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Sampling Methodology

General principles

5000 All PM case selection processes are subject to approval from FEMA. It is important that PM sampling is completely random and that all cases within the target population are potentially available for selection, in order to avoid sampling that could undermine confidence in results. The PM Visiting Programme runs from October to September. Necessary changes to the visiting programme will therefore be made for implementation in October each year rather than April.

Random selection process

Introduction

5001 FEMA will randomly select cases from the live load for all benefits.

5002 The sample will initially be separated into Primary Sampling Units (PSUs), which are based around the geographical structure of Local Authorities, and then into Benefit Delivery Centres (BDC) and Pension Centres.

5003 Each PSU will receive at least one PM visit per year, which will last 8 weeks.

5004 The sample period for each PSU will be shown on the programme of PM visits, supplied to Operational units prior to the beginning of the checking year.

5005 - 5019

PM Sampling

5020 The sample will be constructed from:
   - a benefit specific Review sample
   - official error only checks that fall out of the Review sample

   *Note: official error only cases do not form part of the HB sample*
Sample Construction

5021 The overall PM sample will be constructed as follows:

Review Cases
- ESA
- Housing Benefit standard Working Age
- Housing Benefit standard Pension Age
- Housing Benefit passported Working Age
- Housing Benefit passported Pension Age
- JSA
- JSA New Claims
- State Pension Credit

Official Error Only - Review Cases
- ESA
- JSA
- JSA New Claims
- State Pension Credit

*Note: the official error only checks will be conducted on cases that have fallen from review sample.*

Official Error Only - Non-Review Cases
- State Pension

5022 The number of cases to be examined per visit, for each specific strand of the samples, along with the visiting programme, is detailed in Appendix 03 - Visiting programme.

5023 - 5029

Housing Benefit

Sample size and period

5030 FEMA will provide a sample of 600 cases, from a one week sample period (as specified in Appendix 03). The extra cases over and above the sample requirements are to allow abandoning and replacement.

Sample Stratification
5031 The Housing Benefit sample will be made up as follows
- Cases 001 - 150 Housing Benefit Standard Working Age
- Cases 151 - 250 Housing Benefit Standard Pension Age
- Cases 251 - 500 Housing Benefit Passported Working Age
- Cases 501 - 600 Housing Benefit Passported Pension Age

Employment and Support Allowance

Sample size and period

5032 For each PSU visit, FEMA will select 200 cases from a one week sample period of ESA and will include ESA(C) and ESA(IR) cases from both the assessment phase and the main phase.

ESA Sample Stratification

5033 The sample will be made up as follows:
- Cases 601 - 800 ESA

ESA Official Error Only Check Construction

5034 The ESA Official Error only check samples will be constructed using the lowest numbered abandoned review cases from the relevant samples that remain suitable for an OE check regardless of the order the cases were abandoned.

Example
Circumstances may dictate that case number 796 is abandoned before case number 780, but case number 780 would remain the first case to be considered for an official error check.

Selection criteria

5035 In selecting the above ESA samples FEMA will use the following selection criteria:
- New claims resulting in payment
- Existing live in payment claims
• Live in payment claims that go dormant in the sample period (end of claim payments)
• New claims that have been de-registered or withdrawn will not be included
• The sample will include both new claims to ESA received on the Customer Account Management (CAM) system and those re-assessed from IS and/or IB in the IB/IS Re-assessment programme.

5036 - 5049

Jobseeker’s Allowance

Sample size and period

5050 FEMA will provide a sample of 100 JSA cases, from a one week period (the sample period) for each PSU. In addition a separate list of 50 new claims randomly selected across the Jobcentre sites attached to the BC(s) in the PSU will also be provided. The extra cases over and above the sample requirements are to allow for abandoning and replacement.

Sample stratification

5051 The sample will be made up as follows:

• Cases 801 – 900 JSA

JSA Official Error Only Check Construction

5052 The JSA Official Error only check samples will be constructed using the lowest numbered abandoned review cases, from the relevant samples, that remain suitable for an OE check; regardless of the order the cases were abandoned.

Example
Circumstances may dictate that case number 874 is abandoned before case number 852, but case number 852 would remain the first case to be considered for an official error check.

New claims

5053 A separate sample will be generated as follows:
Selection criteria

5054 In selecting the above samples FEMA will use the following selection criteria:

- New claims resulting in payment
- Existing live in payment claims
- Live claims that go dormant in sample period (end of claim payment)
- Employment action zones are not excluded from the sample
- Selection will not include JSA training (including WBLA cases) and IB cases

Sample size and period

5090 For each PSU visit, FEMA will select 100 cases from a one week sample period. The extra cases over and above the sample requirements are to allow for abandoning and replacement.

Sample stratification

5091 The sample will be made up as follows:

- Cases 901 – 1000 Pension Credit

SPC Official Error Only Check Construction

5092 The SPC Official Error only check samples will be constructed using the lowest numbered abandoned review cases from the relevant samples that remain suitable for an OE check regardless of the order the cases were abandoned.

