



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

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Operations FOI Team  
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SW1H 9NA

**[www.GOV.uk/dwp](http://www.GOV.uk/dwp)**

17 September 2018

Our ref: VTR2897

Dear Mr Pring,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request received on 21 June 2018. We apologise that we have been unable to answer this query within 20 working days as required by S.10 of the FOI Act. You asked for:

*See Annex 1.*

### **DWP Response**

How many internal process reviews have taken place since 18 April 2016.

**50**

How many of these reviews involved a benefit claimant who had died.

**33\***

How many of these reviews involved a claimant of universal credit. –

**6**

How many of these reviews involved a claimant of universal credit who had died. –

**4\*** (n.b. this is a subset of the 33 above)

How many of these reviews involved a claimant who was seen as 'vulnerable' and had died.

**19\***

\* With regard to reviews conducted involving a client who had died as a proportion of total reviews conducted: it is mandatory to carry out an Internal Review (IR) when DWP is made aware of the death of a client and it is suggested that it is linked to DWP activity. IRs can also be conducted, on request, for other reasons. The mandatory element ensures that IRs conducted as a result of reported deaths form a greater proportion of the review total.

You have also asked for all the recommendations made in peer reviews since April 2016 and that we indicate whether these relate to people who were: vulnerable, had died or were in receipt of Universal Credit. Please see Annex 2.

Please note that the information in the above table has been provided to you based on the principles outlined in the table at para 49 of the Decision of the First Tier Tribunal in EA/2015/0237 promulgated on 12 April 2016.

As we have previously advised you Internal Reviews are undertaken to determine whether local and national standards have been followed or need to be revised/improved. They do not seek to establish or apportion blame.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact us quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Operations,  
Freedom of Information Team

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**Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act**

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing [freedom-of-information-request@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dpw.gsi.gov.uk) or by writing to DWP, Central FoI Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

## Annex 1

From: John Pring [mailto:john@disabilitynewsservice.com]  
Sent: 21 June 2018 21:46  
To: DWP freedom-of-information-requests  
Subject: Fol request

Dear Sir/Madam

Please treat this as a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Further to VTR 2633 of 30/8/16, please tell me:

- 1 How many internal process reviews have taken place since 18 April 2016.
- 2 How many of these reviews involved a benefit claimant who had died.
- 3 How many of these reviews involved a claimant of universal credit.
- 4 How many of these reviews involved a claimant of universal credit who had died.
- 5 How many of these reviews involved a claimant who was seen as 'vulnerable' and had died.

Please also send me all the recommendations that form part of all the reviews, as you did in response VTR 2633, noting for each review which of the above categories the claimant fell into (ie if they died, if they had claimed universal credit and if they were vulnerable).

I look forward to hearing from you within 20 working days.

best wishes,

John Pring

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## Annex 2

Vulnerable?	Died	UC?	Recommendation?
No	Yes	No	To remind Customer Compliance Officers that they should be aware of the local 6 point plan in offices they visit and put it into action as required.
Yes	No	No	(Local) To consider a compliance note on appointeeship and responsibilities
No	Yes	Yes	The panel recommends that Universal Credit reconsider the wording of the Claimant Commitment. The references to sanctions and amount of money that will be lost seem excessive (mentioned 8 times). The panel advises that a better balance could be struck in reminding a client of the consequences of not meeting their obligations and not appearing to be overtly threatening, especially to individuals who are vulnerable.
Yes	Yes	No	The panel recommended consider of whether the instructions are specific about the need for a safeguarding visit if a BF223 is not returned by a vulnerable customer.
Not known	No	Yes	The panel considered the question of journal entries and if trigger words eg "suicide" can be picked up automatically. Further information was requested from the Customer Journey teams which addresses this. It is not possible to pick up words automatically, but UCFS agents are recommended to review journals and scan for words potentially indicating self harm threats. Complex needs plans (as in Spotlight on Complex Needs) have now been developed and shared with staff to help them better identify vulnerability and prepare to deal with suicide threats. Although there is no "marker", agents are instructed to record details so any agent going into the case is alerted to the fact that the claimant may have displayed symptoms of being at risk before.
No	Yes	Yes	All staff involved in the Decision Making process to be reminded of the importance of making timeous decisions with regard to sanctions.
Yes	No	No	(local) To consider reminding the local ESA DM team about the processes for ESA customers undertaking further education as guidance hadn't been followed.
Yes	Yes	No	<b>(Local) JSA:</b> [Redacted – S.44 FOI Act] Instructions are in place with correct reason codes. <b>ESA:</b> We should not issue ESA50's without getting an explanation from the claimant why they need one and make sure we get all the info recorded. [Redacted – S.44 FOI Act] cases are given an opportunity to fill in an ESA50 but if they fail to return it

			they automatically progress to a F-2-F assessment thereby removing again half [Redacted – S.44 FOI Act] problems on [Redacted – S.44 FOI Act] ESA claim). We should have considered whether [Redacted - Section 44 FOI Act] was a vulnerable customer and if there were safeguarding issues. Customer service was also poor by telling [Redacted - Section 44 FOI Act]
Yes	Yes	No	<b>LOCAL:</b> To refer case to the ESA Portfolio team to consider issuing a compliance note on action to be taken after hospital admission.
Yes	Yes	No	To include in operational instructions that if a decision is taken to not undertake a visit this should be fully justified in case notes.
Yes	Yes	No	[Redacted S.40(2) FOI Act] confirmed that training is going on all the time to upskill and remind staff of the process to follow if a customer fails to attend a medical assessment and the issue of a BF 223 to establish the reasons/good cause. [Redacted S.40(2) FOI Act] to check that ESA guidance on Mental Health actions are clear (B223 and Hospital admission).
No	Yes	No	National: To agree to refer to HSD to consider if it would be appropriate to refer the HCP report to be quality checked if there is an IPR