

Flexible Support Fund Adviser Guidance

Overview

1. The Flexible Support Fund (FSF) forms part of the overall Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Pre-work programme offer. FSF replaces a range of previous support which helped customers enter and remain in work. JCP customers are eligible for support from the fund provided they are not in the Work Programme. Advisers must also ensure that all other avenues of financial support have been fully explored and it is confirmed that none is available before committing expenditure.
2. The fund is a key enabler to meet individual needs in order to maximise off-flow into work in line with existing policy guidelines.
3. The fund can be used to cover expenses associated with taking up work or training in line with existing policy guidelines. It can be used to fill gaps and add support where DWP provision, non-contracted partner provision or Adviser interventions are not sufficient or appropriate to meet local customer needs.
4. The District Manager is responsible for managing expenditure within their budget and in this context determining how the FSF is spent locally. District Managers may set local guidelines on limits for certain types of payments, the amount an Adviser can award or local priorities.
5. The decision to award a payment from the FSF is the responsibility of the Adviser. Advisers must ensure they target the fund appropriately, using it for those customers who would not be able to move closer to or into work without such assistance. It is important that Advisers are clear on local policy and any local criteria/restrictions that may affect their decisions. Advisers should refer to and keep up to date with local guidelines.
6. Payments from the FSF should not be seen as a reward or bonus for moving into work. Any payment from the FSF must be appropriate, good value for tax payers' money and ensure a customer can move into work sooner than would otherwise be possible. Payments from the FSF may also be considered to enable a customer to address a skills need which will help their immediate prospects of moving into work. This includes supporting those customers not required to be available for work or move into employment e.g. those customers claiming IS/ESA/IB.

Eligibility

7. Support from the fund is available from day one of a new claim for all Jobcentre Plus customers who are not participating in the Work Programme, Work Choice or legacy provision.
8. People not claiming benefit are eligible in the following circumstances -

- Carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance only or not in receipt of any benefit are eligible if they are
 - Aged 18 years or older and
 - Not working or working less than 16 hours per week
- Lone parents not claiming benefit are eligible if they are responsible for and a member of the same household, as a child or young person and they
 - are aged over 16
 - have a dependant child aged under 16
 - are not working - or
 - are working less than 16 hours a week - and
 - are not an asylum seeker (unless they have exceptional leave to stay)
 - are not required to participate in any mandatory programme/activity.

9. Partners of customers receiving benefit (potential second earners) are eligible if they are over 16 and their partner is receiving a qualifying benefit. The qualifying benefits are -

- Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income Support (IS)
- Incapacity Benefit (IB)
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Carers Allowance (CA)
- Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA)
- Working Tax Credit (WTC)
- Pension Credit (PC)

10. Other people not claiming benefit who may receive support from the FSF fund are

- people supported under Partnership Arrangements
- people supported under Rapid Response funding

Travel and Childcare and Replacement Costs

29. Where a Jobseeker direction is used to encourage a customer's attendance at a Provider initial interview or Next Step/Careers Advice interview, travel and childcare costs must be met. Customers cannot be mandated if they are to be left financially disadvantaged as a consequence of a JCP referral.

30. Advisers have discretion to pay travel, childcare and replacement care costs for customers who take up training on a voluntary basis. Advisers also have discretion in line with local priorities, to pay expenses for travel to job interviews (for JSA customers follow table of links and "Payments to remove customers' barriers to work"). Travel and childcare costs will continue to be paid to lone parents, partners of benefit recipients, carers and ESA/IB customers volunteering for training and other work related activities including work trials. The fund can also be used to support disabled customers with assistance to attend interviews (formerly fares to interview). Advisers must ensure that all other avenues of financial support have been fully

explored, for example The Skills Funding Agency Providers Learner Support fund in England and it is confirmed that none is available before committing any expenditure to support attendance on provision.