

Managing Customer Declarations of Intention to Attempt Suicide or Self Harm

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Managing Customer Declarations of Intention to Attempt Suicide or Self Harm

1. Staff who work with customers should know what to do in the event a customer makes a declaration of intention to attempt suicide or self harm.
2. The Department has a Six Point Plan that sets out the framework for managing suicide and self harm declarations from customers.
3. Managers, in all DWP businesses who work with customers, must use the Departmental National Six Point Plan framework to develop arrangements that suit their own local working environments to help staff deal effectively and safely with customer declarations of intention to attempt suicide and self harm.
4. The localised Six Point Plan must be developed in consultation with your local trade union side. Managers may wish to use the [outline local Six Point Plan template](#).
5. Managers must ensure that the localised Six Point Plan is communicated to all staff who work with customers and is kept up to date. Managers have a responsibility to ensure that their staff members are familiar with the local Six Point Plan.
6. Members of staff have a responsibility to make themselves aware of the local Six Point Plan.

7. The local Six Point Plan will be subject to regular review, in consultation with your local trade union side, to ensure it continues to meet its objectives, as outlined above, and for continuous improvement purposes.

8. The policy and guidance will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet its objectives and for continuous improvement purposes. Management information will be collected from business managers periodically, at a national level, to facilitate the review process.

DWP's Six Point Plan framework


9. Departmental Six Point Plan

1	Take the statement seriously – remain calm and listen carefully
2	Summon a colleague - to act as a support partner
3	Gather information - to gauge level of risk
4	Provide referral advice – if situation is non-urgent, e.g. general distress but no immediate plans or means to attempt suicide or self harm
5	Summon Emergency help – if customer is distressed, at serious risk or in immediate danger
6	Review – discuss incident with line manager and record

Policy contacts

10. If you have any questions or comments about this policy please contact the [Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team](#)

Guidance for managing customer declarations of intention to attempt suicide or self harm

11. This guidance supplements DWP's policy framework for managing declarations of intention to attempt suicide and self harm made by customers. It summarises the plans and procedures that must be in place and provides advice, guidelines and good practice to help staff deal effectively and safely with such incidents. It contains an [outline local Six Point Plan template](#).

Background

12. It is possible that customers might say they intend to harm or kill themselves. This can be distressing for those concerned, but there are some important points a member of staff should know that can help resolution. Being prepared and having well managed processes in place helps us to reduce distress and achieve an outcome where everyone is safe. Staff should be alert to customers who may directly declare, or whose behaviour indicates, an intention to attempt suicide or self harm.

13. Whilst some customers may say they intend to kill or harm themselves as a threat or a tactic to “persuade”; others will mean it. Our procedures and actions must be organised around the assumption that it is real possibility that the customer will take action on their declaration.

14. DWP staff are not counsellors - but it is important that systems, procedures and responses are in place and that members of staff know what to do if a customer says they intend to harm themselves.

15. It is not possible or desirable within this guidance to fully identify the range of ways in which customers might say they intend to kill or harm themselves and to specify the action to take in every situation. Staff must be aware of the principles of [DWP’s Six Point Plan](#) and should use these as a basis to enable them to manage situations that may arise effectively.

16. When dealing with this type of incident, the safety of the member of staff must always come first. Staff members have a responsibility for their own safety and must ensure that they do not put themselves at risk when attempting to help or advise the customer.

Setting up local plans and procedures to manage customer declarations of intention to attempt suicide or self harm

17. Managers, in all DWP businesses who may have contact with customers, must develop arrangements that comply with the principles of the [DWP Six Point Plan framework](#) to produce a local Six Point Plan. Some elements of the DWP Six Point Plan framework may not be appropriate in all circumstances: the important factor is to put in place arrangements that suit the working environment. Managers may wish to use the [outline local Six Point Plan template](#).

18. The arrangements must include appropriate responses for face to face communications, telephone calls and written correspondence from customers (including emails) as appropriate. Where members of staff work away from the office, including those who visit customers in their homes, this should also be covered in the local Six Point Plan.

