

DWP Youth Offer

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Introduction

The DWP Youth Offer has been developed to combat youth unemployment and to provide young people with the skills they need to look for, obtain and keep employment. It is available to claimants aged 16-24 and offers 3 elements of support:

- Youth Employment Programme
- Youth Hubs
- Youth Employability Coaches

Claimants on the Youth Offer begin their journey on the Youth Employment Programme before moving to a Youth Hub or Youth Employability Coach. This will be following further discussions with their work coach during the First Commitments Meeting or Work Focused Interview.

Claimants cannot participate in more than one part of the Youth Offer at any one time.

Eligibility

Intensive Work Search regime

All 16-24 year olds who make a new claim and are placed in the Intensive Work Search regime are eligible for the Youth Offer. They are automatically enrolled onto the Youth Employment Programme by the Service and participation is mandatory.

Some claimants may not have been automatically enrolled onto the Youth Employment Programme at the start of their claim, for example because:

- they were not eligible, or
- may have been taking part in the Youth Employment Programme but were withdrawn or they started work

To ensure that all eligible claimants receive support from the Youth Employment Programme, they must be manually enrolled if they:

- are aged 16-18 and were not previously eligible but their circumstances have now changed
- were previously withdrawn from the Youth Employment Programme but are now eligible and ready to participate again
- have moved from Northern Ireland to England, Scotland or Wales, are aged 16-24 and are now eligible

A claimant who was in any of the following regimes when they first made their Universal Credit claim and then move into the Intensive Work Search regime, are not eligible to take part in the Youth Employment Programme:

- Light Touch
- No Work Related Requirements

Work Preparation and Work Focused Interview regimes

Claimants aged 16-24 in the Work Preparation and Work Focused Interview regimes who :

- do not have Limited Capability for Work
- are not treated as having Limited Capability for Work and Work Related Requirements pending a Work Capability Assessment
- do not have a fit note and are waiting for a Work Capability Assessment

will be invited to join the Youth Offer when they make a new claim. They are initially manually enrolled onto the Youth Employment Programme but acceptance is entirely voluntary. Claimants who do not accept the invitation to join the Youth Offer must be withdrawn as soon as they make it clear that they do not wish to participate.

Which of the 3 Youth Offer strands they will participate in will be decided in discussion with their work coach. It is expected that that the majority of claimants in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regimes will be best supported by either the Youth Hub or Youth Employability Coach strands when compared to the intensive nature of the Youth Employment Programme. This should take place at the start of their claim.

When a claimant moves into the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime as part of an ongoing Universal Credit claim, eligibility for the Youth Offer must be considered at their next monthly or 3-monthly Work Focused Interview. The manual referral process will be followed for these claims.

Light Touch and No Work-related Requirements regimes

Claimants in the Light Touch or No Work Related Requirements regimes are not eligible for the Youth Offer. However, they can still attend voluntary appointments in a Youth Hub to meet with other providers using the Youth Hub space.

These claimants can receive Additional Work Coach Time on a voluntary basis if considered to be appropriate by their work coach

They will continue to be supported by Jobcentre Plus and their mandatory interviews will continue to take place with a work coach in the Jobcentre.

Claims by phone

Work coaches should be aware that claimants who are non-digital are included in the Youth Offer and that the non-digital relationship guidance must be followed.

Voluntary work

If a claimant on the Youth Offer is undertaking voluntary work their expected hours can be reduced up to a maximum of 50% as per business as usual. See Voluntary work.

Control measures

Claimants can still participate in the Youth Offer when they have control measures in place due to:

- Unacceptable Customer Behaviour (UCB)
- Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

However, a claimant's individual restrictions must always be considered before any referral or participative action is taken (for example, the support may be offered over the phone if the claimant isn't allowed to attend the office or they may have to remain on the Youth Employment Programme and not attend a Youth Hub).

English for Speakers of Other Languages

When a claimant requires English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support, they do not have to begin their participation until they have attained Level 1 understanding of English.

However, while claimants require ESOL level 1 to participate in the Youth Employment Programme, those who still need to complete ESOL level 1 can be referred to a Youth Hub or Youth Employability Coach where appropriate. The Youth Hub or Youth Employability Coach will then support the claimant in completing the required ESOL level.

