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30 August 2016

[www.gov.uk/dwp](http://www.gov.uk/dwp)

Our Ref: VTR 2633

Dear Mr Pring

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request received on 14 July.

You asked:

Please send me all of the peer reviews/internal process reviews you have carried out in the time frame I mentioned, and which you have previously told me have been carried out. By this, to clarify further, I mean all of the peer reviews/internal process reviews since August 2014 (please see attached FOI).

### **DWP Response**

Section 44 of the FOI Act permits information to be withheld if that information is prohibited from disclosure by legislation. In this instance the Department believes that S.123 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 prohibits the release of information contained in these reports where that information relates to a particular person. This information is therefore being withheld.

The Department considers that S.44 FOI Act and S.123 Social Security Administration Act 1992 do not apply to the recommendations that form part of these reviews. Nor are they covered by any other exemption. We have therefore provided this substantive information to you in Appendix 1 of this letter.

We apologise for not complying with Section 10 of the FOI Act in failing to respond to this request within 20 working days.

DWP takes its responsibilities to vulnerable people very seriously and has put in place clear processes to help our staff identify vulnerability and provide the best possible service for them.

An Internal Process Review is a tool for staff to look the handling of a specific case. Its purpose is to scrutinize the department's handling of particular cases to identify whether processes have been properly followed and if appropriate, identify recommendations for changes to the process.

DWP provides substantial and specific instructions to staff on how to support vulnerable people throughout their benefit journey.

When dealing with vulnerable people, both providers and DWP have procedures in place to take appropriate supportive action, which are regularly reviewed.

We have also established a nationally available 'vulnerability hub'. This provides help and advice for staff in dealing with these individuals and signposts to a range of resources that provide advice about specific conditions or circumstances.

With direct relevance to self-harm, DWP has a national 'Six Point Plan' which offers a clear process outlining what staff should do in these circumstances.

DWP spends around £94bn a year on working age benefits to provide a safety net for some of the most vulnerable people in society. The well-being of people using our services is of the utmost importance, and the department takes strong actions to improve support and guidance for staff on how best to support vulnerable people.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Operations FOI 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@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.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)

## Appendix 1

Reference	Recommendation
<b>A-2633</b>	<p><b>Local</b> Good practice of having clear and 6-monthly reviewed local 6-point plan in place which is communicated through local communication sessions/role play scenarios.</p> <p><b>National</b> Remind staff about the Six Point Plan. This will be referred to the Customer Journey for consideration of further action to embed the Six Point Plan as it is a recurring theme.</p>
<b>B-2633</b>	<p><b>Local</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The benefit centre should remind Decision Makers of the requirement to record Decision Assurance calls in the CAM contact history and JSAPs - Annex 1</li> <li>2. The benefit centre should remind staff of the requirement to send an SMS message to the claimant following 2 unsuccessful attempted Decision Assurance calls.</li> </ol> <p><b>National</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The ESA Portfolio team should consider whether a claimants ESA 50 questionnaire is still valid as current evidence if more than 6 months have elapsed since completion by the claimant.</li> <li>2. The ESA Portfolio team review current guidance related to Decision Assurance calls where it has not been possible to speak to the claimant particularly those with mental health incapacities. Existing overpayment notification guidance in Annex 2 may provide a way forward.</li> <li>3. The ESA Portfolio team should consider clarifying guidance related to recording Decision Assurance calls in terms of details to be recorded i.e. should date and time of each attempt be recorded.</li> </ol>
<b>C-2633</b>	<p><b>Local</b> Local consideration should be given to refreshing staff awareness of the DWP Managing Customers Suicide and Self Harm Declarations guidance.</p> <p><b>National</b> Remind staff about the Six Point Plan. This will be referred to the Customer Journey for consideration of further action to embed the Six Point Plan as it is a recurring theme.</p>
<b>D-2633</b>	<p><b>Local</b> The report highlights that there was a lack of compliance. The claimant was identified as vulnerable and the notes on the case state that a safeguarding visit should take place before a FTA a medical decision could be given. There is no evidence that this took place.</p> <p>There was poor record keeping in notes to support the payments that were made. There is an assumption that someone spoke to the customer, but no note to support this.</p>

	The recommendation is that local staff are reminded of the importance of compliance and record keeping.
<b>E-2633</b>	<b>Local</b> To consider reminding the local processing team that arrears should have been paid to the appointee.