House of Commons

Committee of Public Accounts

Tackling fraud and error in benefit expenditure 2024-25

Sixty-sixth Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1231

Committee of Public Accounts

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Publication

This Report, together with formal minutes relating to the Report, was Ordered by the House of Commons, on 5 February 2026, to be printed. It was published on 11 February 2026 by authority of the House of Commons.

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/pac and in print by Order of the House.

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Summary

It is unacceptable that the Department for Work and Pensions' (the Department's) accounts have been qualified for 37 successive years due to the material level of fraud and error in benefit expenditure. We welcome the fact that the overpayment rate is now beginning to fall—down from 3.6% in 2023–24 to 3.3% in 2024–25—but the level remains too high, with £9.5 billion overpaid in the last year due to fraud, claimant error and official error. The Department says its focus is now on reducing the overpayment rate to 2.8%, but we would like to see a more ambitious statement of intent.

The Department has received extra funding and implemented a range of initiatives in recent years to tackle overpayments. Its programme of Targeted Case Review is checking large volumes of Universal Credit claims and has generated savings of £581 million since 2022. With the passage of the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Act in December 2025, the Department has significant new legal powers, including to compel banks and other financial institutions to provide information to help verify a claimant's eligibility and entitlement to benefits. It is important that it uses these powers effectively and proportionately. The Department also needs to improve its processes and controls to stop overpayments arising in the first place and prevent losses to the taxpayer. A key element of this is drawing on data held by other government departments to help check claimants' entitlement to benefits.

Too many claimants also continue to receive less money than they are entitled to due to official error and unfulfilled eligibility – these totalled £4.9 billion in 2024–25, up from £4.2 billion in 2023–24. We reiterate our previous call for the Department to make it easy for people to report changes of circumstances, alongside building trust so claimants feel confident they will be treated fairly when they do so.

A striking finding of the recent Independent Review of Carer's Allowance Overpayments is that the Department's flawed guidance on how earnings should be averaged had resulted in some carers being incorrectly pursued for overpayment debts. The Department estimates this mistake may have affected some 26,000 carers, but it needs to review 200,000 cases to identify those involved. It must press on with addressing the issues identified in the Independent Review, giving this area the leadership and attention it

has long deserved and acting to rebuild trust with carers. The Committee will be keeping a close eye on the Department as it implements the recommendations of the Independent Review.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. **The Department has started to make progress in bringing down the level of benefit overpayments, but the current rate is still too high.** The Department's accounts have been qualified for 37 successive years due to the material level of fraud and error in benefit expenditure. The Department estimates that it overpaid 3.3% (£9.5 billion) of benefit expenditure in 2024–25, down from 3.6% (£9.7 billion) in 2023–24. In its 2024–25 annual report and accounts, the Department set out an ambition to reduce overpayment rates to the pre-pandemic level of 3.1% by 2028–29. It has since updated its ambition to align with the Office for Budget Responsibility's 2025 Autumn Budget forecast, which was that the overpayment rate will fall to 2.8% by 2028–29. The Department claims that achieving this reduction would be "impressive", but we are not convinced by the scale of its ambition. It will need to go further if the longstanding qualification on its accounts is to be removed, and we expect it to press on with demonstrating that it has put in place a cost-effective control environment for benefit expenditure.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should set out in its Treasury Minute response to this report a more stretching ambition for reducing the overpayment rate, going beyond what is forecast to a level that indicates that it has cost-effective controls over benefit spending.

2. **Errors by the Department or other parts of government caused £1.0 billion of overpayments and £1.2 billion of underpayments in 2024–25.** Official error occurs when a benefit is paid incorrectly due to action, delay or a mistake by the Department, a local authority or HM Revenue & Customs. In 2024–25, official error overpayments were estimated at £1.0 billion, up from £0.8 billion in 2023–24, and official error underpayments were estimated at £1.2 billion, up from £1.1 billion in 2023–24. The Department has published information on some of the work it has done to identify and tackle the root causes of fraud and error, but this analysis focused on claimant error and fraud. We expect the Department to take official

error as seriously as it does claimant error and fraud, given the large amounts of money involved and the fact that reducing this error is largely within its own control.

RECOMMENDATION
The Department should set out what action it will take to address the root causes of official error, with the aim of publishing a progress update in its 2025–26 annual report and accounts.