Exemptions

Claimants are exempt from participating in any part of the Youth Offer if they are:

- in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview Regime and are in work
- in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime and have:
 - Limited Capability for Work
 - Limited Capability for Work and Work Related Activity
 - a fit note and are waiting for a Work Capability Assessment
- gainfully self-employed (or given exemption at the point they become gainfully self-employed)
- pregnant and participation would pose a serious risk to their health or the health of their child

Youth Employment Programme

The aim of the 13-week Youth Employment Programme is to actively support and encourage claimants to take up opportunities such as:

- work
- work experience placements (for example, Movement to Work)
- Sector-based Work Academy Programme
- apprenticeships
- further education or training
- mentoring circles
- equivalent opportunities in Scotland and Wales

This list is not exhaustive.

A claimant can take up one of these at any point during the Youth Employment Programme. In addition to mandatory requirements, they can also volunteer to undertake any work-related activity depending on their circumstances, but any subsequent failure to participate will not result in a reduction of Universal Credit.

Claimants are enrolled onto the Youth Employment Programme once they have accepted their Claimant Commitment following their First Commitments Meeting and they are:

- aged 16-24
- in the Intensive Work Search regime
- in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime and:
 - do not have Limited Capability for Work
 - are not being treated as having Limited Capability for Work and Work Related activity pending a Work Capability Assessment
 - do not have a fit note and are waiting for a Work Capability Assessment
- enrolling voluntarily as part of the invitation to join the Youth Offer (however, if these claimants choose not to participate in the Youth Employment Programme, they must be withdrawn before they take part in any element of it)

Weeks 1 to 2

At the First Commitments Meeting, the work coach must explain the 13-week journey to the claimant so that they know what to expect.

Both the work coach and the claimant are responsible for identifying possible work opportunities and placements throughout the 13 weeks. If the claimant has not taken up work or an apprenticeship by week 13, the work coach must ensure that they are presented with a place on work-based provision such as:

- work experience
- Sector-based Work Academy Programme
- work-related training

In week 2, work coaches must also complete an Employment and Skills Review which must take place separately from the First Commitments meeting. During this review, the work coach must ensure that the following points are covered:

- a review of the claimant's CV (with suggestions for improvements and referral to specialist CV support where appropriate)
- understanding of virtual job search and applications
- essential skills and whether the claimant requires support with this (for example, English, Maths and IT)
- work-based opportunities available over the course of the 13 weeks
- any existing barriers that may prevent the claimant from taking part in work-based opportunities (for example, Sector-based Work Academy Programme)

Some of the above points may have already been covered as part of the First Commitments Meeting and the work coach should focus on the points that were not covered in more detail.

Claimants can be referred to take part in work-based opportunities at any point during the first 13 weeks and the work coach can use the Employment and Skills Review to consider and make referrals if this is appropriate and the claimant is ready.

Weeks 3 to 10

The work coach must conduct weekly appointments and identify suitable provision that will help the claimant to improve their chances of finding work.

By week 7, a discussion about potential week 13 referral opportunities must take place. This gives the work coach and claimant enough time to identify and tailor specific options that will be presented to the claimant at the end of the Programme.

Week 11

A Progress Review must take place (this could take place earlier than week 11 if appropriate). This is a 20-minute appointment and should include a full review of the previous 10 weeks.

During the Progress Review, the work coach must discuss the options that will be available to the claimant at week 13 including opportunities such as:

- work experience
- Sector-based Work Academy Programme
- Work-related training

If a referral appears suitable before week 13, the work coach must discuss this with the claimant and make the referral where appropriate. They must also identify and agree the next steps for giving them the best chance of finding work during the remainder of the 13-week journey

Week 12

The work coach must conduct a regular appointment with the claimant.

Week 13

The work coach must present the claimant with at least one referral opportunity to work based provision or an experiential placement.

Claimant on the Youth Employment Programme changes their Labour Market regime

If a claimant taking part in the Youth Employment Programme moves into any of the following regimes, they will have the option to complete the specific part of the journey that they are currently on.

- Light Touch
- No Work Related Requirements

This may be to complete a Sector-based Work Academy Programme or a work experience placement (for example, completing the current stage of the 13-week journey which will always be voluntary in these cases).

If the claimant then returns to the Intensive Work Search regime, they are able to continue the Programme from the point they left it. However, this will only be appropriate if it is based on the claimant's circumstances.

