

Initial Work Search Interview

Summary How to conduct an initial Work Search Interview

Claimants who are able to work are in the [All Work-Related Requirements Group](#).

The aim of the initial Work Search Interview (WSI) is to encourage claimants to get into as much work as they reasonably can do as quickly as possible. The work coach (WC) takes account of individual circumstances and sets requirements (that if complied with) will give the claimant the best possible prospects of finding;

- paid work
- more work
- better paid work

All such requirements are recorded in the [Claimant Commitment](#). The claimant must accept their Claimant Commitment in order to receive [Universal Credit](#).

In the case of joint claims the WC explains to the claimant:

- Universal Credit payments are made to the household, but each individual has personalised requirements that need to be met in order for the household to receive payment (this interview is to establish the work-related requirements)
- in the case of joint claims, both eligible claimants within a household are required to accept their individual Claimant Commitments and any work-related requirements are detailed for each person (if one member of the couple doesn't accept their Claimant Commitment, neither will be entitled to Universal Credit and will apply throughout the lifetime of the Universal Credit claim, not just at the onset of a new claim)
- conditionality is set at an individual level and therefore labour market interventions including the initial Work Search Interview (WSI), Work Search Reviews (WSR), and coaching interviews must be on an individual basis
- the ultimate goal is to ensure that individuals and their partner increase their earnings and

ultimately become independent by progression
into work, work retention or by increasing work

Claimant responsibility Day 1 Conditionality

Claimant will be aware of the activities set by the AD when the initial appointment was arranged with the claimant. These activities are: set up an email address, create a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and create a Universal Jobmatch account.

The WC will establish if the claimant has completed any or all of the day 1 conditionality activities. If the claimant has not completed any of these activities the WC will mandate the claimant to do so by recording this within the work preparation activities on the Claimant Commitment.

If the claimant has Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) restrictions which may prevent access to the internet or the claimant does not have sufficient IT skills to set up a CV, the WC will use local provision to overcome these barriers.

The interview covers core elements leading to a set of requirements to be recorded in the Claimant Commitment. These are:

- information gather and diagnosis of claimant circumstances
- identifying the work a claimant is expected to look and be available for
 - establishing work-preparation requirements
 - establishing work search requirements
 - establishing ongoing contact requirements

The WC must develop and record a set of personalised requirements (that when complied with) give the claimant the best prospect of finding work.

The initial WSI should start with introductions and an explanation of the purpose of the interview. The claimant's identity will have been verified with the personal and account support agent (PASA) before the interview.

If the claimant reports that they have a change of circumstances the WC advises them to report this by telephone.

English Language Requirements

During the initial WSI if the WC is unsure whether the claimant has English Language requirements the WC should undertake the English Language screening. See: English Language Requirement Skills Screening.

Information gather

The following sections are completed during the initial WSI and can be updated at any time. The WC completes the appropriate fields and confirms with the claimant that any pre-populated answers are correct.

The claimant's 'Conditionality Group' field must be set as 'All work-related requirements'.

Completing a Work Services Platform record for the claimant

Claim section

The claim section holds dates relevant to the claim for Universal Credit. The claim (date) field, 'Linking claim start date' and 'Linking claim end date' will be pre-populated via the Universal Credit Agent Portal.

These dates are used to calculate when the claimant should be referred to the [Work Programme](#).

Personal

To enable claimants to get into as much work as they can as quickly as possible, the WC talks to the claimant to diagnose their capabilities and personal circumstances.

The WC personalises the claimant's work search and work-preparation requirements using this information. It is important to have all relevant information about the claimant.

This includes the following areas of the claimant's circumstances:

Special requirements

The WC determines with the claimant if they have any additional special requirements which are not recorded on the [Work Services Platform](#) (WSP).

If there are no special requirements the WC goes to 'Employment history' below.

If the claimant does have additional special requirements, the WC:

- Selects 'Has special needs' and then the 'Yes' radio button to display 'Active special need' pane. Selects the 'Active special need' pane.
- Selects 'Add new special need' from the ribbon menu.

1. Selects the 'Special need type' look-up menu.
2. Selects the appropriate 'Special need type' and then 'OK'.
3. Selects 'Save and close' from the ribbon menu.

Employment history

The WC selects 'Active employment' and then the 'Add new employment' from the toolbar menu. This opens the Employment New screen.

The following fields are selected and completed:

- Employment name (mandatory)
- Job title (mandatory)
- Start date (mandatory)
- End date (mandatory)
- Reason for leaving (mandatory)
- Average earnings
- Frequency

The WC records relevant experience and transferable skills gained during the claimant's work history in the 'Relevant experience' field.

Skills and qualifications

The WC:

1. Obtains information regarding a claimant's [qualifications](#) by interviewing or by accessing the claimant's [Universal Jobmatch](#) account. The WC identifies the qualifications which are needed for the claimant's job requirements.
2. Selects 'Qualifications' from the 'Common' menu. This displays the 'Qualifications', 'Qualification associated view' (this box is pre-selected and doesn't need to be selected by the WC).
3. Selects 'Add new qualification' from the menu bar. This displays the Qualification new screen and the WC inputs the qualification 'Subject' in the Qualification record.

4. Selects 'Date started' in the Qualification record. Dates should be entered using the format dd/mm/yy.
5. Completes the 'Date completed' field. Dates should be entered using the format dd/mm/yy.
6. Selects the 'Outcome' from the drop-down list in the Qualification record and selects from the following outcomes:
 - not known
 - achieved
 - part achieved
 - not achieved
 - discontinued
 - exceeded
7. Selects the drop-down list from the 'Skills level' field in the Qualification record. This shows a list of skill levels and the WC selects the appropriate skills level in the 'Qualification New' field.
8. Updates the 'Skills' field. This is a free format text box for the WC to input additional detail around the screening.

Skills screening

The WC:

1. Uses their judgement to determine if 'Skills screening' is required.
2. Selects 'Add new skill screening'. The screen is pre-populated with the claimant's details and the WC selects the 'Screening type' from a drop-down list. In a new claim interview, the WC selects 'Initial' and enter this in the 'Description' free text box.
3. Conducts the 'Initial skills screening' using the 'Skills Screening and Assessments' guidance and considers if there is a basic skills need.

4. Views the 'Skills screening result look-up view' by selecting the 'Result' field. The AD selects the appropriate result and 'OK' and then updates the 'Description' free text box with the additional detail.

Challenges to finding work

For information on how to determine challenges, such as [caring responsibilities](#), see [Diagnosis of claimant capability and circumstances](#).

The WC:

1. Selects 'Challenges' from the 'Common' menu to view the claimant's challenges.
2. Selects 'Add new challenge' which displays the Challenge new screen. The claimant's details are pre-populated.
3. Enters the 'Challenge' and 'Sub type' by selecting the relevant type in a look-up list and then selects 'OK'. If there are any more challenges to be recorded the WC selects 'Save and new' and adds a new challenge.

Caring responsibilities

If the claimant is providing care for another person with a physical or mental impairment, the WC selects the amount of care provided from the 'Carers' field.

Health condition

If the claimant has a [health condition](#) the WC:

1. Selects 'Yes' next to the 'Health barriers to work' field.
2. Selects 'Active health barriers' on the footer bar and then 'Add new health barrier' from the toolbar menu. This opens the Health barrier screen.
3. Selects the appropriate option from the 'Name' look-up and 'OK' to confirm. To save the entry the WC selects 'Save and close' from the toolbar menu.

Establishing any other relevant circumstances

The WC establishes any other relevant circumstances which could affect the claimant's work-related requirements, for example:

- criminal convictions
- homelessness
- drug or alcohol dependency
- victim of domestic violence
- voluntary work or paid work being undertaken

This is not a complete list.

The WC saves the record.

Referrals to providers

If the claimant is already a Work Programme participant the WC sends a Work Programme (WP) change of circumstances form (WP07b) to the provider on the same day, to notify them of the new claim to Universal Credit. See [Notifications of change of circumstances for a claimant on the Work Programme, Mandatory Work Activity or Work Choice](#).

If the claimant has been released from prison immediately prior to the claim the WC would consider referring the claimant to a provider for support in finding work, see [Work-related support](#).

The WC determines if early entry to the WP is appropriate. See [Identifying optional early access and voluntary eligibility to the Work Programme](#).

If the claimant is 18 years of age the WC determines if the claimant is not in employment, education or training (NEET) see [Not in employment, education or training](#).

If a task has been received in relation to Community Work Placement (CWP) on WSP, the WC will select 'activities' to view the task and consider the re-referral or signposting back to CWP. (there will be an option to check for 'active' and 'inactive' tasks within 'activities'). See [Community Work Placement signpost or re-referral](#).

Part-time work

If the claimant is a part-time worker, the WC selects 'Yes' in the 'Currently undertaking part-time work' field. This displays the following fields:

- variable hours

- total hours per week
- part-time work: active part-time working

If the part-time work hours are variable, the WC selects 'Yes' in the 'Variable hours' field. A mandatory 'Work pattern' field will appear which must be completed with details of the claimant's working pattern.

The WC selects 'Active part-time working' and then the 'Add new part-time work' option from the toolbar menu. This opens the Part-time work new screen and the WC completes the following mandatory fields:

- job title
- hours per week
- start date

The 'End date' field is only completed when the part-time work has ended.

Establishing the intervention regime

The WC determines how they will continue to support the claimant and checks that they are continuing to take the necessary steps to move them into work.

