

Work focused interview regime

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Aim

This is to encourage the claimant, through a series of interviews, to think about work now and in the future and consider the steps they could take to prepare for work. Any action other than participating in interviews is entirely voluntary. At the initial work focused interview, the claimant is made aware of these expectations and the claimant's commitments include the requirement to participate in interviews.

Characteristics

Those expected to work in the future but are currently the nominated lead carer for a child or children. This includes:

- a nominated lead carer of a youngest child aged 1
- a single foster carer / main carer in a fostering couple where:
 - a foster child under 16 is placed with them
 - in exceptional circumstances - there is evidence that a foster child aged 16-17 has proven care needs that require full time care
 - in exceptional circumstances - both members of a fostering couple may fall into this group where there is evidence that a foster child has proven care needs that require full time care by 2 adults
 - the foster carer is between placements and shows evidence of intent to continue fostering a child with proven care needs, as above, for a period of up to 8 weeks
- a family and friend's carer, also known as a kinship carer, for the first year that a claimant is the responsible carer for a child under 16

Requirements

A claimant is required to attend interviews and report all change of circumstance. They must:

- fully understand the effects of the regime requirements - including a possible sanction action if they do not attend Work Focused Interviews

- notify Universal Credit of any changes of circumstances - for example, when a child joins or leaves the household
- provide evidence, if they are a family and friend's carer, to ensure they are in the correct regime

For claimants with young children, interviews must be arranged taking childcare availability into account. They should also understand they can re-arrange interviews if they have a good reason why they cannot attend - for example, rescheduling appointments around childcare, social services or medical appointments.

Framework

The claimant is supported in this regime by the following interviews and reviews:

- Claimant Commitment Interview
- Flexible Coaching Support Interview

Claimant's commitment's initial interview: face to face

Claimants will have children aged 1 year old.

Enquire what skills, experience and knowledge the claimant has. Help the claimant to focus on the work they can do in the future and consider what can be done now to help them to get work ready.

Encourage the claimant to take voluntary actions and set their commitments from the outcome of the discussion.

The interview includes:

- Claimant Commitment
- developing a detailed plan of work-related activity (on a voluntary basis)
- assessing claimant needs and voluntary referral to provision

Caring responsibilities, childcare options and availability must be identified to ensure interviews and voluntary work preparation activities are arranged at suitable times. Identifying suitable childcare helps responsible carers, who choose to consider a return to work, as this prepares them for the transition to the Work Preparation regime when their youngest child reaches their second birthday.

Flexible Coaching Support Interview

Contact with the claimant is through digital or face to face depending upon diagnostic outcomes. There is a requirement for the claimant to be seen face to face, if deemed necessary.

Six monthly interventions are recommended as a guide. Discretion exists to use interview time appropriately to achieve outcomes for these claimants and the aim is to schedule interviews as flexibly as possible. Claimants are also able to request discussions and interviews. These interviews can include:

- reviewing and discussing activities
- updating the action plan
- identifying support needs
- transitioning to the Work Preparation regime once youngest child is aged 2 years

Consider how to gradually increase the support offered in the months before the claimant's youngest child turns 2. Explain what requirements the claimant is expected to meet and the support available as part of the Work Preparation regime. Consider also offering more frequent Work Focused Interviews during this period.

Flexible Support Fund

The Flexible Support Fund is a locally managed budget to supplement existing services and tailor support to the needs of individuals in the local area. Awards from the Flexible Support Fund are discretionary and aimed at improving a claimant's job prospects subject to eligibility.

Universal Credit claimants are eligible for Flexible Support Fund from and including the first assessment period if they have:

- proved identity verification - including the Habitual Residence Test, where relevant
- attended their First Commitments Meeting
- accepted their Claimant Commitment

A claimant can be considered for a Flexible Support Fund payment if allocated to any of the following Labour Market regimes:

- Intensive Work Search
- Work Preparation
- Work Focused Interview only
- No Work Related Requirements

The most commonly used awards are:

- training and education
- barriers to work
- travel expenses