

Fair Start Scotland programme

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Introduction

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) is the Scottish Government's employment support provision. The last referral to this programme will be the 30 March 2024 after which no new referrals will be made. The programme will end after the last attendee finishes in April 2025.

It is a voluntary programme for eligible claimants living in Scotland and provides support to people with a disability, health condition or those at risk of long-term unemployment.

The offer

Fair Start Scotland is a targeted provision offering tailored support to help eligible claimants to find sustained paid work. The Scottish Government service providers deliver to 9 areas across Scotland (called Lots). Claimants are allocated to the Scottish Government service provider in their Lot.

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) tackles barriers to work by linking up with health and social care providers and other local services aimed at getting people into work. FSS offers more intensive tailored support than can be provided by the standard Jobcentre Plus offer, or through other available services and provision.

Participation on FSS is voluntary. Therefore, claimants cannot be sanctioned for non-attendance, failure to engage or if they leave the programme early. However, normal conditionality and mandatory work-related activity sanctions still apply.

There is a strict data-sharing and data-processing agreement between DWP and Scottish Government service providers detailing what information can be shared.

The Scottish Government service provider allocates a key worker to each claimant. During the first 2 months, the key worker delivers weekly interventions to access a range of activities to help determine the level of support required and the appropriate service strand the claimant will start at week 9. Activities include:

- baseline development of employability skills
- health and well-being assessments and guidance
- jobsearch skills and resources
- better-off in work calculation and financial planning

- labour market information, including employer engagement
- mentoring support
- money management
- personal development and soft skills training, for example communications and interpersonal skills
- promotion of IT for job search, including assessment of IT skills
- social activity to support the engagement and development of soft skills
- volunteering opportunities
- fast-track claimants to specialist organisations to provide appropriate support

These are examples, not a full list.

During this period, the claimant will develop a detailed personalised Employment Action Plan with the service provider which sets out agreed activities and timescales to help them move closer to work.

Claimants on FSS are still required to do the agreed work search activities on their Claimant Commitment and have the usual Work Search Reviews at the Jobcentre.

The FSS programme lasts for 12 months but in-work support is available for a further 12 months after the claimant has found paid employment. Claimants in the Intense Service Strand with significant barriers to employment may have their time on the Programme extended a maximum of 18 months.

Claimants on the FSS programme are not eligible for help from the Flexible Support Fund as the providers are funded to provide in-work support to participants.

Relocation

If the claimant moves out of Scotland while on FSS they are no longer eligible and must leave the Programme. However, if a claimant moves out of Scotland but continues to work in Scotland, the Scottish Government service provider will continue to provide in-work support.

If a claimant on the Work and Health Programme and Pioneer moves to Scotland, they will continue on the Work and Health Programme and Pioneer with their original provider.

Completing the Fair Start Scotland programme

Claimants on the core or advanced level who have not found paid work during the 12 month period on FSS will leave the Programme. There is no option to extend their time on the Programme.

Claimants on the Intense Service Strand may have their time on the Programme extended a maximum of 18 months where there is a realistic prospect of the claimant finding a job within the timescale. If not, they will leave the Programme.

Safety measures - single point of contact

If a claimant has a safety marker, the provider's designated SPOC will contact the DWP SPOC to discuss risk management measures.

Keep Customer Interactions Safe (KCIS)