



# **UCFS 13A WS The Commitment 03: The Commitment Meeting**

Facilitator Led Brief  
V13.0

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# The Commitment Meeting

## Introduction

Now that we have discussed how to prepare for the Commitment Meeting, we will look at how to conduct it effectively. This will be a stretching conversation so that the Commitment can be tailored to individual requirements, focusing on effective work preparation and work search.

## Facilitating the Discussion



**Ask the learners to work in pairs to discuss the following question with their neighbour. Allow 5 minutes for discussion before bringing the group back together to share their responses.**



**What would you promote as good practice when preparing for and conducting a conversation with a claimant?**



#### Responses should include:

- preview the information provided by the claimant
- avoid making assumptions
- make use of the information provided and add value to it through the conversation
- the discussion should start with an explanation of the purpose of the conversation
- keep the conversation work focused rather than sanctions focused, while ensuring the claimant is clear about their responsibilities
- ask appropriate questions
- listen actively. If the conversation is by telephone, make sure the claimant knows you are listening by using 'mmm', 'I see'
- allow time for the claimant to answer questions
- build rapport by showing an interest in what they are saying (for example referring back to it, asking a follow-on question, building on what the claimant has said)

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- consider any special requirements or complex needs. If you're not sure, ask sensitively
- be alert to 'clues' – the claimant may mention something in passing which provides very important information relating to their claim, circumstances or requirements
- identify any potential 'challenges' and think about how you can move the claimant forward
- if the conversation is face to face sit alongside the claimant so the desk and PC screen does not become a barrier
- use summaries to check understanding

This list is not exhaustive.



**Remind the learners that they will be observed by their line manager from time to time as part of the Quality Assurance checks. Line managers should then provide feedback from which further development needs may be identified. This helps to ensure that the claimant receives the best possible service and that the work coach can continuously improve their skills.**

## Coaching

The purpose of the conversation is to identify what activities the claimant will do to prepare for work, find work, or find better paid work. It is also to ensure that stretching and challenging activities are agreed which focus on quality work search activity.

We are aiming to gain the claimant's commitment to undertaking these activities. One of the ways to gain their commitment is by enabling them to take ownership of their Commitment. We can achieve this by using coaching techniques.



**How do you think coaching is different from advising or instructing?**



#### Responses should include:

- coaching avoids telling the person what to do
- coaching uses questions skilfully so that the person to identify for themselves what they need to do, rather than being told
- it helps to build rapport which leads to more effective communication
- it draws out the person's potential
- it enables the person to move forward

## The Benefits of Coaching



#### Show Slide 06 – The Benefits of Coaching

By using coaching you are:

- involving the claimant in decisions about their future which helps gain their commitment
- helping them to identify their goals and think for themselves
- helping them to plan how to meet their goals

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- motivating them
- helping them to gain confidence



**The following further information is included to support you when explaining these benefits.**

Coaching involves them in decisions.

- By coaching, you are encouraging the claimant to come up with their own ideas about what they want to do, why they should do it and how they are going to do it. If it was their own idea they are more likely to remember it and see it through because they know ‘what’s in it for them’
- Involving people in the decisions that affect them increases their sense of ownership. This in turn increases their commitment and motivation and is more likely to gain their commitment. It supports claimants in becoming more independent and having greater ownership of their work preparation and work search activities.

Coaching helps them to identify their goals and think for themselves.



- If people are told what to do, they may go along with it to a degree, however they tend to be more committed to the ideas that they have come up with themselves. This means they are more likely to actively pursue these targets and undertake the steps to achieve them in a more self sufficient way.
- It is important that you are confident that the claimant knows what is expected of them. If they come up with the goals and steps to achieve themselves, they are more likely to be clear about what they have to do.

Coaching helps them to plan how to meet their goals.

- Setting a goal is all very well but you need to put in the effort and have the will-power to actually achieve it. People are far more likely to achieve their goals if they:
  - identify the goals themselves
  - make a plan for what they will do, and how, when and where they will do it

Coaching motivates them.

- Having identified their own goals, people have a vested interest in achieving them - they want to achieve them. This gives them the motivation to take the action needed. Once they start they make progress which in itself is a great motivator.

Coaching helps to build confidence.

- Coaching is empowering as it enables people to take ownership and responsibility for their own future. It encourages them to consider their situation and discover for themselves the changes they can make and how to make them. By asking the claimant to discover the answers for themselves you reinforce the message that their opinions, knowledge, experience for example are worthwhile



**Remember: the Commitment is developed as part of a conversation between you and the claimant. In order for them to take ownership and fully understand their Commitment, it should be the claimant who is doing most of the talking, not you.**

### Questions for Coaching

The whole essence of coaching is to ask (not to tell) and to prompt (not to advise). So it is important that you ask the types of questions that will encourage the claimant to reflect on what they need to do and how to do it.

