



HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

We Are Digital

Network Training Pack

**Submit a plea (Single Justice
Service (SJS) V2.0**



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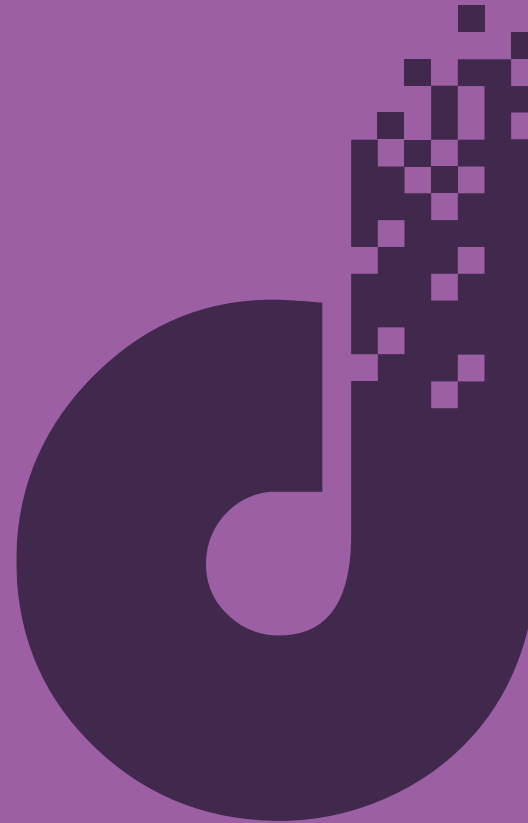
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How to support users to submit a plea through the Single Justice Service

Users may wish to respond online if they have received a Single Justice Procedure Notice (SJPN) informing them that they have been charged with an offence.

If you are completing a **REMOTE** support session, the user needs to have their own device. Your role is to verbally walk them through the process step by step.

You **CANNOT** fill the form in on behalf of the user. They must complete a statement of truth on their own device and submit the form themselves.

In order to respond online, they need to supply an email address. It should be their own email address as it will be added to their case record and, if they are accused of a traffic offence, they will receive a result about the outcome and how to pay via email. If using a friend/family member's email it should be someone who can help and update them regularly.

They can also respond on paper.

If they have been charged with Driving offences they will use [Make a plea for a traffic offence](#). If they have been charged with any other offence they will use [Make a plea for an offence](#). These services are not identical but are broadly the same so we haven't included images of both. Where there are differences you need to be aware of, we have explained that.

How to support users to submit a plea through the Single Justice Service

Some people will want to plead guilty, pay the fine, and get the situation over with quickly.

Others may be confused about what they have been accused of or feel it is unfair. If they don't think they are guilty, or think that there was a good reason for their actions, they should try to get legal advice before the appointment.

Free legal advice on minor criminal offences like these is however very hard to find. If they can afford it and something other than money is at stake, like their ability to drive, they should consider paying for legal advice. See [Advicenow](#) for more information.

How to prepare – Deadline and case number

Deadline

It is vital to check the deadline by which the user has to respond. The deadline is 21 days from the date the Single Justice Procedure Notice (SJPN) was sent to the user (not when they received it). The date it was sent is usually on the front page of the notice.

For offences other than traffic offences the deadline is also confirmed on the front page of the Single Justice Procedure Notice.

The user must be supported to respond before that date.

The deadline to respond cannot be extended. If the user does not respond before the deadline, they are likely to be found guilty and they will have missed the chance to enter a not guilty plea, or explain any mitigating factors, receive a reduced fine, and may be asked to pay the fine in a lump sum they cannot afford.

If the deadline has already passed the service will alert you when you enter their case number on the system (see below).

Check the case number/unique reference number

If the user will attend an appointment at a later date, check first that they have a valid case number. Go to [Make a plea for a traffic offence](#) or the [Make a plea for an offence](#) and press 'Start now'. On the next page you will be asked to enter their unique reference number or case number.

