

Unacceptable customer behaviour

First published: 08 November 2016

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Background

Unacceptable customer behaviour (UCB) is any incident that causes staff, or has the potential to cause staff to feel upset, threatened, frightened or physically at risk and is directed at them because they work in DWP. This also applies when claimants attend partner organisations premises, for example, providers.

Examples of unacceptable customer/claimant behaviour

UCB can occur face to face, over the telephone, by email, by post or through electronic communications such as social media or even UCFS journal entries from claimants. This could include:

- violence
- verbal or written abuse
- verbal or written abuse of a discriminatory nature, for example sex, race, disability, religion
- threats, which are implied or otherwise
- intimidation
- sexual innuendo
- harassment
- unwelcome attention
- attempted or actual assaults
- damage to property
- any other incident that makes staff feel uncomfortable, vulnerable or threatened

These are examples, not a complete list.

UCB taking place outside the workplace involving claimants (or others) and staff should also be reported as an incident. This includes UCB in non-working hours.

Markers on UCFS

UCFS has the facility to hold a marker that will indicate whether control measures exist on a claimant's record. The marker will alert the member of staff to check the Staff Protection List (see below).

Markers should only be added or removed on the instructions of the UCB Nominated Manager

Staff Protection List

Details of claimants who have displayed unacceptable behaviour are recorded on a database called the Staff Protection List (SPL). It shows the control measures that have been put in place to make it a safe environment for staff when the claimant attends the jobcentre or telephones the Service Centre.

The SPL should be checked before booking any appointment. For couple's claims, both people should be checked on the SPL. The claimant and/or partner may have been added to the SPL since their last appointment.

The SPL search facility requires the claimant's National Insurance Number (and their partner's for a couples claim) to check if they are on the list.

It is important for staff to have a shortcut to the SPL on their desktop for easy and quick access.

Not all UCB incidents result in control measures being needed.

Reporting an incident

UCB incidents should be reported in line with DWP Policy as soon as possible after the incident and certainly within one working day. This allows prompt action to be taken to control risks. See the guidance on reporting incidents.

Control measures

There is a control measure matrix to help decide what control measures to apply to certain incidents.

The complete list of control measures available is:

- accompanied interviews
- accompanied visits
- banned from an office
- dealt with by member of other race

- deal with by member of other sex
- dealt with by member of same race
- dealt with by member of same sex
- monitor behaviour
- must be dealt with by post
- must be dealt with in a screened environment
- no home visits
- to be seen by a named officer

It is sometimes necessary to apply more than one control measure. If a claimant is banned from an office it is essential that alternative arrangements are put in place and the claimant is informed of these promptly.

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