When coaching it is best to use open ended questions which allow for more reflection and exploration, for example questions starting with:

- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Who?
- How?

Please note: 'Why' can be a useful word to elicit more information, but it needs to be used with caution. It is difficult to ask a 'why' question without it sounding rude, judgemental or accusatory!

When coaching, you should try to avoid:

- questions which only require a 'yes' or 'no' answer
- using the phrase 'If I were you, I would...'
- leading questions such as 'don't you think it would be better to...' as these impose your ideas and beliefs on the claimant, rather than enabling them to think of their own

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Let's consider some examples.



**Ask some questions, inviting the learners to identify which are coaching questions and why.**

**For example:**



**Show Slide 07 – Are these Coaching Questions?**



**On this slide you can make the following questions and answers appear separately by using the mouse or the enter key.**

- do you think you'd like to work outdoors? (not coaching – this requires a yes or no answer)
- what sort of job do you see yourself doing? (Coaching, requires the claimant to reflect and answer more fully)
- how could you find out more about that? (Coaching)
- don't you think you'd be better suited to working in an office? (not coaching – this is a leading question)
- do you want to work on a building site? (Not coaching)
- do you have any experience to be able to do that kind of job? (Not coaching - requires a yes or no answer)



**The learning point to get across here is that not all questions are coaching questions and the learners need to recognise and use appropriate questions when coaching claimants.**

We have discussed the importance of using open questions to encourage the claimant to reflect. However, there might be times when you need to use closed, yes/no type questions during the conversation.



**When might you need to do this?**



**Answers should include:**

- for clarification
- to bring the claimant back on track



**The following activity is designed to confirm the learners' understanding of coaching and to think about how they can explain it to claimants.**

**Ask the learners to work in pairs. One person should explain coaching and the purpose of coaching to their partner as if they were explaining to the claimant. They may need a minute to prepare what they are going to say, then allow one minute for the explanation. You should move around the room listening to the explanations and offering feedback as appropriate.**

**At the end of the minute ask the learners to work with a different partner and repeat the exercise. Preferably the person who explained last time should be the ‘claimant’ this time.**

**At the end of the exercise, ask for feedback from the ‘claimants’ about how clearly coaching was explained to them, focusing on examples of good practice.**



**Facilitate a short discussion with the learners about the following:**

- how would they feel about explaining this to the claimant?
- to what extent do they feel it would help the claimant to understand the role of the work coach?
- how do they think the claimant would benefit from understanding the role of ‘coaching’ in the discussion?

## Revisiting the Claimant's Information



**Refer the learners back to the notes they made when considering the information Algernon provided in order to prepare for the conversation with him.**

**They should work in small groups and come up with the actual coaching questions they would ask Algernon during the conversation to gather the information needed to progress the Commitment towards supporting the claimant to look for work effectively.**



**It is important during this activity that you ensure the learners come up with effective coaching questions that they could ask the claimant directly. Do not accept responses such as 'I would ask him about...', or I would find out if...'**

**If the suggested question is not suitable for coaching, discuss with them how it could be modified to make it more suitable, for example: 'You could look that up on the internet couldn't you?' could become 'how could you find out about that?'**

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Responses to the activity could include:

- what qualifications do you have?
- tell me more about your career plans
- what skills and qualities do you have which suit you to retail/hospitality work?
- what sort of job would you like to do within retail/hospitality?
- what work experience have you had?
- what areas can you travel to for work?
- what other areas will you consider?
- you mentioned that you are a hard worker. What would be an example of this?
- when are you available for work?
- what hours can you work each day?
- what type of work are you interested in?
- what other types of work will you apply for?
- how will you apply for these jobs?

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- what help do you need with your work search/ job applications?
- how do you feel about putting together a CV?
- who can help you to create a CV?
- where else could you find out about job vacancies?
- what else could you do to find work?



**Once you feel the learners are becoming confident at this, you could add some 'what ifs', for example 'When you ask that question, what if the claimant says.....?'**



**Facilitate a brief discussion with the learners regarding how they might positively challenge objections from claimants should they arise. For example, a claimant might be unwilling to work because they want to stay at home and care for their children.**



**All learners should have completed learning on Challenging and Objection Handling as part of their pre-requisite learning.**

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**Ask if there are any questions and discuss before continuing.**

So by using coaching and challenging techniques effectively, you will hold stretching conversations with the claimant. The resulting Commitment will set robust, tailored, personal requirements which the claimant must meet in order to receive Universal Credit. It should encourage them to buy-in, to take responsibility and be the key enabler for moving them closer to work, into work and increasing their earnings.



**Remind the learners that their manager will be observing the meetings regularly to ensure that they are conducting the conversations appropriately. This supports the work coach to identify any development needs they may have. They can then meet with their manager to discuss how these needs can be met.**



**Ask if there are any questions and discuss before moving on to the next part of this learning – 04: Effective Work Related Activities.**