If there are any difficulties identified, the user could contact the Courts and Tribunal Service Centre on 0300 303 0656 to get the correct number before the appointment.

How to prepare - What to bring to the appointment

The user must bring to the appointment

1. The Single Justice Procedure Notice which tells them what offence they are accused of and their Unique Reference Number (URN). They need the URN to access either online service.
2. Their National Insurance number.
3. If they are accused of a traffic offence, their driving license.
4. Details of their income and any benefits they receive
5. Rough details of how much their major outgoings are – for example, rent or mortgage payments, council tax, household bills, child maintenance, and childcare.
6. If they may wish to pay the fine by instalments deducted from their wage, details of their employer (if they have one).
7. If they are going to plead not guilty
 - any evidence they have that supports their case, and
 - the contact details of any witnesses to support their case.

At the appointment

The system is very straight forward until you get to the section where the user enters their plea – guilty or not guilty.

It is important that the user understands that they are accused of a criminal offence, and if they plead guilty they are saying they are guilty of a criminal offence.

A person is guilty if they committed the act they are accused of and have no ‘viable defense’. They are not guilty if either they did not do the thing they are accused of, or they did but they have a ‘viable defense’. If the user is accused of not having a TV license they can find information about what the law is from [Appeal](#). If they are accused of another offence, they may find [Advicenow’s information](#) helpful.

Reassure the user that only [recordable offences](#) will appear on a DBS check about them (potential employers and others can ask for a DBS check to discover if someone has a criminal record). Most cases using the Single Justice Service are not for recordable offences.

If they do not understand why they have been charged, or think that they should not have been, explain that they can contact the prosecuting authority and ask for more details, or for the charges to be dropped and explain why. They should do this as well as entering a plea because of the tight deadline. They could include on the online plea that they have done this.

The Courts and Tribunal Service Centre helpline is only able to explain the court process, and not why they have been charged or what they should do about it.

If they are pleading guilty

If they plead guilty they are asked if they want to attend court or not. In many cases attending won't be necessary, unless they want to explain themselves to the magistrate in person.

There is also the opportunity to enter information for the magistrate or something called 'mitigation'. If the offence was committed by mistake or was caused by something the magistrate should know about when considering the sentence/fine, the user should take this opportunity to explain.

They should also use this box to explain any difficult personal circumstances, including any health or disability issues they have or anyone they care for, and any financial difficulties they are already facing.

You can find [further guidance on Advicenow](#).

Your plea for this charge

☒ Guilty - I want the case to be dealt with in my absence

☐ Guilty - I want to attend court in person

☐ Not guilty - Pleading not guilty to this charge means we'll send details of a date for you to come to court for a trial.

Mitigation (optional)

Is there something you would like the court to consider?

Continue

Single Justice Service (SJS)

If they are pleading not guilty

If they plead not guilty they will attend court.

In the box 'Why do you believe you are not guilty' they should enter all relevant details. Also include details of any difficult personal circumstances, including any health or disability issues they have or anyone they care for, and any financial difficulties they are already facing.

If the user is accused of not having a TV license they can find information about what the law is from [Appeal](#). If they are accused of another offence, [Advicenow's information](#) may be helpful.

They are also asked if they disagree with anything in the witness statement the user has been sent. If they do, the user needs to explain what it is they disagree with.

If they would like to bring a witness to support their case, they need to enter their details now. If their witness needs an interpreter they will need to arrange this but HMCTS will meet the expense of any interpreting in the court.

Your plea for this charge

☐ Guilty - I want the case to be dealt with in my absence

☐ Guilty - I want to attend court in person

☒ Not guilty - Pleading not guilty to this charge means we'll send details of a date for you to come to court for a trial.

Not guilty because?

Why do you believe you are not guilty?

Do you need an interpreter in court?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Evidence and witness information

Do you disagree with any evidence from a witness statement in the notice we sent to you?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you want to call a defence witness?

Someone who can give evidence in court supporting your case.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Continue

Financial details and employment details

Next the user has to supply information about their personal finances and employment details (if they are employed).