19. Managers must ensure that:


- systems, procedures and responses are in place to help staff to deal effectively and safely with customers’ declarations of intention to attempt suicide or self harm made by customers
- staff are aware of the local systems, procedures and action to take if an incident arises
- members of staff have the capability to respond appropriately
- staff regularly refresh their knowledge of processes and procedures to follow. These [scenarios](#) may be a useful way to help staff refresh their knowledge

20. The local plan must include:

- a reminder to staff to be aware of their own safety and put this first when handling this type of situation
- arrangements for a signalling system to alert colleagues that a customer has said they intend to kill or harm themselves and a requirement for a colleague to act as a support

partner to the member of staff who is dealing with the customer who has made the declaration

- arrangements to ensure that the member of staff dealing with the customer has no further interruptions to enable them to focus on the customer
- arrangements for referring the customer to external sources of help and support, including contact numbers where possible
- arrangements for calling the emergency services if required
- a requirement for a written report of the incident to be completed and retained
- a requirement for managers to review the incident with the member of staff and offer support as appropriate
- how staff will be made aware of action to take at the time of a declaration
- arrangements for dealing with declarations made during visits to the customer in their home, where appropriate
- for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) offices, details of the '[Customer Champion](#)' within the benefit delivery centre who will take further action after the call

21. The local plan and procedures must be developed in consultation with the Local Trade Union Side. Managers may wish to use the [outline local Six Point Plan template](#).

22. Managers are responsible for reviewing the local plan in consultation with the Local Trade Union Side and ensuring that contact numbers are kept updated.

Signalling

23. Local procedures must be in place to enable the member of staff to summon a support partner, whilst maintaining contact with the customer. Managers may find it helpful to refer to these [scenarios](#) when reviewing the local plan

24. Managers must develop, and make staff aware of, a signalling system that is appropriate in their local working environment, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that are needed. This must also include processes to enable staff who may be working off-site, including those visiting customers in their home, to summon help.

25. Examples of possible signalling systems include: holding or waving a red card or flag in a Contact Centre; waving arms to attract attention; putting a yellow card on the top of their desk, the use of a code word or sentence. Some of these signals will not be appropriate to all working environments.

26. Managers of staff who carry out home visits must ensure that a system is in place to provide support to staff in this situation. This must include support provided by telephone. It may follow similar principles to the 'Red Folder' process that provides support for Visiting Officers in difficult situations but must not use the same dedicated phone number. The local Six Point Plan should include phone numbers for suitable support partners.

Support Partner

27. Handling declarations of suicide or self harm from customers can be distressing and challenging for the member of staff involved. A support partner must be available to assist staff who are dealing with customers who have said or indicated that they intend to kill or

harm themselves. The support partner must be aware of the local Six Point Plan and the action to take if such an incident arises.

Role of the Support Partner

28. The support partner will assist the member of staff by:

- unobtrusively monitoring the situation for the well-being of both the member of staff and the customer
- taking notes of the conversation
- helping to assess the degree of risk to the customer and to the member of staff
- organising action to be taken, according to local procedures, such as:
 - finding contact numbers for local support services,
 - calling the emergency services.

29. The support partner must be able to hear or listen into the conversation as best they can. In a telephony centre the support partner might listen into the call. In a Jobcentre or other building that is open to the public the support partner might discreetly watch and listen to the conversation.

30. It is likely that the support partner will be the member of staff's line manager as they will be in the best position to assist. This could differ according to local procedures, but it is more important that the support partner is aware of the action to take in such incidents, aware of local procedures and is available to help rather than being of a particular grade.

Referral to external specialist help

31. In some cases it may be appropriate to encourage customers who have said they intend to kill or harm themselves to contact external specialists such as their GP or a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). If you are able to, check if the customer is already under the care of a healthcare specialist.

32. If you have the customer's permission you may contact these people on their behalf.

33. Local managers must decide the arrangements for contacting such organisations and ensure that staff are aware of these. In some areas, the Crisis Resolution Team may only take referrals from a GP or Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). If DWP staff are to have contact names and phone numbers of Mental Health Services, managers must make arrangements with the local CMHT to ensure that its staff are prepared to receive calls from DWP staff. Managers must ensure that relationships with the local CMHT are maintained.

34. It is strongly advised that the local Six Point Plan contains telephone numbers for local Community Mental Health Teams and other relevant local community services.

The [District Provision Tool](#) holds details of local support organisations in each district, in its 'Specialist Support' section. Staff can use the relevant District Provision Tool to identify local support for customers at risk of suicide or self harm.

35. Staff who work in business areas that cover a wide geographic region or areas of centralised work, such as Contact Centres, Benefit Centres, Benefit Delivery Centres and Pension Centres can also use the relevant [District Provision Tool](#) to find [support organisations local to the customer](#)¹⁷. Managers at such sites may wish to consider including a link to the [District Provision Tool](#) index in their local Six Point Plans in addition to telephone numbers for [national support organisations](#) in their local Six Point Plans.

Calling emergency services

36. Local managers must decide the arrangements for calling the emergency services if the customer is very distressed, if they are in immediate danger or if they have already harmed themselves, for example they may have taken pills or cut themselves badly.

