

Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants

Making sure everyone who needs to can ask for and use
benefits

About this easy read booklet



This is an easy read of a bigger booklet called **XXX**



This easy read booklet tells you about the main things in the bigger booklet.



If you want more information, you can find the bigger booklet on our website:

XXX

Helping people when they ask for benefits



The **UK Government** is doing some work about **benefits**.



The **Government** leads the country. They make decisions and laws about things like health, schools and money.



Benefits means money from the government for people who need help to pay for things.

This might be because they are unwell, disabled, or do not have a job.



The government wants to support **vulnerable** people when they get and use benefits.



Vulnerable people are people who need extra help and support to live well.



This might be people who:

- Have a learning disability.



- Have **mental health** problems.

Your **mental health** is things like your thoughts, feelings and how you cope in everyday life.



- Are homeless.



- Are being hurt by someone in their home.

Vulnerable people might find it harder to do things like:



- Understand letters.



- Answer phone calls.



- Use the internet.



- Go to appointments.



- Cope with stress.



- Sort out their money.



Because of these things, vulnerable people might find it hard to ask for and use benefits.



It is important to have extra support for vulnerable people when they use and get benefits.

We call this **safeguarding**. In this report, we also say safeguarding is keeping people safe.



About this report

This report tells you about ideas for supporting people who get benefits.



The ideas came from the **Work and Pensions Select Committee**.



The **committee** is made up of a group of Members of Parliament. We call them **MPs** for short.

MPs are people who work in the government.



The committee looked at how the **Department for Work and Pensions** supports people who need extra help with benefits.



The **Department for Work and Pensions** is part of the UK Government. They are called the **DWP** for short.



The DWP gives benefits and **pensions** to more than 20 million people.



A **pension** is money you save when you are working. You get the money when you finish working.



The committee sent their ideas to the government.



The government looked at the ideas and thought carefully about them.



This report tells you:

- What the committee's ideas are

and



- What the government said about the ideas.



Some of the ideas are not in this report.



This is because we are already asking people what they think about those things.



A safeguarding statement

A **statement** means giving true information about something.



The committee said:

The government should make a statement about safeguarding.



This means they should say what they are going to do about safeguarding and then make sure they do it.



The DWP should tell MPs what they will do to support people who get benefits.



The government should make new laws to keep people safe.



Everyone in the DWP should be involved in its work to keep people safe.



The government said:

We will tell MPs what we are doing to support people in the autumn.



We are thinking about if new laws might be needed to protect people who get benefits and keep them safe.



We have not made a decision about this yet.

Policies and benefit changes



A **policy** is a set of rules about how we do something.



The committee said:

The government should find out about how people's health might be affected when policies change.



The **Chief Medical Advisor** should be asked to do this work. The **Chief Medical Advisor** is a doctor.



They work together with different teams in the DWP. They give advice and help to make sure policies are safe and support people's health.



The government said:

The Chief Medical Advisor already works closely with people who write the government's policies.

Listening to people

The committee said:

The government should listen to people who get benefits.



They should start a new group, like the Manchester Disabled People's Panel.



This is a group of disabled people who are helping to make Manchester better.



They are involved planning and making decisions about the city.



The government said:

We are asking people about how to keep people safe as part of our survey about **Pathways to Work**.



Pathways to Work is about the government's ideas for changes to benefits.



We are starting a Disability Advisory Panel.

This is a group that gives advice about things that affect disabled people.



There will be up to 12 people on the panel.

Members of the panel will be disabled people or people who have had health problems that last a long time.

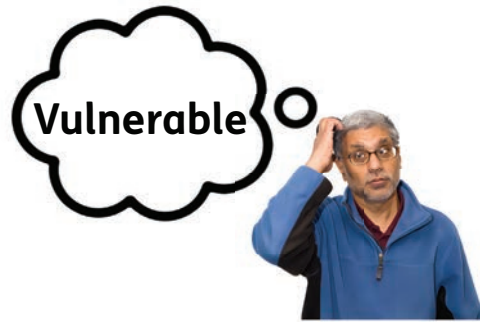


They will use their experience to tell us about the things we need to make better.



The panel is being set up now. They will start meeting later this year.

The word vulnerable



The committee said:

Vulnerable is a hard word. It can mean lots of different things.



The DWP should be clear about what it means when it uses the word vulnerable.



This will help organisations to support people better.



The government said:

We can all be vulnerable sometimes.



We say that people are vulnerable if they need extra help to use our services and to be safe.



We will think about how to tell everyone what we mean when we say that people are vulnerable.



The meaning needs to be **flexible**, because everyone is different.

Flexible means being able to change things if you need to.

Application forms



An **application form** is a form you fill in to ask for benefits.

The committee said:

When people ask for benefits, they must fill in a form.

There should be a question asking if people need extra help and support.



The government said:

We already ask questions about things like:

- Support people need.



- If people are homeless.





- If they need information that is written in a way they can understand.



We share this information with staff who support them.

Supporting people

The committee said:

Staff should check to see if people might need extra support.

They should do this often, not just once. Things can change.



The DWP should have a policy about how to do this.



The government said:

We want to change how things are done. Our ideas are in the Pathways to Work paper about benefits.



We want to talk to people often and offer them help.



Staff who work with people who get benefits will get more training.



This will help people to trust and respect each other.

Help with asking for benefits

The committee said:

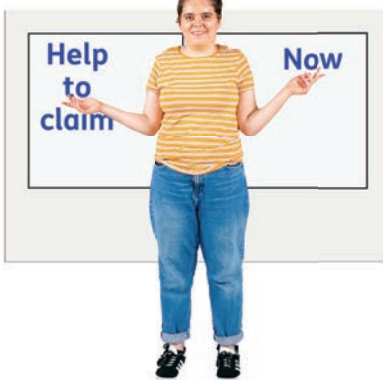
There used to be a way to get help with asking for benefits. It was called **Help to Claim**. It was a good service.



