

# Kickstart scheme

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## Introduction

The Kickstart scheme provides paid jobs for Universal Credit claimants aged 16 to 24 who are deemed at risk of long-term unemployment and not currently employed.

The scheme is not provision. It provides jobs of 25 hours per week for 6 months. The employer can offer more hours at their discretion.

The Government will fund the cost of 25 hours per week at National Minimum Wage plus any National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions. This is for the full 6-month duration of the claimant's job. The employer can choose to pay the claimant more if they wish but this is completely voluntary.

The employer will provide the claimant with the additional support to:

- build their work experience
- gain valuable employability skills
- move into sustained employment

Employers submit their applications for the Kickstart Scheme jobs. Once their application has been accepted by DWP, the employer's jobs will be advertised through Universal Credit service.

Claimants cannot search for Kickstart Scheme jobs themselves, they must be entitled to Universal Credit and introduced to employers by DWP.

When claimants are introduced to Kickstart Scheme jobs, it is their responsibility to apply.

Claimants can apply to multiple Kickstart jobs at the same time. However, they will only be introduced to jobs they are suited to. This ensures quality introductions are made between the claimants and employers, giving the claimant the best opportunity of being successful.

If a claimant is successful in more than one application, the claimant can choose which job they take up.

Claimants are not guaranteed a job and the employer always has the final decision on selecting the most suitable candidate(s) for the role(s).

## **Eligibility**

All eligibility and suitability criteria must be considered before introducing a claimant to a Kickstart Scheme job.

Universal Credit claimants are eligible to be introduced to a Kickstart Scheme job if they meet all of the following criteria, they are:

- aged 16 to 24
- eligible for Universal Credit
- currently unemployed (nil earnings)
- not in an apprenticeship
- have a claimant commitment in place

Kickstart Scheme jobs can only be restricted to a certain age group, for example to those aged 18 or over, if there is a legal reason to do so. In all other cases, claimants aged 16 to 24 who meet the criteria above are eligible to apply. All employers must work within the Equality Act 2010.

Some claimants may not have a claimant commitment in place following restrictions imposed due to Covid-19. If a claimant falls into this category, they are not required to have a commitment in place before being introduced to a Kickstart Scheme job.

Some claimants will have reduced availability for work due to circumstances such as caring responsibilities or a health condition. These claimants can still apply for Kickstart Scheme jobs and a reasonable adjustment can be discussed with employers during the job application process.

Claimants are not eligible for the Kickstart Scheme if they are:

- participating in contracted provision

- have already completed a full 6 month Kickstart Scheme job

Claimants participating in European Social Fund (ESF) provision, not managed by DWP can still be introduced to Kickstart Scheme jobs. They must still meet the eligibility and suitability criteria.

ESF support can continue in the Kickstart Scheme job, where the individual has support needs which are above and beyond those that will be addressed by the employer. This should not replicate the support provided by the employer

## **Suitability**

A claimant is not suitable for Kickstart Scheme jobs if they are likely to find work independently in a short space of time. The scheme is aimed at those who require some support in finding and obtaining work and are struggling to compete in the open labour market. These claimants are at risk of long term unemployment.

Suitable claimants for the Kickstart Scheme are likely to have been unemployed for 6 months or more and be in the intensive work search regime. The Kickstart Scheme has been designed to support claimants who are more likely to struggle to find work on their own and are at risk of becoming long-term unemployed.

Claimants who have been unemployed for under 6 months are still eligible for the Kickstart scheme.

Claimants in other labour market regimes are still eligible for the scheme.

A claimant may not be suitable for the Kickstart Scheme if they:

- are awaiting the outcome of a job interview
- are regularly attending and performing well in job interviews and application processes for work outside of the Kickstart Scheme
- would benefit more from other support or provision before they can be ready to apply for or move into work
- are currently self-employed or have a contract of employment, even with nil earnings

Claimants who are self-employed or have a contract of employment, including zero hour contracts are not considered to be at risk of long term unemployment. These claimants would not be suitable for the Kickstart Scheme.

Kickstart Scheme jobs are not the right solution for every claimant and other work based opportunities or provision may be more appropriate. For example, apprenticeships, work and health programme, traineeships or sector based work academy programmes (SWAP). This depends on each claimant's circumstances.

Claimants referred to Restart are no longer eligible for the Kickstart Scheme.

Claimants who take up a Kickstart Scheme job and return to the Intensive Work Search (IWS) regime, must complete a further 12 consecutive months in the IWS regime before being considered for a Restart referral.

For claimants under the age of 25, before making a referral to Restart, it must be considered if a referral to the Kickstart Scheme would be appropriate.

## **How the Kickstart Scheme impacts on payment of Universal Credit**

Universal Credit earnings rules still apply to claimants who participate in the Kickstart Scheme. This includes the Work Allowance and Earnings Taper.

As most jobs within the scheme include 25 hours work per week paid at the applicable National Minimum Wage rate, the claimant's Universal Credit payment will be affected.

Earnings rules including the work allowance and earnings taper apply to Kickstart Scheme jobs. All claimants will still receive the amount of Universal Credit they are entitled to after their earnings have been taken into account. This will depend on what additional elements they are receiving. For example, housing costs.

For Universal Credit claimants that still receive Housing Benefit, the normal taper rate will apply as it would with any job.

Universal Credit payments will not be affected until the claimant starts receiving earnings from their Kickstart Scheme job.