If their income is a mixture of weekly and monthly, support the user to work out what it is weekly and enter that. Remember that there are 4.3 weeks in a month, so divide any monthly income by 4.3 to get the weekly amount.

If they have a mixture of employment statuses, and one of them is employed they should select 'employed'. If not they should select 'other' and provide details.

From here on the two systems ([Make a plea for a traffic offence](#) and the [Make a plea for an offence](#)) differ more so we will deal with the next screen separately.

Your employment

For this type of offence you'll usually have to pay a fine:

- you must provide your income details
- the court will decide your fine based on your finances and the seriousness of the offence
- your details will be stored securely by the court

How often do you get paid from your employer?

☐ Weekly

☐ Fortnightly

☐ Monthly

What is your take home pay (after tax)?

£

Continue

Financial information cont'd - Make a plea for a traffic offence

If the user has indicated that they receive benefits, they will now be asked to enter the details.

The next screen calculates their total income.

They are then asked if paying a fine would cause them serious financial problems. Of course they don't know how much the fine might be at this stage, but if they are already struggling to make ends meet or are unlikely to be able to pay the fine in one go, select yes. In the next box 'Information for the magistrate' the user should explain their situation, and any current difficulties they have making ends meet.

If they know what amount they could afford to pay of the fine each month it would be useful to write that here.

Your income

Totals
Your fine will be based on what the court considers to be your weekly income, calculated from the information you've provided.

Income source	Frequency	Amount (take home)	
Employment	Monthly	£230.00	Edit
Benefits	Weekly	£120.00	Edit
Total weekly income		£173.08	

Would paying a fine cause you financial problems?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Note:
For the courts to consider allowing you to pay your fine in instalments, you must provide information about your expenses.

Information for the magistrate

How would paying a fine cause you financial problems?
Why you think the court should allow you to pay your fine in instalments:

Continue



Paying in installments – Make a plea for an offence

How would they like to pay the fine if they are given one?

They can choose to pay it in one lump sum, but it is often too high for most people to do that.

They can also ask that it be deducted in installments from their wage (if they have one). This will mean their employer knows about the charge. If they wish to do this, they will have to enter the employer's details.

Their next option is to have it deducted in installments from any benefits they receive.

Even if the user says no to both options, the court can choose to deduct it from either wages or benefits. If the user has failed to pay a fine before, the court is very likely to do this.

If the user cannot pay it in the way instructed on the fine notice (and did not ask for deductions from their wage or benefit), they can contact the fines unit to discuss a payment plan.

Deductions from earnings

If you need to pay a penalty, would you like us to deduct it from your earnings?

The court may deduct a penalty from your earnings if:

- you've failed to pay in the past
- you're ordered to pay compensation, as part of your penalty

☐ Yes ☐ No

Continue

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Expenses and Outgoings

Both services offer the opportunity to tell the court about your expenses or outgoings. On Make a plea for a traffic offence you have to provide details. On Make a plea for an offence, the user doesn't have to tell the court about their outgoings, but it is a good idea as it enables the court to see what sort of installments the user can afford.

Estimates are fine. The amounts just have to be to the very best of the user's knowledge. (It is a criminal offence to give incorrect information). If they pay for anything weekly, remember there are 4.3 weeks in a month.

On Make a plea for a traffic offence you also confirm if someone else helps to meet these bills – a partner, or grown up child for example.

Both systems offer the opportunity to add details of other large expenses. Support the user to include other large costs in the outgoings that they have to pay – this may include childcare so that they can work, school meals, payment of other fines or loans (if not supplied separately), and their basic grocery shop.

If the user is already struggling to meet their basic needs they should tell the court in the 'Any other significant expenses?' box.

Check everything and submit plea

On the last slide the user has to check all the information they have provided is correct.

If they need to change something they can do so by just clicking the 'change' link next to the correct section.

This is a legal document so they have to confirm that everything is true to the best of their knowledge.

