

Claimant Commitment (JSA Regime)

Topic 04: Enhanced Skills

October 2013

Time

3 hours 30 minutes.

Objectives

At the end of this topic learners will be able to:

- state the key elements of an effective plan
- state the role of the coach in supporting the claimant to plan
- explain the 6 Cs Framework for effective planning
- describe appropriate evidence of worksearch; and
- identify acceptable plans and areas for improvement.

Learning Points

This topic will cover the following learning points:

- Ensuring the claimant feels 'listened to'
- The evidence on planning
- Writing a good plan
- The role of a coach in planning

Event Preparation

- Behavioural Insights Good Practice Guide

Support Material

- PowerPoint slides 5 – 21
- Behavioural Insights Good Practice Guide
- Handout 04.01 – The 6 C Framework
- Handout 04.02 – The 6 Cs
- Handout 04.03 – Effective Planning
- Exercise 04.01
- Exercise 04.02
- Exercise 04.03.
- Facilitator Running Note 04.01
- Facilitator Running Note 04.02

Validation

Successful completion of this topic will be measured by participation in discussions, group activities and case studies.

Method of Delivery

This topic is facilitator led. It also includes:

- Question and Answer
- Individual activities
- Group activities
- Discussions.

Introduction



Please refer to the Good Practice Guide which has been produced by the Behavioural Insights Team to support you in your preparation and delivery of this topic.

We have now revisited some of the skills that you already use on a daily basis.

In this topic we are going to talk about some skills that may be new to some of you:

- Planning
- Getting a plan from claimants
- Give feedback on completed plans

These will help give you the opportunity to better understand your claimant and also to help them complete their 'My Work Plan' booklet.

During the interview, the Coach will complete the Claimant Commitment setting out what the claimant must do to look for work. This will summarise the activities that claimants must undertake to receive their benefits. It should encourage and push claimants to do everything that they reasonably can to look for work.



We will go into the detail of completing the Claimant Commitment in the next topic.

The claimant will also receive the 'My Work Plan' booklet. As we have discussed, the claimant should use this to write in detail the specific plans they must make to achieve their goals and do what is expected of them. Although claimants can provide evidence of their worksearch in any form they wish, the My Work Plan allows them to take note of the specific actions they should take to find work.

You should have an in-depth discussion with them about what specific actions they will take to meet their objectives. The My Work Plan is designed to make this as easy as possible and to help claimants into work.

Before we go into detail about the activities we should step back and look at why we need to plan.

The Evidence on planning

We all have goals in life.

We may want to lose weight or learn to drive. But both of these require a great deal of effort and will-power.

However, it is human nature that we lack will-power at times and that our self control lapses especially when we are tired, upset or stressed.

You may have some structure in your lives that will help you to achieve your professional goals. For example a diary system can help you structure your working day and reminders will ensure that you complete the tasks you need to do.

These help us plan our working lives. Although we may not always meet our goals, without these tools structuring our working day would be much harder.

Evidence from a number of areas suggests that people are far more likely to achieve their goals if they make a plan for what they will do, and how, when and where they will do it.

Some claimants may not be used to planning, whilst others may have a great deal of planning experience but are not planning effectively as part of their work search routine.

Making a plan and agreeing on specific activities can help them to get back to work more quickly. Studies that specifically looked at claimants found that planning increased the number of worksearch activities they completed and the number of job offers they received.

Another study found that when claimants planned when and where they were going to write a CV, it became four times more likely they were actually going to do it.

If a claimant makes a good plan, it can also help coaches to quickly assess whether they have put in sufficient effort in looking for work. This means you can spend less time looking back and more time helping their claimants to plan their future activities.

Writing a good plan

When making a plan it is important to consider what makes a good plan. The My Work Plan booklet has been developed to help claimants make good plans and focus on their worksearch.

If used effectively, the My Work Plan booklet helps claimants meet the goals they agreed in their Claimant Commitment.