Example
Circumstances may dictate that case number 974 is abandoned before case number 952, but case number 952 would remain the first case to be considered for an official error check.
Selection criteria

5093 In selecting the above SPC samples FEMA will use the following selection criteria:
- New claims resulting in payment
- Existing live in payment claims
- Live in payment claims that go dormant in the sample period (end of claim payments)
- New claims that have been de-registered or withdrawn will not be included

5094 – 5129

State Pension

Sample size and period

5130 For each visit, FEMA will select 400 SP cases, from a one week period, the sample period. The extra cases will allow for any cases that require abandoning.

5131 The four-week sample period for each pension centre will be shown on the programme of PM visits provided prior to the beginning of the checking year.

Sample stratification

5132 The SP sample is stratified into two subsets of SP cases as follows:
- cases dealt with by pension centres
- periodic payments – are cases where the claimant has their SP paid direct into their bank/building society account.

Selection criteria

5133 In selecting the above SP cases, FEMA will use the following selection criteria:
- all cases across the live load of the location being checked as shown on PSCS (including periodic payments)
- reserved cases where awards have been made by the International and National Pension Centre will be included in the DMS schedules where the case is owned by the Pension Centre being sampled

5134 – 5169
Duplicate cases

5170 It is possible for a case to be listed more than once. This may occur if
• there has been a change of benefit
• a live in payment claim/application has been transferred in, from a
previous office, and a new/repeat claim/application has also been made
at the office being checked within the PSU

5171 As each entry results from a separate claim/award, each one will be
available for check.

5172 In all other cases a filter will be applied to make sure that a case does not
appear twice for the same award/application.

5173 - 5179

Sample Lists

5180 FEMA will prepare the schedules of cases selected and e-mail them to the
BST.

5181 The BST will check the schedules for obvious discrepancies to ensure that
all relevant data has been provided, that the sample is random, and that the
relevant details are correctly shown.

5182 At three weeks and 6 weeks (for Common Sample and pension age cases
respectively) prior to the start of a visit from PM, the BST will issue the
relevant letter to BDCs/Pension Centres to confirm the commencement of the
visit and contact details held.

5183 Three weeks prior to the start of the PM visit, the BST will:
• issue the Working Age lists to the ECO, by e-mail, with an accompanying
letter to state how many cases need to be made available for check initially
• issue the up to date ECO/PCP details to the PM Team Manager

Three weeks prior to the start of the PM visit, the BST will issue the HB only
sample lists to the LAs.

5184 One week before the PM visit; the BST will issue the JSA new claims list
to the ECO, by e-mail, with an accompanying letter to state how many cases
need to be made available for check initially.

5185– 5199
Equalisation of State Pension Credit Age

5200 The sampling for SPC and HB Pensioner now accommodates the equalisation of State Pension Credit Age. The cases affected are currently those with a date of birth 6th May 1951 or later. The age at which cases are affected will increase progressively with the qualifying age increasing in 2 monthly bands for each month of birth.

5201 FEMA has adjusted the sampling to account for these changes, as previously cases had been assigning as HB pensioners if the claimant was 60 or over. Now the client group assignment will be based on the age of the claimant at the selected week.

5202 This correction to sampling methodology should lead to more cases being assigned to the working age client groups and fewer to the pensioner client groups, and should therefore lead to less re-assignment and abandonment.

Action

5203 You are asked to continue to check the client group assignment for the official error selected week to ensure that the case has been sampled correctly. If incorrectly assigned please follow current methodology for re-assignment of the client group or abandonment.

5204 You are also asked to check the client group assignment for the review week to ensure that this is correct. There may be cases where the claimant has reached SPC age between the selected week and the review week and hence will fall into different client groups.

5205 If this is the case, take action as follows:

- An HB Working Age review should continue to be reviewed as normal, but if there is a passporting benefit it will normally be SPC. You should change the review week (i.e. visit preview) client group on FREDA accordingly.

- HB Working Age reviews may also be male HB/ESA claimants currently up to the age of 65 if the claimant has chosen to claim ESA instead of SPC from State Pension Credit age. Do not change the client group in these cases.

5206 It is not anticipated that JSA/SPC reviews will be affected, as these cases are selected using GMS scan data to identify that these benefits have been claimed.
Abandonment Methodology

Introduction

The construction of the various PM samples is detailed in earlier paragraphs; the following paragraphs detail the subsequent action to take when considering the suitability of the sampled cases.

Establishing the period of check

Selected Period

The official error check period has been aligned as closely as possible across all benefits

Note: perfect alignment between benefits is not possible where the claimant does not have a common benefit week across all benefits they claim.

The official error check selected period for all benefits is the benefit week that includes the Monday date that the sample was drawn. Note: the exception to this rule is JSA new claims - see below.

The samples will be drawn as follows:

• Working Age - six weeks prior to the PM visit
• Pension Age - nine weeks prior to the PM visit

Note: the difference in sample drawn dates does not affect the calculation of the selected period - the Monday date will be clearly stated on the samples.