This consists of a tailored level of WC contact (for example by telephone, electronically, or face-to-face) and regular face-to-face Work Search Reviews (at least fortnightly) to check progress and that a claimant is meeting their requirements.

When setting the timing and frequency of these contacts, the claimant's personal circumstances must be taken into consideration. Claimants in need of additional support are likely to be seen more often and for longer than those claimants more capable of looking for and finding work themselves.

This section displays the following fields:

- frequency
- intervention slot
- channel
- next intervention
- excused interventions: active excused interventions

The WC selects the frequency of interventions in the 'Intervention slot' field which automatically populates with the day and time of the claimant's interventions.

At least 50% of Universal Credit claimants will receive the additional support of weekly Work Search Reviews which will be set at the discretion of the Work Coach. At each Work Search Review, consideration is given to whether Weekly WSR remains appropriate or whether the claimant is to revert to fortnightly Jobsearch/Work Search Reviews, provided the 50% ratio is maintained overall

In the 'Channel' field, the WC selects the method by which the claimant will have their interventions conducted and this automatically populates the 'Next intervention' field with the next intervention date.

It is important the claimant understands that if they fail to attend an appointment or any other work-related requirements without good reason, their Universal Credit payments will be cut. These cuts are known as sanctions.

The WC asks the claimant to read the sanctions information in their Claimant Commitment and Commitment Pack and explain it to them. The WC should explain:

- the length and amount of the sanction that may apply in relation to each requirement, and that sanctions may be longer for each successive failure
- that if the claimant's actions at any time lead the Department for Work and Pensions to question their on-going entitlement to Universal Credit, suspension and ultimately termination action may be taken (for example, if the claimant doesn't respond to requests for information)

Creating a Claimant Commitment

The WC creates a Claimant Commitment. If the claimant is being re-referred or signposted back to CWP, this must be included in the Claimant Commitment. See [Recording information to create tailored claimant commitment](#).

If the claimant is a Work Programme participant the WC creates a non WSP Claimant Commitment, see [Creating a non WSP Claimant Commitment](#).

Joint claimants

The WC explains that all sanctions are applied on an individual basis. This will affect the overall amount of Universal Credit the claimant and their partner receive. If a sanction is applied, separate notifications will be sent to both the claimant and their partner.

Next steps

If the claimant has indicated that they left their last employment due to misconduct or leaving voluntarily, the WC issues [UC84 FM Loss of Paid Work](#) located in [Supporting Documents for the Decision Making and Appeals process](#).

If the claimant has had a loss of pay they will have to explain the reasons why.

Claimants, who permanently reduce their pay voluntarily without good reason, or as a result of misconduct, may be subject to a sanction. The WC issues [UC84a FM Loss of Pay](#) located in [Supporting Documents for the Decision Making and Appeals process](#).

The WC issues the relevant form for the claimant to complete and explains their importance, including the possible sanction consequences if the decision maker (DM) decides that a sanction applies. The WC gives the claimant the option to complete the form whilst in the Universal Credit office or to return to the Mail Opening Unit (for example, if they need to supply further information, require help with the forms or wish to consider the matter further).

If the claimant wishes to post the forms, the WC sets the date by which they must be returned. This is normally 7 days but the WC can consider extending this, for example if the claimant has complex needs. If the forms aren't returned by the due date, the decision will be made only on the information held. See [Handling sanction referrals and notifications](#).

The WC explains the following to the claimant:

- their information will be passed to a DM who will decide if the reason they have given is acceptable
- a sanction will be applied if they reduce their pay voluntarily without good reason or as a result of misconduct.
- the DM will notify the claimant in writing once the decision has been made
- their Universal Credit claim will continue to be processed and they will be notified if their payments will be cut by a sanction

Setting a task for quarterly Work Search Interview

The WC sets a task for 11 weeks from initial date of claim for the 1st quarterly review to be conducted at week 13. This task is set to mature at week 11 to prompt the WC to contact the claimant and book the appointment on Work Services Platform.

To set a WSP task the WC will:

1. Task: Action required.
2. Subject header: Quarterly WSI required.
3. Body: Quarterly WSI due, day/month/year.
4. Maturity: 2 weeks before WSI date.
5. Audience: Owning WC.
6. Due date (this is 11 weeks from initial date of claim), the WC will have already established the date of claim as part of the interview.

Notes from the Interview

To add a new note the WC selects 'Add a new note' and then 'Save' from the toolbar menu.

Following the initial Work Search Interview

The WC sets work-related requirements and explains the consequences of failing to meet them.

If the claimant needs to be re-referred back to CWP the WC books the next available appointment to complete this action.

The claimant is expected to accept the Claimant Commitment and will be issued with the Commitment Pack. In WSP, the WC selects the claimant's 'General' section and then 'Yes' from the 'Verified' drop-down list.

If the claimant has a partner and has placed restrictions on their availability, the WC should compare the separate Claimant Commitments to determine if there are any duplications or discrepancies that warrant further investigation.

Recording information to create a tailored Claimant Commitment including a written Welsh language preference

Recording information on the Work Services Platform to create a tailored Claimant Commitment and how to create a Claimant Commitment for a claimant with a written Welsh language preference

In order to create a tailored [Claimant Commitment](#), the following data items must be considered within the [claimant](#) record during the Work Search Interview. These are (in the main) ordered as they appear on the claimant record and are not necessarily in business process order. If these items are not considered then the Claimant Commitment will not be complete.

The table below shows which types of Claimant Commitment can be generated directly from [Work Services Platform](#) and which must be populated by copying and pasting information from WSP into a separate, non-WSP Claimant Commitment template. See '[Creating a Non-WSP Claimant Commitment](#)'.

SUB TYPE	DESCRIPTOR	CONDITIONALITY	WSP/Non-WSP REGIME
4a	Work Preparation requirements	Work Preparation	Non-WSP Manual Work Prep Commitment Pack also needed
3b,3c,3d,3e	WFI only	WFI	Non-WSP Manual Claimant Commitment WFI Commitment Pack also needed
1a,2a,2b,2c,2d,3a	Not working - no requirements	NWRR	Non-WSP Manual Claimant Commitment No Commitment Pack required
7a,7b	Working enough, earning above conditionality earnings	NWRR	Non-WSP Manual Claimant Commitment

	threshold - no requirements		No Commitment Pack required
5c,6a,6b,6d	Not working enough/not working - earning above admin threshold or not working but in a household with earnings above the admin threshold	AWRR -Light touch/IW pilots	Non-WSP Manual Claimant Commitment AWRR Commitment Pack where working with a WSC also needed
6e	Self employed start up	AWRR	Non-WSP Manual Claimant Commitment Self-employment start-up Commitment Pack also needed
7c	Self employed MIF	NWRR	Non-WSP Manual Claimant Commitment No Commitment Pack required
5a,6c	U18s	AWRR	Non-WSP Manual Claimant Commitment Under 18 Commitment Pack also needed

5b	JSA(C)	AWRR	Non-WSP Manual Claimant Commitment JSA(C) Commitment Pack also needed
5a,6c	Not working/not working enough - full conditionality	AWRR	WSP generated by WSP using information in the claimant record. AWRR Commitment Pack also needed
5a,6c	Not working/not working enough - work search/availability suspended	AWRR	WSP generated by WSP using information in the claimant record

Job Goals

Select 'Job Goals' from the 'Information' menu on the claimant record.

Permitted Period

The 'Permitted Period Applicable' checkbox defaults to 'No'.

If a permitted period is applicable to a [Claimant](#) the 'Permitted Period Applicable' checkbox must be updated to 'Yes' (To do this, you must ensure the 'Claim Date' within the 'Claim' menu is recorded). This updates the 'Permitted Period Date' to a date 13 weeks from the date of claim (the maximum length of a permitted period is 13 weeks). The 'Permitted Period Date' can be amended to an earlier date.

If 'Permitted Period Applicable' is set to 'Yes', at least one Job Goal must be entered.

Job Goals

To add a Job Goal, highlight the 'Active Job Goals' area and select the 'Add New Job Goal' icon on the task bar. This opens up the 'Job Goal' screen where you can enter appropriate information, but you must enter the:

- Job Title or Type (this wording will appear on the [Claimant Commitment](#))
- Rate of Pay (this wording will appear on the Claimant Commitment')
- Payment Frequency (select from drop down list)

If only one Job Goal is recorded, the 'Applies to Claimant Commitment during Permitted Period' tick box must be selected (where the claimant is in their Permitted Period). 'Save & Close' once recorded.

If more than one Job Goal is recorded, the 'Applies to Claimant Commitment during Permitted Period' tick box must be selected for only one of these jobs (where the claimant is in their Permitted Period). 'Save & Close' each Job Goal once recorded.

If a claimant wishes to change their Job Goal during their permitted period, 'Applies to Claimant Commitment during Permitted Period' must be unset for the previous Job Goal before setting 'Applies to Claimant Commitment during Permitted Period' for the new Job Goal. Save and Close.

A system task is created 7 days before the permitted period review date is due to end, where job goals should be reviewed. Once the review date is reached, 'Permitted Period Applicable' radio button must be updated to 'No' and a new Claimant Commitment considered.

Availability

Select 'Availability' from the 'Information' menu on the [Claimant](#) record.

'Available For Work' must be updated from 'Not Set' to 'Yes' to produce a tailored [Claimant Commitment](#).

