

# Work Preparation regime: Guidance

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## Introduction

The Work Preparation regime aims to keep the claimant motivated and preparing them to return to work as soon as they are able whilst taking their capabilities into account.

There is a stepped increase in support for a return to work for when the youngest child reaches the age of 3.

## Characteristics

This regime includes claimants who:

- are the lead carer of a child aged 2
- are treated as having limited capability for work following the outcome of a Work Capability Assessment

## Requirements

A claimant in the Work Preparation regime is required to:

- prepare for work
- attend Work focused Interviews, and
- report any changes of circumstances

A claimant determined as having limited capability for work following the outcome of their Work Capability Assessment must agree set work search requirements to:

- keep the claimant motivated
- preparing them to return to work as soon as they are able, and
- taking into account their capabilities

A lead carer whose youngest child is aged 2 will be offered a stepped increase in support to enable them to be ready to return to work. This is important in the year before they move to the Intensive Work Search regime when their youngest child turns 3.

Lead carers are not expected to be available for or to look for work, but they can do so voluntarily.

Participation in work experience or an employment programme is also voluntary (for example, claimants aged 16-24 in the Work Preparation regime can choose to participate in the DWP Youth Offer provided that they are not following the health journey).

The following table sets out the 2 main types of work-related requirements that can be mandatory for claimants in this regime:

<p><b>Work Focused Interview requirements are for any or a combination of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessing prospects for remaining in or finding paid work</li> <li>• coaching claimants to remain in or find work</li> <li>• identifying training or educational opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work Preparation requirements include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attending a skills assessment</li> <li>• preparing a CV</li> <li>• improving personal presentation</li> <li>• participating in an employment programme</li> <li>• developing a business plan</li> <li>• researching childcare costs and provision</li> </ul>
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## **Recording requirements**

A claimant in this regime must have an agreed and fully tailored Claimant Commitment and work plan documenting their plan for how they will prepare for work and setting out their mandatory and voluntary work preparation activities.

The claimant must be encouraged to accept their Claimant Commitment during their First Commitments Meeting using their own device or on a customer computer.

If they are unable to do this, remind them to complete this within 7 days to avoid delaying their payment or to prevent their claim being closed. See Claimant Commitment overview for further information.

## **Framework for lead carers with a child aged 2**

The claimant is supported in the Work Preparation regime by the following:

- First Commitments Meeting for lead carers with a child aged 2
- Regular coaching reviews

## **First Commitments Meeting for lead carers with a child aged 2**

The aim of the First Commitments Meeting is to ensure that the claimant fully understands their:

- responsibilities
- the requirements they must meet, and
- what they are expected to achieve

For information and assistance with communicating with claimants whose first or preferred language is not English. see Speakers of Other Languages guidance or the Welsh Language Line.

The claimant must attend a face-to-face meeting. The meeting covers 3 core parts and leads to a set of requirements to be recorded in the Claimant Commitment. These are:

- Diagnosis of claimant capability and circumstance
- Establishing which work preparations should apply
- Establishing on-going contact requirements

## **Diagnosis of claimant capability and circumstances**

The work coach will determine the claimant's capability and personal circumstances and this includes exploring:

- work history
- qualifications
- health
- caring responsibilities

Encourage the claimant to view a move into work positively (for example, by explaining the benefits of the Work Allowance and Earnings Taper for Universal Credit). Determine also if the claimant would like to undertake other work-related requirements on a voluntary basis.

Assess the claimant for essential skills gaps, especially English Language, using skills screening and subsequent mandating to essential skills training (including English for Speakers of Other Languages) where appropriate.

## **Establishing which work preparations should apply**

Establish clear work preparation activities. These must reflect the claimant's capabilities and circumstances and in the case of carers, to address skills gaps or confidence issues. These must be reasonable and take into account their caring responsibilities.

Ensure that the claimant understands the steps they must take to prepare for a return to work and the consequences (including a potential sanction) if they fail to comply with mandatory work preparation requirements.

Ensure also that the claimant is motivated and positively commits to complying with all actions and expectations.

## **Establishing on-going contact requirements**

This consists of a tailored level of contact by digital, telephone or face-to-face channels to check progress and to confirm that the claimant remains committed is meeting their requirements. This should be done with the work coach providing pro-active support and coaching.

Develop a relationship where the claimant feels they can discuss issues as they emerge, helping to ensure that work search requirements remain reasonable and appropriate.

In addition to ongoing contact and discretionary ad-hoc support, the following mandatory interventions must be applied unless requirements have been switched-off.

### **Regular coaching reviews**

A claimant must be interviewed flexibly but with a minimum of at least one interview every month. They must also be able to request discussions and interviews themselves.

At these interviews the work coach will discuss what is available to them in terms of childcare now and in the future. See the Childcare guidance and offers.

These appointments are also used to engage the claimant in further skills development.

