

# Assisted digital overview

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## Introduction

The standard process to make and maintain a Universal Credit claim is via online self-service. Claimants should be made aware that they will increasingly need to be able to use online services to make and maintain their claim and to job search online.

The Department for Work and Pensions must consider the needs of those who may not be able to access services through the standard process.

Claimants who may find difficulty in accessing services online fall into two categories:

- **Assisted Digital** - people who are able to make and maintain their claim by online self-service, but need support to do so. This is typically linked to skills, confidence, lack of motivation and access.
- **Digital Exclusion** – a very small number of people who are unable to make or maintain their claim by online self-service, for reasons which include ill health, disability, or legal limitations such as MAPPA. See Spotlight on Non-Digital Relationships.

## Assisted Digital Support – key points

Claimants should always be asked to apply and maintain claims online independently where possible, via GOV.uk.

All reasonable attempts should be made to enable, support and educate claimants to self-serve.

If claimants state they are having difficulty using the online service, reasons for this need to be established. Claimants may have an email address, they may shop online, have a Facebook account or use a PC, tablet or smartphone. This

would indicate that a claimant has some IT skills and with assistance would be able to access Universal Credit services online.

Assisted digital support covers:

- coaching, challenging and motivating claimants to become more digitally competent – helping them to create, maintain and fully utilise their digital account
- recognising when additional support is required and taking appropriate action to coach, sign-post to additional support or ensure claimants are referred to appropriate Universal Support Delivered Locally to build their digital skills
- promoting the benefits of work and supporting/coaching claimants to make the most of on-line services to help them prepare for, find, and secure work

Based on their circumstances, claimants should be assisted in accessing the Universal Credit service through a channel that is appropriate for their needs.

### **Support from family or friends**

This can include help using IT devices or simple coaching.

### **Telephone support when using the online channel**

A claimant may have access to suitable devices and Wi-Fi but have insufficient IT skills or lack of confidence to complete their claim, and no one to support them. They may initially be unwilling to use the online channel but can be encouraged to do so. In this scenario, coaching can be provided over the phone, to help and prompt the claimant to enable them to complete their online claim.

Claimants are still required to attend their commitments meeting at the jobcentre to complete their Claimant Commitment.

### **Attendance at a jobcentre**

If other means of accessing the online account are not suitable, claimants can book an appointment at the jobcentre for support from the Assisted Service Team, or alternative job role in some offices.

Universal Credit members of staff must never enter information on a claimant's behalf. The information entered and the accuracy of this information is the responsibility of the claimant.

If a claimant attends a jobcentre but is not capable of making a digital claim even with agent support, they should be signposted to make a claim by phone. See 'spotlight on claims by phone'

## **Universal Support delivered locally (USdl)**

Universal Credit claimants can be referred for advice, assistance and support from locally agreed Universal Support partners. Amongst other things Usdl provides help with assisted digital support, accessing and using online services. For more information see Usdl guidance.

If assisted digital support is provided, colleagues should identify if claimants have an on-going need for this support.

## **Digital Exclusion Support – key points**

In exceptional circumstances, and if all reasonable attempts have been made to enable, support and educate claimants to self-serve, the following two alternative channels are available to help digitally excluded claimants make a claim.

### **Telephony claim**

Telephony claim action should be completed before a home visit referral is considered.

See Spotlight on claims by phone

### **Home visit**

Home visits should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

See guidance on home visits

See Spotlight on home visits

If a claimant does not fall into a digitally excluded category but insists on making a claim by phone, they should be allowed to do so.

### **GOV.UK Verify**

If required, Assisted Digital support can be available for the full end to end GOV.UK Verify transaction. This must protect the claimant's security. Claimants should not divulge any of their credential information to the supporting member of staff.

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