

# **Suicide or self-harm: Universal Credit Six Point Plan Framework: Guidance**

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## **Introduction**

A claimant may declare that they intend to attempt suicide, self-harm or to harm others. This can be distressing for those concerned, but there are some important points a member of staff should be aware of that will help to support them in these circumstances.

Being prepared and having well managed processes in place may help to reduce distress and ensure that we have done everything we can to support the claimant. Staff should be alert to claimants who may directly declare, or indicate an intention to attempt suicide, self-harm or to harm others.

It is not possible to fully identify the range of ways in which a claimant may say that they intend to harm themselves or to specify the appropriate action to take in every situation.

Declarations of an intent to attempt suicide, self-harm or to harm others must be taken seriously. Procedures and actions must assume that the claimant has a likely intention of acting on these thoughts.

DWP staff are not counsellors and are not expected to be.

Following the steps of the Six Point Plan will ensure that the claimant receives the support they need from the right people at the right time. It is important that systems, procedures and responses are in place and that members of staff know what to do if a claimant declares that they intend to attempt suicide, harm themselves or others.

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 while attempting to support or advise the claimant. They must also be aware that, if possible, they must summon a colleague to act as a support partner so that they are not dealing with the incident alone. The support partner can:

- take notes
- find contact phone numbers
- witness the conversation

## **Six Point Plan**

The Six Point Plan must be completed in all cases where there is any indication that the claimant is thinking about suicide or self-harm. Pinned notes must read 'Six Point Plan invoked' with the date so that agents are aware in all future interventions.

If the claimant declares they intend to attempt suicide, harm themselves or harm others via journal messages or free text responses in the Service 'To-do's', the 'Six Point Plan' must be invoked. If we are unable to contact the claimant, all attempts to do so should be recorded in the 'Claimant history', for example:

"Unable to invoke the Six Point Plan as unable to contact the claimant by phone. Raised this with my team leader who advised referring for a home visit or contacting the local authority or Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader."

Contact should be in Welsh if this is the customer's preferred spoken language.

## **The Universal Credit Six Point Plan can be found below**

1. Take the statement seriously: remain calm

be professional and listen carefully.  
all threats of suicide or self-harm must be taken seriously

2. Summon a colleague: to act as a support partner

Where applicable:

- alert your support partner
- your support partner must be able to hear or listen into the conversation as best they can (if the call is in Welsh, the support partner must also be able to speak Welsh)

If you are face-to-face or on the telephone:

- follow your local process to get help from a colleague who will act as your support partner
- do not put the claimant on hold if on a telephony line
- record the claimant's phone number in case you get cut-off

If you are homeworking:

- alert a support partner within your local support group using a local Teams method
- where possible, the support partner will access the case so that they are able to view the claimant's address or location and if there are any named people who may be able to help, if required
- whilst contacting the support partner using Teams, make sure you manage the silences with the claimant effectively (for example, explain that you are writing notes to get them some support or adding your support partner to the call if appropriate)

The support network is there for two reasons:

- to support you as you deal with the claimant, and
- to act as a witness to what is said during the call

### 3. Gather information: to gauge the level of risk

a) by asking:

- where are they now?
- are they at home or at another location?
- do they intend to go anywhere else?
- is there anybody else with them?
- have they already attempted suicide or self-harm?
- if they have acted, what action have they taken?
- if they have not acted, what are their plans?
- have they received treatment or are they currently receiving treatment?

b) by checking if there is any reference to vulnerability or mental health concerns in 'Claimant history' notes, or the additional support area on the claimant's account.

c) does the claimant threaten to harm others?

Staff are not expected to provide counselling to the claimant. The purpose of the conversation is to identify their needs and to encourage or help them to seek appropriate support.

Record key information such as the claimant's location and any plans they have to go elsewhere to attempt suicide or to harm themselves

#### 4. Provide referral advice

If the situation is non-urgent (for example, there is general distress but no immediate likelihood or means to attempt suicide or self-harm), signpost the claimant to the NHS 111 service.

