The Initial Work Search Interview

Introduction

- 1. This guidance has been developed to support the phased national roll-out of the Claimant Commitment and other supporting products for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants. Districts will start to phase in the JSA Claimant Commitment for new JSA Claimants and Work Programme completers from 28 October 2013.
- 2. Stock claimants and 16 -17 year old JSA claimants have not been included in the phased roll-out.
- 3. For the purposes of section 1(2)(b) of the Jobseeker's Act 1995, the Claimant Commitment is the Jobseeker's Agreement.
- 4. Districts should continue to follow existing JSA guidance until their agreed scheduled roll-out date.

Overview

- 5. The Initial Work Search Interview is a critically important part of the service we provide to support people in finding work. It is the first contact a claimant will have with the Work Coach and will therefore be important in outlining roles and responsibilities and for future interviews and setting expectations.
- 6. It must include a full diagnosis of the claimant's capability and circumstances relating to work, including the claimant's ability to find and apply for jobs. It must also include an explanation of what the claimant must do to remain entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance.
- 7. Any new Jobseeker's Allowance claimant will go on the Jobcentre Plus Offer claimant journey.

Identifying Work Programme Returners

- 8. At the Initial Work Search Interview, any claimants who have not fully completed their time on the Work Programme will need to be referred back to the Work Programme. These claimants are referred to as Work Programme Returners and can be identified by viewing the Work Programme hotspot on LMS.
- 9. Once identified, Work Programme returners will need to agree a Claimant Commitment. However, as the claimant will be working closely with their Work Programme provider to determine the actions they need to take to look for work, they will not be provided with the My Work Plan booklet. Instead, they will be issued with form ES40JP containing details of their attendance arrangements and form ES4JP, as a means of providing evidence of their Work Search activity. Further information can be found in the 'Initial Work Search Interviews (WP participants) guidance.

Identifying claimants who have completed the Work Programme

- 10. Claimants who make a new claim within 26 weeks of the Work Programme completion date must be identified.
- 11. Once identified, the steps to follow can be found in 'Post Work Programme Support (JSA claimants)'.

Split Initial Work Search Interview

- 12. As part of the flexibilities available to managers, the Initial Work Search Interview can be split into a Conditionality Interview followed by a Diagnostic Interview.
- 13. The Conditionality Interview can be conducted by a Band B or Band C. The purpose of this interview is to gather appropriate information to establish whether a claimant is entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance.
- 14. The Diagnostic Interview should build on the Conditionality Interview. It must be conducted by a Work Coach as soon as possible after the conditionality interview working towards no later than 7 days following the date the claim was made. The Work Coach should ensure they review any outcomes from the Conditionality Interview and take any appropriate action.

Purpose

15. The purpose of the Initial Work Search Interview is to have an in depth discussion with the claimant, to:

- build an understanding of the claimants capability and circumstances relating to work;
- identify, where appropriate, things that could make it harder for the claimant to look for work and agree what the claimant will do to overcome them;
- explain the work search and work availability requirements for JSA;
- agree personalised Work Search activities that are ambitious but reasonable for the claimant to take, that will give them the best chances of finding and keeping work;
- agree, create and sign a personalised Claimant Commitment based on this discussion. The Claimant Commitment should be practical, helpful, specific and measurable and if followed, will offer the claimant the best chances of securing employment as quickly as possible; and
- explain the types of evidence the claimant will be required to provide, to demonstrate that they are entitled to and continue to be entitled to receive JSA.
- 16. It is very important that the coach explains that meeting the work search requirement to take all reasonable steps to find work is challenging and requires detailed planning. Claimants who are not engaging in active, effective and persistent work search will be less likely to receive an offer of employment. Those claimants who plan and carry out their work search effectively, are more likely to be successful.
- 17. At the end of the interview, the Work Coach will determine how they will continue to support the claimant. Back to work support should be personalised and take account of the claimants personal circumstances, so a judgement must be made about the ongoing level of support required and the timing, frequency and method of subsequent contacts.