In order to establish the exact dates of the selected period for each case, you will need to determine the claimant’s benefit week ending/commencing date.

The period recorded will be a maximum of seven days for ESA/SPC/HB/SP and a maximum of fourteen days for JSA cases.
Examples

JSA

Monday Sample Drawn Date: 12/03/12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R cycle</th>
<th>Period to be checked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday week ending</td>
<td>28/2/12 to 12/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday week ending</td>
<td>29/2/11 to 13/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday week ending</td>
<td>1/3/12 to 14/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday week ending</td>
<td>2/3/12 to 15/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday week ending</td>
<td>3/3/12 to 16/3/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P cycle</th>
<th>Period to be checked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday week ending</td>
<td>6/3/12 to 19/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday week ending</td>
<td>7/3/12 to 20/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday week ending</td>
<td>8/3/12 to 21/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday week ending</td>
<td>9/3/12 to 22/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday week ending</td>
<td>10/3/12 to 23/3/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JSA New Claims

5245 For most JSA claimants the BWE day and attendance day will remain the same but in some cases these dates will differ.

5246 The period of check for JSA new claim cases is from the treat as made (TAM) date to the first BWE date associated with the first signing day.

5247 The first signing day is defined as the first day the claimant signed or would sign on.

Note: From April 2009 the payday and periodicity rules mean that all new and repeat JSA claims have their BWE date aligned with their NINO, although this will not always be the date they attend the Jobcentre. You will use the BWE day rather than the signing day when determining the selected period.
There will be occasions where the claimant is not entitled to payment from the TAM date to the first signing date, however you should not abandon the case; you are required to check that the decision that JSA was not payable was correct.

Whilst the maximum selected period remains at 14 days in the majority of cases the period will be less - the number of days in the award should include any waiting days.

Example

Monday Sample Date 09/04/12
New claim registered on 06/04/12
Treat as Made date 23/03/12 Tuesday week ending P cycle
The selected period 23/03/12 to 03/04/12

New claim registered on 06/04/12
Treat as Made date 23/03/12 Wednesday week ending R cycle
The selected period 23/03/12 to 28/03/12

5248 For JSA new claims the Monday sample drawn date does not specify the selected period however it must be used to establish that the case selected for check has been registered on JSAPS prior to that date.

5249 Where the latest claim has been registered after the sample drawn date you will identify whether this is because there has been another new claim made since the sample was extracted.

5250 Where no benefit was paid for the period prior to the sample date then you may need to consider abandoning the case due to 'benefit not in payment'.

Responsibility for identifying periods of check

5251 In the majority of cases the selected period will be identified at the preview stage; however you must ensure that the details recorded are correct when you conduct the official error check.

Note: cases you do not review will have the selected period identified at the official error check stage.

5252- 5259

Review Week
When considering the suitability of the case to be reviewed you must bear in mind what the relevant periods of check are, before determining what the next action should be.

The review week will be determined by:

- The date of the effective visit to the claimant
- The date of the first ineffective visit (notified or un-notified), where the claimant is not seen
- The date the claimant advises they no longer wish to claim, where PM have made contact to arrange a review but there is no visit attempted
- The date the technical preview commences where the claimant review is not attempted due to current fraud involvement
- The date of the first ineffective visit (notified or un-notified), regardless of any subsequent effective/ineffective visits, where as a result of the review activity you discover the claimant is abroad. You will record the first ineffective visit as an effective visit on FREDA. See Part 7 for more info.

Note: In cases where the claimant is subsequently interviewed, you will ensure that the Statement of Circumstances includes a statement from the claimant confirming that the information provided relates to the review week established by the date of the first ineffective visit (notified or un-notified).

Similarly where a notified visit is planned but then not attempted (because information has been received from the claimant or a third party) you will record the date of the third party or claimant contact to determine the review week.

The review week will be the benefit week which includes the determining date. As with the official error selected period, perfect alignment between benefits will not be possible where the claimant does not have a common benefit week across all benefits they claim.

You will need to confirm the actual review week, when categorising the case.

Consideration of Abandonment

General principles
The majority of cases sampled are initially selected for both a review and an official error check; however, circumstances may dictate that the sampled case may not be suitable for either or both checks.

‘Common Sample’ Benefits – ESA/ JSA/SPC

Where a case is unsuitable for an official error check you will abandon the case from the sample entirely. However, whenever a case is unsuitable for review, you will abandon the case from the review and it will become available as a potential official error only case.

It is imperative that where the defined abandonment reasons apply solely to the review that the case is only abandoned from this strand of the PM action and not abandoned from the sample entirely - this, as stated above, will only occur where the case is also unsuitable for an official error check.

Housing Benefit

Where a case is unsuitable for an official error check during the selected period the case will be abandoned from the sample completely.

Review Sample

All cases in the Review samples will also be primarily available for both claimant review and official error check but circumstances may dictate that the case subsequently becomes an official error only check on CS cases only.

SP

The State Pension sample will be subject to an official error only check.

Additional Generic Principles

A case can be abandoned at any time in the process because it is unsuitable for the selected period (official error) check or claimant review.