Work conducted by the Behavioural Insights Team indicates that plans should be:



Show slide 5 – Plans Should be...

ABCDE:

- Ambitious
- Behavioural
- Challenging, with contingencies
- Detailed
- Evidence embedded



Have these prepared on flip so that they can remain on display for reference throughout the rest of the event.

Let's go through each of these in turn.

Ambitious

All plans need to be realistic, as both the claimant and the coach need to believe that they are achievable. However, setting a minimum target may reduce motivation.



Refer to Facilitator Running Note 04.01 to talk the learners through and show the research behind this.

So what does this mean for us? Well, even if a claimant makes a plan you need to make sure that it is ambitious. As the plan should be co-created it is important for you not to entirely disregard their plans if you think that they are not ambitious enough. For example, a claimant may feel that completing three application forms a week is enough to qualify for JSA, but just completing application forms is not enough.

You can ask them how long they think it will take them to do one application form. Unless the claimant says it will take them more than a day to complete one, you can tell them that this is not really enough to fill a working week. Tell them what you think they can do and then meet in the middle.



Show Slide 8 – Priorities First.

Research shows that setting several plans at the same time requires a lot of effort, reducing people's ability to complete them. So Work Coaches encourage claimants to tackle the most pressing issues first. For example, some claimants require basic things like a CV before they can think about doing a CV drop.



Show Slide 9 – Plans should be...

Behavioural

Behavioural is about finding a goal then setting steps to help make that goal a reality. These should be things that you can do immediately, not goals that you have for the future.



Show slide 10 – What is the behaviour?

This slide shows the difference between **goals** (high level information): what claimants want to achieve, and **behaviours** (low level information): the specific actions that they need to take to achieve these goals. As you can see, you can really break down the goals into the very specific behaviours.

In order for people to follow through with plans, they should be very specific about the exact behaviours that are part of their plans. When claimants are writing down their plans they should write down the behaviours that they are going to use.



Show slide 11 – How Does this fit with the Claimant Commitment?

The Claimant Commitment should detail the high level goals and the My Work Plan should detail specific actions.

In contrast, the Claimant Commitment should be used to show the high level goals that claimants need to achieve to receive their benefits. The example in the slide shows that one is directly linked to the other.

You can also have multiple plans to work to a single goal. But, these plans should focus on behaviours, not goals.

Let's look at a goal as an example.

Your goal might be to get to work earlier.



How could you break down the specific activities/behaviours that would be involved in reaching that goal?



To get to work earlier, the behaviours may be:

- leave the house at 7:45 instead of 8
- move your alarm clock to the other side of the room so that you cannot press the snooze button
- make your lunch the night before; or
- make sure that you go to bed before 11.



Show Slide 12 – Plans should be...

Challenging....

Challenge a claimant's assumptions about their worksearch. A person may believe that their way of finding work is the best for them, even if you know that that is not the case. But, if you directly challenge their belief they are not going to listen to you.

Asking someone to test their own beliefs is the best way to do this. You should make sure the claimant is always doing useful activities to find work, but if they are going to do activities that are not likely to help them find work for 13 weeks you might want to think about ways to get them to prioritise their time.

For example, imagine a claimant says they are looking for work as a paper guillotine operator. The conversation might go like this:



Show slide 13.

Note: the speech bubbles appear on command.

If you challenge the claimant's belief in this way they may not believe you.

This might be better:



Show slide 14.

Note: the speech bubbles appear on command.

You could get them to test whether there are any guillotine operator jobs in the whole country by looking in national and local papers or on the internet. This could demonstrate that there are no guillotine operator jobs in the whole country or in the local area and that the claimant should look for other sectors to work in or look at moving to another area. The most powerful way to convince someone that they might not be right is to let them come to that conclusion by themselves.



Emphasise to the learners that the purpose of this example is to illustrate the value of the claimant finding things out for themselves. It would obviously not be acceptable for the claimant to spend two weeks just looking for guillotine operator vacancies – they must be taking other action to ensure they meet ‘all reasonable’ action for Actively Seeking Employment.