'Restrict Claimants Availability?' must be updated from 'Not Set' to 'No' or 'Yes' (once 'Available For Work' is set to 'Yes').

Set to 'No' if claimant has no restrictions on when they are available for work.

Set to 'Yes' if the claimant has placed restrictions on their availability to work. If set to 'Yes', the 'Active Availability for Work' area must be highlighted (by selecting) and the claimants availability recorded for each day of the week. Select 'Add New Availability For Work' icon to open the 'Availability For Work' screen. The following must be completed on this screen:

- Day (select from drop down)
- Start Time (select time from drop down)
- End Time (select time from drop down)
- Hours Available (select from drop down)

Note: Claimant may not be available for the entire time between 'Start Time' and 'End Time'.
'Save & Close' after details for each day are recorded.

'Total Available Hours Per Week' must be entered (enter a whole number between 1 and 100).
Enter the total number of hours per week the claimant is available for work.

The 'Availability for Interview' drop down must be updated to 'Immediately' or 'Within 48 Hours' as appropriate.

'Travel Time in Minutes' defaults to 90, but should be amended using the drop down if necessary (i.e. if 90 minutes travelling time each way is not appropriate).

The 'Available to Start Work' drop down must be updated to one of the following:

- Immediately
- Within 7 days
- Within one month
- From - If 'From' is selected, the 'Available to Start Work Date' field appears and must be completed

Work Search Activities

'Work Search Hours Per Week' defaults to 35, but can be amended using the drop down as necessary (values are 1 – 35). Note: this needs to be the total number of hours the claimant is expected to spend each week looking and preparing for work.

Part Time Work Details

If the [Claimant](#) is currently working part time, the 'Currently Undertaking Part Time Work' field should be set to 'Yes'. Complete the additional fields that appear as appropriate (but these additional fields do not affect the [Claimant Commitment](#)).

Work Search Activities

You must record 'Work Search Activities' (by selecting the item from the 'Common' menu) to produce a tailored Claimant Commitment. Select 'Add New Work Search Activity' icon from the toolbar to open the 'Work Search Activity' screen. Relevant text should be entered in the 'Work Search Activity' field.

The 'Frequency' must be selected from the drop down values of:

- Daily
- Weekly
- 2 times a week
- 3 times a week
- 4 times a week
- 5 times a week
- 6 times a week

Select 'Save & Close' to save the activity. If more work search activities are appropriate, the adviser selects 'Add New Work Search Activity' and adds new activities as appropriate. All 'Work Search Activities' will appear in section 1 of the [Claimant Commitment](#).

Extra consideration needs to be given to the wording entered in each 'Work Search Activity' field as this wording will display in the Claimant Commitment.

Work Preparation Activities

If appropriate, 'Work Preparation Activities' should be recorded (by selecting the item from the 'Common' menu). To add a new Work Preparation Activity, select the 'Add New Work Preparation Action' icon from the toolbar to open the 'Work Preparation Action' screen.

Relevant text should be entered in the 'Specific Action' field. **Extra consideration needs to be given to the wording entered in each 'Specific Action' field as this wording will display in the Claimant Commitment.**

The 'Mandatory Work Activity' radio buttons are by default set to 'No' and must only be used when referring to the provision called 'Mandatory Work Activity', this is provider led with its own sanctions. It must not be set when specifying any other Work Preparation Activity. Failure to comply will result in the [Claimant Commitment](#) being incorrect in law and the linking of incorrect sanctions.

The 'By Date' and 'Review Date' must be completed if a 'Specific Action' is recorded. Leaving the 'Completed' radio button set to 'No' means the 'Specific Action' will appear in section 2 of the Claimant Commitment.

If the [Claimant](#) has completed the 'Specific Action' recorded, update the 'Completed' radio button to 'Yes'. Setting this to 'Yes' removes this 'Specific Action' from the Claimant Commitment when next created. All 'Specific Action's that are not marked as 'Completed' will display in the Claimant Commitment.

Any 'Specific Action's that have 'Mandatory Work Activity?' set to 'Yes' will display with the text 'Mandatory Work Activity:' before the 'Specific Action' text in section 2 of the Claimant Commitment. 'Save & Close' as appropriate.

Other Work Related Activities

If appropriate, 'Other Work Related Activities' should be recorded (by selecting the item from the 'Common' menu). To add a new Other Work Related Activity, select the 'Add New Other Work Related Action' icon from the toolbar to open the 'Other Work Related Action' screen.

Relevant text should be entered in the 'Specific Activity' field. Activities recorded in this section are voluntary. Voluntary activities are not subject to sanction consideration should the claimant choose not to do them. Referrals to voluntary provision should be recorded here if they fall within this category.

The 'By Date' and 'Review Date' must be completed if a 'Specific Activity' is recorded. Leaving the 'Completed' radio button set to 'No' means the 'Specific Action' will appear in section 3 of the [Claimant Commitment](#).

If the claimant has completed the 'Specific Activity' recorded, update the 'Completed' radio button to 'Yes'. Setting this to 'Yes' removes this 'Specific Activity' from the Claimant Commitment when next created. All 'Specific Activity's that are not marked as 'Completed' will display in section 3 of the Claimant Commitment. 'Save & Close' as appropriate.

To move back to the claimant record, select the '[Claimant](#)' tab above toolbar.

Create Claimant Commitment

Select the 'Create [Claimant Commitment](#)' icon on the toolbar to open the '[Claimant](#) Commitment Sanction' screen. Select the 'Sanction Data' look up. One of the following must be selected:

- Joint clmts both 18 -24 – both sanctioned
- Joint clmts both 18 -24 - one sanctioned
- Joint clmts one or both 25 or over – both sanctioned
- Joint clmts one or both 25 or over - one sanctioned
- single 18-24
- Single 25 or over

Select 'Next'. Select 'Finish'. An accurate tailored Claimant Commitment can now be Previewed or Printed.

Creating a Claimant Commitment for a new claimant with a written Welsh language preference

The process an agent follows to create a [Claimant Commitment](#) for a claimant with a written Welsh language preference so that they can meet the legal requirements for claimants with a Welsh language preference.

The agent:

1. Accesses the AWRR group Claimant Commitment (Welsh). This will be accessed via the DWP Welsh Language Unit (WLU) shared folder.
2. Creates AWRR group Claimant Commitment (Welsh) with details from the printed English AWRR group Claimant Commitment. Templates held in the shared folder will have been translated from English into Welsh.
3. Prints two copies of the completed AWRR group Claimant Commitment (Welsh).
4. Selects 'General' menu.
5. Selects 'Notes'.
6. Selects 'Add New Note' hyperlink.
7. Creates a Claimant 'Commitment pack' note.
8. Completes a Commitment Pack (Welsh) if Claimant has requested written Welsh language preference. Commitment Pack (Welsh) can be accessed via the DWP Welsh Language Unit (WLU) shared folder.
9. Selects 'Save' from the ribbon.
10. Selects the look up from the 'Commitment Status' field. See [Accepting Claimant Commitment](#).
11. Selects the correct status for the Claimant Commitment from the list.
12. Selects 'Ok'.
13. Selects 'Save & Close' from the ribbon.

Setting requirements – Taking part in work preparation activities

Setting the requirements for claimant's work-preparation activities

The work coach (WC) reviews the [Claimant Commitment](#) in conversation with the [claimant](#).

Claimant is carrying out work-preparation activities

The WC or the claimant identifies that work preparation activities will help the claimant move into work.

The WC considers if the claimant's work search, work availability or job interview requirements should continue to apply whilst the claimant is undertaking [work-preparation activities](#). The WC considers what work-related requirements are reasonable and supports the claimant into work.

Work preparation activities could include:

- work experience
- skills assessment
- improving personal presentation
- [Universal Credit](#) training provision

This list is not exhaustive and can relate to anything that will improve the claimant's employment prospects.

The WC considers the claimant's individual circumstances and the level of attendance at work-preparation activities when deciding what level of work-related requirements should be set on a continuing basis.

The WC may continue to set the claimant's work related requirements regardless of whether they or the claimant has identified the work-preparation activity. The claimant can arrange voluntary work-preparation for themselves but the WC must agree that this will enhance the claimant's prospects of obtaining paid work.

The WC can set all or any of the following requirements:

- work search requirements
- work availability requirements
- job interview requirements
- other work preparation requirements

The WC considers reducing the claimant's current number of hours work search by the number of hours engaged in work preparation.

If the work-preparation activity is voluntary work that the WC has accepted, the claimant's number of hours work search cannot be reduced by more than 50%. The WC may set these or other work-preparation activities as part of the claimant's Claimant Commitment.

Work-preparation activities could include:

- work experience
- skills assessment
- proving personal presentation
- Universal Credit training provision

And can relate to anything that will improve the claimants employment prospects.

Determining the claimant's current situation

The WC views the claimant's current Claimant Commitment on [Work Services Platform \(WSP\)](#), if a clerical Claimant Commitment has been issued this will be on the Document Repository System (DRS). The WC considers if the work-related requirements detailed on the Claimant Commitment are reasonable and supports the work preparation activity.

The WC determines if there are any Work Search Reviews (WSR) or Work Search Interviews (WSI) scheduled which may need to be cancelled or rescheduled due to the claimant taking part in work preparation activity.

Claimant's work-related requirements are temporarily switched off

If the WC decides to temporarily switch off the claimant's work-related requirements any outstanding appointments will be cancelled and the claimant is informed. See [Switching off requirements WSP action](#).