37. If you work in a Contact Centre, Benefit or Pension Centre or other area of centralised work you may need to call the emergency services on behalf of a customer who lives in another area. You should tell the emergency services operator that you are calling from a national centre and let them know the customer's location.

38. You do not need the customer's consent to call the emergency services but it is important to let the customer know what is happening and why, when this is possible.

Accessing the local Six Point Plan

39. It is strongly recommended that staff create a desktop shortcut to the local Six Point Plan so that they can access it quickly and easily if they need it. Managers may also wish to consider producing their local Six Point Plan as a desk aid.

40. Staff members who are working away from the office, for example on visiting duties, may wish to consider carrying a copy of the local Six Point Plan with them.

Giving staff 'permission to act'

41. Local procedures cannot cover all circumstances that may arise. Staff must always consider the Six Point Plan, their own safety and the best outcome for the customer's safety, but depending on the circumstances, do not need to work through each step. Managers must ensure that staff members who are dealing with the situation have permission to act as they think best. In some circumstances this may mean calling the emergency services immediately the customer indicates they intend to attempt suicide or self harm. Managers must not criticise staff for acting as they consider appropriate given the situation and the information they have available at the time.

42. DWP will support decisions that staff make whilst dealing with incidents that arise. Staff and managers will later [review the incident](#), which will include identifying any lessons for the future. If the manager felt that the member of staff could have considered a different course of action they should discuss this at the review meeting. Managers must respect the decision the member of staff made in dealing with the situation, but may offer suggestions to be considered if a similar scenario occurs.

Line Managers' responsibilities

43. Line Managers must:

- ensure that staff are aware of the local Six Point Plan and have the opportunity to discuss any concerns
- ensure that staff refresh their knowledge of the local Six Point Plan at least annually and following an incident. Managers may wish to refer to these [scenarios](#) to help their staff to review their knowledge of the local plan
- encourage staff to create a desktop shortcut to the local Six Point Plan
- ensure that a [record of the incident](#) is completed
- ensure that they [review any incident](#) with the member of staff involved in handling the incident promptly and that the [review is recorded](#)
- provide staff with [appropriate support following an incident](#), this could include giving the member of staff time away from duties and ensuring they are aware of the [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#).
- in PIP offices, ensure staff are aware who is the [PIP 'Customer Champion'](#) within the benefit delivery centre who will take further action after the call

Staff responsibilities

44. Staff must:

- ensure that they read and understand the local Six Point Plan and discuss any concerns they have with their line manager
- refresh their knowledge of the local Six Point Plan at least annually and following an incident
- ensure that they are able to access the local Six Point Plan quickly if needed
- [record](#) an incident in which a customer declares an intention to attempt suicide or self harm as soon as possible
- [review](#) the incident with their line manager
- in PIP offices, ensure they know who is the [PIP 'Customer Champion'](#) within the benefit delivery centre who will take further action after the call

What to do – customer declares an intention to attempt self harm or suicide

Face to Face or telephony

45.

1	Take the statement to self harm or suicide seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remain calm and listen carefully• Make sure that you are safe• Stop what you are doing - give the customer your full attention
2	Summon a colleague	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not put the caller on hold• Use your local signal to get help from a colleague who will act as your 'support partner'• Your support partner will assist you as

		<p>you help the customer, for example by finding contact numbers for you and will act as a witness to the conversation</p>
3	Gather information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the customer to gather information to help you to assess the degree of risk. This could include finding out: • do they have specific plans? What are they? • have they already taken action, e.g. have they taken tablets? If so, find out what, when and how many? • do they have the means to carry out the plans to hand? • have they tried to harm themselves before? Have they received, or are they currently receiving, treatment? • where the customer or claimant is and if they intend to go anywhere else • how imminent the intention is • Try to find out if they have any friends or family members who could provide support • You and your support partner should make notes of the conversation, if possible • Record key information including the customer's location and any plans they have for going elsewhere to harm themselves. This will be important if you need to inform other services <p><u>Hints on managing the conversation with the customer</u></p>
4	Provide referral advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the discussion suggests that the customer is not in immediate danger but there is a risk that they may attempt suicide or self harm you should encourage them to seek help • You could suggest they:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make an emergency appointment with their GP • contact the local Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). • contact friends or family who could provide support • With the customer’s permission you may contact their GP or CMHT on their behalf. It is important to stress to the GP or CMHT that the customer is talking about suicide • You could offer the customer one or more telephone numbers from the list of national support organisations • You can use the ‘Specialist Support section of the District Provision Tool to find contact details for appropriate support organisations local to the customer
5	Summon Emergency help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the emergency services if you consider the customer to be at serious risk or in immediate danger. For example if they have taken tablets or cut themselves badly, or they are in a dangerous situation such as next to heavy traffic or near a railway line, • You do not need the customer’s consent to contact the emergency services, but it is important to tell them what is happening and why when this is possible • Your office will have arrangements for calling emergency services. You should follow these arrangements whenever possible, but in some cases this may not be practical. You are in the best position to decide the action to take given the circumstances and information you have available • Do not delay in contacting the emergency services if you think this is appropriate • Let the emergency services know the customer’s location and any other relevant details you have uncovered