This rule will only apply to claimants who were eligible for the YEP on the day of the First Commitments Meeting.

Reclaims or new claims from claimants previously on the Youth Employment Programme

If a claimant in the Intensive Work Search regime closes their claim and then makes a reclaim or new claim at a future date, they will be automatically enrolled onto the Youth Employment Programme from day 1 (once they have agreed their Claimant Commitment).

If a claimant in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime closes their claim and then makes a reclaim or new claim at a future date, they are invited to take part in the Youth Offer and are manually enrolled if they accept.

Youth Hubs

A Youth Hub is located in an agreed external provider site where DWP work coaches are based alongside external providers and have been created to support eligible claimants in addressing barriers to work. Youth Hubs are not sited within Jobcentres.

Some areas have virtual Youth Hubs where there is no physical provider site for claimants to travel to.

Certain Youth Hubs offer a drop-in service to allow young people not referred to the Youth Offer to access the service but processes and procedures will usually differ for each Youth Hub.

Work coaches based in Youth Hubs only operate within that Youth Hub. They do not operate in both Youth Hubs and jobcentres during the same period.

Work coaches in Youth Hubs work alongside DWP's network of external partners to provide intensive support to the claimants referred to them. The type of support provided will differ depending on:

- the location of the Youth Hub
- providers that the work coaches are working alongside
- the claimant's individual needs and barriers to work

Work coaches in Youth Hubs have a primary focus of addressing key barriers that are currently preventing claimants from finding and keeping employment. This may be through interventions or referral to appropriate provision.

Youth Hubs provide claimants with access to additional support opportunities through the partnership approach. However where it is identified that DWP funded provision is the appropriate course of action, the claimant must end their Youth Hub participation to avoid double-funding.

Youth Hub work coaches provide all the necessary support that a claimant would receive through their jobcentre work coach. Once referred, participating and engaging in appointments for claimants in the Intensive Work Search regime with a Youth Hub work coach is mandatory. For claimants in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regimes, attendance is voluntary (except for their monthly or 3 monthly mandatory appointment).

Support from the Youth Hub can last up to 6 months and during this time the claimant's primary contact will be their Youth Hub work coach.

A claimant is referred back to their local jobcentre when:

- the 6 months Youth Hub support comes to an end
- the barriers to work have been suitably addressed
- the claimant in the Intensive Work Search regime has failed to attend a mandatory appointment with their Youth Hub work coach and has:
 - failed to provide good reason, or
 - has already had 3 locally allowed good reason decisions
- the claimant in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime has failed to attend a voluntary appointment with their Youth Hub work coach

- the Youth Hub work coach identifies that a place on DWP funded provision is the correct course of action (for example, Restart)

See Failure to attend mandatory appointments with a Youth Hub work coach and Fail to attend: good reason.

From this point onwards, the claimant will continue to receive support from DWP and Jobcentre Plus.

When a claimant can be referred to a Youth Hub

Claimants can be referred to a Youth Hub at any time if they:

- are aged 16 to 24
- are in the Intensive Work Search, Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regimes
- have not already spent 6 months receiving Youth Hub support

Claimants do not need to be taking part in the Youth Employment Programme to be referred to a Youth Hub. They can be referred during participation or any time after it has ended as long as they meet the eligibility criteria.

Suitable claimants will have specific skills and employability barriers preventing them from moving into work that could be addressed with the support offered through a Youth Hub.

Claimants who have the necessary skills to look for, find and keep employment on their own are not suitable for Youth Hub support.

Failure to attend mandatory appointments with a Youth Hub work coach

Claimants in the Intensive Work Search regime are subject to mandatory interventions and failure to attend may result in a sanction.

For claimants in the Work Focused Interview and Work Preparation regimes who are attending a Youth Hub, attendance at interviews is voluntary except for their monthly or 3 monthly mandatory appointment.

Where there is good reason for failing to attend, the claimant remains allocated to the Youth Hub work coach and continues on the Youth Hub journey. See Fail to attend good reason.

If good reason cannot be applied or the claimant has already had 3 consecutive, locally allowed good reason decisions, they are allocated back to a Jobcentre work coach whilst a decision to apply a sanction is made:

- if a sanction is not applied, the claimant is allocated back to a Youth Hub work coach to continue on the Youth Hub journey.
- if a sanction is applied, the claimant remains allocated to the Jobcentre work coach until the sanction ends

See Sanctions.