Claimants can get advice or ask for an urgent GP appointment if:

- they are not able to speak to their local NHS urgent mental health helpline
- they need help urgently for their mental health but it's not an emergency
- they're not sure what to do

NHS 111 will signpost them to the right place to get help if they need to see someone.

When they call NHS 111, they may be able to speak to a nurse or mental health nurse over the phone.

A GP can advise about helpful treatments and also help them to access mental health services. They may be able to refer them to some other services as well.

Additionally, refer to the local District Provision Tool (DPT) and provide the claimant with details of support organisations.

Further information is provided on the DPT. This shows details of local organisations that can provide support for claimants at risk of suicide or self-harm in each district.

#### 5. Summon Emergency help

If a claimant is distressed, at serious risk or in immediate danger, your team leader and / or support partner will assist you with this.

If there is urgent and immediate threat to life, do not delay and immediately contact the emergency services. This can be done by any member of staff using **999**. Request the appropriate emergency services, the Police and / or Ambulance Service. To have information available to support discussions with the emergency services refer to: Situation Background Assessment Recommendation (SBAR).

You do not need the claimant's consent to call the emergency services but it is important to let them know what is happening and why. By not doing this you may cause further distress to the claimant if the emergency services arrive at their location unexpectedly.

Record the Police Incident Number if contact with the police is made.

## 6. Review and record

Review: discuss the incident with a line manager and record the incident as soon as possible.

If you have had an incident where a claimant has declared an intention of suicide or self-harm, it is important to look after your own wellbeing:

- take a break,
- change your focus
- get fresh air
- manage your work life balance
- practice breathing exercises
- access the Wellbeing Hub

You can access the DWP Wellbeing Icon from your desktop or by following this link: [Wellbeing](#)

## Local Six Point Plan

Managers in all DWP businesses who work with claimants must use the Six Point Plan to develop arrangements that help colleagues effectively and safely to support a claimant's declaration of intention to attempt suicide, to self-harm or to harm others.

The local Six Point Plan shouldn't deviate from the Six Point Plan aside from:

- how to summon a colleague to act as a support partner
- local GP or Community Mental Health Team information
- details on how to call the emergency services
- the link to the local District Provision Tool

The plan must be developed in consultation with the local trade union.

There is an Outline local Six Point Plan template to help prepare the local Six Point Plan..

The local Six Point Plan must be kept up to date and communicated to all staff who work with claimants. Staff must refresh their knowledge and understanding of the local

Six Point Plan at least twice annually using scenario role-play and following any incident.

It is strongly advised 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. Staff members who are working away from the office (for example, on visiting duties) are also strongly recommended to carry a copy of the local Six Point Plan with them.

It is not possible or desirable within this guidance to fully identify the range of ways in which claimants might declare they intend to attempt suicide or harm themselves or to specify the action to take in every situation. Staff must be aware of the principles of **the** Six Point Plan and use these as a basis to enable them to effectively manage situations that may arise.

### **Third party reports that a claimant intends to attempt suicide or self-harm**

A third party might contact Universal Credit to advise that a claimant intends to attempt suicide or self-harm. A third party could include:

- the claimant's representative
- family member
- friends
- organisations such as Social Services
- landlord
- neighbour

These are examples and not a full list.

In these circumstances, it is reasonable to expect the third party to manage the situation (for example, by encouraging the claimant to contact their GP or Community Mental Health Team). If the third party considers the claimant to be at serious risk or in immediate danger, they must call the emergency services.

If the third party is capable of managing the situation, they must be informed that no further action will be taken. Details of the incident and discussion with the third party are noted on the Six Point Plan Incident Review Form

If the third party is not capable of managing the situation and the claimant seems to be at serious risk or in immediate danger, the emergency services must be called. Details of the incident, discussion with the third party and any action taken are noted on the Six Point Plan Incident Review Form

## **Declarations made in writing, electronically or by social media**

Occasionally, a claimant may say they intend to attempt suicide or self-harm in a letter, email or in their journal. In such cases, there must be a discussion with the team leader and all necessary and appropriate steps agreed. Every effort must be made to contact them to:

- activate the local Six Point Plan
- gather as much information as possible
- signpost to local support (for example, their GP or the Community Mental Health Team) where necessary

This list is not exhaustive.