Key Activities

- 18. The key activities that must be covered in the Initial Work Search Interview include:
 - discussing and agreeing an appropriate number of realistic and achievable types of work the claimant will search for, taking into account

- things such as their experience, skills and qualifications and abilities, and the availability of given jobs in the areas in which they are able to work/travel:
- ensuring the claimant knows how and where to look for jobs and has the work search skills needed to find and apply for jobs successfully including;
 - motivation, commitment and confidence to apply for jobs and sell themselves to an employer;
 - the right work search tools and behaviours; and
 - an understanding of the local labour market and up to date employer recruitment methods.
- the Get Britain Working Overview, which gives more detail about the
 particular considerations that the Work Coach will need to take into
 account when dealing with the needs of specific claimant groups. This
 support is available to claimants from day 1 of their claim, based on
 need;
- agreeing personalised work search activities that, if followed, will offer the claimant the best prospects of securing employment and against which, activity can be measured and reviewed;
- agreeing the claimant's availability for work how soon they can start, the days and hours (if necessary) they are able to work – and any acceptable restrictions. For example, due to caring responsibilities or due to attending treatment for drug / alcohol dependency;
- identifying and helping the claimant overcome and address any challenges they may face that could hinder their prospects of finding work. This includes things that might be making it harder to find, apply for and secure suitable employment. For example, poor Work Search skills, caring responsibilities or a skills gap. Many people will need little more than signposting to appropriate vacancy sources but others will need significant support, which may be provided through local provision/service providers and/or additional Work Coach contacts and/or the Flexible Support Fund, depending upon personal circumstances and need;
- making sure the claimant understands that finding work is a personal responsibility and that they must do everything that can be reasonably expected each week to look and apply for jobs. Our role is to provide the claimant with any help and support they need to do this;
- making sure the claimant understands their responsibilities and the things they must do to remain entitled to any payment of Jobseeker's Allowance / allocation of National Insurance credits and the consequences of not meeting those responsibilities;
- making sure the claimant understands what happens next, which includes the purpose of Work Search Reviews and explaining the requirement to plan future work search activities in advance of each review and record details in their My Work Plan booklet.
- confirm appointment details and the next scheduled Work Coach appointment;
- the Work Coach spending time helping the claimant to draw up the first set of specific actions and getting the claimant to record them in the My

- Work Plan booklet, so that they understand what is required and how the booklet can be used effectively.
- providing information about the local labour market, the availability of jobs and the likelihood of people finding work. Most people find work very quickly, even during difficult economic times. For example, about 50% of people leave Jobseeker's Allowance within 13 weeks, rising to about 75% by 26 weeks. This is helpful information, particularly for claimants who may be disillusioned and feel they will never get a job; and
- if appropriate, enrolling the claimant on the Signature Capture Service.

Claimant Fails to Attend Initial Work Search Interview

19. The action to be taken if the claimant fails to attend can be found in the Fails to Attend their New Jobseeker Interview guidance.

Undertaking a Initial Work Search Interview

Preparing for the interview

20. A check of any existing information held (on LMS and elsewhere) must take place, to help inform the discussion and identify any action that needs to be taken.

21. Asking the claimant to provide information can also be helpful. For example, by completing a 'Looking for Work Questionnaire' while awaiting the start of their Initial Work Search Interview. This might highlight areas for discussion and the help and support the Work Coach can offer to the claimant.

Introduction and explanation of the purpose

22. The Work Coach should always introduce themselves and outline the purpose and key features of the interview.

23. Where appropriate, the claimant should be advised that they will be their Work Coach and wherever possible, they will undertake any subsequent Work Coach contacts.

Confirm the claimant's identity

24. The claimant's identity must always be confirmed, if not already done as part of the claim check.

Travel expenses

25. Any travel expenses should be refunded.

Additional requirements

26. Consideration of whether any of the following apply and if so, appropriate action taken:

- The claim is a Joint Claim;
- Claimant has transferred from Incapacity Benefit / Employment Support Allowance to Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Claimant is potentially violent;
- Claimant is homeless/a person without address

- Claimant requires a formal Permitted Period;
- Claimant has a drug and/or alcohol dependency;
- Claimant is approaching state pension age;
- Claimant has made a JSA On-Line claim;
- Claimant has or requires a Special Claimant Record status;
- · Claimant provides Statement of Fitness for Work;
- Claimant is pregnant.