3. **The Department has not made clear how it plans to spend the £3.5 billion of dedicated funding it has available to tackle fraud and error in the three years from 2026–27.** The government has awarded the Department £6.7 billion of dedicated funding for fraud and error activity over the nine years from 2020–21 to 2028–29. Of this, £3.5 billion will be available in the three years from 2026–27. The Department says that it will use £300 million to £400 million each year to continue its Targeted Case Review programme, which seeks to detect and correct fraud and error in Universal Credit claims. It is also planning to extend Targeted Case Review to Pension Credit, at a cost of up to £70 million per year. However. the Department has not made clear how it will use the remainder of the available funding, which amounts to over £2 billion. It has indicated that it intends to use some of the money to implement its new legal powers, but did not say how much this would cost.

RECOMMENDATION
The Department should set out in the Treasury Minute how it plans to spend the £3.5 billion of dedicated funding available from 2026–27, including how it will measure the cost-effectiveness and return on investment of the areas it funds.

4. **The Department is not doing enough to share data with other government departments and thereby improve the accuracy of benefit payments.** Administering the benefits system is complex: for example, targeting benefits such as Universal Credit to claimants' needs and circumstances introduces complexity and increases the risk of fraud and error. Access to reliable data is key to keeping benefit payments accurate. However, the Department's benefit systems are not fully integrated and it lacks common data standards, which makes it difficult to take a data-driven approach to preventing and detecting fraud and error. The Department uses real-time PAYE earnings data from HM Revenue & Customs to verify claimants' employment earnings, which it holds up as a 'gold standard' example of data sharing. However, it does not seem to have similar data-sharing arrangements with other government departments, which could help it tackle key loss areas such as household composition.

Data from the Department for Education, for example, could help the Department to verify the number of children in households claiming Universal Credit.

RECOMMENDATION
The Department should set out in the Treasury Minute how it plans to work directly with other departments on data sharing, including how it can work with the Department for Education to help verify household composition as part of its checks for Universal Credit.

5. **The Department has not fully set out how it will use its new legal powers in a way that supports public trust.** The Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Act, which received Royal Assent on 2 December 2025, gives the Department new powers to tackle fraud and error and recover debt. For example, it can now compel banks and other financial institutions to provide information to help verify a claimant's eligibility for benefits, and third parties to provide information when it is conducting criminal investigations. It will also be able to recover money owed by individuals directly from their bank accounts without the need for a court order where an individual is not on benefits or in PAYE employment. It is important that the Department uses these extensive powers proportionately and effectively. The Department says it is putting in place safeguards to make sure it does so, such as issuing codes of practice, and it also highlights the role HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services will play in providing oversight of how it uses the new powers.

RECOMMENDATION
The Department should report annually, in its annual reports and accounts, on how often it has used the powers in the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Act 2025 and with what impact.

6. **Claimants not reporting changes in their circumstances remains a key cause of people not receiving the full amount of benefit they are entitled to.** Unfulfilled eligibility occurs where a claimant fails to provide accurate information or evidence to the Department about their circumstances and as a result does not receive their full benefit entitlement. Unfulfilled eligibility was estimated to be £3.7 billion in 2024–25, up from £3.1 billion in 2023–24. It particularly affects claimants of disability benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment, who fail to report that their condition has worsened. The Department acknowledges that building trust with customers is key to reducing the number of incorrect benefit payments, alongside making it easier for people to report changes of circumstances. It is launching a communications campaign in January 2026 to help customers identify what they need to tell the Department

and to encourage them to do so. The Department also acknowledges that it needs to do more to build public trust by ensuring that people feel raising concerns about potential fraud is worthwhile, and has agreed to consider what information it might be able to share about the outcome of cases with people who make fraud referrals.

RECOMMENDATION

a. The Department should evaluate the impact of its communications campaign to encourage claimants to report changes of circumstances and publish the results by the end of 2026.

b. In its Treasury Minute response to this report the Department should update us on how it plans to provide more information to update people who raise concerns with it about cases of potential fraud.