## **Mandating claimants and sanctions**

Applying for a Kickstart Scheme job is entirely voluntary. A claimant cannot be mandated to apply for a specific Kickstart Scheme job and they cannot be sanctioned if they do not apply.

If a claimant is successful in applying for a Kickstart Scheme job, accepting and starting the job is entirely voluntary. The claimant must not be sanctioned if they do not take up a Kickstart Scheme job even after receiving a job offer.

Once a claimant has started the job, a sanction referral must be made if they leave a Kickstart Scheme job voluntarily, or is dismissed for misconduct before the end of their 6-months. This applies even if the claimant has only worked in the job for 1 day.

Claimants must still meet their commitment to search for work. Applying for Kickstart Scheme jobs is considered to be a work search activity and can make up part of a claimant's overall work search.

## **Claimant has a nil award due to earnings from their Kickstart Scheme job**

As claimants in a Kickstart Scheme job will be receiving earnings for 25 hours per week, this means some claimants may receive a nil award of Universal Credit.

When claimants receive a nil award due to earnings, their Universal Credit claim will remain open while they are in a Kickstart Scheme job.

## **On-going support for claimants in a Kickstart Scheme job**

The labour market regime of claimants in Kickstart Scheme jobs will also change to light touch or working enough. Claimants will be provided with voluntary on-going support during the 6-month job.

This voluntary support includes:

- helping claimants overcome barriers to staying in work
- for claimants in the light touch regime, on a case by case basis, access to the Flexible Support Fund if they meet the eligibility criteria. Employability support, should be explored through the employer first
- discussing employer related issues
- identifying other opportunities when the Kickstart Scheme job ends
- a voluntary appointment after 4 months to discuss updating the claimant's CV, job search support available in the final 2 months of the job and ensuring the claimant knows how to report their Kickstart Scheme job has ended

## **Employer supporting claimants after they have started a Kickstart Scheme job**

Employers must provide claimants with employability support as part of the Kickstart scheme.

This support includes:

- developing a claimant's employability skills
- helping them to understand the sector in which they are working
- helping them look for permanent work and further opportunities
- CV and interview preparation

This may be provided by the employer themselves or by an external provider selected by the employer.

## **Claimant ends a Kickstart Scheme job early**

If a claimant leaves their Kickstart Scheme job early on a voluntary basis, a sanction referral must always be made.

If they leave their job within 12 weeks, a local decision must be made to decide whether the claimant is able to apply for other Kickstart Scheme vacancies. This decision is only considered when the claimant's reason for leaving was one of the following:

- the role was not the same as advertised in the vacancy
- it was not appropriate for the claimant to continue the job due to their personal circumstances
- the employer and claimant agree that the job should end

In these cases, the local decision on allowing a claimant to apply for other Kickstart Scheme jobs can be made before the outcome of the sanction referral is known.

If a claimant leaves after being in their Kickstart Scheme job for longer than 12 weeks, they may be allowed to apply for further vacancies, but only in exceptional circumstances. Consideration should be given to whether another Kickstart Scheme job will improve employment skills.

A claimant cannot leave a Kickstart Scheme job early to take up another Kickstart Scheme job by choice. This still applies even if the second job would pay the claimant a higher wage.

A sanction referral must still be made and this would be taken into account when a decision is being made as to whether the claimant had 'good reason' for leaving their job.

## **Leaving voluntarily**

Where a claimant left voluntarily, a sanction referral is made to determine whether the claimant had 'good reason' or if a sanction should apply.

Claimants can be introduced to further Kickstart Scheme jobs after the sanction referral has been made. They do not need to wait for the outcome of the referral.

## **Claimant reaches age 25**

Claimants are not eligible to be introduced to any new Kickstart Scheme jobs once they reach age 25.

If a claimant reaches age 25 after they have been introduced to a Kickstart Scheme job, they can still apply for the role and undertake the job if they are successful. This rule also applies when a claimant reaches age 25 during the application process or while undertaking a Kickstart Scheme job.

## **Multiple agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)**

Claimants with MAPPA restrictions are eligible to apply for Kickstart Scheme jobs. However, any employment restrictions that the claimant has in place must be considered before the claimant is referred to a Kickstart Scheme job as they would for any job.

For example, a MAPPA claimant may have a restriction which means they are not allowed to undertake work which involves contact with children. The job they are referred to must not involve contact with children.

## **Unacceptable Customer Behaviour**

Any UCB restrictions must be considered in the same way as they would for any job. Before making any referrals to providers, employers or discussing a job with a claimant. The UCB Nominated Manager should be contacted to discuss the reasons behind the control measures and seek their advice on whether it would be 'safe' to make the referral

See Unacceptable customer behavior.

## **Incorrect processes and activity**

Some claimant activity relating to the Kickstart Scheme could be considered suspicious. This activity includes but is not limited to where:

- a Universal Credit claim has been made with the sole intention of accessing Kickstart jobs and the person would otherwise not have made a claim
- a claimant asks to be introduced to a Kickstart Scheme job after they have already applied for/discussed the vacancy with the employer
- a claimant asks to be introduced to a Kickstart Scheme job after already informally agreeing to take up the job with the employer

In most cases, the action taken by the claimant will be genuine and no further action will be required. Judgement must be made on a case by case basis.

Suspicious activity relating to the Kickstart Scheme is referred to a Service Innovation Lead (SIL) using the continuous improvement and learning (CIL) template.

## **Work Trials**

Claimants cannot participate in a work trial with a Kickstart Scheme employer before starting a Kickstart Scheme job with the same employer.