The WC advises the claimant that this applies until the work preparation activity is completed.

Work-Related and Work Search Interviews to continue in the Universal Credit outlet.

The WC sets the maximum requirements which the claimant can reasonably be expected to do which will support them into work or towards work.

Work-Related and Work Search Interviews to continue in the Universal Credit outlet

A work related intervention is a regular interview with the assistant work coach when a claimant attends and supplies their work search. The regime (how often a claimant attends the intervention) is set by the WC. A work related interview is a more in-depth interview with the WC.

The WC sets the maximum requirements which the claimant can reasonably be expected to do which will support them into work or towards work.

Future work-related intervention to be conducted by telephone

The WC may decide that the claimants WRIs should be conducted by telephone if the claimant's work-preparation activity, location and the location of the Universal Credit outlet means that this is the most practical and reasonable. See [Claimants who live in remote areas](#).

This enables the WC to maintain contact and review work-related requirements during telephone interviews which will be booked on WSP.

Action to take where face to face interviews are to continue or where interviews are to be conducted by telephone.

If the next scheduled appointment is not booked within the next week, the WC

re-arranges this so that it reflects the claimant's work-preparation activities. See [Booking appointments](#).

The WC considers whether the next appointment needs to be rescheduled due to the ongoing work-preparation activity.

Reviewing the Claimant Commitment

The WC needs to create a new Claimant Commitment and takes into account the number of hours of the work-preparation activity comparing this to the number of available hours on the claimant's current Claimant Commitment.

Work Preparation activity hours are more or equal to availability hours

If the claimant's work-preparation activity hours are equal to or more than the claimant's available hours the WC:

- tailors the Claimant Commitment to reflect what work-preparation activities the claimant is undertaking, for example 'I will attend the training course for the required hours on the required days'

- considers if provision is equal to or more than the claimant's weekly hours of work search and work preparation, nil hours must be recorded on the Claimant Commitment (the claimant's work search and work-preparation activity is to attend the provision)

Work preparation activity hours are less than availability hours

If the claimant's work-preparation activity hours are less than the claimant's available hours the WC:

- tailors the Claimant Commitment to reflect work-preparation activities the claimant is under taking for, example 'I will attend the training course for the required hours on the required days. I will also undertake xxxx hours of work search and work-preparation activity'
- considers if provision is less than the claimant's weekly hours of work search and work-preparation - the balance of hours must be recorded on the Claimant Commitment (for example, claimant's current work search and work-preparation requirement is 30 hours, provision is 20 hours so claimant's work search and work preparation activity is 10 hours per week)

Creating Work Services Platform task

The WC creates a [WSP](#) task to schedule a WRI to review the Claimant Commitment when the work-preparation activities end.

The task is set so that the WC can review the effect that the work-preparation activity has had on the claimant's ability to return to work and to review the claimant's work-related requirements.

Updating Work Services Platform notes

The WC updates WSP general 'Notes' with the reasons for the WC decision on the claimant's work-related requirements and that the claimant has been advised this will remain for the period of work preparation activity.

Setting work related requirements

How to set work related requirements for a claimant during interview

During every work search interview, the Work Services Coach (WSC) identifies the things that affect the type of work a claimant is expected to look for and accept if offered. The WSC establishes the type, location, hours and pattern of work a claimant is expected to look for and be available for. Claimants are normally expected to look for any work that they are capable of doing that pays the national minimum wage(or above) and that is within 90 minutes travelling distance from their home. Claimants are normally expected to look for full time work.

Claimants in the all work related requirements group must normally be available to attend an interview and take up a job immediately.

Claimant's particular personal circumstances will determine the actual requirements set.

A full diagnosis of the claimant's circumstances and capacity for work helps determine:

- realistic job requirements
- required hours of availability
- availability for interview / to start work
- travel to work time
- work search requirements
- work preparation requirements
- any other work related activities

These should be reviewed and updated throughout the claim.

Claimants must understand:

- their goal will be to get paid work, more work or better paid work as quickly as possible
- they will be expected to take up a full time job.
We will not require any claimant to take employment which requires them to work for more hours than the European Working Time Directive which is up to 48 hours per week
- they should undertake work search and work preparation activity for up to a maximum of 35

hours a week or the same number of hours they would normally be available for work.

- the work search and work preparation activities must give them the best prospects of finding work quickly
- if without good reason they have not carried out their work related requirements, their UC payments will be cut. These cuts are known as sanctions. The information about sanctions in the Claimant Commitment and the Commitment Pack should be shown to the claimant and explained to them

Job requirements

Where the claimant does not have a permitted period they are required to look for and take any job that they are capable of doing that pays the National Minimum Wage or above. However it can be helpful to focus effective work search for the claimant to identify a job or jobs that they are most suited to or most capable of doing.

Looking for any job and accepting the first job offered, will help the claimant back into work as quickly as possible. Once the claimant is in paid work they can continue to look for their preferred job.

All elements of the claimant's job requirement must be realistic and achievable for each type of work the following should be explored:

- Capability for work. Does the claimant have the relevant qualifications, experience, skills, etc
- Capacity for work. For example are there any health or social issues or caring responsibilities that might make it difficult to find, obtain and retain the job in question
- Wage expectations. For example, does the job requirement pay the wages that the claimant is looking for and does the claimant understand how much the National Minimum Wage is
- The local labour market. Consideration must be given to what jobs are available within that area. If the work the claimant is looking for is not

available within the claimant's travel to work area, the job requirement is not realistic

Recording job requirement

The claimant's agreed job requirement(s) are recorded on the 'Job Goals' section of the claimant's record.

To input job goals for the claimant, the 'Active Job Goals' box is selected on the footer bar, then 'Add New Job Goal' is selected from the toolbar menu this opens the 'Job Goal' screen. The following fields are selected and completed:

- Job Title or Type (mandatory free text box)
- Claimant (already populated with claimant's name)
- Rate of Pay
- Payment Frequency
- Minimum Hours Per Week
- Applies to Claimant Commitment during Permitted Period

The entry is saved by selecting 'Save & Close' from the toolbar menu. The job goal(s) will then show in the 'Active Job Goals' box.

Permitted period

Where a claimant has a strong work history the WSC can allow a claimant to limit their work related requirements to look for work relating to a particular type of job and salary that they have recent experience of. This limitation can apply for any period up to a maximum of 3 months from the date they claimed Universal Credit or 3 months from the date they ceased work which paid above the conditionality earnings threshold, whichever is the later. This is known as a 'permitted period'. The WSC must be satisfied that the claimant has reasonable prospects of getting a job that fits this limitation before agreeing it. After this period, they will be required to look for full time work at the national minimum wage.

- Recording a Permitted Period
- To record a Permitted Period:
- Select Job Goals
- Select 'Yes' for Permitted Period
- Input the Job Title or Type
- Select the Job Title or Type to get the pay rate

Availability

After gathering all the relevant information regarding the claimant's circumstances, the number of hours the claimant is required to be available for work is determined.

Consideration must be given to the claimant's circumstances, to identify whether any limitations on their hours or pattern of availability should be applied.

A limitation on hours or pattern of availability may apply where a claimant:

- has a health condition (see Diagnosing Claimant Capability and Circumstances)
- has caring responsibilities (see Diagnosing Claimant Capability and Circumstances)
- is engaging in treatment for drug and/or alcohol dependency
- has sincerely held religious beliefs
- is participating in agreed work preparation activities

provided that the claimant is available for paid work for as many hours as the limitation allows.

The claimant's hours of availability are set by the WSC, taking into account their circumstances. The claimant must usually have reasonable prospects of finding paid work, more work or better paid work.

Recording availability

The claimant's availability for work and any agreed restrictions are recorded on the 'Availability' section of the claimant's record.

When recording the claimant's availability the following fields will be presented:

- Available For Work
- Work Search Hours Per Week
- Currently Undertaking Part Time Work

If the claimant is available for work 'Yes' is selected from the 'Available For Work' drop-down menu.

The 'Active Availability For Work' box on the footer bar is selected, and then the 'Add New Availability For Work' is selected from the toolbar menu. This opens the 'Availability For Work' screen. The following fields are selected and completed:

- Day (Monday to Sunday)
- Start Time (30 minute time slots from 00:00 to 23:30)
- End Time (30 minute time slots from 00:00 to 23:30)

The entry is saved by selecting 'Save & Close' from the toolbar menu.

The 'Total available Hours Per Week' field must be completed showing the claimant's hours of availability.

The 'Restrict Claimant's Availability' field is completed to show if the claimant is restricting their availability.

If the claimant is restricting their availability the reason(s) are recorded in the 'Notes On Availability For Work' field.

Availability to start work and attend a job interview

Claimants in the All Work-related Requirement Conditionality Group must be willing and able to start work and attend a job interview immediately unless one of the following circumstances apply.

For claimants where the WSC is satisfied that they need a longer period because they:

Are undertaking voluntary work

Where the WSC is satisfied that the claimant needs a longer period because they are undertaking voluntary work, WSCs can agree that the claimant is able to take up employment on being given up to one week's notice and / or attend a job interview with up to 48 hours notice.

Have caring responsibilities

Where the WSC is satisfied that the claimant needs a longer period because they are a nominated responsible carer or relevant carer for a child or disabled person, WSCs can agree that the claimant is able to take up employment on being given up to one month's notice and / or attend a job interview with 48 hours notice.