7. **Inaccurate operational guidance has led the Department to incorrectly assess around 26,000 carers as having been overpaid Carer's Allowance.** The main cause of Carer's Allowance overpayments is claimants having earnings which exceed the permitted limit. The Independent Review of Carer's Allowance Overpayments, which was published in November 2025, found that the prevalence of earnings-related overpayments had been caused by systemic issues that prevented carers from fulfilling their responsibility to report information about their circumstances. This included the Department having operational guidance that was inconsistent with the governing regulations and that did not allow staff discretion to average fluctuating earnings where claimants had an irregular earnings pattern. The Department estimates that, over the past 10 years, about 26,000 people were incorrectly recorded as having been overpaid Carer's Allowance as a result. It has committed to put this right and believes it will take around two years to identify all those affected, with 200,000 cases reviewed in the process. A lack of integrated, concerted leadership from the Department allowed this issue to persist, and it must now work quickly to provide redress to the people affected.

RECOMMENDATION
Within six months, DWP should write to update the Committee on its progress with identifying and resolving the cases of carers affected by its inaccurate guidance.

1 Levels of fraud and error

Introduction

1. On the basis of two reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General (the C&AG), we took evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions (the Department) on tackling fraud and error in benefit expenditure.[1]

2. The Department makes welfare payments to more than 23 million people across Great Britain. In 2024–25, it paid £290.8 billion in benefits (including State Pension) and spent £7.3 billion on running costs. Some of its customers have complex needs, for example due to poverty, age, health problems or disabilities.[2]

3. The Department is required to pay benefits and State Pension on time, in full and in accordance with legislation and the related regulations. Where fraud or error results in the payment of a benefit to an individual who is not entitled to that benefit, or a benefit is paid at a rate that differs from the amount specified in legislation, the overpayment or underpayment does not conform with Parliament's intention and is irregular.[3]

4. Fraud and error is one of the Department's most persistent and pressing risks.[4] Due to the material level of fraud and error in benefit expenditure, successive C&AGs have qualified their audit opinions on the regularity of the Department's accounts for the past 37 years. State Pension is excluded from the qualification because it has a significantly lower level of fraud and error.[5]

1 C&AG's Report, Tackling benefit overpayments due to fraud and error, Session 2024–26 HC 1336, 22 October 2025 (abbreviated in subsequent footnotes to 'C&AG's Report (overpayments)'); C&AG's Report on DWP's accounts 2024–25, Session 2024–25, HC 995, 8 July 2025 (abbreviated in subsequent footnotes to 'C&AG's Report (on accounts)')
2 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 1
3 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 2
4 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 4
5 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 3

Efforts to bring down the level of overpayments

5. The overpayment rate has been generally declining, but has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. The Department estimates the monetary value of fraud and error annually. It estimated that it overpaid 3.3% (£9.5 billion) of benefit expenditure in 2024–25, down from 3.6% (£9.7 billion) in 2023–24. The estimated Universal Credit overpayment rate dropped significantly from 12.4% in 2023–24 to 9.7% in 2024–25.[6]

6. In its 2024–25 annual report and accounts, the Department set out an ambition to reduce overpayment rates to the pre-pandemic level of 3.1% by 2028–29.[7] On 1 December 2025, three days before the oral evidence session for this inquiry, it wrote to draw our attention to the Office for Budget Responsibility's (the OBR's) 2025 Autumn Budget forecast, which was that the estimated monetary value of fraud and error would fall to 2.8% by 2028–29.[8]

7. The Department told us that an overpayment rate of 2.8% was where it wanted to get to by 2028–29 and that this rate reflected what the OBR thought the Department's existing measures would achieve if they were implemented effectively. It also noted that the rate did not reflect the impact of any new measures that it might develop going forward.[9] We pressed the Department on whether its target for reducing fraud and error is ambitious enough. It told us that achieving a rate of 2.8% would be "impressive", particularly as it was operating against headwinds in society where it sometimes felt as though fraud and error was becoming more acceptable.[10] We have said previously that we see no reason why an increasing propensity for fraud must inevitably lead to increasing losses to the taxpayer.[11]

8. We asked the Department about its controls to prevent fraud and error, particularly in relation to Universal Credit. It said that, because it was monitoring controls, it was able to identify where there were possible weaknesses and make continuous improvements. It noted that it was harder to have effective controls in some areas than in others.[12] We pressed the Department about controls in key loss areas, such as fraud and