Where cases are abandoned and subsequently replaced, you will ensure that any abandonment and replacement action follows strict guidelines in order that the integrity of the sample is maintained and that an audit trail of these cases and the reason for abandonment are documented.
Where abandonment is necessary and replacement appropriate you will draw the replacement case from the same sample as the abandoned case.

*Note: replacement will be automatic on FREDA platform samples*

You must always consider pre-causal link if the PM review process has commenced on a case that is abandoned from the claimant review because the claimant’s claim has ceased. However, where this occurs between the selected period and the preview the case will not require a C-link check.

*Note: comprehensive pre-causal link methodology is contained in Part 17 Categorisation.*

Abandonment Reasons – ESA/JSA/SPC

Case no longer within PSU

Where you identify that the case has moved out of the PSU being checked the case should be abandoned from the claimant review and become available for a potential official error only check.

This abandonment reason also applies to NFA claimant with c/o addresses that are outside of the PSU.

Benefit not in payment/ceased or suspended

New claims live not in payment

This applies to JSA only. You should confirm the status of any JSA new claims that have been notified as either ‘registered’ or ‘live not in payment’. If it is confirmed that this is still the case, you should abandon and replace the case.

*Note: If, at the point of check, you confirm that the case is now in payment then abandonment is not appropriate.*
Dormant

5311 This includes:

- Cases suspended in selected period;
- Cases where at Performance Measurement preview, payment has not been made for the selected period. This includes cases where payments are made quarterly and the selected week payment has not yet been made.
- Cases where benefit ceases between selected period and attempted first visit. Where ESA/JSA/SPC ceases between the selected period and the first attempted visit you will abandon the case from the review and replace it with the next available case from the same sample list;
- Cases where benefit is suspended between selected period and review week. If benefit has been suspended you will abandon and replace the case. The exception is where FES initiate a suspension - see cases not to be abandoned;
- Cases with a break in claim. Where there is a break in the claim between the selected period and the review, you will abandon and replace the case. A break in claim is defined as suspension for at least one day or the claim actually being closed down and a new claim made from the following day

5312 - 5319

LMS Intervention

5320 If you have not interviewed the claimant and the Jobcentre is solely responsible for the cessation of the claimant’s claim you should abandon using this reason.

5321 - 5329

Interim Payments

5330 Includes any case where the payment is a payment on account and not an award of the relevant benefit/entitlement.

5331 - 5339

Recent Home Visit
5340 FES Compliance, Local Service visit, or Benefit Integrity Centre (BIC) visit has taken place within the last 6 weeks and activity ended.

5341 This refers to any case where you have identified that there is Compliance, Local Service interest or BIC interest, involving a visit to the claimant’s home and the activity has concluded; you will need to consider the case for abandonment from the claimant review where the 6 weeks will not expire in the visit period.

   Note: where the end of the six week exclusion period falls within the visiting period the case should be retained and reviewed again at that point.

PM review has taken place within last 6 months

5342 You should ensure that where a PM/HB visit has been noted on notepad that you do not interview a claimant within 6 months of that action.

   Note: this code will also be used where the claimant has been selected on a separate PM sample and the action is ongoing.

Example

Case selected for JSA review in visit 5.
You identify that the claimant was selected for an HB review in visit 3 and that review is ongoing.
In these circumstances the JSA review will be abandoned.

Within the same AIP

5343 Where a claimant has already had a PM visit within their current AIP and it has been selected for review again, you will need to abandon the case from the claimant review. This is because the circumstances used to set the AIP are the same for both visits.

   Note: You should treat the setting of an AIP run on as an extension of the existing AIP and not a new AIP.

5344 - 5349

Sensitive issues

This includes cases where:
5350 Claimant or partner terminally ill. Where it is clear during the preview that the claimant and/or partner are terminally ill, you will need to abandon the case from the claimant review. The case will then need to be considered for suitability for an official error only check.

5351 Claimant recently bereaved. You will consider this in the same way as terminal illnesses.

5352 Claimant deceased. You will abandon a case where the claimant is already found to be deceased at the point of preview or, when the review has commenced. Where you cannot complete the check without reference to either the claimant or a relative and there is no official or claimant related error regarding the death of the claimant on the claim.

5353 – 5359

**Operational Issues (HEO authorisation only)**

5360 This will include cases that you cannot review for any unforeseen circumstances e.g. industrial action that will affect the visiting programme or late abandonment needs to be considered as the claimant is in a remote area and you cannot conduct the visit within the visiting period.

5361 You must refer cases considered for abandonment for this reason to Eve Smith in FEMA for authorisation

5362 - 5369

**Allowable Absence**

**Claimant on remand in prison**

5370 You must use this option to abandon the case from the claimant review immediately when the end date of the period on remand does not fall within the visiting period or at a later date where the end date has been extended outside the visiting period or becomes unknown.