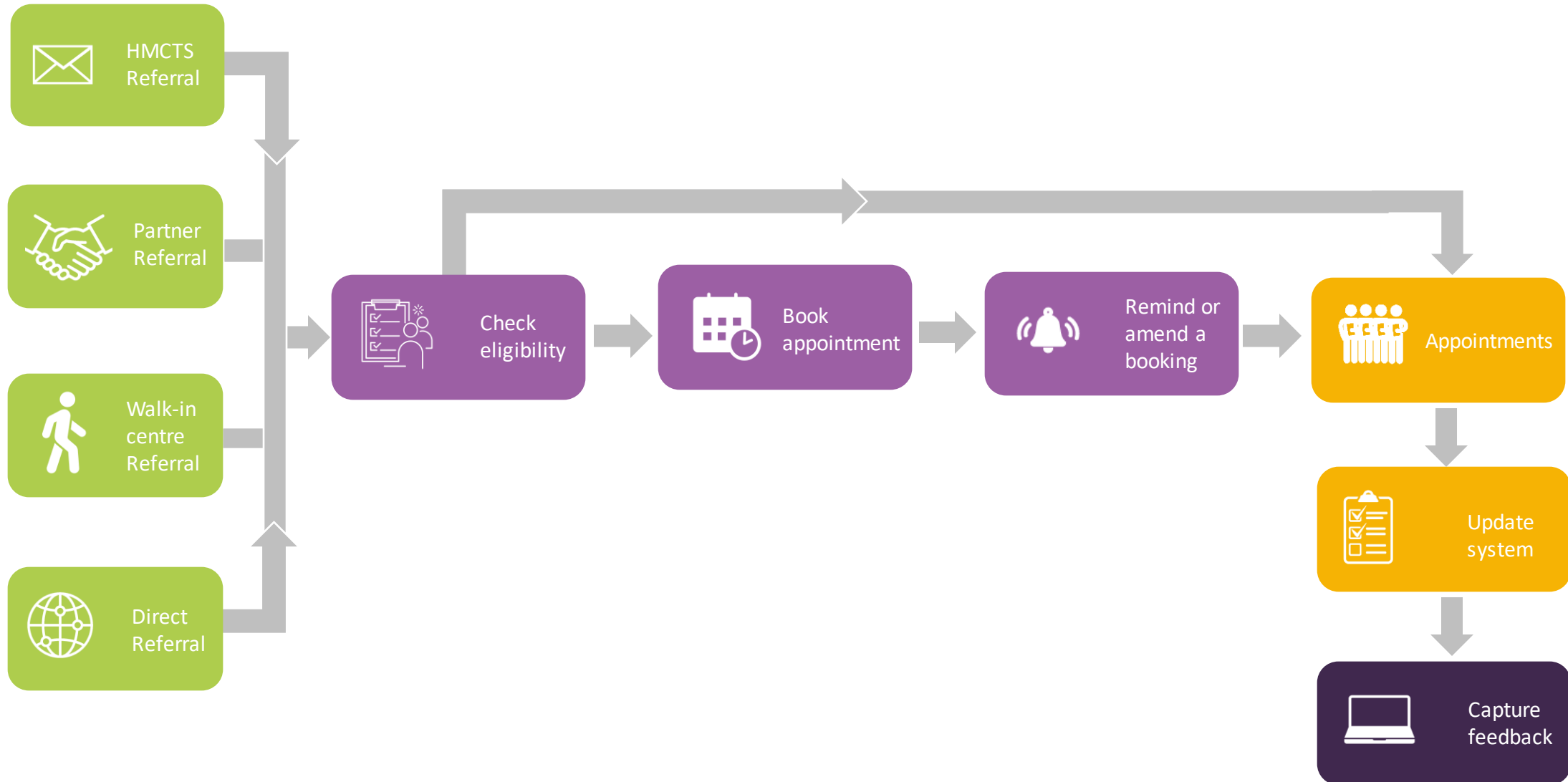
When you press the button at the bottom of the page they will submit their plea and you will arrive at a confirmation screen. This screen will provide a reference number and contact details that they will need if they wish to contact the court again about their case.