6 C&AG's Report (overpayments), paras 7, 8
7 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 2.25
8 Letter from DWP to the Public Accounts Committee dated 1 December 2025
9 Q 3
10 Q 17
11 Committee of Public Accounts, DWP Customer Service and Accounts 2023–24, Sixth Report of Session 2024–25, HC 354, January 2025
12 Q 13

error relating to people living together.[13] Written evidence we received highlighted that this is the second most common cause of Universal Credit overpayments, accounting for £1.2 billion in 2024–25.[14] DWP acknowledged that family life was fluid in many cases and living together was difficult to define.[15]

9. Demonstrating that it has a cost-effective control environment could help the Department move towards an unqualified audit opinion on its accounts.[16] We made clear our desire to be involved in conversations with the Department and the C&AG about how the Department might get to a position where the long-standing qualification could be lifted. The Department agreed that it was keen for these conversations to take place, and acknowledged that Parliament would want to have confidence that it was driving down fraud and error relentlessly.[17]

The scale of official error

10. Official error occurs when a benefit is paid incorrectly due to action, delay or a mistake by the Department, a local authority or HM Revenue & Customs.[18] In 2024–25, official error overpayments were estimated at £1.0 billion, up from £0.8 billion in 2023–24, and official error underpayments were estimated at £1.2 billion, up from £1.1 billion in 2023–24.[19] Reducing these amounts is largely within the Department's own control.

11. In its 2024–25 annual report and accounts, the Department published information on some of the work it had done to identify and tackle the root causes of fraud and error, particularly on Universal Credit through activities such as its Targeted Case Review of existing claims.[20] Targeted Case Review has helped inform a range of improvements – for example, the Department is introducing 'periodic redeclaration' of Universal Credit claims after Targeted Case Review helped identify people not regularly reporting changes of circumstances as a key source of error.[21] We note, however, that the Department's analysis of the root causes of fraud and error has to date focused on claimant error and fraud rather than official error.[22]

13 Q 14
14 FAE0007
15 Q 14
16 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 2.16
17 Q 4
18 C&AG's Report (on accounts), para 6
19 C&AG's Report (on accounts), paras 6, 27; C&AG's Report on DWP's accounts 2023–24, Session 2024–25, HC 129, 12 July 2024 , paras 14, 21
20 DWP Annual Report and Accounts 2024–25, pages 104-105
21 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 3.21
22 DWP Annual Report and Accounts 2024–25, pages 104-111

12. We pressed the Department on whether it is taking official error seriously enough. It acknowledged that, while official error is a smaller component of overpayments than fraud, it needed to get its own house in order. It said that it continuously sought to address official error through training for its staff, regular audits and other lines of defence.[23]

23 Q 18

2 Measures to address fraud and error

Funding to tackle fraud and error

13. The Government has awarded the Department £6.7 billion of dedicated funding for fraud and error activity over the nine years from 2020–21 to 2028–29. £3.5 billion of this money will be available in the three years from 2026–27 to 2028–29, giving the Department the opportunity to increase the scale and impact of its approach.[24]

14. We asked the Department how it planned to use this funding in the three years from 2026–27. It told us that the money would cover a series of measures, including a continuation of Targeted Case Review of Universal Credit claims.[25] From August 2022 to March 2025, over 1.15 million claims were reviewed, generating savings of £581 million.[26] The Department said it was expecting to spend between £300 million and £400 million per year on Targeted Case Review. It was also planning to extend this initiative to other areas, particularly Pension Credit, at a cost of between £60 million and £70 million per year. It estimated that this would save between £30 million and £190 million annually.[27]

15. The Department did not make clear how it planned to use the remainder of the available funding, which amounts to over £2 billion. It indicated that it expected to spend some money implementing the new powers it has acquired through the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Act 2025 but did not say how much this would cost. The Department also told us that it planned to employ a 'test and learn' approach in tackling fraud and error, with an expectation that successful measures should deliver a return on investment in excess of 3:1.[28]

24 C&AG's Report (overpayments), paras 12, 21
25 Q 8
26 C&AG's Report (overpayments), paras 3.27, 3.28
27 Q 8; Letter from DWP to the Public Accounts Committee dated 1 December 2025
28 Q 8

