



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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FOI2018/04816

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Dear Mr John Pring

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 28 September. Please accept our apologies for not answering this within the requirements of S.10 FOI Act. Your complaint on this point is upheld.

You asked for:

Further to your FOI response VTR 2897, emailed to me on 17 September 2018.

In Annex 2 of your response, you provide 12 sets of recommendations that came out of Internal Process Reviews carried out since 18 April 2016.

For each of those 12, please tell me whether they were implemented, and if so, how they were implemented.

DWP Response

The information presented in the table below corresponds to the order of information presented in VTR2897. Some information is still being sought. We will forward this to you as soon as it is available.

Recommendation?	Outcome
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.	Compliance guidance currently signposts what action should be taken should an individual be found to be at risk during the course of an interview.
(Local) To consider a compliance note on appointeeship and responsibilities	Information regarding this outcome still being sought.

<p>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.</p>	<p>The current Claimant Commitment now makes no reference to sanctions.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>A change to the instructions encouraging the use of Visiting Officers in this instance was commissioned.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>This information was contained in our response to VTR2897. It can be seen at left here.</p>
<p>All staff involved in the Decision Making process to be reminded of the importance of making timeous decisions with regard to sanctions.</p>	<p>Staff have been reminded of the need to make timely decisions.</p>
<p>(local) To consider reminding the local ESA DM team about the processes for ESA customers undertaking further education as guidance hadn't been followed.</p>	<p>The Decision Makers Guide covers this in detail. The issue was raised with the relevant local decision makers.</p>
<p>(Local) JSA: [Redacted – S.44 FOI Act] Instructions are in place with correct reason codes. ESA: We should not issue ESA50's</p>	<p>Recommendations implemented locally.</p>

<p>without getting an explanation from the claimant why they need one and make sure we get all the info recorded.</p> <p>[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.</p> <p>Customer service was also poor by telling [Redacted - Section 44 FOI Act]</p>	
<p>LOCAL: To refer case to the ESA Portfolio team to consider issuing a compliance note on action to be taken after hospital admission.</p>	<p>An update to instructions regarding hospital admission was commissioned.</p>
<p>To include in operational instructions that if a decision is taken to not undertake a visit this should be fully justified in case notes.</p>	<p>Operational instructions currently say that Compliance officers must enter, in the relevant database, the reason for not undertaking a visit when closing a case.</p>
<p>[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.</p> <p>[Redacted S.40(2) FOI Act] to check that ESA guidance on Mental Health actions are clear (B223 and Hospital admission).</p>	<p>An update to instructions regarding hospital admission was commissioned.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>A process is already in place to review HCP reports where identified incidents are judged serious or critical.</p>

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Operations
Freedom of Information Team

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

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 ico.org.uk