

Work Focused Interview regime: Guidance

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Introduction

The Work Focused Interview regime encourages claimants to think about the individual challenges of:

- moving towards work now or in the future, and
- preparing to move to a different regime and being less dependent on Universal Credit

By attending regular interviews, claimants are encouraged and supported to consider the steps they could take in preparation for starting work.

At the First Commitment Meeting, the claimant is made aware of these expectations and their Claimant Commitment and Work Plan will include the requirement to participate in Work Focused Interviews.

Characteristics

The Work Focused Interview regime supports claimants who are expected to work in the future but are currently the nominated lead carer for a child or children. This includes:

- nominated lead carers where the youngest child is aged 1
- single foster carers or main carers in a fostering couple where:
 - a foster child under 16 is placed with them
 - a qualifying young person's care needs would make it unreasonable for the claimant to comply with a work search or work availability requirement.
 - a foster parent (not the main carer in a fostering couple) of a child or qualifying young person, where the child or young person's care

- needs would make it unreasonable for the claimant to comply with a work search requirement or work availability requirement
- the foster carer has fallen into one of the above categories in the last 8 weeks, is between placements and shows evidence of intent to continue fostering a child
- family and friend's carers (also known as a kinship carers) for the first year that a claimant is the responsible carer for a child under 16

Claimants in the Work Focused Interview regime are not required to be available for work and any activities other than participating in mandatory interviews is entirely voluntary (for example, claimants aged 16-24 in the Work Focused Interview regime can choose to participate in the DWP Youth Offer provided that they are not following the health journey).

Requirements

The claimant is required to attend all mandatory interviews and to:

- understand and fully accept the requirements of their regime including possible sanctions if they do not attend Work Focused Interviews
- notify all changes of circumstances (for example, when a child joins or leaves their household)
- provide evidence (if they are a family and friend's carer) to ensure they are in the correct regime

For claimants with young children, childcare availability must be considered when arranging interviews.

Claimants must also be made aware they can re-arrange interviews if they have a good reason why they cannot attend (for example, rescheduling appointments around childcare, social services or medical appointments).

Framework

During all interviews the following subjects must be discussed:

- caring responsibilities
- childcare options
- availability (this must be identified to ensure interviews and voluntary work preparation activities are arranged at suitable times)

For carers who choose to consider returning to work, identifying suitable childcare will help them to prepare for the transition to the Work Preparation regime when their youngest child reaches their second birthday.

For help with childcare, see Childcare costs and the related content on this page.

The claimant is supported in the Work Focused Interview regime by the following:

First Commitment Meeting: face-to-face

Claimants attending the First Commitment Meeting will have a child aged 1 years old. This may be the claimant's first contact with a work coach and they may never have attended appointments or previously received support.

The First Commitment Meeting provides the opportunity to explain to the claimant that they do not have to work or look for work until their youngest child turns 3. However, they can work before then if they choose and they can be offered support to help them do so.

All work-related requirements are undertaken on a voluntary basis only and the work coach must:

- determine what skills, experience and knowledge the claimant has
- help them to focus on the types of work they can do in the future
- consider what they can do now to help themselves to be prepared for work
- encourage them to take voluntary actions
- set their commitments in accord with the outcome of the discussion

The interview will include:

- agreeing the Claimant Commitment
- developing a detailed plan of work-related activity (on a voluntary basis)
- assessing claimant needs and voluntary referral to provision
- discussing childcare options for now and in the future

The main types of work-related requirements to consider (on a voluntary basis) are:

- attending a skills assessment
- preparing a CV
- improving personal presentation
- participating in an employment programme
- developing a business plan

- researching childcare costs and provision

At the end of the discussion, the Claimant Commitment and Work Plan are created and the claimant is required to give their agreement.

For more information, see Building the Claimant Commitment: Guidance.

Flexible Coaching Support Interview and Claimant Commitment Review (follow Up Work Focused Interview)

Ongoing contact with the claimant will be via digital or face-to-face depending upon diagnostic outcomes. There is flexibility for the claimant to be seen face-to-face if it is deemed necessary.

Interviews must take place every 3 months as a minimum. However, these interventions are recommended as a guide and there is flexibility to schedule these more often and to use interview time appropriately in order to achieve positive outcomes for the claimant.

Claimants are also able to request discussions and interviews. These interviews can include:

- reviewing and discussing activities
- developing a detailed plan of work-related activity (on a voluntary basis)
- identifying support needs including childcare
- discussing the childcare offers available to the claimant now and in the future
- considering how to gradually increase the support offered in the months before the claimant's youngest child turns 2 when transitioning to the Work Preparation regime

The work coach will:

- consider how to gradually increase the support offered in the months before the youngest child reaches the age of 2 and they move to the Work Preparation regime
- explain what requirements the claimant is expected to meet and the support available as part of the Work Preparation regime
- update the Work Plan with agreed voluntary activities that will help the claimant to progress on their journey towards work or progress in their current employment (for example, developing a CV or looking at jobs online)
- discuss childcare options appropriate to their needs now and in the future

- inform them of what happens in the intensive Work Search regime when their child turns 3
- inform them of their next appointment

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 are discretionary and aimed at improving a claimant's job prospects and is subject to eligibility.

Claimants allocated to the Work Focused Interview regime can be considered for the Flexible Support fund. See the Flexible Support Fund and Childcare and Flexible Support Fund guidance.