Claimant Commitment - Additional claimant information

27. The following include information relating to particular claimants and their Claimant Commitments:

- Claimants with a Health Condition or Disability also Employment Rights and Access Rights;
- Claimants who are deaf or have a speech or hearing impairment; or
- Claimants requiring an Interpreter (the onus is on Jobcentre Plus to provide an interpreter for any scheduled interview to last longer than 15 minutes).

ADAPT

28. The ADAPT tool has been updated to assist Work Coaches and Work Services Managers in managing and monitoring the Pre Work Programme Offer. This will be particularly useful for monitoring the claimant journey, in terms of Follow-up Work Search Interviews and Work Programme entry points. In order to ensure that ADAPT can be used in this way, it is imperative that ADAPT guidance is followed carefully when loading and updating claimant details.

Conditionality & Sanctions checks

29. A check of the claimant's decision history [Decn] in LMS **must** be made to determine if the claimant's previous claim was disallowed and a sanction referral needs to be made, or whether an existing sanction can be lifted. See the Conditionality & Sanctions checks guidance for further information.

Labour Market System

- 30. Updating LMS is important but it must not become the main focus of the interview.
- 31. Start the interview on LMS
- 32. Once relevant information has been gathered, LMS is updated as appropriate:
 - claim and restart dates set;
 - attending office updated, if prompted;
 - · the claimant's previous activity updated;
 - Ethnicity Marker updated;
 - the 'More' box updated with the claimant's previous work history:
 - the disadvantaged markers are updated
 - the Care Leavers pilot marker is set; and
 - details of the claimant's qualifications are updated.

33. Best practice is to take notes during the interview and populate LMS as the interview concludes.

Explaining conditions of entitlement

34. During the course of the interview, the conditions for entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance and the consequences of not fulfilling them are explained. This should include the claimant's:

- requirement to be available for work;
- requirement to actively seek work;
- · capability to work; and
- requirement to enter into a Claimant Commitment.

Change of circumstances

35. The importance of reporting any change of circumstances which may affect their claim, how they would do this and the consequences of not doing so, should be explained to the claimant.

Direct Payment

36. The best method of payment is directly into a bank account, as amongst other reasons, the vast majority of employers will not pay by any other method. If the claimant has asked to be paid by cheque, the payment procedures and the benefits of Direct Payment including Post Office Card Accounts are explained.

Reason for leaving last job

37. The reason for the claimant's last job ending is established and appropriate action taken.

Skills screening

38. An initial skills screening is carried out, as detailed in the Skills Guide. 39. Where a potential problem is identified, further discussion with the claimant will determine whether a referral for a fuller assessment is appropriate and/or the support outlined in the Get Britain Working Overview should be considered, using the District Provision Tool. Using the Customer Assessment Tool should be considered, where appropriate.

Talking about work

40. The main part of the interview is to discuss and agree the content of a Claimant Commitment and My Work Plan booklet. This must be a two-way discussion. Only by feeling they have played a full role in discussing things, will claimants be committed to following-through the actions that are agreed. 41. Looking for work often and in the right way is critical in terms of securing employment quickly. To obtain the best results, claimants must seek work actively, effectively and persistently and this involves certain behaviours and work search tools.

42. It is important to quickly identify how effective the claimant is likely to be at looking for work. Applying the 10 factors for effective jobseeking helps with this assessment. The more of these that a claimant demonstrates at the outset, the less help and support they are likely to need.

43. The Work Coach's responsibility is to:

- discuss and agree the
 - Types of Work the claimant can realistically secure and carry out ;and
 - work search activities that offer best prospects of finding employment; and
- provide support in addressing the things that might undermine the claimant's efforts to find work, or make the process harder.

