

Non-digital relationships

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Introduction

The majority of claimants will be able to make and maintain their claim for Universal Credit online. For more information on the support available for claimants who need help to do this, see [Assisted Digital overview](#).

However, not everyone will be able to make and maintain their claim online for a variety of good reasons.

Some claimants may not have family or friends they can trust to help them manage their claim and the assistance of Universal Credit staff may be the only help they have.

Reasons for not using the digital service

There are a number of reasons why a claimant may not be able to make and maintain their claim online including:

- physical or mental ill health or disability
- visual impairments
- lack of essential literacy
- lack of skills and training
- legal limitations such as Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) or terrorism Prevention Investigation Measures (TPIM)

The claim by phone process is in place to enable non-digital claimants to make and maintain their claim and to ensure they receive the right support while claiming Universal Credit.

Communicating with non-digital claimants

Claimants who have made their claim by phone do not have an online account so will not have access to important information such as:

- appointment dates and times

- requests for further information (for example, Statements of Fitness for Work or Fit Notes)
- suspensions
- sanctions
- requests for further information
- payment details and statements

This information must be communicated to claimants by alternative forms of contact. For those who are not able to access their journal, methods of contact could include:

- SMS messaging to prompt the claimant to make contact (ensure that the claimant has a mobile phone and the preference is set to SMS instead of email)
- via mobile phone or landline, but consider:
 - do they have sufficient credit on their phone?
 - do they need us to call them back?
 - if a call-back is required ensure they can access their phone
 - is there a good time to call them?
- face-to-face contact
- home visit, but only in exceptional circumstances and after all other options have been considered

Alternatively, consider if an appointee or corporate appointee is appropriate. See Appointees, Personal Acting Bodies and Corporate Acting Bodies.

It is important to remember that if a claimant cannot interact online, a call-back must be offered anytime they call Universal Credit. When claimants do agree to a call-back, Universal Credit staff must be proactive in returning those calls.

The method of contact must be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains the most appropriate option.

Tailoring support for non-digital claimants

Staff flexibilities

Staff flexibilities could include:

- attempting to contact the claimant if they miss a face-to-face appointment before referring for a decision
- offering an alternative to the online channel
- accepting that telephony contact could take longer
- allowing the claimant to use the Jobcentre as a care-of address if they are unable to provide an alternative (to be agreed locally and reviewed regularly)

- more than one attempt may be needed when making outbound calls to a claimant

Labour Market flexibilities

Labour Market flexibilities could include:

Conditionality

If a claimant has characteristics that mean they could fall into more than one regime, the lowest conditionality intensity must be applied.

Alternative work search activities

Universal Credit staff must identify any restrictions the claimant may have and record these in a profile note in the 'Claimant history'.

For claimants who can't use computers, don't make online job search part of the Claimant Commitment. Alternative work search activities can be agreed such as:

- searching in the newspapers
- contacting employers directly
- registering with agencies that will search for vacancies on the claimant's behalf
- using computers under supervision from the jobcentre or probation staff
- obtaining assistance from support agencies (for example, the local authority or charities).

Remote management

Remote areas are where a claimant using public transport to get to get to their nearest jobcentre would:

- take longer than 1-hour door to door in either direction, and
- result in an absence from home of over 4 hours

To support claimants living in remote areas, alternative attendance arrangements must be discussed. This is to help them to provide their work search evidence and show that they are fulfilling the requirements of their Claimant Commitment.

Staff can remotely manage claimants who live in remote areas and have difficulty attending appointments and this can include contact through telephone interventions. The way this is undertaken will be agreed at the claimant's initial Claimant Commitment Interview or at any point they declare a change of circumstances that leads to remote management.

Accepting the Claimant Commitment

For claimants who can't access the 'to-do' on their journal, they are able to accept their Claimant Commitment clerically during either face-to-face or telephone interventions.

Providing work-related evidence

Regulations provide flexibility with regard to how a claimant can provide evidence for when their work-related requirements have been met. Alternative options include providing evidence face-to-face, using clerical records or through telephony channels.

Example of dealing with non-digital claimants

A claimant who cannot read or write English (and so cannot use a computer to make a claim on-line), wishes to make a claim for Universal Credit.

The claimant must phone Universal Credit and ask to make their claim by phone. Their suitability will be assessed, the first part of their claim will be completed and an appointment booked so that they can be contacted for completion of the information gather.

Once the claim has been completed, an appointment will be booked for them to attend the jobcentre for their Initial Evidence Interview.

As the claimant cannot access their journal, they must be contacted by phone about any important messages.

When the claimant attends an appointment, future appointments will be made at this time so that they are aware of when they next need to attend.

The claimant must also be placed in a conditionality regime according to their circumstances. Any restrictions to employment and training must be taken into account when setting requirements on their tailored Claimant Commitment and Work Plan.

The claimant's ability to read and write in English and their digital capability, must be reviewed regularly as part of their ongoing interaction with DWP. If their language and digital skills reach an appropriate standard, their account must be converted from a phone claim to an online claim.