

# Work and Health Programme and Pioneer: Guidance

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## Work and Health Programme and Pioneer

The Work and Health Programme and Pioneer provide contracted employment support, in England and Wales, for disabled people, people with a health condition and disadvantaged groups.

Referrals to the programme stopped on 30 September 2024. Participants already referred to the programme will continue until the end of their allotted time.

It offers tailored support to help eligible claimants find sustained work.

Work and Health Programme and Pioneer are expected to take a holistic approach to tackling barriers to employment by linking up with health and social care providers and other local services aimed at getting people into work.

The contracts have been awarded and are split into Contract Package Areas across England and Wales.

The Work and Health Programme and Pioneer will not be rolled out in Scotland. The Scottish Government will use devolved powers to deliver employability support in Scotland.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for Work and Health Programme or Pioneer, claimants must meet the following criteria:

- in England they must be aged 18 or over
- in Wales people who leave school on the last Friday in June, and are aged 16 or over by the end of that school year's summer holidays
- have the right to work in the UK
- have the right to live in the UK and is resident in England or Wales
- have recourse to public funds

- not already be participating on other contracted provision
- not have completed Work and Health Programme or Pioneer previously
- not doing any paid work, including zero-hour contracts
- not be self-employed
- not have a job offer
- not be about to start a job

If they fulfil the above eligibility criteria, they must also meet one of the following criteria:

- have a health condition or disability as defined in the Equality Act 2010
- be in one of these early access disadvantaged groups:
  - ex-offenders, someone who has completed a custodial sentence or a community sentence
  - offenders, someone who is serving a community sentence
  - carers
  - ex-carers
  - homeless people
  - former members of HM Armed Forces
  - members of the HM Armed Forces reserve
  - partners of current or former HM Armed Forces personnel
  - people for whom a drug / alcohol dependency presents a significant barrier to employment including in the past
  - care leavers
  - refugees
  - an Afghan resettler
  - a Ukrainian evacuee
  - victims of domestic abuse
  - young people identified as being involved or at risk of being involved in gangs or serious violence

## **Suitability**

Claimants who are eligible must also be suitable to participate in the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer. Eligible claimants are only considered suitable if they:

- can be helped by the offer
- have committed to the goal of finding employment within 12 months
- are willing, if required, to undertake more training to find a job
- do not have any complex barriers that need addressing first
- are not close to the job market, and require support to find and apply for jobs
- need more support than can be provided within the standard Jobcentre Plus offer or through other available services and provisions
- have already been helped with their core job search activity, for example:
  - basic job search skills:
  - reading, writing, numeracy
  - digital skills
  - CV writing
  - use of email
  - support with Find a Job

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

The Work and Health Programme and Pioneer tackle barriers to work by connecting with health and social care providers and other local services aimed at getting people into work.

It offers more intensive, tailored support than can be provided by the standard Jobcentre Plus offer, or through other available services and provision.

Providers will:

- provide the specialisation and capability to offer personalised and tailored support
- address both work and health barriers
- provide support through a range of delivery channels, including digital support
- effectively link with other services, including transition between support offers
- achieve a high level of quality employment outcomes that support the claimant in line with Universal Credit
- create an action plan, outlining the manageable steps to take to help them
- receive support for up to 456 days (15 months), even if the claimant's benefit changes
- if the claimant finds a job, provides support for up to 182 days (6 months)

## **Participant responsibilities**

When a claimant on Universal credit commences the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer, they must be informed that they:

- must continue to fulfil their agreed 'Commitments'
- will be encouraged to provide evidence of their actions to find work; including any activities agreed with their provider
- must continue to attend work focused and mandatory interviews if applicable, or a sanction may apply
- must make the most of the support offered by the provider
- failure to comply with Labour Market conditions without good reason could result in a benefit sanction being applied
- must continue to report changes of circumstances to Universal Credit and the provider

## **Mandating disengaged participants**

Only voluntary participants can disengage from the Work and Health Programme and Pioneer, although they will be encouraged to return.

A disengaged participants allotted time (456 days) continues to accrue and they can reengage with the provider at any point within that allotted time.