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the emergency services if you are calling from a Contact Centre or other virtual network • Record details of the incident and the action you took as soon as you are able to.
6	Review	Discuss the incident with your line manager

Following the incident

46. As soon as possible after the incident [record details of the incident](#) and the action you took. Staff in PIP offices must follow PIP procedures and contact the ‘Customer Champion’ in the benefit delivery centre who will take further action after the call

What to do – customer declares an intention to attempt suicide or self harm

- Home visits

47. A customer may declare an intention to attempt suicide or self harm during a home visit. In this situation it is likely that the member of staff will be alone and unable to summon a colleague to be physically present.

48. When dealing with this type of incident, the safety of the member of staff must always come first. Staff must ensure that they do not put themselves at risk in attempting to help or advise the customer.

49. The principles of the Six Point Plan apply if a customer declares an intention to attempt suicide or self harm during a home visit. Managers of staff who work away from the office must ensure that staff are equipped to develop strategies that enable them to manage the ‘one off’ situations that may arise.

50.

1	Take the statement to self harm or suicide seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen carefully and remain calm • Stop what you are doing and give the customer your full attention • If you have other visits booked you may need to contact your home office so that the following visits can be rearranged or cancelled <p>Think about your own safety. If at any time you feel unsafe, or if there is any sign of a weapon, such as a knife, gun or petrol, leave the property, ensure you are in a safe place and contact the emergency services. DWP will support your decision to do this.</p>
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2	Summon a colleague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible, contact the person within your part of the business who is aware of the action to take in such incidents and available to support you
3	Gather information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the customer to gather information that will help you to assess the degree of risk that they will attempt suicide or self harm. This could include finding out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do they have specific plans? What are they? • have they already taken action, e.g. have they taken tablets? If so, find out what, when and how many? • do they have the means to carry out the plans to hand? • have they tried to harm themselves before? Have they have received treatment or are they currently receiving treatment? • if they intend to go anywhere else • how imminent the intention is • Try to find out if they have any friends or family members who could provide support • If possible, record key information including any plans the customer has for going elsewhere to harm themselves. This will be important if you need to inform other services. <p><u>Hints on managing the conversation with the customer</u></p>
4	Provide referral advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the discussion suggests that the customer is not in immediate danger but there is a risk that they may self harm or attempt suicide you should encourage them to seek help. You could suggest they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make an emergency appointment with their GP • contact the local Community Mental

		<p>Health Team (CMHT).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact friends or family who could provide support. <p>With the customer's permission, you may make the contact on their behalf.</p> <p>It is important to stress to the GP or CMHT that the customer is talking about suicide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could offer the caller one or more telephone numbers from the list of national support organisations [link to para 92] below. It is good practise for staff who are working away from the office to carry a list of contact numbers or to have numbers programmed into a mobile phone. • As soon as you are safely able to, record details of the incident and the action you took.
5	Summon Emergency help	<p>If you consider the customer to be at serious risk or in immediate danger, for example if they have taken tablets or cut themselves badly contact the emergency services.</p> <p>Do not delay in contacting the emergency services if you think this is appropriate.</p> <p>You do not need the customer's consent to call the emergency services but it is important to tell them what is happening and why when this is possible.</p> <p>As soon as you are safely able to, record details of the incident and the action you took.</p>
6	Review	Discuss the incident with your line manager

Following the incident

51. As soon as possible after the incident:

- make notes whilst the incident is still fresh in your mind. This will help you in completing a [record of the incident](#) on your return to the office;
- contact your line manager to inform them of the incident and the action you took.

52. Think about your own well-being. Dealing with this type of incident can be distressing and stressful. Let your line manager know if you need to take a break from your activities or

if you feel unable to carry on with the visits you had planned. Your line manager will make arrangements for these to be postponed and rearranged.

What to do – Declarations made in writing or by electronic media

53. Occasionally a customer may say they intend to attempt suicide or self harm in a letter or by electronic media. In such cases it can be difficult to assess the level of risk to the customer and to decide an appropriate response.