Are employed under a contract of service

Claimants who are required to give notice must be willing and able to take up employment immediately following the statutory or contracted period of notice they are required to give their employer to end the contract of employment and attend a job interview with 48 hours notice.

Recording Availability to start work and attend a job interview

The claimant's availability to start work and attend a job interview is recorded on the 'Availability' section of the claimant's record.

The claimant's availability to attend an interview is recorded by selecting the drop-down menu in the 'Availability For Interview' field and selecting either:

- Immediately
- Within 48 hours

The claimant's availability to start work is recorded by selecting the drop-down menu in the 'Available To Start Work' and selecting either:

- Immediately
- Within 7 days
- Within one month
- From

If 'From' is selected, the 'Available To Start Work Date' field will appear. The earliest possible date by which the claimant can start work is recorded from information provided by the claimant. This option is used when the claimant is not available to start work within one month. & For example, if the claimant has broken a limb and the cast is to be removed on a specific date. Where 'From' is used a specific task should be set to review this or a Work Search Interview booked to discuss further and consider the effect in the Claimant Commitment.

Travel to work time

Claimants must be willing to travel 90 minutes each way to work, by a route and means of transport appropriate to their circumstances (for example, car for some, public transport for others, walking etc). Limitations can be agreed due to health conditions or caring responsibilities where it means that a shorter distance is necessary.

The claimant's travel to work time is recorded on the 'Availability' section of the claimant's record.

The claimant's travel to work time is recorded by selecting the drop-down menu in the 'Travel Time In Minutes' field and selecting the appropriate time. This will default to 90 minutes but can be changed if limitations have been agreed.

Setting work preparation and work search requirements to give claimants the best prospects of finding work

In setting requirements, the WSC will set out a detailed plan of action, articulating the steps a claimant must take to give themselves the best prospects of getting paid work quickly.

It is important the claimant understands that if they fail without good reason complete a work preparation, work search or interview requirement then their Universal Credit payments will be cut. These cuts are known as sanctions. The WSC should ask the claimant to read the sanctions information in their claimant commitment and commitment pack and explain it to them. The WSC should explain the length and amount of the sanction that may apply in relation to each requirement and that sanctions may be longer for each successive failure.

A claimant will be expected to undertake the same number of hours of work search and work preparation activity as they are available for work up to a maximum of 35 hours a week).

A WSC will mandate any work preparation activity that the WSC thinks will make it more likely that the claimant will obtain paid work (or more paid work or better-paid work).

Claimants must take all reasonable actions to get paid work. They must usually engage in work search and work preparation activity for the same number of hours as they are available for work up to a maximum of 35 hours a week. For example, if they are expected to be available to work for 30 hours per week, they must spend at least 30 hours each week on their work search and work preparation requirements.

WSCs must set work search and work preparation requirements that meet this expectation, taking into account the claimant's personal circumstances. These should be the most effective activities which, when undertaken, give the claimant the best possible chance of getting paid work quickly.

Looking for work often and in the right way is critical in terms of securing employment quickly. Claimants who undertake work search actively, effectively and persistently usually get work more quickly than would otherwise be the case. It is important when setting work search and work preparation requirements, to consider the following 10 factors:

- **Self Perception** – the claimant believes that they can work, find specific jobs, has the capability to do those jobs, and is confident of being able to gain and keep employment
- **Specific Job Requirement** – the claimant knows their job requirements

- **Local Labour Market** – that specific work is available in the local market
- **Knowledge Skills and Experience** – the claimant has the knowledge, skills and experience that match their job requirements
- **Commitment to undertake Work Search** – the claimant is committed to carry out effective and sustained work search
- **Resources for Work Search** – the claimant knows how to access the resources required to undertake sustained work search
- **Demonstrating Capability for a Specific Job** – the claimant is able to demonstrate their capability effectively to employers
- **Presenting themselves to an Employer** – the claimant is able to present themselves effectively to potential employers
- **Managing Personal Circumstances** – the claimant is able to successfully manage, anything that makes it harder to get and keep paid work
- **Keeping a job** – the claimant could keep a job offered by an employer

And ensure that steps are taken to address anything that makes it harder for the claimant to get and keep paid work.

The claimant's work search requirements and work preparation requirements must be **SMART**. That is:

- **Specific** – it must state the claimant's precise job requirements and the specific activity they will take to give them the best chance of finding and securing a job. For example, generic job descriptions such as 'Driver' should be avoided and more specific terms such as 'bus driver', 'HGV driver' or 'van driver' used
- **Measurable** – for work search activities to be undertaken regularly, how many and how often must be specified

- **Achievable** – any activities set must be achievable. Activities that are clearly beyond the claimant's capabilities or that are simply unreasonable should not be included
- **Realistic** – job requirements and work related requirements must be realistic, taking into account the claimant's skills, experience, capabilities, etc. and the local labour market
- **Time bound** – activities should be time bound and will be reviewed at appropriate points. Activities may be regular (weekly) and reviewed within Work Search Reviews, or be one-off, time bound and reviewed within Work Search Interviews or Work Search Reviews

Work preparation requirements

Work preparation requirements are those specific activities that a claimant must take for the purpose of making it more likely in the opinion of the WSC that the claimant will obtain paid work (or more paid work or better-paid work).

These may include, for example:

- attending a skills assessment
- improving personal presentation
- taking part in training
- taking part in programmes or provision
- undertaking work experience or a work placement
- developing a business plan

This is not an exhaustive list. These requirements must be SMART.

Although the requirement to register and use Universal Jobmatch is entered in the Work Preparation Requirements, it is a work search requirement.

If a claimant fails to comply with a Work Preparation activity this attracts a low level sanction. A low level sanction has two elements :

- an open-ended period equal to the number of days from the date of failure until the day before

the requirement or alternative requirement is met or lifted, followed by

- a fixed period of between 7 and 28 days (dependent on whether there are any previous failures in the 365 days before the current failure)

When setting a work preparation requirement the WSC must explain that if the claimant fails to do that activity Universal Credit will be cut for a period equal to the number of days between the date of failure until they do so or until they undertake an alternative activity decided by the WSC. Their payments will then be cut for a further fixed period of up to 28 days (depending on how many requirements they failed to meet and when).

When setting the Work Preparation requirement the WSC must tell the claimant and record what the claimant must do if they fail to meet the requirement on time. Where the requirement is an on-going task for example, create a CV by a set date and if the claimant does not do this, their UC payments may be cut for the number of days from the failure date until they meet the requirement (ie they create a CV).

Where the requirement set is time-limited e.g. attend a forklift truck driving course on 8th March, once 8th March has passed the claimant cannot meet the requirement.

When setting a requirement the WSC must consider and tell the claimant what they must do if they fail to undertake the original requirement. This (alternative requirement) must also be recorded on the claimant record so that it is noted on the Claimant Commitment.

Work preparation requirements (and specific work search requirements) should be recorded on the claimant commitment as follows:

Section 2: Specific actions I will take	By	Review
Fully take part in a forklift truck training course	15th June	17th June
If without good reason I don't do this, my Universal Credit payments will be cut by (amount) for each day until (I call my WSC to arrange a new course) My payments will then be cut by (amount) a day for a further period of up to 28 days.	As soon as possible after 15th June	

I will create a profile and public CV within Universal Jobmatch by the 15th June.	15th June	17th June
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If without good reason I don't do this, my Universal Credit payments will be cut by (amount) for each day until I have done so. My payments will then be cut by (amount) a day for a further period of up to 28 days.	As soon as possible after 15th June
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Bring my CV to my appointment on 17th June	17th June	17th June
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If without good reason I don't do this, my Universal Credit payments will be cut by (amount) for each day until I bring my CV to this office. My payments will then be cut by (amount) a day for a further period of up to 28 days.	As soon as possible after 17th June
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In some circumstances the WSC may also agree that the claimant should undertake a voluntary Work Preparation activity. There is no sanction if the claimant does not do this activity. However, if a claimant fails to do the voluntary activity they must make up the extra time in their work search. For example, if the claimant agrees to do 5 hours of voluntary work preparation activity (such as attending their local Work Club for 5 hours a week), this may be deducted from the amount of time they are expected to undertake Work Search (see Setting Work Search Activities below). If the claimant does not do their voluntary activity in a particular week they need to make up their Expected Hours of work search. The WSC must explain this to the claimant.

Recording Work Preparation Activities

The claimant's Work Preparation requirements are recorded on the 'Work Preparation Activities' section of the claimant's record.

To input a new Work Preparation Action, the 'Add New Work Preparation Action' is selected from the toolbar.

The WSC completes the 'Specific Action' field and selects 'Yes' or 'No' for 'Mandatory Work Activity'. This field by default is set to 'No' and must only be used when referring to the provision called 'Mandatory Work Activity', this is provider led with its own sanctions. It must not be checked when specifying any other Work Preparation Activity. Failure to comply will result in the Claimant Commitment incorrect in law and linking of incorrect sanctions.

The WSC inputs the dates the activity is to be completed and reviewed by.

If there are more work preparation activities to be considered, the WSC selects 'Save & New' and adds a new activity.

If the Work Preparation Activity is to be completed before the next Work Search Review, set a task to follow up the agreed action. See 'Setting a task on the Work Services Platform'.

The details of the Work Preparation Action are recorded and the entry is saved by selecting 'Save & Close' from the toolbar menu. The Work Preparation Action will then show in the 'Work Preparation Actions' box.