44. Where the claimant appears sufficiently able to look for work persistently and effectively, little support may be needed at this stage. However, where it appears that additional support is required to improve job prospects, or overcome things that might make it harder to find work is thought to be needed, this should be provided at the interview, through:

- further time with and input from, the Work Coach;
- the use of the Flexible Support Fund;
- the use of local provision;
- the use of Adviser Hub;
- the use of the support outlined in the Get Britain Working Overview and the District Provision Tool; or
- other sources of help.

Types of Work

45. The Types of Work the claimant aspires to must be realistic and achievable. For the Types of Work in question, 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?;
- Restrictions. Is the claimant placing restrictions on the Types of Work they aspire to? For example, wages, travel or others because of disability or caring responsibilities;
- Wage expectations. For example, do the Types of Work pay the wages that the claimant expects?; and
- The local labour market. Careful consideration must be given to what jobs are available within that area. If the Types of Work the claimant is looking for is not available within the area they are prepared to travel to, aspiring to these Types of Work is not realistic.

Finding vacancies

46. It is important that the claimant is fully aware of the requirement to be Available for and Actively Seek Employment, by doing all that can reasonably expected of them based on their circumstances. For example, it may be reasonable to expect a claimant with internet access at home, to browse employment-related websites to find suitable vacancies 5 days a week, whereas someone who has to go to the library may only be reasonably expected to do so twice a week.

47. The claimant's intended activities to look for work are discussed, using the answers in the Finding and Getting a job section of the Looking for Work questionnaire, if necessary. Building on this discussion and considering the Type(s) of Work they are looking for and their employment and work search skills, the claimant is advised of any additional steps that may help their work search. For example:

- a person looking for office work having a tailored and up to date CV;
- a person looking for security work having a valid SIA licence;
- · creating a Universal Jobmatch account;
- online recruitment websites and job boards;
- local recruitment agencies specialising in their field;
- local employers offering the kind of work they are looking for;
- speculative visits to employers. For example, retail; and
- speculative letters and CVs to employers. For example, professionals.

48. If the claimant expresses concerns about utilising some of these steps, they are provided with the appropriate access to the support available to overcome these concerns. For example, a claimant who does not have online access should be:

- made aware of the Internet Access Devices, or equivalent, in the jobcentre;
- signposted to the local library or other Internet provider; or
- referred to support outlined in the Get Britain Working Overview.

49. Following this discussion, it should be possible to agree all the activities that it is reasonable for the claimant to undertake regularly, to look for work. All activities agreed should be recorded in the Claimant Commitment.

Getting a job

50. Having found a job to apply for, different skills may be necessary to get the job. Claimants must be confident that they can meet the expectations of the employer when making contact about vacancies, either by telephone or in person. For example, during a job interview. By using their interviewing skills, the Work Services Coach determines the claimant's level of confidence and if appropriate, advises them of the available help and support that will help them to increase their confidence levels and interview techniques. 51. Another important part of looking for work is having the necessary tools to do so. For example:

- most people will benefit from having a good quality, tailored and up to date CV. The claimant will be offered the option of having their CV reviewed by the adviser, who will consider signposting them to the support outlined in the Get Britain Working Overview, if the claimant is unable to create or update their CV.
- if the claimant is not comfortable completing application forms consideration should be given to signposting them to the support available in the Get Britain Working Overview.
- if the claimant is unsure about interview techniques consideration should be given to signposting them to the support outlined in the Get Britain Working Overview, or refer to online help.

Referrals to Get Britain Working measures

52. If the claimant has a clearly defined need, an appropriate referral to the support outlined in the Get Britain Working Overview is made.

