

Building the claimant commitment: Guidance

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Introduction

Helping claimants move into work, move closer to work or increase their earnings can change lives. The Claimant Commitment documents the activities aimed at supporting the claimant do this.

Every claimant must accept their Claimant Commitment regardless of what Labour Market regime they are allocated to.

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Often, the claimant will pre-populate their commitments before a meeting at the jobcentre.

Each Claimant Commitment and work plan must be tailored and the recorded activities made personal to the individual claimant's circumstances. There is no 'one size fits all' approach regardless of what Labour Market regime the claimant is allocated to.

The work-related activities agreed on the Claimant Commitment should offer the claimant their best prospects of:

- getting work
- moving closer to work, or
- increasing their earnings

They can be:

- required – with a risk of Universal Credit payments being reduced if not carried out
- voluntary – with no risk of Universal Credit payments being reduced if not carried out, but see Expected hours

All work-related activities and jobs are listed on the claimants Work Plan.

When work-related activities are required, claimants must be advised that there is the risk of Universal Credit payments being reduced if these are not carried out.

The work-related activities that a claimant may be required to carry out depend on what Labour Market regime is allocated to. The Labour Market regime table gives further details.

Commitment meeting outline

The purpose of the commitments meeting is to:

- complete the information gather and diagnosis of a claimant's circumstances
- identify the work a claimant is expected to look for and be available for
- establish work search requirements
- establish work preparation activities requirements
- confirm ongoing contact requirements and a forward plan of action for the claimant

In addition, the meeting should facilitate:

- a positive, individual and supporting relationship with each claimant as an individual
- an understanding of how close the claimant might already be in getting work, moving closer to work or increasing their earnings (for example, through ongoing work-related activities and existing skills and experience)
- an identification of what the claimant needs to do to get work, move closer to work or increase their earnings (for example, a claimant can be required

- to create and maintain general work profiles but must not be mandated to use particular internet or social media sites, this must be entirely voluntary)
- confirmation that the claimant fully understands when work-related activities are required and that the consequences of not carrying them out may result in a reduction in Universal Credit payments
 - confirmation the claimant understands to report all changes in circumstances
 - if the claimant requires Money guidance and Alternative Payment Arrangements

Preparation

The information gathering and analysis prior to the meeting is crucial to ensure that the discussion can be as focused and relevant as possible.

Claimant's health circumstances

All activities included on the Claimant Commitment must be work-related.

Activities which relate to any medical related requirements, regardless of whether they have been prescribed by a Health Care Practitioner, must not be included on the Claimant Commitment. For example, to not include attending appointments, taking medication, treatments, medical therapies or medical interventions (including well-being activities to support mental health).

Complex needs

When a claimant is identified as having complex needs but they have reasonable prospects of finding paid work, they can have the following mandatory activities reduced:

- available hours
- availability for types of work
- location of work and travel time

Any mandatory reduction must not prevent the claimant from taking up a job or restrict available hours to such an extent that no job is available to them.

When agreeing to reduce mandatory activities, consideration must be given to:

- the nature of the health condition or disability and how this may affect what it is reasonable to expect the claimant to do
- the duration of the health condition and the potential for this being long-term

- whether the claimant has an employer, and that employer is providing occupational therapy or other provision to help the claimant get back to work

Existing work-related activities and skills

Any information the claimant provides about existing work-related activities and skills must always be considered in order to assess if the activities:

- are work-related
- improve the claimant's work prospects
- provide opportunities to work
- prepare or help work search
- provide skills, experience, or qualities that improve work prospects

The aim is to understand the claimant's circumstances so that the activities recorded on the Claimant Commitment can be shaped in the best way to support them in getting work, moving closer to work or increasing their earnings as quickly as possible.

Appointee cases

In all appointee cases, the need for a Claimant Commitment is waived.

The Service does not currently allow the acceptance of a Claimant Commitment to be waived and this must be marked as accepted by an agent so that the claim can proceed. Work-related requirements are switched-off and the work group **not** overridden. Any actions and reasons for waiving the Claimant Commitment must be noted in 'Claimant history'.

Some claimants may wish to undertake work-related activity with jobcentre support (for example, voluntary work) and the claimant, appointee and agent may agree voluntary activities together. Any actions and reasons must be noted in 'Claimant history' and journal. The Claimant Commitment must continue to be waived and marked as accepted.

The following must not be applied to appointee cases:

- mandatory activities, including mandatory Work Focused Interviews
- sanctions

Claimant skills

A full review of the claimant's skills must be carried out to identify any gaps. This process involves observation and discussion to gather evidence on skills, qualifications, previous training and work history.

Information must also be gathered to determine whether the claimant has any potential skills gaps in relation to

- their job goals
- what the local Labour Market is seeking, or
- progressing into better-paid work

Ideally the skills review will help the claimant to consider their immediate, short - term and longer-term requirements to gain employment and to start them on a career path and learning journey where needed.

For an explanation of the different levels of qualifications a claimant may hold in England, Scotland and Wales see: [Overview – GOV.UK What different qualification levels mean \(external link\)](#).

See: [How to have a productive conversation with claimants about their essential skills](#).