54. If you receive a declaration made by letter or electronic media you must consider whether the declaration is specific and urgent.

55. If you consider that there is a specific risk that the customer may attempt suicide or self harm you must consider the Six Point Plan and what is appropriate and reasonable in the circumstances. If you are sufficiently concerned about a customer you may contact the emergency services. You must tell your Line Manager that you are considering doing this and [record details of the incident and the action you took](#)²⁴.

56. In some cases a customer may mention thoughts of attempting suicide or self harming to support a benefit claim. You must consider whether this is general information, such as ‘I have frequent thoughts of self harm’ or if the customer is stating a specific intention.

57. If you consider the customer has provided general information and is not specifically declaring an intention to attempt suicide or self harm, you do not need to take any further action in connection with these statements as this will form part of the benefit assessment process. If you are unsure about what to do in a specific case, talk to your Line Manager.

What to do – a third party tells us a customer intends to attempt suicide or self harm

58. Occasionally a third party might tell DWP that a customer intends to attempt suicide or self harm. A third party could include: customer representatives, family members, friends, organisations or someone with a connection to the customer such as a landlord or neighbour. This is not an exhaustive list.

59. In these circumstances it is reasonable to expect the third party to manage the situation, for example, you may suggest that the third party encourages the customer to contact their GP or CMHT. You may provide contact details and numbers to the third party. If the third party considers the customer to be at serious risk or in immediate danger, suggest that they call the emergency services.

60. You must inform the third party that you will not be taking any further action and you must [record details of the incident](#)²⁴ and your discussion with the third party.

61. If you doubt that the third party is capable of managing the situation and you believe the customer to be at serious risk or in immediate danger you may call the emergency services. It is good practise to tell the third party that you are doing this. You must [record details of the incident](#)²⁴, your discussion with the third party and action taken.

Managing the conversation with the customer

62. Hearing a customer express an intention to harm themselves or attempt suicide may come as a shock and can be upsetting for you. Dealing with this type of incident can cause distress and you may have concerns about how to speak to a person who has said they intend to attempt suicide or self harm. You may be concerned about making the situation worse or causing the customer more distress. These types of worries are understandable.

63. The shock and upset can be reduced if you are prepared and know how to make an appropriate response to the individual as the conversation progresses.

64. You are not a counsellor. In the course of your normal working you may hear things from customers that are potentially upsetting but you are not responsible for sorting out their lives. The purpose of talking to the customer is to help identify their needs and encourage them to seek appropriate support or, with their consent, to help contact specialist support on their behalf.

65. Your training and the experience you have developed during your dealings with customers will be helpful for you to draw on if you are in this situation. It is important to be aware of what you are hearing, observing and experiencing.

66. There are some helpful points to aid you in talking to the customer. It is not a script as each individual situation will be different and it is important that you talk to the customer in a natural and engaging way.

- Give the customer the opportunity to talk about their feelings and plans. If they are given an opportunity to do this, they may feel better by the end of the conversation. However this recovery may be brief and it is important that you advise them to see their GP or other mental health professional as soon as possible.
- It is important to **listen** and be non-judgemental. You may not need to say very much during the conversation and there are no magic words.
- Try to be yourself. If you are concerned your voice and manner will show it. It is okay to tell the customer that you are concerned about them.
- Don't be afraid to talk to the customer about their plans: you may be gathering important information. Encourage the customer to talk to you, for example try to find out if they have attempted this before, how they will do it, if they have the means to do so available, and when they intend to do it – but avoid putting too much emphasis on it.
- Try to focus on the here and now in your discussion. For example, if you are speaking to a customer who has come to a Jobcentre ask them: what they are going to do when they leave, where are they going, who are they meeting, what they are going to have for dinner that night and plans for the next few days.
- Do not be sworn to secrecy. If a customer says that they will tell you something only if you will not tell anyone else you can say “I don't know what it is you want to tell me and I cannot promise that”, or “I cannot make that promise”.
- Do not try to solve the customer's personal crisis by giving advice or problem solving.
- Avoid making the customer feel that they have to justify their feelings and belittling their problem. What might seem to be an insignificant issue to one individual may

seem insurmountable to another. You cannot assume that because you feel something is not worth feeling suicidal about, others will feel the same way.

- Reassure the customer that help to manage the way that they are feeling is available. You can signpost the customer to appropriate specialist support or, with their consent, you may contact the specialist support on their behalf.