After the appointment

If they want to change anything about their plea (including change a guilty plea to a not guilty plea, or the other way round) they can do so, but cannot do it via the online service. They will have to do it via post or email, quoting their reference number in the subject heading.

They should do so as soon as possible.

Delivery process



Making contact - Options

- User contacts CTSC and has a preliminary triage and then is transferred onto WAD to book in their appointment
- User walks into their nearby centre and is passed through to WAD as a user of one of the justice services. This would also cover a user calling or emailing their local centre.
- User contacts WAD directly (e.g., after viewing advertising) via:
 - National telephone line: 03300 16 00 51
 - Dedicated email address: support@we-are-digital.co.uk

WAD check the user's eligibility and assess the type of support required:

- Access to a computer, smartphone or laptop
- Internet access (Wi-Fi, broadband)
- Email use, or ability to find something online
- Confidence in using HMCTS online services
- Friends or family members at home who can help with any additional support needs
- Any barriers that prevent the user from engaging with HMCTS online services
- User calls with a tech issue with the website – they would need to be referred to CTSC

If eligible for in-depth Digital Support, the user is booked in for face-to-face or remote support through the network.

Booking confirmation received - User

- Email confirmation
- SMS confirmation, and a reminder before their appointment
- Or letter confirmation (if they don't have an email address or a mobile phone)

Booking confirmation received - Network

- Booking confirmation including details and timings
- Guidance relating to the specific service being supported will be provided.
- Links to the area on the .gov website for their guidance notes
- Links to the surveys to be completed

Arranging the appointment

We are Digital will refer users to you via your selected email address which you provided during the onboarding phase. The initial booking will be made within the timeframes you have provided for availability. The user's name and contact number will be provided within the booking email, alongside their unique ID and the type of support required.

All emails will be sent from support@we-are-digital.co.uk

Pre-appointment – Courtesy Call

Each user with a confirmed booking must receive a courtesy call within 1 working day before the planned appointment. All of the following topics are detailed in the booking confirmation email:

- Who they will be meeting with
- Where they will be meeting
- Date and Time of the meeting
- What will be covered in the session
- How long the session will last
- What to do if they are no longer able to attend

The work we do for HMCTS will often touch on very sensitive issues, with raw emotions attached. It is therefore very important that all users are treated with respect and dignity, whilst representatives of the Digital Support service maintain a non-judgemental approach.

Some key points:

- Introduce yourself and confirm the purpose of the session
- Check the user's preferred language or communication method
- Ensure you are using an appropriate tone, to demonstrate that you are listening and that you understand what the user is saying.
- Be respectful and allow the user to tell their story
- Remain calm and show empathy
- Ask only relevant questions that add value to the Digital Support being provided
- Remain impartial
- Signposting; if the end-users raise something outside of the scope of the session, acknowledge the point and signpost them to a relevant service.

- **Local Centre support:** The user travels to their local centre who are trained in how to deliver Digital Support and have the systems ready to provide support.
- **Over the phone support:** Our in-house agents, can provide support and they can transfer over to partners
- **In Home support (face to face):** For users who require a home visit, WAD will arrange this via its network of dedicated trainers. If there is no trainer close to the user's location, WAD will approach the closest delivery partner to the customer's home address and request support to meet the customer's need.
- **Remote Delivery support:** Available for a user who requires support, but cannot travel to a partner centre, or does not want a home visit. WAD will arrange for remote delivery via the most appropriate platform, such as Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom.