Voluntary Work Preparation activities are recorded on the 'Other Work Related Activities' section of the claimant's record.

Requiring a claimant to apply for a specific vacancy

A WSC can require a claimant to apply for a specific vacancy that they are capable of doing by recording this as Work Preparation activity. The WSC will need to include all of the information that the claimant will require to identify the vacancy. Although this is recorded in the Work Preparation Activities section of the claimant record it attracts a high level sanction.

If a WSC requires the claimant to apply for a specific vacancy on Universal Jobmatch, the following wording must be included in the Claimant Commitment: I will apply for any jobs that my adviser tells me to apply for, including any saved by my adviser in the 'Saved Jobs' section of my Universal Jobmatch account.

Setting regular Work Search Activities

Work Search Activities are those that the claimant is expected to undertake regularly. The claimant must take all reasonable action for the purpose of obtaining paid work. The WSC will set work search activities such that the claimant will conduct work search for their Expected Hours. This is the number of hours that the claimant is available for work or 35 hours whichever is the lower figure less the total amount of time spent undertaking agreed Work Preparation activities, Voluntary Work and Paid Work.

Any paid work, including part time or casual self-employment the claimant undertakes can be considered by the WSC to reduce the usual requirement for looking and preparing for work. This is at the discretion of the WSC and should be recorded on the Claimant Commitment.

The claimant must be prepared to give up the paid work, including part time/casual self-employment to take up employment to move them over their individual threshold. This could also

include combining their part time/casual self-employment with another job or increasing the hours of their part time/casual self-employment to move them over their individual threshold.

Accounting for self-employment

A reduction to the claimant's expected work search hours is most likely to be identified at a WSI following a Gateway Interview

When considering the appropriate number of hours to apply as a relevant deduction in the case of self-employment, the WSC must take account of the following:

- the self employed activity has not been deemed gainful self-employment during the gateway interview and therefore should not be regarded as such
- the relevant deduction must be appropriate for the work undertaken and the payment received

The WSC checks Work Services Platform (WSP) notes and looks at the reason for the decision that the claimant is not gainfully self-employed. This may help to decide how the self-employed activity should be treated at the WSI.

When deciding how much time to deduct, the WSC considers, the amount the claimant earns from self-employment divided by the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for the claimant's age group. This gives an approximate number of hours to use as a guide for making a relevant deduction from the claimant's expected hours of work.

For example, a small amount of self-employed work is considered useful to keep a claimant's skills current by the WSC. This could provide a return to work route if they have a long period of absence. The WSC may also consider whether earnings from self-employment were lower than usual in a month because of normal business patterns rather than because the claimant was spending less time on it, and whether earnings are likely to increase in the near future. In these cases the WSC considers allowing a greater hours deduction than suggested to reflect the self-employed activity by dividing the claimant's self-employed earnings by NMW.

The WSC may consider that a reduction in hours is not appropriate as the self-employment is not significant enough to change the claimant commitment.

If the reason for the original 'not gainfully self-employed' decision no longer applies and the WSC considers that a new gateway interview will lead to a different result, the WSC considers booking another gateway interview. For example, if the claimant was deemed 'not gainfully self-employed' because they were unable to provide significant development plans for their business but have

since produced a credible business plan and carried out significant marketing activity, a repeat gateway interview would be appropriate.

If the WSC considers that further support will develop the claimant's self-employment further giving a better chance of being deemed gainfully self employed in the future the WSC considers referring or signposting the claimant to the appropriate support.

When considering Voluntary Work, the WSC will deduct the hours the claimant spends undertaking agreed Voluntary Work, up to a maximum of 50% of the Claimant's Expected Hours:

For example, Mary's Claimant Commitment requires her to be available for work for 28 hours per week. These are her Expected Hours. She does voluntary work for a local charity for 18 hours per week. Mary's WSC can deduct 14 hours (being 50% of the 28 hours that she is available for work) from the hours that she is available for work when determining the amount of time she must spend on Work Search activities. Mary can still do more hours at the charity but these will not count as work search or preparation activities.

The work search activities set should be the most effective activities which, when undertaken, give the claimant the best possible chance of getting paid work quickly.

How long any particular activity will take will vary from claimant to claimant and the WSC must judge this in line with the claimant's circumstances and abilities.

Work Search activities will differ for each claimant based on their job requirement(s) and circumstances and may include for example:

- using Universal Jobmatch
- registering with and using other job search websites
- carrying out other activities to look for work
- making applications
- registering with an employment agency
- seeking references

This list is not exhaustive. All Work Search Activities must be SMART.

Having set all the reasonable and effective actions that the claimant could do, the claimant will have met their work search requirement if they undertake all these actions.

If the claimant does not undertake these actions the WSC will consider whether they have done all that can be reasonably expected of them. (See Work Search Reviews).

Recording Work Search Activities

The claimant's Work Search Activities are recorded on the 'Work Search Activities' section of the claimant's record.

To input a new Work Search Activity, the 'Add New Work Search Activity' is selected from the toolbar. The details of the Work Search Activity are recorded and the entry is saved by selecting 'Save & Close' from the toolbar menu. The Work Search Activity will then show in the 'Work Search Activities' box.

Temporarily switching off requirements

There will be some circumstances, where WSCs will identify claimant circumstances that mean work search and availability requirements will be temporarily switched off.

Regulations give a list of the particular circumstances where this is appropriate. This applies to claimants:

- with a self certificate/medical evidence of illness of up to 14 days
- receiving medical treatment outside of Great Britain (for up to 6 months)
- on jury service or attending court or a tribunal as a witness
- whose partner, child or qualifying young person has died (for up to 6 months from the date of death)
- participating in structured recovery orientated course of alcohol or drugs dependency treatment (for up to 6 months)
- who are prisoners (detained in custody pending trial or sentence or on temporary release.)
- who have arrangements made by a protection provider for up to 3 months. (This can be extended in exceptional circumstances)
- engaged in a public duty– e.g. volunteer Fire-fighter, Lifeboat crew member

WSCs can, at their discretion also temporarily switch off work search and work availability requirements where it would be unreasonable to require the claimant to comply with a work search or work availability requirement:

- if the claimant is carrying out work preparation or voluntary work preparation
- if the claimant has a fit note beyond the first 14 days of sickness. Nevertheless, the WSC may decide that the claimant should be subject to other work related requirements, such as work preparation and/or work focused interview requirements

Where a claimant has a temporary emergency or temporary responsibilities such as:

- temporary child care responsibilities (for example, where there is no appropriate childcare available during the school holidays and no other arrangements can be made or where the child is temporarily excluded from school)
- they are dealing with a domestic emergency
- they are having to make funeral arrangements
- other temporary circumstances

Where requirements have been temporarily switched off, WSCs should ensure that appropriate dates are set to review these arrangements.

Victims of Domestic violence

If a claimant notifies us that they have been a victim of domestic violence in the past six months, they are not living at the same address as the perpetrator, and they have not had access to this easement in the last 12 months, they must have an exemption from all work-related requirements for one month. During this time the claimant has the opportunity to provide relevant evidence from a person acting in an official capacity and, if they do so, will have this exemption extended to 13 weeks in total.

If claimants feel, before this 1 month or 13 week easement is over, that they wish to reconnect with their work search or preparation activities, they should be able to do so on a voluntary basis until the end of the easement period at which point the claimant's appropriate work-related requirements will be re-applied. If a claimant does wish to begin to carry out work-related

activities before their exemption period is over, it should be explained to the claimant that they will not be able to 'bank' this time and access it later on after the easement period has ended.

However, claimants who have been a victim of domestic violence but are outside of this specific easement period may need to access a temporary lifting of work search and availability requirements as a result of temporary circumstances which are directly or indirectly related to their experience of domestic violence. For example if a claimant was obliged to move accommodation in order to ensure their safety or the safety of their children, work search and availability requirements can be temporary lifted to accommodate this if necessary.

If the claimant is not available for work or work search activity

If the claimant is not available for work, 'No' is selected from the 'Available For Work' drop-down menu and the reason(s) recorded in the 'Reason For Unavailability' field. This is used in cases such as a condition that affects the claimant meaning they are temporarily not available for any work, work preparation or work search activities. For example, a claimant participating in a recognised drugs rehabilitation treatment programme, or incapable of work due to a mental or physical condition.

If the claimant is available for work from a specific date, the date is recorded in the 'Available From Date' field. The date that this will be reviewed is recorded in the 'Review Date' field.

The claimant's required weekly work search hours are recorded in the 'Work Search Hours Per Week' field. This defaults to 35 but can be changed if required.

Diagnosis of claimant capability and circumstances

How to determine the things that affect the work a claimant is expected to look for and accept if offered

Diagnosing work related requirements

During work search interviews, a Work Services Coach (WSC) identifies the things that affect the work a claimant is expected to look for and accept if offered.

Claimants in the all work related requirements are normally expected to look for any suitable employment, paying the relevant national minimum wage, that is within 90 minutes travelling distance from their home. Claimants are usually expected to look for full time work. They will normally be available to attend an interview and take up a job immediately.

Claimant's particular personal circumstances will determine the actual requirements set.

A full diagnosis of the claimant's circumstances and capacity for work will help the WSC determine:

- a realistic job requirement
- availability requirements
- travel to work time
- work search requirements
- work preparation requirements
- any other work related requirements

These should be reviewed and updated throughout the claim.