Recording customer declarations of intention to attempt suicide or self harm

67. You must consider whether it would be appropriate to report the incident using the [Unacceptable Customer Behaviour procedures](#). You must complete a [UCB incident report form](#) if you felt threatened or intimidated by the customer's declaration of intention to attempt suicide or self harm, or if the customer threatened to harm you or another person whilst acting on the intention. You may have felt threatened if, for example, the customer had a knife or similar weapon, or the customer threatened to self harm in the office in such a way that would endanger others, such as by pouring petrol on himself or herself and the surroundings and threatening to set fire to it.

68. If UCB procedures are not appropriate, you must record details of the incident on a [record of customer declaration of intention to attempt suicide or self harm form](#)^{PDF}. It is good practice to do this within a day of the event if possible, whilst details are still fresh in your mind.

69. It is important that the record is as full as possible, detailing what the customer said or did, the customer's behaviour and demeanour, the decision you made and any action you took.

70. Useful things to include in your record include:

- the time and duration of your contact with the customer
- the customer's behaviour: for example if they were: fidgety; not interested; vacant; fast or slow talking; not replying to you; talking incoherently; not making eye contact
- key information you provided to the customer
- any actions the customer said they would take such as contacting their GP, visiting a friend or family member

71. You must give a copy of the record of the incident to your line manager and may wish to keep a copy for yourself.

72. Line managers must [keep these records for six years](#) as they may be needed in future for legal and system review purposes.

Reviewing the incident

73. Following all customer declarations of intention to attempt suicide or self harm you and your line manager must review the incident and record the review discussion on the [incident review template](#)^{PDF}. It is good practice to do this within a day or two of the incident if possible.

74. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on the incident, discuss your feelings about it and agree any support to help you deal with your reactions to the experience.

75. You will find it helpful to refer to your record of the incident for this discussion. The discussion should include:

- how you handled the incident
- whether the local procedures in place for handling these situations worked effectively
- if there are any lessons to be learned for future handling and responses.
- any support for you that has been agreed

76. This provides a further opportunity to consider whether it would be appropriate to record the event using the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour procedures.

77. The line manager must keep a copy of the review record for six years. They must also send copies of the records to the manager in the office who is responsible for developing and reviewing local plans for managing incidents.

Support for staff following an incident

78. This type of experience can be upsetting and you need to look after yourself and be reassured that you have done what you can to help the customer.

79. You are not expected to counsel customers in this situation. You are not responsible for actions the customer might take or if they decide not to seek help. You are not responsible for how agencies such as GPs and CMHTs respond to a referral or approach from the customer. By encouraging the customer to seek help or by calling the emergency services you have done all that could reasonably be expected of you.

80. After the incident you may have thoughts and feelings about the situation. This is all part of the process of coping with what may have been a distressing experience. If you feel the need to discuss your experience seek support from your line manager and colleagues. Individuals will be affected differently. You may be able to deal with the situation well at the time, but may have thoughts about it later on. If so, ask your line manager and colleagues for help and/or contact the [Employee Assistance Programme](#).

81. Managers must ensure that any member of staff who has managed an incident in which a customer has declared an intention to attempt suicide or self harm has opportunities to discuss the incident and how they are feeling. Line managers must provide support to the officer, such as giving the member of staff time away from duties and listening support. Managers must ensure that the officer is aware of the counselling services available under the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

82. The Employee Assistance Programme can provide an independent, confidential counselling service. You can contact the EAP helpline by calling 0800 028 8763. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and all calls are free of charge from landlines. There is no limit to the number of calls you can make to the helpline. The EAP also has a management support service to help line managers deal with these conversations with their members of staff.

Additional support – DWP Contacts

83. Due to its customer-facing role, Work Services Directorate has District-office based specialist services available to support staff in their day to day dealings with customers who have particular needs. Their expertise can also be used to help staff deal effectively with customer declarations of intention to attempt suicide and self harm and help managers formulate their local Six Point Plans.

Jobcentre Work Psychologists

84. In Jobcentre, managers and staff may contact their District Work Psychologist for support and advice around any vulnerable customer groups. The Work Psychologist will provide specific advice and guidance around individual customers that staff wish to discuss to ensure the welfare of that customer, to support the adviser in what to do and to ensure referral to appropriate services. Work Psychologists are not counsellors and are not expected to provide a counselling service to staff or customers.

85. Work Psychologists may also be able to help managers to implement local procedures around the policy framework for managing customers declarations of Intention to attempt suicide and self harm to help staff feel confident in applying the principles and practice.

86. If they would like support in implementing local procedures managers may find it helpful, in the first instance, to contact the Senior Work Psychologist in their region for advice.