*Note: where the anticipated end date of the remand period falls within the 8 week visiting period the case should be retained and reviewed again at that point.*
Claimant in hospital or rehab

5371 You must use this option to abandon the case from the claimant review immediately when the end date of the period in hospital/rehab does not fall within the visiting period or at a later date where the end date has been extended outside the visiting period or becomes unknown. You must verify admittance and establish if there is an estimated date of discharge, before you consider using this abandonment reason.

Note: where the anticipated end date of the period in hospital/rehab falls within the 8 week visiting period the case should be retained and reviewed again at that point.

Claimant giving or receiving approved medical care

5372 You must use this option immediately when the end date of the period away from home does not fall within the visiting period or at a later date where the end date has been extended outside the visiting period or becomes unknown.

Note: where the end date is known to be within the visiting period the case should be retained, reviewed again at that point and a decision made as to whether the case will remain in the review.

Claimant abroad

5373 You will only consider this code where the period abroad has been properly notified and the end date of the absence is not within the visiting period.

5374 Where the end date is known to be within the visiting period you must retain the case, review it again at that point and a decision made as to whether the case will remain in the claimant review.

Note: see Part 7 for full details of action to take in abroad cases.

5375 - 5379

Non-residence HEO authorisation only
5380 You must only use this abandonment code where the claimant has not been seen by either Fraud or PM, no review has taken place, the DM has not suspended the claimant’s benefit and it is not possible to record an outcome of fraud with causal link or benefit correct.

5381 You must abandon the case from the common sample (and a replacement must be selected) in the following circumstances:
- where there has been no contact with the claimant during the 28-day period resulting in benefit no longer being in payment and process checks have not revealed the claimant’s whereabouts
- any other reason for the claimant’s non compliance on all cases where you have been unable to contact the claimant and no fraud investigation has taken place
- where there has been no contact with the claimant and causal link has been considered but not established. If causal link was established the case would not be abandoned

5382 When considering this code the Team Manager must ensure that methodology has been applied and recorded and that there is no possibility of retaining the case within the sample based on the evidence presented.

5383 - 5389

**Non co-operation of the claimant (HEO authorisation only)**

5390 Only in exceptional circumstances where there is no reason to suspect that the refusal to be interviewed is in any way related to the correctness of their claim should you consider the case for abandonment.

5391 Where your request has been made for a case to be abandoned due to non-cooperation of the claimant, the Team Manager must make sure that the PM docs show the following has been considered first:
- Is it due to the sex of the MRO officer due to visit? Would the claimant prefer someone else to visit?
- Is it because the claimant has a personal dislike of the MRO?
- Is the claimant uncomfortable with being interviewed alone?
- Do they fully understand the purpose of the review?
- Is it possible that the reason for this is due to fraud?
- Has an office interview been considered as the claimant does not want to admit an MRO into their home?
- As the Team Manager, have they contacted the claimant to see if they are able to persuade the claimant to participate in a review?
- Are the reasons for non-cooperation fully recorded?
Could a benefit suspension or fraud referral be required if the claimant’s response now raises suspicions regarding their ongoing entitlement to benefit?

5392 - 5399

Incorrectly sampled

Case appears in normal or new claim sample but is credits only in the selected period

5400  This applies where the case appears in normal or new claim sample but is credits only in the selected period

Case in incorrect PSU at point of sampling

5401  This applies to all cases and must be used when at the point the sample was extracted the case was the responsibility of another PSU

Claimant is on Work Programme (WP)

5402  This applies where the claimant is on WP or Community Work Placement (CWP). You must consider using this option immediately when the end date does not fall within the visiting period or at a later date where the end date has been extended outside the visiting period. Cases should only be considered for abandonment where it is known the claimant is unavailable for interview due to full time attendance on Work Programme activity/Work Experience opportunity or CWP for the whole of the Visiting Period. It is unlikely that the level of activity will be shown on LMS at preview stage. Therefore unnotified visits should go ahead as normal.

5404 - 5409

Change in benefit

5410  This will include any cases where the benefit in payment in the selected period has changed before the claimant review has been conducted for example JSA to ESA etc. It does not apply to any case where there has only been a change in client group.
5411 For HB cases, ‘change in benefit’ does not apply as an abandonment reason. Therefore HB claims that go from passported to non-passported are not abandoned.

5412 You will still need to consider an official error only check on cases abandoned for this reason.

5413-Job Grant (ESA and JSA only)

5420 You must use this where the payment is made up solely of a job grant as it is not a payment of benefit and is only paid to claimants or partners who have ceased claiming benefit and commenced work of 16/24 hours or more as applicable. If the payment has been made in respect of a partner the claimant cannot continue to receive benefit in their own right so the claim will be closed.

5421 You can apply it to either the selected period or the claimant review so it may be possible that the case could still require an official error check.

5422-Joint Claim and not payee

5430 Where a joint claim has been selected for review, the claimant listed on the sample must be the payee of the claim. If they are not the payee you will need to abandon the case.

5431

Compliance Activity not in line with agreement (HEO authorisation only)

5440 Where you have referred a case to fraud or a case is subject to ongoing activity by Compliance which is being tracked by the BST SPOC, the Team Manager must be satisfied on return from Compliance that the activity satisfies the PM/Compliance agreement.