....with Contingency Plans

The best laid plans that you can make can still go wrong. When making your plans, you need to consider what can go wrong and then have a contingency plan.



Refer to FRN 04.02 to explain the research behind this.

The best way of thinking about this is as an “IF THEN” statement. An IF THEN statement is a plan that says IF X happens, THEN I will do Y. For example, IF my laptop breaks THEN I will continue to work on my CV at the local library.



Ask learners to give a situation in which their plans went wrong and how they dealt with it.

Then ask them to phrase these situations as a prospective plan. For example, if their bus failed to turn up when they tried to go to the airport and they had to get a taxi instead, ask them to state this as “IF my bus does not turn up, THEN I will call a taxi company”.

When making plans claimants should also focus on what they should be doing, rather than what they shouldn't be doing. You should be thinking about the issues that may stop a claimant from reaching their goals and build these into their plans.

Plans should consider where things may go astray and what you should do when this happens. You really need to work out claimants' life routines and what their concerns are to work out how to address this.



Show slide 16 – Plans should be...

Detailed

What, where, when, why and how. What specific actions are required? Formulating a plan in as much detail as possible will encourage the claimant to fulfil the task. For example when we say “I’m going to eat healthily” we don’t specify what it entails and how we are going to do it. Having concrete implementation plans makes it 3 times more likely they will be followed through.



Show slide 17 – Make it Detailed.



Show slide 18 – Plans should be...

Evidence Embedded

Claimants need to understand what is expected of them. If claimants feel that their coach is trying to trip them up to sanction them, the relationship between the claimant and the coach will suffer. Make sure the plan states exactly what they are expected to show. We’ll discuss this in detail later today.



Show slide 19 – Plans should be...

You should now have a basic understanding of how to write effective plans with good examples of work related activity.



Ask the learners to think of three things they would like to do but never get around doing. These can be personal (for example, chores in the house, New Year's resolutions) or professional (dealing more efficiently with emails, doing a certain administrative task). Allow learners some time to think. Ask for the learners to share their examples with the group.

Ask each specific learner why they have not got round to doing these things.

Ask the group whether the excuses that the learner gives sound similar to those that claimants might give.

Then allow 20 minutes for everyone to come up with a plan that fulfils all the requirements.

Make sure that you refer back to the ABCDE framework when going through commitments.



Learning point: it is harder than you think to draft a plan which includes all the detail of what and how you will achieve it. Yet that is what we are asking the claimants to do so you need to support and coach them to do so.

Make sure you ask everyone to give examples of commitments and pick up on any misunderstandings at this point. If learners are unsure about what makes a good commitment at this point they will struggle later on.

The role of a coach in planning

We discussed ownership earlier, the fact that people are more likely to follow through with something that they have suggested themselves than with something they have been told to do. People will only do something when they have a reason to do it. Although saying “because I said so” or “because you have to” might seem like powerful phrases, they are not going to work as well and are likely to lead to a poor relationship between you and your claimant.

Your role as a coach is to make sure that your claimants are doing as much as they can to get work when they are not seeing you.

Having used your questioning and listening skills to find out about them, you need to develop the conversation in a way that will encourage them to identify the steps they need to take to progress into work.



Ask the learners to work in groups of three for this exercise. Allow 15 minutes to discuss the question below, 20 minutes to report findings back to the whole group and discuss.



What sort of questions could you use to encourage the claimant to identify the steps they need to take to progress into work?



Answers could include:

- So you're interested in being a plumber. What could you do to find out about apprenticeships?
- In terms of work, where would you like to be six months from now? What can you do to work towards that?
- What needs to change to get you where you want to be?
- What is stopping you getting a job? Is there anything we can do about that issue or part of the issue?
- Imagine yourself in a job. What would you have that you don't have now? How would that help you?