Mental Health Co-ordinators

87. Some Districts may have Mental Health Co-ordinators whose role is to:

- improve and facilitate links between local mental health and employment services;
- identify the availability of local support (both internal and external) that Jobcentre Plus advisers may signpost customers to;
- provide a support role to Jobcentre Plus advisers who are working with customers with mental health conditions via regular team meetings, awareness sessions etc;
- influence local partners to consider whether the help currently available for those with mental health conditions satisfies local needs and encourage them to address any gaps or shortfall in provision.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Customer Champions

88. A Customer Champion role exists in Personal Independence Payment to support staff and customers when a declaration of intention to attempt suicide or self harm has been made. PIP staff must contact the relevant [PIP Customer Champion](#) if a declaration is made. The Champion will then take action to follow the case through to completion to assess if further support is required during the process.

Additional support – External contacts

Community Mental Health Teams

89. In some areas, the Crisis Resolution Teams (CRT) may take referrals only from a GP or the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). If DWP staff are to have contact names and

phone numbers of Mental Health Services, managers must make arrangements with the local CMHT to ensure that its staff are prepared to receive calls from DWP staff. Managers must ensure that relationships with the local CMHT are maintained.

90. In general, CMHTs do not provide crisis intervention, however they normally have a duty officer/desk clerk who will be able to provide advice if this has been arranged.

91. Crisis referral should ordinarily be referred to the customer's/claimant's GP.

National support organisations

92. You may offer the customer contact details for one of more of these support organisations:

- [Samaritans^{web}](#) - a confidential emotional support service available 24 hours a day - 08457 909090
- [MIND^{web}](#) – Mental Health charity providing confidential mental health information services - 0300 1233393
- Breathing Space - a free, confidential phone and web based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety - 0800 838587
- Get connected - a free, confidential helpline service for young people under 25 - 0808 8084994
- [Bereavement Trust^{web}](#) – helps people to overcome the grief and sorrow that can follow bereavement by providing telephone help lines - 0800 435455
- [Cruse Bereavement Care^{web}](#) National charity set up to offer free, confidential help to bereaved people - 0844 4779400

The 'Specialist Support' section of the [District Provision Tool](#) holds details of local support organisations in each district. You can use the relevant District Provision Tool to find contact details of support organisations local to the customer and encourage or help them to make contact.

Monitor customer well-being for future contacts

93. Being aware that the customer has declared an intention to attempt suicide or self harm may be useful information to help you prepare for future contacts with the customer.

94. If the declaration is recent you should consider how best to communicate with the customer and whether it would be appropriate to communicate in a different way. For example:

- if you are communicating what may be unwelcome news you may wish to consider:
- telephoning the customer to explain the implications and discuss options before sending a letter, or
- making a referral to DWP Visiting;
- if you are visiting the customer at home you may wish to be accompanied by colleague;
- if you are inviting the customer to attend an appointment at the office you may wish to:
- ask a colleague to discreetly observe the meeting;

- suggest that the customer brings a friend or other support to the appointment;
- consider whether you need to schedule a longer appointment to allow you to explain and discuss matters more fully
- PIP staff must refer the case the appropriate [PIP Customer Champion](#)





Contacts

95. If you have any comments on this guidance please e mail [DWP Social Justice Integration Team](#)

96. For further advice on any of the issues in this guidance please contact your [Health & Safety Business Partner](#) in the first instance.

Templates

These documents open in a separate page

- [National Six Point Plan framework](#)
- [Outline local Six Point Plan template](#)
- [Record of customer declaration of intention to attempt suicide or self harm](#)
- [Review of incident – customer declaration of intention to attempt suicide or self harm](#)


Scenarios

[Line Managers' Briefing](#)

[Scenarios](#)

Line Manager Briefing

Managers must ensure that staff refresh their knowledge of processes and procedures to follow if a customer tells us directly, or their behaviour indicates, that they intend to attempt suicide or self harm. Staff should refresh their knowledge at least annually, and following an incident.

Managers may use the scenarios below to help staff to review their knowledge. The scenarios will help in identifying whether they need to take any further action to help staff to refresh their knowledge. They will also help identify whether there is a need to revise the local Six Point Plan.

Most of these scenarios are based on actual incidents. They are intended to promote useful debate and discussion. It is useful if the scenarios are played out by volunteers. The rest of the participants can listen and watch what goes on and can comment on what happens.

It can be useful to stop the action at certain points during the role play to consider what will happen next and whether there are actions that other witnesses to the event should be taking.

There are some questions below to help take you through the scenario and debrief.