Data sharing between government departments

16. In many instances, Parliament has targeted benefits to claimants' needs and circumstances, with the aim of ensuring that resources are used efficiently. However, this can introduce complexity and increase the risk of fraud and error.[29]

17. The Department said that data was absolutely key to addressing fraud and error. Exploiting forms of data to keep benefit claims accurate was a lesson it had taken from Universal Credit. It pointed us towards its success in using real-time PAYE data from HM Revenue & Customs to verify Universal Credit claimants' earnings, which it held up as a "gold standard" example of data sharing.[30]

18. The Department told us that there were data sources from across government and beyond that its systems could potentially use to help drive down fraud and error, and that it was very keen to exploit such opportunities.[31] We note that there is information that the Department for Education and councils have that could help the Department to verify household composition as part of its checks for Universal Credit.[32]

19. The Department's modern digital systems for Universal Credit have made it easier to implement fraud and error prevention measures for this benefit.[33] We asked the Department what it was doing to improve the digital platforms for other benefits, so it could introduce similar initiatives in other areas. The Department noted that its Service Modernisation Programme would be important in bringing about the digital improvements needed to support this work.[34] For example, the 'one customer view' system would enable departmental staff to view all elements of a customer's claim in one place.[35]

29 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 1.13; C&AG's Report (on accounts), para 11
30 Q 12
31 Q 12
32 Qq 12, 14, 16
33 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 2.14
34 Qq 10-11
35 Q 48

Use of new legal powers

20. The Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Act, which received Royal Assent in December 2025, extends the Department's powers to tackle fraud and error and recover any associated losses.[36] The Department's new powers include the ability to compel banks and other financial institutions to provide information to help it verify a claimant's eligibility and entitlement for certain benefits. It will also have greater information-gathering powers whereby a larger range of third parties could be required to provide information to the Department in support of criminal investigations.[37]

21. We asked the Department how it would ensure that it used its new powers proportionately and effectively. It highlighted that the new powers and safeguards had been debated at length during the passage of the Bill. It said that it would be consulting on codes of practice, which would give more detail about how the safeguards would work.[38] The Department told us that the ultimate safeguard would be the involvement of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services – the Inspectorate would oversee how the Department used its powers, produce an independent report and come to a view on whether the powers were being used appropriately.[39]

22. The Department will also have a new power to recover money owed from an individual's bank account, without the need for a court order, where the individual is not on benefits or in PAYE employment.[40] It told us that this power was about fairness and making sure that it treated people who chose not to pay debts owed to the Department consistently. It said it would make sure that those involved had the financial resilience to allow it to recover the money owed.[41]

Reporting changes of circumstances

23. Unfulfilled eligibility (previously called claimant error underpayments) occurs where a claimant fails to provide accurate information or evidence about their circumstances and as a result does not receive the full amount of benefit they are entitled to. Unfulfilled eligibility was estimated to be £3.7 billion in 2024–25, up from £3.1 billion in 2023–24.[42] It particularly

36 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 3.35; Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Act 2025
37 C&AG's Report (overpayments), para 19
38 Qq 37, 47
39 Qq 37-38, 47
40 C&AG's report (on overpayments), Figure 10
41 Q 47
42 C&AG's report (on accounts), para 8; C&AG's Report on DWP's Accounts 2023–24, Session 2024–25, HC 129, 22 July 2024, para 21

affects claimants of disability benefits who fail to report that their condition has worsened. The highest levels of unfulfilled eligibility are for Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance, with estimated rates of 4.1% (£1.06 billion) and 11.1% (£0.85 billion) respectively in 2024–25.[43] People not regularly reporting changes of circumstances is also a key cause of Universal Credit overpayments.[44]

24. We previously concluded that the Department needed to do more to encourage people to report changes of circumstances, which hinges on making it easy for people to get in touch and on customers trusting that they will be treated fairly.[45] The Department told us that customer satisfaction was generally high, but acknowledged that it needed to go further in building trust.[46] It also spoke about research it had done to understand how people feel about the Department, and said what was interesting was that people who regularly dealt with the Department had a more positive view of the Department than the wider population.[47]

