Safeguarding

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The purpose of safeguarding

Universal Credit has a responsibility to ensure that anyone who accesses our service and benefits can do so safely.

Measures are in place to ensure that staff are aware of, and can recognise, the signs of someone who could be at risk.

Everyone has a responsibility to ensure they are aware of the procedures to follow where a concern is raised and how they report this to the appropriate authorities.

For Information on your district procedures and contact details, refer to your District Provision tool.

What is safeguarding

Safeguarding is having measures in place and using them to protect the health, well-being and human rights of individuals to enable them to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.

This could be the claimant, part of their family or someone in the household, including children, young person or adult.

Safeguarding is making sure everyone is supported in getting access to the help they need and anyone at risk is protected.

Warning signs that are missed or concerns that are not reported could have serious consequences and leave vulnerable individuals open to abuse, harm and neglect.

For further information refer to Complex needs: other needs and situations.

The six principles of safeguarding

Follow the six principles when deciding how best to support or protect individuals. The principles are:

1. Empowerment and participation: support and encourage claimants to make their own decisions. Help them access additional support or encourage them to discuss their situation and develop a plan that Universal Credit can support.

2. Prevention: support claimants to take action before harm happens. Act on the information you have heard or know, discuss with Managers and or safeguarding leads.

3. The amount of involvement: do not intrude more than is necessary to keep a claimant and staff safe. Gather information to make an informed decision on the steps that need to be taken to manage the risk identified.

4. Protection: support claimants when they need help. Establish the risk and consider the help available from other local organisations or authorities to determine the best outcome for the claimant.

5. Work together: work with local organisations or authorities to find the best ways to keep a claimant safe. The District Provision tool provides information on help available and contact details.

6. Accountability: clearly explain safeguarding, what we are doing and why.

Complex needs that may lead to a safeguarding issue

Claimants identified as having additional needs may have difficulty accessing the Universal Credit service. They may have difficulty understanding or accepting the conditions of claiming Universal Credit and complying with any requirements they need to undertake.

Additional needs may include:
- learning or physical disability
- mental illness
- homelessness
- experiencing domestic abuse
- drug or alcohol addiction
- ex-offender
- local authority care leaver

Safeguarding is providing the claimant with the help and support they need and taking account of their abilities and circumstances when considering what they are capable of.

For further information, refer to Complex needs: other needs and situations.

Suicide and Self-harm

If a claimant expresses thoughts about suicide or self-harm they must be taken seriously and the appropriate help and intervention offered at the earliest point.

For information, refer to Suicide and Self-harm and the DWP six point plan.

Recognising abuse, harm and neglect

When interacting with claimants and their families we need to recognise signs of abuse, harm or neglect. The individual(s) may not ask for help or be able to ask for help but their behavior or information they disclose may raise a concern.

Safeguarding areas to consider:
- **Financial or material abuse** including stealing, selling assets, fraud, misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- **Domestic violence and abuse:** including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, economic, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.
- **Psychological or emotional abuse**: including belittling, name calling, threats of harm, intimidation, isolation
- **Self-neglect:** covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings.
- **Discriminatory abuse**: including racist, homophobic, sexist, abuse based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment
- **Neglect and acts of omission**: including withholding the necessities of life such as medication, food or warmth, ignoring medical or physical care needs
- **Institutional or organisational**: including regimented routines and cultures, unsafe practices, lack of person-centred care or treatment. Observed lack of dignity and respect in the care setting, rigid routine, processes or tasks organised to meet staff needs in that care setting, disrespectful language and attitudes.
- **Modern slavery**: is the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women or men using force, coercion, and abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation.

Responding to concerns

Use the District Provision Tool and any local complex needs tool to identify what help is available and the procedures to take to raise a concern. These tools have

information on who to contact and which organisations can offer the appropriate support to claimants.

Information in the following guidance also points to the support that can be provided. Refer to the Complex needs: other needs and situations.

Where a safeguarding issue is identified it can be discussed with line managers and/or safeguarding leads to determine what support can be given, the action to take and whether to involve the police or the local authority's safeguarding team. We do not need the claimant's permission to report a safeguarding concern to either organisation.

Refer to the Complex needs: consent and disclosure.

If a claimant is in immediate danger, we should contact the police and make a safeguarding referral.

When a safeguarding issue is identified, the concern and any support offered or action taken must be recorded so that anyone else supporting the claimant is aware of any complex needs.

Following a safeguarding incident staff may need to be supported by talking through the incident with line managers and or other staff. Staff can be allowed time to reflect on the situation and to look after their own wellbeing.

Maintaining role and personal boundaries

Agents need to understand what is expected of them, their role and limitations when dealing with a safeguarding concern. This will protect them and the claimant and ensure a professional distance is maintained.

Agents need to be aware of the expert support available from partner organisations. This will allow them to respond to any concerns by signposting claimants quickly and appropriately.

Refer to the, Standards of behaviour policy and procedures.