If the circumstances are deemed appropriate, a claimant can be referred back to a Youth Hub work coach. This is at the discretion of the work coach and there is no set timing for this. Some claimants may go back straight away while others may not go back at all.

Claimant at a Youth Hub changes their Labour Market regime

If a claimant in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime moves to the Intensive Work Search regime, their participation becomes mandatory and all Youth Offer guidance for Intensive Work Search claimants would apply. They will continue on their existing Youth Offer journey and it is not reset to week 1.

If a claimant in the Intensive Work Search regime moves to the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime, they can continue on their current Youth Offer strand if they choose to do so.

In these cases, work coaches need to be aware of the new actions relating to sanctions applicable to the new regime. Claimants can also choose to withdraw from the Youth Offer and return to Jobcentre Plus for business as usual support appropriate for their journey

Youth Employability Coach

Youth Employability Coaches are based in jobcentres with a maximum caseload of 100 claimants. They support young claimants with multiple barriers to work and complex needs to develop the skills to look for, obtain and keep employment.

Depending on the claimant's individual needs, tailored and focused support at an intensive level is provided for 6 months. A case conference is required to extend support to 12 months where appropriate.

In most cases, claimants aged 16 and 17 should be referred to a Youth Employability Coach. This is because many 16 and 17 year olds claiming Universal Credit are likely to have significant complex needs or vulnerabilities and would therefore benefit from the support of a Youth Employability Coach.

Youth Employability Coaches may attend appointments with claimants outside of the jobcentre (for example, with providers or other support organisations). Types of support that may be provided include:

- in depth face-to-face interventions
- CV, application and interview preparation support
- identifying suitable provision and other opportunities to develop claimant employability skills
- conducting in depth follow-up conversations, reviews of provision and work-based opportunities
- advocating for claimants with employers and providers where appropriate
- up to 6 weeks of 'in-work support' when a claimant starts work or a work-based opportunity

This list is not exhaustive.

When referral to a Youth Employability Coach can be considered

Referral to a Youth Employability Coach can be considered if the claimant meets the following criteria:

- is unable to look for, find and keep employment
- has complex needs which cannot be immediately addressed and are likely to be in place for an extended period
- has barriers to work which they cannot overcome without intensive support

Claimants aged 16 and 17 will usually be referred to a youth employability coach.

When referral to a Youth Employability Coach is not suitable

Claimants not suitable for referral to a Youth Employability Coach include those who have:

- recently been employed and/or demonstrate the ability to look for, find and keep employment
- barriers to work and complex needs and barriers to work that can be quickly addressed or are likely to only impact the claimant for a short temporary period

See Programmes and job schemes: Video

Before making a referral to a Youth Employability Coach

Referral to a Youth Hub must always be considered before referral to a youth employability coach. The following must also apply before referral to a youth employability is considered:

- all initial claim actions have been completed (for example, verification of evidence)
- a Claimant Commitment has been agreed
- there is a clear understanding of the claimant's barriers to work
- the claimant's suitability has been discussed with a Youth Employability Coach

Claimant with a Youth Employability Coach changes their Labour Market regime

If a claimant in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime moves to the Intensive Work Search regime, their participation becomes mandatory and all Youth Offer guidance for Intensive Work Search claimants would apply. They will continue on their existing Youth Offer journey and it is not reset to week 1.

If a claimant in the Intensive Work Search regime moves to the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime, they can continue on current Youth Offer strand if they choose to do so.

In these cases, work coaches need to be aware of the new actions relating to sanctions applicable to the new regime. Claimants can also choose to withdraw from the Youth Offer and return to Jobcentre Plus for business as usual support appropriate for their journey

Claimant reaches age 25

If a claimant reaches age 25 while participating in the Youth Offer, they will be offered the opportunity to continue depending on which point they are on the journey.

If they are participating on the Youth Employment Programme they can choose to complete this or return to Jobcentre Plus and get support as per business as usual.

If they are participating with a Youth Hub or Youth Employability Coach, they can continue to receive up to 6 months cumulative support from the point of referral or chose to return to Jobcentre Plus and get support as per business as usual.