Q. How would you signal to attract a support partner?

Q. What type of questions should the member of staff ask? What information should they try to uncover?

Q. What action does the member of staff need to take?

Q. What should happen following the incident? Eg recording the incident, support for staff, reviewing the incident

Q. Should this be recorded under the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour procedures?

Q. Are there any lessons to be learnt from this scenario? Does the local Six Point Plan need to be updated? How will this be communicated

This is not an exhaustive list of questions and sometimes an incident may not neatly fit neatly into the above criteria. For further advice and guidance please contact your Health & Safety Business Partner in the first instance.

Scenarios for role play or discussion to help refresh staff knowledge of processes and procedures to follow if a customer declares an intention to attempt suicide or self harm

Scenario A – Customer pours petrol in Jobcentre

A customer enters the Jobcentre and uses the ‘warm phones’. He is irate and becomes abusive to the person on the phone and to Jobcentre staff, threatening to return to the office later to harm himself and staff before storming out.

The customer returns to the Jobcentre later in the day with a can of petrol which he pours over himself. He takes out a lighter and threatens to set himself on fire.

Scenario B – A customer says he intends to attempt suicide as he leaves the Jobcentre office.

A calm but seemingly depressed man attends the Jobcentre for a pre-arranged appointment. He is seated and waiting to be seen for his appointment when several members of staff and the Customer Care Officer (CCO) notices that he is sobbing with his head in his hands. He then abruptly walks out of the office but advises the CCO, when passing him, that he cannot take any more and is going to kill himself.

Scenario C - A customer says she will kill herself during a call to a Contact Centre - telephony

A customer advises the Contact Centre that she has recently separated from her partner and is looking after her two children alone. In addition she is caring for both of her elderly parents. She is calm and broadly rational. However, she gets more upset as the call continues and has suffered delay in her benefit being awarded and paid. She says that she has recently been relying on a Food Bank for food for her and the children. She says that she has recently been

thinking more and more about suicide as she cannot cope any more. The news during the call about further delay in her benefit payment results in her repeating her thoughts of suicide and the call ends abruptly.

Scenario D - Customer has a weapon and mentions his suicidal tendencies during a home visit

A Visiting Officer makes a home visit to a customer to deliver and explain an overpayment letter. The Visiting Officer is accompanied by a colleague. The Visiting Officer sees that there is a shotgun on the kitchen table. The customer notices that the Visiting Officer has seen the shotgun in the kitchen. The customer mentions that he has mental health issues and suicidal tendencies and that, in the past, he has threatened to shoot a bailiff.

Scenario E - Customer sitting on balcony wall, Visiting Officer locked in flat – home visit

A Visiting Officer makes a home visit to a middle-aged single father to deliver and explain an overpayment letter. He lives in a flat on the 5th floor of a block of flats. The customer has been identified as needing additional support, and the case-paper has a 'mental health' flag but no further details. The customer and a teenage girl open the door to the flat. The customer introduces the girl as his daughter and directs the Visiting Officer to the living room. As the Visiting Officer is walking to the living room the customer locks the front door and puts the key in his pocket. As the Visiting Officer delivers the letter and starts to explain the overpayment details the customer leaps to his feet yelling 'I've had enough, I can't cope with all this'. The customer opens a door to small balcony and throws his legs over the balcony wall. He sits on the wall continuing to state that he has 'had enough'. The daughter looks at the Visiting Officer and rolls her eyes in mock despair; she turns up the volume on her mp3 player and retreats to her bedroom.

Scenario F – Customer says he will kill himself if no satisfactory outcome in seven day's time - letter

A claimant writes in to complain about his Personal Independence Payment claim. He says he has telephoned three times about the outcome of his claim and it has still not been paid. He says that he has no money or food and is relying on the charity of friends. He is at the end of his tether and his mental condition has been worsened by the delay.

He concludes by saying if he does not hear from us about payment of benefit within seven days he will kill himself. He has the means at home to carry this through and the ball is in our court.

Scenario G - We are told by a Third Party that a customer may attempt suicide

A customer receiving Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) attends the Jobcentre bringing a medical certificate from his doctor. As a result of the medical certificate the advisor informs the customer that he is no longer entitled to JSA and that he will need to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The customer becomes agitated at the thought of his JSA stopping and suddenly gets up and leaves the Jobcentre. The customer returns a few minutes later with a mobile phone. He walks up to the advisor and hands the mobile phone to her saying: "Here, talk to my landlord and tell him why I cannot pay this months rent". The Advisor takes the

phone from the customer. The person on the phone says he is the customer's landlord. He says that he has known the customer for a few years and that he is concerned about his state of mind. He believes the customer may attempt suicide.