25. The Department outlined what it was doing to make it easier for people to report changes of circumstances.[48] It highlighted a campaign that it would be launching in January 2026—"Tell DWP"—to help customers identify what they need to declare and encourage them to do so. It wanted to support those people who were honest but who might make a mistake.[49] The Department also noted that Universal Credit claimants could report changes of circumstances via the online journal portal and said that it would look to roll that functionality out to other benefits.[50]

26. We also asked the Department how it communicates with members of the public who raise concerns about potential cases of fraud, in particular what it tells them about how the cases have been resolved. The Department acknowledged the importance of ensuring that people feel raising a concern is worthwhile, and agreed to consider what more it might be able to do.[51] It subsequently wrote to tell us that, where a fraud referral was received, it confirms receipt and explains that no details on the outcome of the case can be provided. It said that, generally, it cannot provide updates as there is no lawful basis to disclose this information to a third party. The Department

43 DWP report (on accounts), para 28
44 DWP report (overpayments), para 17
45 Committee of Public Accounts, DWP Customer Service and Accounts 2023–24, Sixth Report of Session 2024–25, HC 354, 31 January 2025, para 5
46 Q 41
47 Q 40
48 Qq 14, 40
49 Q 14
50 Q 40
51 Qq 44-46

noted, however, that it was sympathetic to the points we had raised, and committed to explore what was possible within the confines of the legislation and to update us when it had done so.[52]

Carer's Allowance

27. From 2018–19 to 2023–24, the number of new Carer's Allowance overpayments identified by the Department each year fluctuated between 32,500 and 60,800. The main cause of Carer's Allowance overpayments is a claimant having earnings which exceed the permitted limit.[53]

28. The Independent Review of Carer's Allowance Overpayments, published in November 2025, found that the prevalence of overpayments related to earnings had been caused not by widespread individual error by carers in reporting their earnings, but by systemic issues preventing them from fulfilling their responsibility to report. This included the Department's operational guidance that was inconsistent with the governing regulations.[54] The Department told us that the guidance it had issued in 2015 had not allowed its staff discretion to average fluctuating earnings where claimants had an irregular earnings pattern, despite the law allowing this.[55]

29. We asked the Department how long it would take to reassess all the cases that might have been affected by its incorrect guidance on averaging earnings. The Department said it estimated that about 26,000 people would have been affected over the past 10 years, but it would need to review 200,000 cases to identify the individuals involved. It thought that this might take about two years. The Department told us that it was mobilising teams to address this matter in the same way as it had addressed systemic underpayments found in other parts of the welfare system, such as in State Pension.[56] It had £75 million available to build and run the teams and to fund payments to customers.[57] The Permanent Secretary said that he was sorry for all of those affected by this issue but that he was determined to put it right.[58]

30. The Independent Review also found a lack of integrated, concerted leadership in relation to Carer's Allowance overpayments. We asked the Department what it was going to do to make sure that this area got the

52 Letter from Department for Work & Pensions dated 17 December 2025
53 C&AG's Report, Carer's Allowance, Session 2024–25, HC 377, 11 December 2024, paras 2.3, 2.7
54 Department for Work & Pensions, Independent Review of Carer's Allowance Overpayments, 25 November 2025
55 Q 21
56 Q 21
57 Q 24
58 Qq 21-22

attention and leadership it deserved going forward. The Department told us that it had made progress, but not enough. It said that it had appointed a service owner to lead across Carer's Allowance and to own this problem. It also highlighted that it had eliminated the backlog of earnings alerts received from HM Revenue & Customs. Where previously it had funding to investigate only about 50% of alerts, over the past year it had been funded to look into every alert received and could thereby avoid people generating an overpayment and building up a debt.[59]

59 Q 22

Formal minutes

Thursday 5 February 2026

Members present

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts

Anna Dixon

Rupert Lowe

Catherine McKinnell

Declaration of interests

The following declarations of interest relating to the inquiry were made:

4 December 2025

Anna Dixon declared the following interest: Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Carers.