5441 Where the activity undertaken does not satisfy the agreement criteria (i.e. the activity must have been face to face), and you are unable to arrange a
review due to the timing of the Compliance response, you will need to consider the case for abandonment from the claimant review under this code.

5442 - 5449

**Miscellaneous (HEO authorisation only)**

5450 You must only use this where abandonment has been requested and the reason is not covered by any other code. Use of this reason must be authorised by the Team Manager which must include consultation with AGA.

*Note: If an ESA claimant is also in receipt of State Retirement Pension (SP) you should not abandon the case and an official error check should be carried out.*

**Corporate appointee no named contact**

5451 You must use the miscellaneous code where the claimant has a corporate appointee and there is no named contact recorded. However, in the first instance, you must attempt to ascertain if there is a named contact assigned to deal with the claimant’s affairs.

5452 - 5459

**Cases abandoned from the claimant review**

5460 You will consider for suitability for an official error only check any case abandoned from the claimant review that is live in the selected period. This consideration must be done on all cases that are abandoned from the claimant review until the required sample size for cases subject to a full review have been met.

5461 Any case that has been noted as suitable for official error only will form part of the hand off to the MRO, who will conduct the official error check.

5462 - 5469

**Cases not to be abandoned**

5470 You must not abandon where any of the following apply:

- Benefit was paid clerically in respect of the selected week
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- Where payment was made in respect of the selected week, but all or part of that payment was subsequently recovered from another DWP benefit - both the original payment, and the recovery action will be checked

- Cases that are unavailable

- Change in client group between preview and review

- Current fraud activity is identified including cases where a case is live in the selected period and a PM review is not to be attempted because the case is under current fraud investigation and Fraud initiate suspension. The case will be tracked as high suspicion.

- The case is in payment without entitlement

Current fraud activity

5471 Current Fraud activity will not result in automatic abandonment - you must follow the methodology detailed in Part 7.

5475 - 5479

Cases in payment without entitlement

Potential cessation of the current condition of entitlement

5480 Where you identify a potential cessation of the current condition of entitlement the action to take will be dependant on whether payment of benefit is continuing. Where benefit:
- has ceased the review will be abandoned
- is still in payment the case will be reviewed

JSA(C) is continuing to be paid beyond the 182-day exhaustion date, or ESA(C) is continuing to be paid beyond the 365 day limit and the claimant is not in the support group.

5481 Depending on the circumstances of the case, you may have to complete form JSA3 or ESA3 if the claimant wishes to claim JSA (IB) or ESA(IR). Alternatively if the claimant does not wish to claim you may complete an MF47 statement detailing this fact and refer the case for categorisation.

5482 - 5489
Additional doubts for JSA

5490 Where you identify no payment of JSA has been made for the selected period because of a LM sanction, and there is a future entitlement which commences within the duration of the PM visit, you will not abandon the case. You will need to BF the case to conduct the review at a later date.

5491 However, where entitlement will not commence within the duration of the PM visit you will need to consider the case for abandonment from the review and replaced. You will then need to consider the case for suitability as an official error only case.

5492 Where no payment of JSA has been made for the selected period because of a LM disallowance, and the case is not classed as dormant (i.e., disallowed indefinitely), and there is a future entitlement (e.g. disallowed on ASE for a two week period), you will not abandon the case as it is likely that the case should be live in payment again at the point of preview.

5493 If you identify during the course of attempting to visit a claimant that a disallowance has been applied, you will need to consider again if the case will be back in payment prior to the end of the visit period and either BF or abandon the case accordingly.

5494 However, where the case is live but there is no payment due (and it is not classed as dormant due to an indefinite disallowance) you will abandon the case from the claimant review and it will be considered for suitability for an official error only check.

5495 Where no payment has been made in the selected period because waiting days have been imposed, and there is a future entitlement, you will not abandon the case.

5496 Arrangements will be made for a suitable MRO to check the correctness of the imposed waiting days and where a payment was appropriate a review will be conducted.

5497 - 5519

Abandonment Reasons - Housing Benefit

5520 Where HB ceases between the selected period and the first attempted visit you will abandon the case from the review and replace it with the next available case from the same sample list.
5521 You will abandon and replace the case where there is a break in the claim between the selected period and the review. A break in claim is defined as:

- The claim actually being closed down and HB then reclaimed with a break of one day or more for which benefit is not paid.