This list is not exhaustive

The 6 C Framework



Show slide 20 - The 6 C Framework.



Issue Handout 04.01 – The 6 C Framework

The 6 C Framework is a useful tool for helping coaches and claimants to construct plans for the My Work Plan booklet.

Commit

The first step of the plan is to look at the claimant's goals. This will require an understanding of what they want from the job they are looking for, their situation and their current efforts to look for work. The goals will inform their plans.

Co-Create

Plans are created by coaches and claimants. It's important that this is done together. When people tell others what they are going to be doing it becomes a "social contract". Even without conditionality people feel bad for not following through.

Confirm

Once the coach and claimant have agreed on a set of plans, they should be handwritten into the My Work Plan by the claimant. Research shows that writing things down yourself makes you more likely to follow through with it.

Plans should be associated with activities the claimant will do anyway (taking children to school, walking the dog etc) so that the activity reminds them of the agreed plan. You should also keep a note or a photocopy of claimants' work plans to ensure that they know that these will be reviewed even if they lose their booklet.

Complete

The claimant should complete their plans in between meeting with the Coach or Assistant Coach. The My Work Plan should be used to empower claimants to undertake activities on their own. Claimants should then write down the outcomes of the activities and bring anything they would like to discuss to their next meeting.

In some cases, you might feel that the claimant is able to make their own plans and it would be beneficial for them to spend some of the time before your next appointment together to write out a work plan for subsequent weeks. Claimants should be encouraged to do this, but they must be checked when they next come in.

Check

Every time the claimant comes in for a meeting the coach goes through the previous set of plans, gives feedback and agrees new plans for the following meeting.

If the claimant has made a new work plan before their meeting they should be reviewed to ensure that it fits with the ABCDE framework and encompasses what is considered reasonable to find work.

In some cases claimants may have drawn together a basic plan for you to go through together. In this case you should work together to build a strong and ambitious Work Plan. Just remember that the claimant should always feel that it is achievable, but stretching.

Congratulate

Claimant's efforts should be positively reinforced particularly if they have completed actions that they did not write down in the previous meeting.

Where there is inter-generational unemployment, those looking for work may not receive any support from their families. In these cases you may be the only ones who are giving them positive feedback. It is important to do it in the most effective way possible.

There are four ways that we can give feedback to claimants. Being active and constructive when giving feedback is the best way to make sure that claimants feel rewarded.



Show slide 21 – How to respond to getting an interview.

On the slide you can see examples of how you might react to a claimant getting an interview. Try to be active and constructive at all times.



Issue Handout 04.02 and allow a few minutes for the learners to read through.

Putting the 6C Framework into practice

Let's look at some ways in which you can 'take the claimant with you' on the journey to achieve their goals.

For example, Claire recently had to shut down her business selling pottery online, as it was no longer making any money. As a result she has had to move back in with her parents. She is looking for work as an office administrator, but hasn't looked for work since leaving school and needs to build the confidence to find job vacancies that she can apply for. On top of this, she doesn't know the local labour market.



One of the plans noted on Claire's Work Plan is 'To find jobs as an office administrator in town that I can apply for every day.'

Is this plan:

- **Ambitious?**
- **Behavioural?**
- **Challenging but include contingencies?**
- **Detailed?**
- **Evidence embedded?**



No. This would be better suited as a goal written in the Claimant Commitment.



What could you do to help Claire create a better plan?

How could this plan be presented and phrased in such a way as to make it more achievable for the claimant and help follow through with her plan?



Break the task down more achievable goals, each of which can be an achievement in itself. For example:

- Research the local labour market.
- Learn more about how to apply for jobs.
- Find a job vacancy that she can apply for.



Now consider how each of these goals might be broken down even further into manageable steps..

- Research the local labour market.
- Learn more about how to apply for jobs.
- Find a job vacancy that she can apply for.

These steps will vary from person to person. Some may already be part way through this process, i.e. they already know the local labour market and know the local transport links. Others may need to spend some time researching the bus routes into nearby towns.