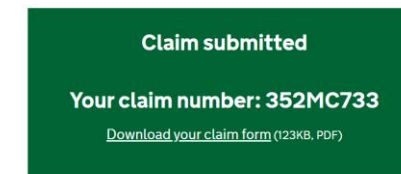
Successful application

- Once support has been delivered via any of our channels, the user will be required to fill out a short “outcome” survey. The survey acts as evidence of service delivery (and proof of the duration of the support session) and it provides valuable feedback on the service experience, social impact and outcome.
- Network will be required to complete a survey stating the user’s reference number.
- An outcome is defined as complete when a HMCTS online form has been submitted, and a Partner survey form has been submitted to We Are Digital including the HMCTS Claim reference number. At this point the outcome can be submitted for payment.
- Partners should also assist the claimant to complete a user’s survey, however if the user refuses, this will not impact the case or the payment for the outcome.

Unsuccessful application

- Complete outcome survey
- User will have to call WAD and arrange further appointments

User claim number example below



What happens next

Mary Richards has until 4pm on 26 March 2022 to respond to your claim. They can ask for an extra 14 days if they need it. We'll email you when they respond.

You can request a County Court Judgment (CCJ) against them if they don't respond.

If the defendant pays you

You need to sign in to your account to tell us you've been paid.

[What did you think of this service? \(opens in new tab\)](#)

[Go to your account](#)

Network survey submission

Our end of session surveys (completed by every user/support worker) act as a verification that the appointment has taken place. Each user that is booked will be allocated a unique reference number in the system (sent to the user and delivery partner) and this will be replicated on the survey they complete at the end of the session.

This is how we know that the appointment has taken place and the outcome has been achieved. Surveys are handled through an online survey platform called TypeForm, from which we pull all of the data using an API

If our API doesn't find a matching survey code for the booked session code, it assumes the session has been missed and reports it as such. Follow-up reports are produced automatically and this is discussed with partners at month-end to show their activity and is linked to payments and funding.

Athena

WAD system tracks the initial booking with a bespoke customer code, and an automated API then looks for the matching survey code post-session to see if it happened. If it doesn't find a match, it is noted as a "missed" session. This links to payments and reporting for HMCTS

Athena user guide is ready to be downloaded on the following [link](#)

Accessing regional/local support, postcode finder, local specialist centres

Our call centre is experienced in dealing with people who need more than the service they are calling about or have further situational issues.

As the leading digital and financial inclusion provider to social housing, we are acutely aware that many users who call us are leading difficult lives and it is very rarely about one standalone issue.

All staff are trained on safeguarding and prevention, updated annually.

All staff are required to do monthly training modules on data security and GDPR through our online training e-learning platform, Bob's Business. Our centre network is diverse and in many cases provide this type of support.

We have found through our work delivering a debt advice service in London, that a friendly tone and a sympathetic approach to solving users' problems can have a major impact on a person's mindset and responsiveness to the call.

We also have a formal safeguarding process, and all our staff are trained on what to do with safeguarding issues, onward organisations to signpost to, including in crisis, and we ensure staff have refresher training sessions (online and in-person)

If you identify a safeguarding concern, you should follow your safeguarding procedure.

- CMC – Civil Money Claims (over £10k)
- CTSC – Courts & Tribunals Service Centres
- GAPS2 – Generic Appeals Processing System
- HWF – Help With Fees
- OCMC – Online Civil Money Claims (under £10k)
- RA – Reasonable Adjustment
- RPC – Regional Processing Centre
- SSCS – Social Security and Child Support
- SJS – Single Justice Service
- SJP – Single Justice Procedure
- SJPN: Single Justice Procedure Notices
- WAD – We are Digital

Systems used:

- MYA – Manage Your Appeal (SSCS)
- SYA – Submit Your Appeal (SSCS)
- Common Platform – new online case management system for digital cases, used for crime and SJS.
- Libra – legacy case management system in Magistrates’ Courts. It is being replaced by Common Platform.
- MyHMCTS – single place for law firms and other professional court users to issue, pay for and manage applications to the family and county court and to tribunals.

Document History

Version	Date	Author	Change Status
1.0	11 th February	Daniel McMahon	
2.0	25 th March	Daniel McMahon	Updated SSCS training pack which includes details of when WAD can offer support over the phone and face to face.