

Increased jobcentre support for women experiencing domestic abuse

Around 600 DWP staff across the UK are currently undergoing specialist training from expert organisation [Women's Aid](#). The newly assigned points of contact will be trained to identify and support the needs of anyone experiencing domestic abuse, and will work closely with local services to share knowledge and signpost women to additional, external support.

And in an important step to protect those experiencing domestic abuse, the Secretary of State will also announce that new Universal Credit claims will receive automatic guidance directing payments to be made to the main carer's account.

In the same week that the Domestic Abuse Bill received its First Reading in the House of Commons, the critical change set out by Rudd follows a [commitment made in January](#) to ensure the welfare system works in the best interests of women.

On a visit today to Women's Aid member organisation [Advance](#), Amber Rudd will discuss the importance of the new training with DWP staff who have recently completed it. She is also expected to meet frontline support workers and hear first-hand accounts from survivors of abuse who are currently being helped by the charity.

Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

"Domestic abuse is a despicable crime that often happens behind closed doors, making it incredibly difficult to detect. By ensuring there is a specially trained domestic abuse support officer in every UK jobcentre, we are increasing the likelihood that someone will spot the tell-tale signs and get support to the victim quickly.

"And with the automatic recommendation that payments are to go to the main carer, we're making it easier for women to build the financial independence they need to leave their abuser."

Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance said:

"It's crucial that we work closely with experts to identify and support people who have experienced abuse. Drawing on the knowledge and expertise of Women's Aid, we are equipping our staff with the training to spot the signs of abuse, and help vulnerable people to stabilise their lives."

Currently around 60% of Universal Credit payments go to women within joint claims. But recognising that women experiencing domestic abuse may also be victims of financial coercion, the Department for Work and Pensions want to do more to ensure benefit payments are directed to the primary carer of children in a household.

There are also a range of measures designed to provide assistance and support to survivors of domestic abuse including benefit easements and advance payments, as well as maintaining close links with local supported accommodation provision.

The domestic abuse point of contact role compliments the ongoing work taking place to support vulnerable benefit claimants, and trained staff will be in place in all jobcentres by the end of August 2019. While the new online prompt, which was welcomed by industry organisations in January, will occur automatically for all new online Universal Credit applications by the end of this month.

Jacqui Kilburn, manager of the National Training Centre at Women's Aid, said:

"Women's Aid has welcomed the opportunity to deliver training to DWP, ensuring approximately 600 Jobcentre Plus staff understand the devastating nature and harm caused by domestic – including economic – abuse.

"We now look forward to working with the Secretary of State to ensure every frontline work coach is trained to deliver the right response to survivors, and secure a welfare system that supports women and children experiencing domestic abuse."

Niki Scordi, Chief Executive of Advance said:

"For women escaping domestic abuse, help needs to be where they are – whether a GP surgery or a jobcentre. Training like this can help change and even save lives.

"With jobcentres and specialist services like Advance working together, women and children can be supported to rebuild their lives."

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