Jobcentres should still be helping people in the same way.

We want the DWP to tell us about the differences between:

- Help to Claim
- and
- The help people get now.



If any support is missing, tell us what you will do about it.



The government said:

People can still use Help to Claim by contacting their local Citizens Advice service.



Jobcentres help people who cannot get help from Citizens Advice or the internet.



If someone cannot use any of these services, we visit them at home.



We visited 1 hundred and 46 thousand people last year.



We have found no difference between the Help to Claim, and the support people get now

Giving people information



The committee said:

Tell people about the support they can get.

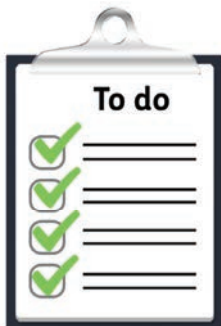


Keep records about the information that people are given.



The government said:

Giving people too much information can make them feel confused.



People have told us they want simple advice about the things they need to do.



People can update their own information in their **online account**, if they need extra support.



An **online account** is something you can set up on the internet. You can log into your account to find information about your benefits.



We have Work Coaches. These are people who are trained to give people the right information at the right time.

Safeguarding Approach



DWP is working on a new way of working to help keep people safe. We call this way of working the **safeguarding approach**.



We are still working on this.



The committee said:

Make sure that the new approach is simple and easy to follow.

There should be information for:

- People asking benefits.

and

- Organisations who support people to claim benefits.





We should tell people about this new approach in different languages and ways that are easy for people to understand.

Things like braille, easy read or large print.



The government said:

We will think about these things in the autumn.



This is when we will know more about what will be in the approach.



We follow our Accessible Documents Policy.

Staff survey

The committee said:

Send a survey to staff who work for the DWP.



Ask questions about keeping people safe. Ask about things like:

- What training they have.



- What policies there are.



- How much they know and what experience they have of safeguarding.

The government said:



We agree that surveys help us to understand more about what staff think and know about safeguarding.



We will think about how to use the things people tell us to make our policies and services better.

Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders



These are people who make sure vulnerable people get extra help and support, if they need it.



The committee said:

More people need to know about the Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders.



They are important for helping to keep people safe.



Benefits Advisors need to be able ask them for advice if they are worried about someone.



Right now, we think we have the right number of Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders.



We will keep looking at this and check if we need more Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders in the future.

The government said:



Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders already tell people about their job in their local areas.



We employed more Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders in 2022 and 2023.



Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders will not replace the usual support you get from Job centres or other DWP staff.



There are already ways for people to get extra help or support.

Safeguarding Adults Boards



Safeguarding Adults Boards are groups of people who look at keeping people safe in a local area.



The committee said:

Safeguarding Adults Boards should include someone from the DWP.



Tell everyone about how the DWP and the Safeguarding Adults Boards work together.



The government said:

We will keep working with local Safeguarding Adults boards.



We already work with the National Network for Safeguarding Adults Board Chairs.

National means across the UK.



Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders are members of **8 out of 10** local Safeguarding Adults Boards.

Complaints



A **complaint** is when you tell a service you are unhappy about something.

The committee said:



A service called the **Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman** listens to complaints about benefits.



People have to contact their local **MP** about their complaint.

Then the MP contacts the Ombudsman.



People should be able to contact the Ombudsman, without having to ask their MP.



The Ombudsman should also be able to find out about problems with benefits, before people have to complain.



The government said:

The DWP cannot make these changes.



Only Parliament can change the law about how the Ombudsman works.

Serious harm and death

The committee said:

There is not enough information about people who die or are seriously harmed whilst they are getting benefits.



The DWP needs to collect this information, then **publish** it.

Publish means putting something out for everyone to see or read. This might be in a leaflet, book or online.



When other organisations run services for the DWP, make sure that they:

- Collect the right information.
- Store and share it safely.





The government said:

The Chief Medical Advisor is involved in how we learn from **Prevention of Future Deaths** reports.



These reports are written by **coroners**.

Coroners are people who find out:

- How a person died.
- When and where they died.
- What caused the death.



These reports are published.



We will work with **coroners** to get better at learning from the reports and protect people from harm in the future.



We have a person who is our **Caldicott Guardian**. Their job is to make sure that we look after information properly.



The Caldicott Guardian can help us to make sure that organisations who work for us are:

- Looking after people's information properly.
- Following the rules to keep information safe.



Learning from mistakes



The committee said:

Tell people about how the DWP and the Ombudsman work together.



Tell people about how the DWP and the Ombudsman learn from serious mistakes.



This should happen in the next 6 months.



The government said:

The Ombudsman is not involved in how the DWP learns from mistakes.



The DWP wants to learn from any mistakes.



We are looking at how we work, and at things that need to be better.

Investigating mistakes

Investigate means looking into something.

The committee said:

Ask an **independent** organisation to look at how the DWP learns from mistakes.


Department
for Work &
Pensions



Independent means that people in the organisation do not work for the DWP.

An independent organisation is free to say what it thinks.



The DWP should work with disabled people to set up this up.





The government said:

We think this is a good idea. We will find out how other organisations do this.



We already have an independent person on our Clinical Governance and Excellence Board.



The board gives advice on problems, and makes sure everything is safe and working well.



Our Serious Case Panel is also led by someone who is independent.



The Serious Case Panel looks at things that have gone wrong and tries to stop them from happening again in the future.