**Benefit suspended between selected period and review week**

5522 Where at the time of the preview, benefit is found to be currently suspended, you will abandon the case.

**Allowable Absence**

5523 Normally the claimant has to reside in the dwelling to receive HB; however in some cases HB can continue while the claimant is temporarily absent. Where you identify any of the following reasons for the temporary absence you will abandon and replace the case:

- Temporary residential care
- Held on remand
- Receiving, or giving, medical care certified by an approved medical practitioner
- In hospital
- On an approved training course, provided by, for example, the government or LA
- Temporary absence abroad
- Intermittent Custody

*Note: this list is not exhaustive - comprehensive guidance on where an absence is allowable can be found in HB Guidance*

**Benefit not in payment/ceased**

**Dormant**

5524 You must use this abandonment code where the case is dormant

**Recent Home Visit**
FES Compliance/Verification Framework visit has taken place within the last 6 weeks and activity ended

5525 You will abandon a case where a FES Compliance visit/verification framework visit has been carried out by Compliance or the LA, and the 6 week end date ends after, or within two weeks of the end of the PM visit. A check of the LA system should be conducted to see if a visit has been completed within the previous 6 weeks, or if one is planned (a full 6 weeks must elapse before the review visit can be carried out). If the 6 weeks is within 2 weeks of the end of the LA visiting period you can consider abandoning and replacing the case, but the Team Manager should be consulted first.

If a visit or check is planned, you should offer to take over the check because the LA can record our results in lieu of a Local Performance Framework visit for subsidy purposes. (Results of Local Performance Framework visits within the previous 6 weeks cannot be used for recording HB outcomes).

A PM Review has taken place within the last 6 months

5526 You will abandon a case where a PM review has been carried out by PM and the 6 month end date ends after, or within two weeks of the end of the PM visit

Incorrectly sampled

Sample data problem (No HB in the last 3 months)

5527 You must abandon the case where there is a problem with the sample data selected, for example:
- the case is on a Council Tax reduction scheme ONLY and has therefore been included in the sample in error
- where HB ceased, for whatever reason, more than 3 months before the sample was received
- where the case has been sampled in the incorrect PSU at the point of sampling

Sensitive issues
Terminally ill

5528 Where it is clear during the preview that the claimant and/or partner are terminally ill, you will need to abandon and replace the case.

Death of Claimant

5529 You will abandon and replace the case where the claimant has died and Housing Benefit has ceased prior to the first attempted visit.

*Note: You must not abandon the case where the claimant has died but HB remains in payment.*

Claimant recently bereaved

5530 You will consider this in the same way as terminal illnesses.

Run on or extended payment - HB Only

5531 This covers cases where the claimant is being paid based on old circumstances due to starting work. You must only abandon cases where the qualifying run on period has not already ended as there will be an error on the claim because the circumstances used to award benefit will be different. Where the qualifying run on period was in payment during the selected week, the case must not be abandoned.

Advance Claim - HB Only

5532 This covers any claim to HB that has been logged in advance and is not due to be paid until after the LA sample period as claims can be made up to 13 weeks in advance.

Compliance activity not performed to agreed PM standards

5533 Where a case has been referred to fraud or is subject to ongoing activity by Compliance which is being tracked by the BST SPOC, your Team Manager must be satisfied on return from CC that the activity satisfies the PM/Compliance agreement.
5534  Where the activity undertaken does not satisfy the agreement criteria (i.e. the activity must have been face to face), and PM are unable to arrange a review due to the timing of the Compliance response, you will need to consider abandoning the case from the claimant review under this code.

Operational issues (HEO authorisation only)

5535  You must only use this where abandonment has been requested and the reason is not covered by any other code. Use of this reason must be authorised by the Team Manager which must include consultation with AGA.

Corporate appointee no named contact

5536  You must use the Operational issues code where the claimant has a corporate appointee and there is no named contact recorded. However, in the first instance, you must attempt to ascertain if there is a named contact assigned to deal with the claimant’s affairs.

Cases not to be abandoned

5537  Where a non-standard claim is shown live but the passporting benefit is not currently in payment and DWP have input HB indicators but failed to issue an Electronic Transfer of Data (ETD) to close the claim and cancel HB, you must not abandon the case but visit to establish any underlying entitlement.

5538  For non-standard HB claims where ESA(IR)/IS/JSA(IB)/Guaranteed Pension Credit payments have ceased and DWP have issued an ETD to close the claim and cancel HB but the LA have failed to action, you must not abandon the case but visit to establish any underlying entitlement.

5539  For non-standard HB claims where ESA(IR)/IS/JSA(IB)/Guaranteed Pension Credit payments have ceased or are shown as live but benefit is not currently in payment and DWP have no HB indicators held on the claim, you must not abandon the case but visit to establish any underlying entitlement.

5540  Where the claimant has moved within the PSU boundary and HB ceased for old address but is in payment at the new address the case should not be abandoned. You must review on the current claim.

5541  Similarly where the claimant has moved within the PSU boundary and HB continues in payment for the old address, you must not abandon the case.
You may see cases where an HB claimant is living in a neighbouring LA to the one sampled, but the sampled LA continues to pay HB. This normally occurs in areas where appropriate housing stock is limited. On advice from FEMA, you must not abandon these cases, but should retain in the sample and review as normal where possible. This applies to both HB and JR cases.

HB Ceased Before Preview

It is also important that you check the circumstances of the cessation of HB before requesting abandonment. Careful consideration must be given to:

- The date HB ceased
- The reason HB ceased, and
- The date on which the LA reassessed the case
- The date LA received the sample

This is to ensure that the LA did not bias the sample by checking and reassessing cases or contacting the claimant prior to the PM visit (if a claimant is contacted or has benefit changed prior to an un-notified PM visit, it may affect their behaviour). If it is clear that the LA has tampered with the sample, then you must advise the PM Field Team Manager urgently, to consider any action that may need to be taken. This information must also be included on the Abandoned Case request on FREDA.