Claimants must understand:

- they will normally be expected to search for work for the number of hours they are available for work up to a maximum of 35 hours per week
- they need to take all reasonable steps to give themselves the best chance of finding work, more work or better paid work as quickly as possible
- that their work related requirements have been set taking into account all of their relevant personal circumstances
- if they don't carry out their work related requirements without good reason, they will be sanctioned
- the date and time of their next intervention
- the consequences of failing to attend their Work Search Reviews
- where they have an unspent sanction from a previous claim, this will have an effect on the amount of UC they receive and any future failure to comply with requirements
- if they work and earn the required amount for 26 weeks, their sanction will be ended. If they have worked since the sanctionable failure, this could count towards their 26 weeks. The claimant should be asked their periods of work and

earnings and this should be recorded in WSP in 'Employment History'. See 'Initial Work Search Interview'

Caring responsibilities

When setting a claimant's individual work related requirements the WSC considers any caring responsibilities they have.

Nominated responsible carers of a child under age 13 (or an older child where the child has exceptional care needs).

A nominated responsible carer for a child under the age of 13 is required to be available for paid work for as many hours as their caring responsibilities allow and which is compatible with these responsibilities. Where the child is at school, this is the child's normal school hours including the time it takes to travel to and from school.

Where the WSC adjusts the claimant's work related requirements because they are the nominated responsible carer of a child under age 13 (or an older child where the child has exceptional care needs) the claimant does not have to have reasonable prospects of getting paid work. However, the adjustments must be reasonable and connected with their caring responsibilities for that child.

If a WSC also adjusts the claimant's work related requirements for reasons not connected to the care of that child, they must be satisfied that the claimant has reasonable prospects of getting paid work in light of these adjustments.

Nominated responsible carer for a child aged 13 or over

A nominated responsible carer of a child aged 13 or over is required to be available for paid work for as many hours as their caring responsibilities allow. They may have their hours of availability adjusted at the WSC's discretion taking into account the claimant's caring responsibilities. The claimant must have reasonable prospects of finding paid work, more work or better paid work.

Carers who have regular caring responsibilities for a person(s) who has a physical or mental impairment

Carers who have regular caring responsibilities for a person(s) who has a physical or mental impairment are required to be available for paid work for as many hours as their caring responsibilities allow. They may have their hours of availability adjusted at the WSC's discretion taking into account the claimant's caring responsibilities. The claimant must have reasonable prospects of finding paid work, more work or better paid work.

Parents of a child who are not the nominated responsible carer, but have caring responsibilities for the child

A parent of a child who is not the nominated responsible carer, but has caring responsibilities for the child is required to be available for paid work for as many hours as their caring responsibilities allow. They may have their hours of availability adjusted at the WSC's discretion taking into account the claimant's caring responsibilities. The claimant must have reasonable prospects of finding paid work, more work or better paid work.

Exercising discretion

In exercising discretion, the WSC should consider:

- that a claimant is expected to do all that is reasonably possible to fit their caring responsibilities with the local labour market
- other care arrangements which may be available (including childcare)
- the impact of their caring responsibilities on the hours that they are able to work
- the care requirements of the individual being cared for

Health conditions

Where a claimant has a physical or mental impairment which substantially affects their ability to carry out paid work, they are required to be available for paid work for as many hours as their health condition allow.

They may have their work related requirements adjusted at the WSC's discretion taking into account the:

- claimant's health condition
- regular treatment regime related to the claimant's health condition
- hours their health condition allows them to work
- type of employment their health condition allows them to do
- environmental conditions their health allows them to work in for example lighting, background noise, dust

- impact of their health condition on their ability to travel

For example, where a claimant with a health condition states that they have limited capacity to stand and need to sit frequently, the WSC would explore with them what they are able to do. Can they sit without a problem? Can they walk without a problem? What other skills do they have? How do they spend their day? An example statement for the commitment pack would be 'I am able to undertake work which does not involve maintaining one position for a prolonged period'.

Where the WSC adjusts the claimant's work related requirements because of their health condition the claimant does not have to have reasonable prospects of getting paid work. However, the adjustments must be reasonable and connected with their health.

If a WSC also adjusts the claimant's work related requirements for reasons not connected to their health condition, they must be satisfied that the claimant has reasonable prospects of getting paid work in light of these adjustments.

Other relevant circumstances

The WSC must consider anything else (for example legal restrictions, drug or alcohol dependency, domestic violence etc) that could have an effect when setting the claimant's work related requirements.

Skills

Claimants who do not have the skills that are valued in the labour market will be required to start, participate in and complete appropriate skills assessments or training.

The WSC will conduct a skills screening to fully understand the needs and capabilities of the claimant. This will help the WSC determine if the claimant's goals are realistic and if they require any additional support. This can be conducted as part of an Initial Skills Screening, or an In-depth Skills Assessment.

The Initial Skills Screening determines if the claimant is lacking skills such as English language, literacy, maths or computer skills. Where the WSC believes there may be a skills gap but confirmation is needed, they must be referred for an In Depth Skills Assessment, Careers Advice, to an initial interview with a provider or direct to training. All these referrals should be included as either Work Preparation (Mandatory) or Other Work Related Activities (for provision funded by the Devolved Administration in Wales and for Careers Advice in Scotland and Wales).

Overview of work-related requirement sanctions in Universal Credit

Information on the various sanction levels and the reasons and durations applicable to Universal Credit

[Universal Credit](#) will focus on setting suitable work-related requirements, tailored to the [claimant's](#) circumstances. These requirements are important because claimants are more likely to enter full-time work if they meet them.

[Work-related requirement sanctions](#) (sometimes known as conditionality sanctions for [Jobseeker's Allowance](#)) should act as a deterrent for claimants against failing to meet these important requirements. Therefore Universal Credit must ensure that claimants fully understand both the requirement and the [sanction](#) consequences of not meeting it.

Sanctions can only be effective in encouraging claimants to meet work-related requirements if the possible sanctions they may face are communicated to and understood by the claimant. Evidence shows that claimants are more likely to meet a requirement if they understand they will receive a sanction if they fail to do so.

Agents must ensure that sanctions are explained when requirements are set and be clear to claimants that if they fail to meet a requirement without a good reason they will receive a sanction.

The agent must explain that a sanction means their Universal Credit payments will be cut. The more times that a claimant fails to meet requirements, the longer a sanction will be.

A sanction will cut a claimant's Universal Credit payment by a daily amount. That daily amount, and how long the cut could last for, is recorded on the [Claimant Commitment](#). Further important information is in the [Commitment Pack](#). This information should be drawn to the claimant's attention and explained to them.

Where a claimant is aware that a requirement is mandatory but nevertheless fails without a good reason to meet a suitable requirement that was clearly notified to them, then a sanction should be applied.

A trained decision maker determines whether the claimant had good reason and if a sanction should apply.

Differences and similarities exist between legacy Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) sanctions regimes and the Universal Credit sanctions regime.

For Universal Credit there will be four sanction levels:

- higher
- medium
- low
- lowest

JSA and Universal Credit

The higher level sanction periods are the same for JSA and Universal Credit, the only difference is that under Universal Credit the sanctions are expressed in days.

In JSA there is disqualification for failure to be available for, or seeking work followed by an intermediate sanction. Under Universal Credit there is no disqualification for these failures and a medium level sanction is applied instead (note also that the work search and availability requirements in Universal Credit are different to JSA).

In JSA the low level sanctions are for fixed periods. In Universal Credit the low level sanctions will have two elements – an open-ended period which will run for a period equal to the number of days from the date of failure until the day before the claimant meets a compliance condition, followed by a fixed period.

ESA and Universal Credit

The low level sanctions in ESA will work in the same way in Universal Credit, that is, an open ended period followed by a fixed period. The only difference is that they will be expressed in days.

In Universal Credit there will also be lowest level sanctions for claimants in the [Work Focused Interview Only group](#).

How sanctions will operate for Universal Credit

For higher, medium and low level sanctions, claimants will be sanctioned an amount broadly equivalent to 100% of their [Standard Allowance](#). For lowest level sanctions they will be sanctioned an amount equivalent to 40% of their Standard Allowance.

For Universal Credit, sanctions will run consecutively and the claimant's award amounts will therefore be reduced for the entire duration of all sanctions. So where a claimant is subject to one sanction and receives another, the period of the second sanction will be added to their Total Outstanding Reduction Period (TORP).

This is different to the current position in JSA whereby if a claimant is subject to one sanction and receives another, the sanctions run concurrently with one reduction suppressed so that for the period in which the two sanctions overlap the second sanction has no impact.

Once a decision maker decides that a sanction should apply, then that sanction period will be added to the claimant's TORP. The TORP is the total of all sanction days imposed on a claimant which has not yet resulted in a reduction to the award and is limited to 1095 days. A new sanction which would take the TORP over 1095 days must be reduced in length accordingly.

Daily sanction amounts

The daily sanction amount for claimants has been determined in accordance with a formula based on the Standard Allowance for each category of claimant.

For claimants receiving a high, medium or low level sanction the formula will be: Standard Allowance x 12 divided by 365, rounded down to the nearest 10p.

For lowest level sanctions it will be 40% of the Standard Allowance x 12 divided by 365, rounded down to the nearest 10p.

In cases where there are joint claimants the formula is based on half of the joint Standard Allowance paid to the couple.

