteria, which covers cases identified internally or externally. What can vary is how the colleague making the referral for an IPR was made aware of the case.

The Committee asked a further question about the number of Internal Process Review (IPR) referrals – where those referrals came from and why out of the 75 referrals received in 2023/24, only 53 were deemed to have met the IPR criteria.

All of the 75 referrals received in 2023/24 were made by DWP colleagues, but, as the criteria allow, the Department was also alerted to some of the cases via external parties, such as next of kin and MPs and agencies such as Safeguarding Adult Boards or coroner inquests.

Of the 22 cases referred that did not meet the criteria, the most common reason was that there was no allegation or suggestion in respect of DWP actions and the facts of the tragic circumstances were not known. 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 relevant colleagues in the department, such as Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders, who are able to ensure we capture and share learning from all serious cases and not just those that meet the criteria for an IPR.

During 2024/2025, the department embarked on a rolling programme of awareness sessions to increase awareness and understanding of IPRs and their criteria across DWP. We will continue to deliver these sessions and learning modules to support colleagues working with vulnerable customers.

The role of the Work and Pensions Committee is crucial in aiding the department in identifying issues and strengthening processes. These are very important matters for the people we serve and those who support them, and I look forward to receiving the Committee's final report.

Please express my thanks to members of the Committee for their interest and continuing engagement.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen Timms". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Timms MP

Minister for Social Security and Disability