Moving between Labour Market regimes

For information about what happens when claimants participating in different stands of the Youth Offer change Labour Market regimes, see the following sections:

- 'Claimant on the Youth Employment Programme changes their Labour Market regime'
- 'Claimant at a Youth Hub changes their Labour Market regime'

- 'Claimant with a Youth Employment Coach changes their Labour Market regime'

Moving to the Light Touch or Working Enough regimes

When a claimant moves into the Light Touch or Working Enough regime, they are no longer required to participate in any aspect of the Youth Offer.

In these cases, if the claimant is unemployed or has started work but are still earning below the Administrative Earnings Threshold, they are still eligible to participate in the Youth Offer providing that they meet all other eligibility criteria.

Moving to the Intensive Work Search regime

When a claimant moves into the Intensive Work Search regime from another regime, participation in the Youth Offer is not mandatory. They cannot take part in the Youth Employment Programme but if it is determined the claimant requires further support, and they are eligible to participate, then referral to a Youth Hub or Youth Employability Coach can be made.

Moving out of the Intensive Work Search Regime

A claimant may move from the Intensive Work Search regime into one of the following regimes:

- No Work Related Requirements
- Light Touch

In these cases, if the claimant is participating in provision or a work-based opportunity, they will have the option to complete this where appropriate. They will also retain access to Youth Hubs and Youth Employability Coaches where appropriate.

Additional Work Coach Time and the Youth Offer

Claimants aged under 25 can receive the Additional Work Coach Time (AWCT). This is an opportunity to help claimants with health conditions or disabilities to move closer and into work through increased work coach support.

If a claimant is eligible for AWCT and the Youth Offer, the work has the discretion to offer the most suitable support based on their current circumstances and capabilities.

The increased time can be delivered by all work coaches, through either the Youth Hub or via a Youth Employability coach, as capacity allows.

If a claimant is on the Youth Employment Programme, they can be moved off this and onto AWCT at any time it's duration or following completion.

For more information, see Additional Work Coach Time: Health.

Easements

The DWP Youth Offer is considered to be a work preparation requirement. If claimants have work preparation requirements switched-on, they can be referred to a Youth Hub or Youth Employability Coach.

If a claimant in the Intensive Work Search regime has their work preparation requirements switched-off and they are on the Youth Employment Programme their journey must be suspended until such time as their work preparation requirements are switched-on again.

If work preparation requirements have been switched-off, no referral must be made until they are switched-on again.

If a claimant in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regime declines the Youth Offer, the work coach is not required to make the offer again whilst the claimant remains in the same regime. However, the claimant can request to join the Youth Offer at any time, or the work coach can renew the offer if they feel that this would benefit the claimant.

See Switching-off requirements (easements) of Labour Market interventions and Switching-off work availability and work-related activities.

Appointments

All appointments are mandatory for claimants in the Intensive Work Search Regime.

Claimants in the Work Preparation and Work Focused Interview regimes are obliged to attend monthly or 3 monthly mandatory appointments. Any additional meetings are voluntary and non-sanctionable.

When considering different channels for appointments, the first choice for work coaches should be face-to-face. This must always be used for claimants attending a Youth Hub and as a minimum for weeks 1-4 of the Youth Employment Programme.

With the exception of claims by phone, telephone appointments must not be used regardless of which part of the Youth Offer the claimant is taking part in.

After week 4 of the Youth Employment Programme, the work coach should utilise their acquired knowledge having built up a relationship with the claimant to consider if video appointments would be appropriate. This is compliant with other checkpoints

in the Youth Employment Programme of up to 13 weeks, and moving forward if the claimant goes on to receive support from a Youth Employment Coach.

This ensures that the most appropriate appointment types are used for claimants with specific needs or those who may be closer to the Labour Market.

Failure to attend

All appointments are mandatory for claimants in the Intensive Work Search Regime. If they fail to attend without good reason, they must be referred to a decision maker to consider a sanction according to business as usual (BAU).

If a claimant in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regimes fails to attend a voluntary meeting without good cause, they will be withdrawn from whichever stand of the Youth offer they are participating in and return to Jobcentre Plus to receive support for their appropriate journey as per BAU.

Withdrawal from the Youth Offer

For claimants in the Intensive Work Search regime, participation in the Youth Offer is mandatory unless:

- they reach the age of 25, or
- an easement is appropriate

Claimants in the Work Preparation or Work Focused Interview regimes participate on a voluntary basis and have the option to withdraw from the Youth Offer at any time.