The small steps are achievable on their own (“I can do that”) and completing each one takes claimants closer to their goal so they will get a sense of achievement, which in itself a great motivator. This will add to their feeling of progress.



Ask the learners to work in groups of two or three for the following exercise:

The learners note down examples of how they can get the claimant 'on board', that is, more likely to complete the activities in their Work Plan.

Allow about 15 minutes for this exercise then bring the groups back together to share their suggestions with the whole group.

There will probably be a lot of discussion around this exercise and you should allow sufficient time for the learners to be clear about how they can support claimants to complete their agreed activities and to share good practice.

This activity should build on the interviewing skills discussed in Topic 03.

You should ensure that all the learning points in the 'Answer' examples below are covered.



The learners can have full license in this exercise to make up particular claimant circumstances, lifestyle etc because the created plans should not be generic, but should be tailored to an individual claimant.



Suggestions could include:

Find out about their 'typical day'. This may help you to find some 'hooks' that you can attach specific activities to. Examples are provided below:

Encourage them to build the activity into an existing routine. For example a claimant may do voluntary work in a charity shop three mornings a week. The library is a two minute walk from the shop, so they could call into the library to use the Internet access immediately after their voluntary work. This forms a link between the two activities, it saves additional journeys to the library and the connection helps them to remember to do it.

Encourage them to allocate a specific convenient time to do a particular activity. This makes them more likely to complete the activity; otherwise they may have good intentions of doing it but put it off indefinitely. For example, the claimant's child is at nursery from 10am – 12 every day. The claimant could designate that time to a specific worksearch activity. For example, on Mondays and Wednesdays they could research and register with relevant employment agencies. On Tuesdays and Thursdays they could ring round

local employers.

Ensure the claimant has ownership of the agreed plans. That is, that the plans have come from their ideas and suggestions during the discussion. They are more likely to actively pursue the activities if they have written them down. Ideally you should encourage “I want...”, “I need...”, “I must...” type declarations from the claimant, as opposed to “I agree”, “I suppose so” or “that makes sense”.

Encourage them to be ‘part of the solution’ to their own challenge – asking: “What needs to change to get you to where you want to be?” can help to encourage involvement and participation in the discussion leading to suggestions and ideas as above.

Link activities together. For example: “When I have finished my job search, I will adapt my CV and covering letter to each vacancy I have found to make sure it is relevant”. This will help them to see the relevance of each stage and to get a sense of progression in what they are doing. This will give them a sense of achievement.

When starting or reviewing the Work Plan booklet, it is a good idea to discuss with the claimant what

might be appropriate evidence for each activity. This will help the claimant to fully grasp the specifics of what the activity entails. You are also coaching the claimant to recognise valid evidence which will help you both in future reviews/interviews.

Make the claimant aware of what other people are doing (without names, of course). For example, “most people who complete their Work Plan booklet find it really useful”. People tend to like to fit in (“if others are doing it, it must be right”).

Encourage the claimant to plan ahead. This may help prevent potential barriers. For example, if they are going on a course, ask questions like: “Can you download a map of how to get there?” or “Do you know which bus to catch?” or “What time will you have to leave home to be there by 9.30?” or “Have you got a pad and pen to take with you?”

Encourage the claimant to make contingency plans, for example: “if the five employers you’re going to ring round do not have any vacancies, what will be your next step?”

Ensure that the worksearch activities are prioritised appropriately, with the smaller, more easily achievable steps at the beginning working

towards the 'bigger goals (don't run before you can walk) so that claimants can progress through them, gaining in a sense of achievement and confidence as they go.

Find out who can help the claimant with their worksearch – Is there a friend who will help them with IT skills, proof read their CV or who can look out for vacancies at their own work place?, for example. Having another person's support is a great motivator.