Interviews are typically mandatory but flexibility can be exercised. If the interview is mandatory, the requirement to attend and the consequences of failing to attend (including a potential sanction) must be clearly communicated.

Coaching reviews must be accommodated around childcare availability as far as possible. Mandatory work preparation activity should normally be restricted to the hours when the claimant's child is in the care of a responsible adult.

The claimant must feel supported in order to comply with their requirements and given timely interventions for help and direction. These provide access to support to help them overcome issues as and when they are identified. For more information about supporting claimants with health conditions, see the related content linked products.

Monitor the claimant's activities to determine if they are complying with the requirements accepted in their Claimant Commitment and the conditions of their regime.

A claimant will be required and encouraged to keep an update of work preparation activity to allow this to be monitored. Their progress against mandatory requirements must be checked to support coaching interventions and conversations.

### **Framework for claimants with limited capability for work**

The claimant is supported in the Work Preparation regime by the following:

- First Commitments Meeting

- Regular coaching review

### **First Commitments Meeting for claimants with limited capability for work**

The aim of this meeting is to ensure that the claimant fully understands their:

- responsibilities
- the requirements they must meet to prepare for work, and
- what they are expected to achieve

The claimant will usually attend a face-to-face meeting. However, it is important for those who are assessed as having limited capability for work that facilities and reasonable adjustments are offered to accommodate health needs. This includes home and telephone interviews where appropriate.

The meeting covers a set of requirements which are to be recorded in the Claimant Commitment. These are:

- Diagnosis of claimant capability and circumstance
- Establishing which work preparations should apply
- Work and Health Programme and Pioneer

### **Diagnosis of claimant capability and circumstances**

Determine the claimant's capabilities and personal circumstances. This includes exploring their

- work history,
- qualifications
- health
- caring responsibilities

Encourage the claimant to view a move into work positively (for example, by explaining the benefits of the Work Allowance and Earnings Taper for Universal Credit). Determine also if they would like to undertake other work-related requirements on a voluntary basis.

Assess the claimant for **essential** skills gaps, especially English Language using skills screening with subsequent mandating to **essential** skills training (including English for Speakers of Other Languages) where appropriate.

## **Establishing which work preparations should apply**

Establish clear work preparation requirements which must be appropriate to the claimant's physical and mental capabilities as well as their personal circumstances.

Ensure that they understand the steps they must take to prepare to return to work and the consequences (including a potential sanction) if they fail to comply with mandatory work preparation requirements.

Ensure that the claimant is motivated and positively commits to complying with all actions and expectations.

Health conditions must be considered when determining what the claimant can do to prepare for work as well as understanding what their experience, knowledge and skills are.

An understanding of every type of health condition is not required and it is more important to listen to the claimant's needs and abilities as that will help to tailor the Claimant Commitment and work plan appropriately.

## **Work and Health Programme and Pioneer**

The Work and Health Programme and Pioneer (WHP) is DWP's new contracted employment provision that will help eligible claimants to find sustainable work. It is available for claimants who have a disability or have early access priority. Referral to the Work and Health Programme and Pioneer is voluntary.

The WHP and Pioneer tackle barriers to work by linking up with health and social care providers and other local services aimed at getting people into work. It offers more intensive and tailored support than can be provided by the standard Jobcentre Plus offer or through other available services and provision.

See Work and Health Programme and Pioneer for eligibility, suitability and what the Programme offers.

## **Regular coaching reviews**

There is extensive flexibility regarding the best use of review time to help drive results for claimants in the Work Preparation regime.

The claimant can request reviews and interviews and although these are usually mandatory, there is flexibility with this. If an interview is mandatory the

requirement to attend must always be clearly communicated together with a clear summary of the consequences of failing to attend (including a potential sanction).

The claimant must feel supported in order to comply with their requirements and given timely interventions to provide encouragement and direction. These provide ready access to support and help them overcome issues as and when they are identified.

Monitor the claimant's activities to determine whether they are complying with the requirements in their Claimant Commitment and the conditions of their regime (for example, if the claimant has attended a training course).

The claimant will be required and encouraged to keep an update of work preparation activity so that their progress can be monitored against mandatory requirements and to support coaching interventions and conversations.

The claimant must be able to engage with Universal Credit through a variety of communication channels for variable durations and frequencies.

It is important that claimants who are assessed as having limited capability for work are offered facilities and reasonable adjustments to accommodate health needs, including home and telephone interviews as appropriate. All work preparation requirements must also be appropriate to their physical and mental capabilities and personal circumstances.

The next WCA is at 18 and 24 months.

The Universal Credit appointment list will assist with the type of appointment that must be booked.

## **Flexible Support Fund**

The Flexible Support Fund is a locally managed budget which is used 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.

See the Flexible Support Fund and Childcare and Flexible Support Fund guidance for further information.