SP Abandonment reasons

You will abandon from the sample any case which falls into any of the SP categories shown in the following paragraphs.

Dormant

This applies to a case which is “claim closed” for the whole of the selected week, i.e. there was no award in respect of the selected week because there was no claim or no entitlement for the selected week. You do not need to check that the case is correctly claim closed.
5582 If the case is live but no payment has been made for the selected week, you will leave the case as incomplete to establish the exact position. You may need to check an extra case initially in anticipation of the late abandonment of the selected case.

Responsibility in the selected week in a different Pension Centre

5583 You must use this code where a case for which the whole of the award in respect of the selected week was the responsibility of a Pension Centre other than that being checked, except where the case still shows the office serial number within the Pension Centre being checked (as happens where there has been a delay in bulk office transfer action).

Interim Payments

5584 Includes any case where the payment is a payment on account and not an award of the relevant benefit.

Redundant account on NIRS

5585 This applies to any case which has a redundant account on NIRS and therefore NIRS cannot be updated for either the claimant or their spouse.

Conversion Case

5586 This must be used for conversion cases where the deceased spouse’s details are not available on any clerical documentation already held or on departmental computer systems.

No payment

5587 This applies where no payment has been made and no payment is due i.e. 52 week payment into bank before the end of the PM visit.

IPC over 14 months
5588  Applies where a case with IPC involvement is for check and the case is over 14 months old.

RF1 for claimant destroyed

5589  You must use this code when an RF1 for the claimant is required to check the case and one is not available as it has been destroyed.

RF1 for late/ex spouse destroyed

5590  This applies when an RF1 for the claimant’s late/ex spouse is required to check the case and one is not available as it has been destroyed.

NPC/IPC case no late/ex spouse details

5591  Applies to NPC/IPC cases where deceased/ex spouse’s details are not available on any clerical documentation already held or on any computer records.

Increments cannot be calculated

5592  This must be used where increments cannot be calculated due to the deletion of the relevant computer or clerical records.

Sensitive issue - claimant deceased

5593  Where a case is live in payment during the selected period but the claimant subsequently dies, the case will be retained unless there is insufficient evidence to clear the check. If further information is required from the claimant’s next of kin or family members the case will be abandoned. If the office continues paying benefit after the date of death has been notified this will be recorded as an official error.

Reserved cases and cases with overseas involvement

5594  Reserved cases and cases involving overseas claims occurring naturally in the sample will fall to be checked and must not be abandoned.
The CTG will need to preview cases on the sample to identify any reserved cases and should then ask the office to request any relevant forms immediately i.e. RF1s, RD10Rs

**Payable Uprated Guaranteed Minimum Pension Increments (PUGMPI)**

Where a case has PUGMPIs included in the award the case will fall for abandonment.

**Request for authorisation of abandonment and replacement cases**

**Abandonment at preview/review stage (ESA/HB/JSA/SPC)**

Where abandonment arises during the preview/review stage, you will note the abandonment reason on FREDA.

Abandonment requests are routed through on FREDA to the peer checker/Team Manager for consideration as applicable.

Once authorised, FREDA will automatically generate and present the details of the replacement case to the referring officer.

**Abandonment at official error check stage (ESA/HB/JSA/SPC/SP)**

You will enter the abandonment reason on FREDA where a potential abandonment occurs at the official error check stage.

Abandonment requests are routed through on FREDA to the peer checker/Team Manager for consideration as applicable.

If the peer MRO Team Manager agrees to the abandonment they will enter the appropriate details on FREDA and the database will automatically generate and present the details of the replacement case to the referring officer.

**Rejection of request for abandonment (ESA/HB/JSA/SPC/SP)**
Once the abandonment request appears in approvals list the peer MRO/Team Manager will consider the reasons for abandoning the case and complete FREDA authorising the abandonment.

If the peer MRO/Team Manager rejects the abandonment they will record the details and reasons for disagreement. Once done, the case will be immediately available for the referring officer to action accordingly. Please see the FREDA database guidance for more details.

Dispute over abandonments

Where there is a dispute over the abandonment, the Team Manager will resolve this. This can involve consultation with AGA if necessary.

Replacement of cases

All FREDA based samples will have replacement cases generated automatically.

Where a replacement case is not automatically generated, raise an incident with CIT.

It will not be necessary to ensure that the replacement is from the same BC as the original case. It must, however, fall within the PSU being checked.

Where the replacement case is no longer in the original MRO’s allocated visiting area, the case may have to be re-allocated to another MRO depending on in team arrangements.

Potential Sample Shortfalls

Where abandonment results in no replacement case being selected and a possible sample shortfall, the Team Manager must contact the PM Central IT Development and Support Team immediately as consultation with FEMA will be necessary.