Praise claimants for successfully completing activities from the Work Plan booklet, especially if it was an activity they were nervous or concerned about tackling. This will boost their confidence and spur them on to complete the other activities. If they haven't quite completed the activity but have put in a lot of effort, praise that too. You may be the only person who is providing feedback on what they are doing so it is important that you remain positive and constructive to keep up their motivation.

This list is not exhaustive.



Check whether the learners have any questions before continuing.

Recording Worksearch Evidence

The claimant must keep a record of the worksearch activities they complete and present evidence of the worksearch activities they complete to their Coach or Assistant Coach. The evidence must be robust.



Can you think of examples of evidence that a claimant could provide?



Responses could include:

- Completed My Work Plan booklet
- Completed a CV
- Notified of enrolment/acceptance on a course
- Confirmation of application to employment agency
- Print outs of jobs to apply for
- Print outs of completed applications (or on smart phone if emailed)
- Record of researching employment websites on smart phone

This list is not exhaustive

In addition, the claimants may present oral evidence.



How could you validate the oral evidence that the claimants provide?



By asking probing questions. For example:

- Who did you speak to when you cold called the contact centre? What questions did you ask? Did they refer you to somebody else? What additional information did you find out?
- Which companies did you send your CV to? Did you send them by post or via email? Did you send a covering letter? What sort of acknowledgement did you get?
- When you researched the apprenticeships website, what did you find out about requirements/application processes/who to contact?
- When you went to the jobs fair, which stalls did you visit? Did you gather any leaflets? Were they helpful? What further information did they provide which would help you? How will it help you?
- And the important question – what are you going to do next?

By asking these sorts of questions you should be able to determine the level and detail of worksearch that the claimant has completed.



Look back to the plan that you wrote for yourself earlier. Imagine you had written that plan two weeks ago, what progress might you have made so far?

Take five minutes to write up some evidence about what you might have done towards it

Now swap your plan and your evidence with the person sitting next to you.

Take it in turns to play the role of 'coach'. Read through your partner's plan and evidence and identify if the evidence is valid. If not:

- How would you explain this to your partner?
- How could you coach them to provide evidence which is more appropriate/measurable?

Reviewing the Claimant's Worksearch



Issue Exercise 04.01.



The exercise shows an extract from a claimant's Work Plan showing their commitment and the outcome. The learners should discuss:

- Is their plan acceptable? If not, how could you coach the claimant to identify how to improve it?
- Is the outcome acceptable? If not, how could you coach them to plan ahead to make further progress in their worksearch?
- Is their evidence appropriate? If necessary, how could you coach them to identify what constitutes appropriate evidence in the future?



When the learners have finished this activity, issue:

- Exercise 04.02
- Exercise 04.03



The learners should carry out the same activity as before, using these commitments.



At the end of their discussions, encourage the learners to share any good practice and suggestions with the whole group.



Issue HO 04.03: Effective Planning

This handout shows some good examples of claimant plans and the outcomes.



Allow a few minutes for the learners to read through the handout.



Inform the learners that if they would like to know more about the skills and techniques discussed in the last two topics, they should consider enrolling on the Solution Focused Approach learning event.

They should make a note on their Action Plan to find about more about Solution Focus and to discuss with their line manager.



Check whether the learners have any questions before continuing.

In Conclusion

The Work Plan is:

- about supporting independence
- a structured coaching plan with the responsibility on the claimant to take ownership and comply; and
- about providing advice to help them help themselves rather than doing it for them.

Before we move onto the next topic consider the following;

- What does the move to a coach/athlete relationship mean for you as an individual?
- If we are expecting our claimants to behave differently, what will we need to do so that they have a different experience when they interact with us?
- What do I need to start changing in my behaviour so that this change happens?



Allow a few minutes for the learners to reflect on these questions individually before facilitating a short discussion about the changes this will bring to their role.



Allow a few moments for the learners to make any notes on their Action Plan.

Summary

In this topic we have covered:

- coaching the claimant to plan their worksearch effectively
- supporting the claimant to plan and record evidence of their worksearch.

End of Topic