It is important to note that contact should be in Welsh if this is the claimant's preferred spoken language.

All attempts to contact the claimant must be recorded in 'Claimant history'.

If there is sufficient concern about a claimant, the emergency services may be called. The details of the incident are noted on the record of claimant declaration of intention to attempt suicide or self-harm form.

There is a separate Six Point Plan for handling declarations made through social media. Such incidents must be referred to the Social Media Regional Lead for action in accordance with the DWP Social Media Six Point Plan and the Jobcentre Plus Twitter Operation Instructions.

## **Claimant declares intention during a home visit**

A claimant may declare an intention to attempt suicide or self-harm during a home visit. The principles of the local Six Point Plan apply.

If possible, the Jobcentre must be contacted to get support to handle the incident and to rearrange or cancel any other visits arranged for that day.

The safety of the member of staff must always come first when dealing with this type of incident.

If at any time there is any sign of a weapon, such as a knife, gun or petrol, the member of staff must leave the property immediately and contact the emergency services.

For more information see: Managing customer declarations of intention to attempt suicide or self harm whilst on a home visit.

## Claimant threatens to harm others

The claimant may be agitated and come across as aggressive and threatening to others. They may have a weapon or threaten to self-harm in the office in such a way that would endanger others - such as pouring petrol on themselves and the surroundings and threatening to set fire to it. In these circumstances it is important to report the incident using the Keep Customer Interactions Safe (KCIS) procedures.

## Recording a claimant declaration of intention

Regardless of whether Keep Customer Interactions Safe (KCIS) procedures apply or not, details of the incident must be noted on a Six Point Plan Incident Review Form. It is good practice to do this within a day of the incident if possible.

The record must be as detailed as possible, for example:

- the time and duration of contact with the claimant
- what the claimant said or did
- their behaviour and demeanour, 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 provided to the claimant, for example:
  - any actions the claimant said they would take such as contacting their GP, visiting a friend or family member
  - any specialist support held on the relevant District Provision Tool
  - the local Community Mental Health Team
  - any support organisations:
    - [Samaritans](#): a confidential emotional support service available 24 hours a day Tel 116 123, free from both landlines and mobiles
    - [MIND](#): 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



- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#): national charity set up to offer free, confidential help to bereaved people: 0808 808 1677

These are examples and not a complete list.

A copy of the Six Point Plan Incident Review Form should be forwarded electronically to your local Single Point of Contact or site leader. This will be retained for legal purposes and localised Six Point Plan reviews.

The member of staff recording the incident **must** also record in 'Claimant history' that the Six Point Plan has been invoked.

## **Escalation to the Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader**

Before escalation, all business-as-usual procedures in the Six Point Plan must be completed. If there is still an underlying issue around the suicide intent, refer to the Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader (ACSSL) community using the following link:

Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader (ACSSL) Referral Process.

## **Reviewing the incident**

Following all claimant declarations of intention to attempt suicide or self-harm, the incident must be reviewed by the line manager on the Review of incident form at the earliest opportunity. This is a chance to reflect on:

- how the incident was handled
- whether the localised Six Point Plan worked effectively
- any lessons to be learned for future handling and responses
- any support needed to help deal with reactions to the experience

The support partner must be included in the review.

The completed review record must be kept for 6 years, and a copy sent to the person in the Jobcentre who looks after developing and reviewing the localised Six Point Plan.

## **Support for staff following an incident**

It is important to consider how the member of staff and the support partner feel about handling the incident.

It can be very upsetting, but they should remember that they are not responsible for the actions that the claimant might take or if they decide not to seek help. Encouraging the claimant to seek help or by calling the emergency services is all that can be reasonably expected of them.

Some colleagues will be affected in different ways when they have supported a claimant through the Six Point Plan process. They may need some time off work or wish to take advantage of the independent and confidential counselling services available under the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

The EAP helpline is: 0800 169 1111 and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. All calls are free of charge from landlines and there is no limit to the number of calls that can be made.

The EAP also has a management support service to help line managers to deal with these conversations with their members of staff.