A claimant's Standard Allowance is based on their age and whether they are single or part of a joint claim. For a list of daily sanction amounts for each category of claimant see Advice for Decision Makers (ADM).

Application of a reduction to the claimant's award in Universal Credit

The reduction for a particular [assessment period](#) is then calculated (based on the daily sanction amount on the last working day of that assessment period). In cases where the TORP is less than the number of days in the given assessment period, then the reduction will be calculated by multiplying the number of days in the TORP by the daily sanction amount for the claimant.

In cases where the TORP exceeds the number of days in the given assessment period, the reduction will be calculated by multiplying the number of days in the assessment period by the daily reduction amount. Any residual sanction days are carried forward and applied to future assessment periods.

If the reduction would exceed the Standard Allowance (or half the Standard Allowance for a joint claimant) the sum is reduced accordingly so it does not exceed these amounts.

16/17 year olds

16 and 17 year olds will be able to claim Universal Credit in their own right in some circumstances and, depending on their capability and circumstances, could fall into any one of the four conditionality groups:

- All Work-Related Requirements
- Work Preparation
- Work-Focused Interview Only
- No Work-Related Activity Requirements

The sanctions regime for 16 and 17 year olds mirrors the adult regime but has lower sanction amounts and shorter durations. The durations are set out alongside the over 18 periods below.

16 and 17 year olds will be sanctioned 40% of the Standard Allowance.

Sanction levels

There are four levels of sanction:

- higher
- medium
- low
- lowest

Sanction durations range from fixed higher level sanctions of up to three years for claimants who repeatedly fail to meet their responsibilities to lowest level sanctions which are open-ended and build up, usually until the claimant meets a compliance condition.

Where a claimant has good reason for a failure, a sanction won't be applied.

Higher level sanctions

Higher level sanctions will be applied to claimants subject to All Work-Related Requirements who without good reason:

- fail to undertake Mandatory Work Activity
- fail to apply for a particular vacancy
- fail to take up an offer of paid work
- by reason of misconduct or voluntarily and without good reason:
 - cease paid work
 - lose pay

For claimants aged 18+ high level sanctions will usually be for a fixed duration of:

- 91 days for a first failure
- 182 days if there has been a 91 day higher level sanction applied for a failure in the 365 days prior to the current failure date.
- 1095 days if there has been a 182 or 1095 day higher level sanction applied for a failure in the 365 days prior to the current failure date.

For claimants aged 16-17 higher level sanctions will usually be for a fixed duration of:

- 14 days for a first failure
- 28 days if there has been a 14 or 28 day higher level sanction applied for a failure in the 365 days prior to the date of the current failure.

Pre-claim failures –higher level sanctions

Where a claimant:

- leaves employment voluntarily
- loses pay voluntarily
- loses employment or pay because of misconduct&
- fails to take up an offer of employment

Before applying for Universal Credit the applicable sanction period will be reduced by the length of time between that failure and the date of the Universal Credit claim.

Sanctions for pre-claim failures do not count for the purposes of escalation, so if a claimant fails to meet a higher level requirement any pre-claim higher level sanction in the preceding 365 days is ignored for the purposes of escalation.

If the pre-claim failure relates to employment which was expected to last for a limited period, the applicable sanction period will be the shorter of the standard duration or the length the employment was expected to last, minus the number of days between the failure and claim.

Medium level sanctions

Medium level sanctions will be applied to claimants subject to All Work-Related Requirements who without good reason:

- fail to undertake all reasonable work search action
- fail to be able and willing to immediately take up work

Medium level sanctions for claimants aged 18+ will be of a fixed duration of:

- 28 days for a first failure
- 91 days if there has already been one or more medium level sanctionable failures in the 365 days before the date of the current failure.

Medium level sanctions for claimants aged 16-17 will be of a fixed duration of:

- 7 days for a first failure
- 14 days if there has been one or more medium level sanction applied for a failure in the 365 days before the date of the current failure

Low level sanctions

Low level sanctions will be applied to claimants who are subject to All Work-Related Requirements or are in the Work Preparation Group (subject to work-preparation and Work Focused Interview requirements) and who fail without good reason to meet any work-related requirement (or connected requirement) that is not sanctionable at the higher or medium level.

There will be two components to a low level sanction for claimants aged 18+. An open ended component equal to the number of days from the date of failure until:

- the day before the date the claimant meets a compliance condition
- the day before the date the claimant moves to the No Work-Related Requirements Group
- the day before the date the claimant is no longer required to undertake a particular action under the work-preparation requirement
- the date the award is terminated (other than by reason of the claimant ceasing to be or becoming a member of a couple)

plus

- a fixed period of 7 days
- 14 days if there has been a lower level sanction with a fixed period of 7 days applied for a failure in the 365 days prior to the date of the current failure.
- 28 days if there has been a lower level sanction with a fixed period of 14 or 28 days applied for a failure in the 365 days prior to the date of the current failure

For claimants aged 16-17, low level sanctions will be for an open period which will run for a period equal to the number of days from the date of failure until:

- the day before the date the claimant meets a compliance condition
- the day before the date the claimant moves to the No Work-Related Requirements Group
- the day before the date the claimant is no longer required to undertake a particular action under the work-preparation requirement
- the date the award is terminated (other than by reason of the claimant ceasing to be or becoming a member of a couple)

plus

- for second and subsequent failures with a previous failure within the 365 days prior to the current failure, a fixed period of 7 days

Lowest level sanctions

Lowest level sanctions will be applied to those claimants subject to Work-Focused Interview Only requirements who fail to attend or participate in a Work-Focused Interview without good reason.

Lowest level sanctions will be open-ended for a period equal to the number of days between the date of failure and:

- the day before the date the claimant meets a compliance condition

- the day before the date the claimant moves to the No Work-Related Requirements Group
- the date the award is terminated (other than by reason of the claimant ceasing to be or becoming a member of a couple)

Compliance condition

A compliance condition is the action a claimant must take to stop the open-ended element of the sanction building.

It can be the original requirement imposed on the claimant or a new requirement where the original is no longer appropriate, for example if the original requirement is time-limited, such as a training course on a specific day.

Escalation of sanctions

Sanctions will only escalate when there is a previous sanction at the same level (higher, medium or low). Only previous sanctions with a date of failure in the 365 days prior to the current failure date are counted.

The date of failure is used to determine progression up the sanctions ladder.

A previous higher level sanctionable failure with a failure date prior to the date of the Universal Credit claim (a pre-claim failure) is disregarded for escalation purposes.

A previous sanctionable failure at the same level is disregarded for the purposes of escalation if it occurred in the 13 days immediately preceding the date of the current failure.

Escalation of sanctions does not apply to lowest level sanctions.

Sanctions in place until exhausted

Where a claimant's award is terminated and they subsequently reclaim and receive a new award of Universal Credit, any unexpired TORP will apply to the new award.

The reduction remains in place until exhausted. Therefore, the TORP is reduced by one day for each day a sanctioned individual does not have a Universal Credit award.

Termination of sanctions

Sanctions will remain in place until exhausted subject to three exceptions:

1. All unexpired sanctions will be terminated (that is the TORP is reduced to zero) if the claimant

can prove they have been in employment earning at or above their earnings threshold for at least 26 weeks since their last sanctionable failure. The period in employment above the threshold need not be continuous.

2. The sanctionable amount will be reduced to zero whilst a claimant has been assessed as or treated as having both a Limited Capability for Work (LCW) and a Limited Capability for Work Related Activity (LCWRA). Sanctions will remain in place whilst claimants await the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) determination
3. The TORP will be reduced to zero where a claimant with a sanction dies.

Change to sanction amount when claimant moves conditionality group

For claimants who move into the No Work-Related Requirements group on the grounds of [childcare](#) responsibilities, the sanction amount will change to 40% of the Standard Allowance.

This includes:

- a responsible carer for a child under 1
- a claimant who is pregnant and it is 11 weeks or less before her expected week of confinement
- claimants who adopt a child and it is 52 weeks or less since the date the child was placed with the claimant
- claimants who adopt a child and have elected that the 52 weeks should run from a date within 14 days before the child was expected to be placed, that date

General principle of sanctions

The daily reduction amount used to calculate the reduction for an assessment period should reflect the claimant's conditionality and circumstances on the last day of the assessment period for which the award is being reduced.

This approach is intended to avoid the situation whereby different daily reduction amounts apply in the same assessment period because claimants move between conditionality groups.

Failure to report change of circumstances

Claimants are required to report the loss of a job within 5 working days unless they fall into the No Work-Related Requirements Group for a reason other than earnings above the conditionality earnings threshold. However, in practice initially, a sanction will only be imposed if as a result of the loss of a job their pay has reduced so that they/their household are below the lower conditionality threshold (subject to full work search requirements).

The sanction starts from the fifth day after losing the job and stops building when the claimant notifies Universal Credit.

Similarly, loss of pay/paid work sanctions will also only apply if as a result of the loss their pay has reduced so that they/their household are below the lower conditionality threshold (subject to full worksearch requirements).

Fraud penalties

Work-related sanctions will be suspended when a fraud penalty is in effect. The work-related requirement sanction will resume once fraud penalty has expired. This approach will ensure that claimants will serve the full duration of both sanctions without both amounts being deducted at the same time.

A previous fraud/loss of Benefit penalty will not count towards escalation of conditionality sanctions.

The 1095 day cap on the TORP will only apply to work-related requirement sanctions. Fraud penalties may be over and above this.