

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 individual circumstances and capabilities into account.

There is a stepped increase in support for a return to work for lead carers whose youngest child reaches the age of 2.

Characteristics

The Work Preparation regime includes claimants who are:

- the lead carer of a child aged 2
- determined as having limited capability for work (LCW) following the outcome of their Work Capability Assessment

Requirements

A claimant in the Work Preparation regime is required to:

- prepare for work
- prepare to move to a different regime and be less dependent on Universal Credit
- attend Work Focused Interviews
- report any changes of circumstances

Work preparation claimants are not required to search for work but must agree to engage in mandatory work preparation activities. If they fail to do so without good reason, this may result in a sanction being imposed on their Universal Credit.

Lead carers

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.

Claimants with limited capability for work

A claimant determined as having limited capability for work following the outcome of their Work Capability Assessment must agree to engage in mandatory work preparation activities to:

- keep motivated
- prepare for a return to work as soon as they are able, and
- develop their work capabilities

Work experience and employment programmes

Participation in work experience or an employment programme is entirely 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).

Mandatory requirements

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

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

Recording requirements

A claimant in the Work Preparation regime must have an agreed and fully tailored Claimant Commitment and Work Plan in line with their individual circumstances and their Labour Market regime framework. This will document their plan for how they will prepare for work and set out their mandatory and voluntary work preparation activities.

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

If they are unable to do this, they must be reminded 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

First Commitments Meeting

The First Commitments Meeting may be the claimant's first contact with a work coach as they may never have had to attend appointments or received support before.

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 consists of 3 core parts and leads to a set of requirements to be recorded in the Claimant Commitment. These are:

Diagnosis of claimant capability and circumstances

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

- work history
- qualifications
- health conditions and disabilities
- 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). Advise on the help available for childcare costs (upfront and ongoing costs) and signposting to providers for when their child turns 3. 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 account of 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.

The Work Plan must be updated with the mandatory activities agreed, to help the claimant prepare for work or to progress in their current job. 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

to 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, mandatory interventions must be applied unless requirements have been switched-off. See Regular Work Focused Interviews and Claimant Commitment Reviews.

For more information, see [Building the Claimant Commitment: Guidance](#).

Regular Work Focused Interviews and Claimant Commitment 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 the claimant in terms of childcare now and in the future that fits their circumstances and what they are able to claim for upfront and ongoing childcare costs. See [Childcare guidance and offers](#).

These appointments are also used to engage the claimant in further skills development to enable them to start work or help them to progress in their current job if already working.

During these appointments, the work coach must also discuss what happens when the claimant moves into Intensive Work Search Regime. This will include the frequency of appointments and availability up to a maximum of 30 hours per week though this will be tailored around their individual circumstances.

Interviews are 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.

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 to comply with their requirements and given timely interventions for help and direction. These provide access to support which will 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.

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

Discussions must be work focused and activities should be centred around the claimant taking actions to preparing for work and not limited to being just a 'check in'.

They must be tailored to the claimant's specific circumstances establishing all previous job roles, what skills they have acquired, what jobs they wish to do and what they require to achieve that job role. The work coach must also follow up on the voluntary activities that were agreed in the Work Focused Interview regime.

The Work Plan must be updated with the claimant's mandatory work-related activities, though they can also engage in voluntary activities that will help them move into or closer towards work. These could include:

- signposting to training courses that may be relevant
- browsing jobs or researching career options
- finding out about what childcare is available that would suit their needs and what they need to do to secure a place when they get a job
- CV preparation

They must be informed of their next appointment which could be a Work Focused Interview or a Claimant Commitment Review for the Intensive Work Search regime depending on the age of their youngest child.

Framework for claimants with limited capability for work

First Commitments Meeting

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 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.

For more information, see [Building the Claimant Commitment: Guidance](#).

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 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 Work Capability Assessment 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.