The screening may identify a gap in their essential skills, specific work skills or generic work skills. These can be defined as follows.

Essential skills

Essential skills are the ability to:

- read, write and speak English
- use numbers at a level to function in work and society
- use digital/Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

If a potential skills need is identified, claimants in England may be referred to an initial assessment with a learning provider to confirm their skill level. The aim is to identify learning which may help them find work and suggest the next steps regarding training.

If further investigation of essential literacy and numeracy skills is needed, the claimant can be asked to complete the Fast Track Screening Tool in England and Wales or the Literacy and Numeracy Alerting Questions in Scotland.

Vocational skills

A set of practical skills that help a person to obtain, perform and perfect a job or trade.

Employability and transferable skills

The following are examples of employability and transferable skills:

- time management
- soft skills such as confidence building
- communication
- core skills and traits required to succeed in any job
- work-readiness and teamwork ability

Where appropriate, claimants can be required to attend training to improve their skills or language needs with the intention of improving their prospects of finding employment. See Provision: Choosing a career and developing work search skills and Provision: Developing employability skills and work experience.

Soft skills

Soft skills are a branch of employability skills.

These are non-technical skills that promote productivity and effective communication in the workplace. Some soft skills can also be part of the individual's personality or work ethic. They are often transferable across roles and industries and are necessary in every level of the workplace from entry-level roles to top-level executive roles.

In order for most job goals to be attainable, the claimant will need to have or be able to develop key soft skills. Employers see these skills as essential to be able to effectively perform daily tasks in the workplace.

Key soft skills are:

- attitude
- communication (both listening and speaking skills)
- work ethic
- teamwork
- leadership qualities
- time management
- decision making
- conflict resolution
- critical thinking
- networking
- empathy
- problem-solving

Essential skills screening at the commitment meeting

At the commitment meeting, all claimants will be screened for the following essential skills:

- English speaking and listening below entry level 2
- numeracy below entry level 2
- essential digital and IT capabilities

English speaking and listening

Where necessary, some claimants where identified will be required to undergo a full assessment by a provider and where appropriate, be required to attend English language training to improve their language skills.

The training will generally last between 7 and 20 weeks for between 8 and 16 hours a week.

During training, the claimant will still be expected to undertake all other work preparation and work search activities as accepted on their Claimant Commitment.

Numeracy

Claimants who have a numeracy skills gap can be referred to additional training, support and provision to help them develop these skills and achieve relevant qualifications. This is to improve their chances of competing in the Labour Market and gaining employment.

This support or training must be recorded and accepted as part of the Claimant Commitment.

The claimant is still expected to undertake other work-related activities while participating in most forms of other support. The amount of other work-related activity will depend on how many hours the claimant is spending on training or provision.

Essential digital skills

As digital and IT skills are becoming more and more important when looking for work and sustaining employment, it is important that a claimant's digital skills are considered at the commitments meeting.

A claimants who is considered to have essential digital skills can confidently and independently:

- communicate, collaborate and share information online
- find, manage and store digital content securely
- secure their personal information online
- make payments and manage their money online
- use the internet to find information that helps them solve problems, improve their skills, or learn how to do new things

It may not always be possible to identify gaps in digital and IT skills immediately but where a claimant does not have the relevant skills needed to effectively search for work, they can be referred for additional support. This must be recorded and accepted as part of the Claimant Commitment.

The claimant would still be expected to take part in other reasonable work-related activities while participating in digital skills support.

Skills gap identified during the commitments meeting

If a claimant is not yet ready to take up work and essential or employability skills gap is identified during the commitments meeting, additional third-party support and provision should be considered to help them address these gaps.

For more information on identifying and addressing skills gaps, see Supporting claimants with their essential and employability skills.

Provider skills assessments

Skills assessments are carried out by providers and are used to identify a claimant's current skills levels. Results are measured against national standards to ensure that providers make appropriate decisions about appropriate training courses.

Diagnostic skills assessments conducted by providers give a specific breakdown of the claimant's skills need. For example, if a claimant has been assessed as having literacy needs, a diagnostic assessment will identify the specific area for improvement, such as spelling or punctuation.

Referrals to training and provision to address skills gaps

If a referral to additional training or provision has been agreed to address a skills gap, this is recorded on the Claimant Commitment as a work preparation activity. Some training and provision are mandatory, whereas others are voluntary.

If the required provision is not available, the District Employer and Partnership Team can consider sourcing and funding the training in order to support the claimant. The work coach should discuss this initially with their line manager.

For details on what provision and training opportunities are available, see Programmes and Provisions and the District Provision Tool (DPT).

Not in employment, education or training

A claimant is treated as being not in employment education or training (NEET) from the date immediately following the last date that an 18-year-old claimant took part in employment, education or training.

In terms of NEET, the following definitions apply:

- employment - any paid work including part-time, temporary and self-employment, but not including voluntary work
- education - any formal course of full-time or part-time education
- training - any formal employment-related full-time or part-time training course (including 'Essential Skills'), but not including, for example, work experience or CV writing

Cyber security

Claimants concerned about online security can be signposted to the National Cyber Security Centre