Participants must be referred to Work and Health Programme or Pioneer on a mandatory basis for the balance of their allotted time on the programme, when all the following criteria apply, they have:

- disengaged from the programme

- been unemployed, in the Intensive Work Search Regime and in receipt Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance for 24 months or more prior to their disengagement date

The start of the 24 month period for Work and Health Programme or Pioneer is established by:

- identifying breaks in claims to Universal Credit or Jobseekers' Allowance
- calculating a date when the 24 month period of unemployment is treated as starting from
- using the number of days in any breaks between claims (only those less than 28 days each) to work out when the claimant will be eligible for Work and Health Programme

Periods of Employment and Support Allowance are not considered.

If participants do not meet the 24 months long term unemployed criteria, they remain disengaged from the programme until they re-engage.

### **Autistic Spectrum Condition participants**

Autistic spectrum condition participants have been informed of the process to ensure providers are discreetly made aware of their health condition. Claimant's must have given their consent to these referrals.

### **Change of circumstances for Work and Health Programme or Pioneer Participants**

Participants should be encouraged to report changes of circumstances to the Jobcentre through their online account, and the provider.

Form UC78e is used to inform the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer provider of the following changes of circumstances:

- participant moves abroad, not including Northern Ireland
- participant is terminally ill
- death
- change to benefit or conditionality
- outcome of a disengagement interview

Find form UC78e in Forms

The following wider changes must also be reported to the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer provider, including changes in:

- address, including transfer of Jobcentre district
- additional support / reasonable adjustments, such as a new Work Capability Assessment outcome
- admission / discharge hospital
- appointee / power of attorney
- caring responsibilities
- the participant's conditionality which impacts participation in the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer

- changes in complex needs
- imprisoned / leaves prison
- name
- new claim
- partner entering / leaving the household
- part-time education
- period of sickness, restrictions and duration
- restrictions such as, attendance
- when they start or end work including part time, voluntary, self-employed, permitted work, lost work, or changes in hours worked
- telephone number
- other things that affect a participant's work-related requirements - these may include jury service, civic duties, domestic emergency, easements for domestic abuse / violence, Territorial Army / Reserve Forces, or homelessness

If a participant changes address to one outside their Contract Package Area, they will remain the responsibility of their original provider.

Potential participants moving to Scotland remain with their original provider.

Participants mandated to the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer who move to Scotland will become a voluntary participant.

When a participant moves the new Jobcentre Plus office must send a UC78e to the original provider.

Information on how to complete the UC78e, and contingency arrangements for e-mail failures, can be found in Reporting change of circumstances to providers. Form UC78e is in Forms

If a mandatory Work and Health Programme or Pioneer participant has a change of circumstances which results in a change of conditionality group, they must be issued with a notification to tell them they are now voluntary.

The notifications are:

- UCD550 / UCD550W for Work and Health Programme or Pioneer participants
- UCD550LLGP for Local Government Partners participants

### **New claim to Universal Credit is made by a Work and Health Programme or Pioneer participant**

Where a claimant on the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer makes a new claim to Universal Credit they remain on Work and Health Programme or Pioneer.

Once referred, the claimant is on the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer for up to 456 to 639 days (15 to 21 months) whether on or off benefit, or in or out of work.

On every new claim to Universal Credit, check if the claimant is already attached to Work and Health Programme or Pioneer by viewing 'History' in Jobs and opportunities and Labour Market System.

If the claimant is still a Work and Health Programme or Pioneer participant, issue form UC78e to the provider to notify them the claimant is back on Universal Credit.

If the claimant is a voluntary Work and Health Programme or Pioneer participant, explain they are still on the programme, signpost them back to the programme and promote the support they will receive.

If the claimant is a mandatory Work and Health Programme or Pioneer participant:

- explain to the claimant that they must take part in the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer
- issue UCD567 / UCD567W (Work and Health Programme or Pioneer participants),
- issue UCD567LLGP Local Government Partners participants

Find the forms on the notifications page.

## **Local Government Partners**

The Work and Health Programme and Pioneer also include devolved funding arrangements with Local Government Partners in two areas of England:

- London, which has 4 sub-regions
- Greater Manchester

Whilst on the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer, participants on benefit must continue to satisfy the conditions of entitlement and notify DWP of any changes in their circumstances.

## **Completing the Work and Health Programme or Pioneer**

A participant will end the programme if:

- they have reached the 456 day (15 months) and are not in sustained employment
- they completed the programme after a period of 'in-work support' up to a maximum of 639 day (21 months)
- they have moved abroad
- they have died
- they have reported a terminal illness, however, the participant has the option to continue or
- a final outcome payment in respect of the participant has been made by DWP to the provider