Tackling fraud and error in benefit expenditure 2024-25

Draft Report (*Tackling fraud and error in benefit expenditure 2024-25*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 30 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Conclusions and recommendations agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixty-sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

Adjournment

Adjourned till Monday 9 February at 3.00 p.m.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Thursday 4 December 2025

Sir Peter Schofield KCB, Permanent Secretary, Department of Work and Pensions; **Neil Couling CBE**, Director General, Fraud, Disability and Health, Department of Work and Pensions; **Vikki Knight**, Director of Fraud, Error and Debt Strategy, Department of Work and Pensions Q1-48

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

FAE numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Avram, Dr Silvia (Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex); and Harkness, Professor Susan (Professor of Social Policy, University of Bristol)	FAE0007
2	Ballis, Dr Antonis (Senior Lecturer and FRG Member , Aston University); and Kassem, Dr Rasha (Senior Lecturer and Leader of the Fraud Research Group (FRG), Aston University)	FAE0005
3	Buziuk, Hleb (Independent policy researcher and human-rights advocate, FairGo CIC)	FAE0003
4	Currie, Dr Morgan (Senior Lecturer, University of Edinburgh); Podoletz, Dr Lena (Lecturer, Lancaster University); and Spring, Dr Alli (Researcher, University of Edinburgh)	FAE0002
5	Equifax	FAE0001
6	Public Law Project	FAE0006
7	Wildman, Professor Charlotte (Professor of Modern British History, University of Manchester)	FAE0004

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
65th	Efficiency and resilience of the Probation Service	HC 1235
64th	Costs of clinical negligence	HC 1234
63rd	Increasing police productivity	HC 1239
62nd	Faulty energy efficiency installations	HC 1229
61st	Financial sustainability of children's care homes	HC 1233
60th	DWP follow-up: Autumn 2025	HC 1447
59th	Ministry of Justice follow-up: Autumn 2025	HC 1240
58th	Government services: Identifying costs	HC 1421
57th	Government services: Generating income	HC 890
56th	BBC Accounts and Trust Statement 2024–25	HC 1230
55th	Reducing NHS waiting times for elective care	HC 820
54th	Afghanistan Response Route	HC 1391
53rd	Cost of maintaining the FCDO's overseas estate	HC 884
52nd	Resilience to threats from animal disease	HC 885
51st	The UK's F-35 stealth fighter capability	HC 1232
50th	Local bus services in England	HC 892
49th	Administration of the Civil Service Pension Scheme	HC 888
48th	Smarter delivery of public services	HC 889
47th	First Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 1300
46th	Improving local areas through developer funding	HC 886
45th	Improving family court services for children	HC 883

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44th	Governance and decision-making on major projects	HC 642
43rd	MoD’s oversight of Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’ Associations	HC 893
42nd	Water sector regulation	HC 824
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39th	Government’s use of private finance for infrastructure	HC 821
38th	Increasing teacher numbers: Secondary and further education	HC 825
37th	Immigration: Skilled worker visas	HC 819
36th	Jobcentres	HC 823
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34th	Department for Business and Trade Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24	HC 818
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32nd	The Future of the Equipment Plan	HC 716
31st	Local Government Financial Sustainability	HC 647
30th	Antimicrobial resistance: addressing the risks	HC 646
29th	Condition of Government property	HC 641
28th	Decommissioning Sellafield	HC 363
27th	Government’s relationship with digital technology suppliers	HC 640
26th	Tackling Violence against Women and Girls	HC 644
25th	DHSC Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24	HC 639
24th	Government cyber resilience	HC 643
23rd	The cost of the tax system	HC 645
22nd	Government’s support for biomass	HC 715
21st	Fixing NHS Dentistry	HC 648
20th	DCMS management of COVID-19 loans	HC 364
19th	Energy Bills Support	HC 511
18th	Use of AI in Government	HC 356
17th	The Remediation of Dangerous Cladding	HC 362
16th	Whole of Government Accounts 2022-23	HC 367
15th	Prison estate capacity	HC 366
14th	Public charge points for electric vehicles	HC 512
13th	Improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children	HC 365

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12th	Crown Court backlogs	HC 348
11th	Excess votes 2023-24	HC 719
10th	HS2: Update following the Northern leg cancellation	HC 357
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8th	Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage	HC 351
7th	Asylum accommodation: Home Office acquisition of former HMP Northeye	HC 361
6th	DWP Customer Service and Accounts 2023-24	HC 354
5th	NHS financial sustainability	HC 350
4th	Tackling homelessness	HC 352
3rd	HMRC Customer Service and Accounts	HC 347
2nd	Condition and maintenance of Local Roads in England	HC 349
1st	Support for children and young people with special educational needs	HC 353