Complete the Claimant Commitment

53. Full details on how to create a Claimant Commitment are detailed in the Claimant Commitment guide.

My Work Plan

54. Before the claimant is issued with the My Work Plan booklet, it should be explained to them that;

- the main purpose of the booklet is to support the claimant in taking responsibility for their own work search by enabling them to:
 - plan and record the specifics of how they will carry out the activities agreed at a high level in the Claimant Commitment;
 - record details of the actions taken to complete each specific activity, including any outcome of that action; and
 - keep a track of the actions needed to start and continue their journey from benefit to work;
- it also includes:
 - a reminder of their responsibilities and the consequences of not meeting them;
 - o details on where to find suitable vacancies;
 - o changes in their circumstances they must notify DWP about;
 - o details about their benefit and National Insurance Credits;
 - o a section to complete when they want to close their claim; and
 - o details of their attendance at the jobcentre.

55. The Work Coach spends time during the interview helping the claimant to draw up the first set of specific actions and getting the claimant to record them in the My Work Plan booklet, so that they understand what is required and how the booklet can be used effectively.

56. More information can be found in the My Work Plan Booklet chapter of guidance.

Work Search Reviews

- 57. The purpose of Work Search Reviews is explained.
- 58. Claimants must attend a Work Search Review every two weeks, as a minimum, although some may be required to attend more often. The frequency of a claimant's attendance is determined by the level of Work Search support the Work Coach deems they require.
- 59. For example, those claimants who are well versed in looking for work and the means by which to do so may only be required to attend fortnightly, whereas those who have no, or minimal recent experience, may need to attend more frequently.
- 60. The level of support required should be reviewed at an appropriate point, to determine whether the same frequency of attendance is still required.
- 61. The Periodicity & Payday Calculator is used to determine the day each claimant is due to attend. If due to attend fortnightly, it also determines which cycle of attendance applies to each claimant.

- 62. The claimant is told when they are required to attend, the details recorded on My Work Plan booklet and an explanation the importance of/consequence of not attending is given.
- 63. The importance of being able to show that they have done all that they could reasonably do each week to look for work at their Work Search Review is stressed.
- 64. Completing the My Work Plan is promoted by explaining that this will not only allow them to provide evidence of what they have done, it will help them manage the activities they are undertaking.
- 65. The claimant should also be advised that any additional information, such as prints of web pages, copies of application forms etc. may improve the chances of them meeting the requirement to be Actively Seeking Employment.

Personalised support

- 66. As the interview concludes, the coach's next contact with the claimant is discussed.
- 67. The method, timing and length of the contact is decided, taking into account what has been agreed, what might need following-up and the level of support required. For example:
 - if it has been agreed that the claimant will create a CV within 4 weeks, it might be worthwhile seeing them shortly afterwards to ensure it has been created and is fit for purpose;
 - a claimant who has a Permitted Period must be seen at the end of that period to agree a widening of their Work Search; and
 - a claimant who was very unsure of what activities to undertake might be seen again sooner than a claimant who already knew exactly how and where to look for work.

68. In order to provide value for money to the business, the Work Services Coach should consider the applicable Work Programme entry point for the claimant and assess whether they can effectively move the claimant in to work before that time. If they cannot, they should consider signposting the claimant to more appropriate support.

Identifying the Work Programme Entry Point

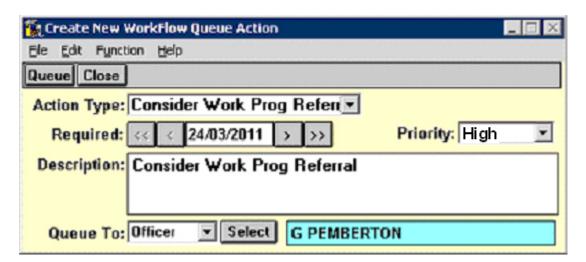
Mandatory Entry

69. The point at which it is mandatory for the claimant to enter the Work Programme is automatically calculated by LMS. For more information, see Release 34 Guidance.

Clerical Cases

- 70. Advisers must calculate the Work Programme Entry Point, based on the Eligibility Table.
- 71. Once determined, a workflow is set for the point at which the referral is appropriate.
- 72. The LMS User Guide, Chapter K, Creating a WorkFlow guidance explains how to create a WorkFlow. When creating a 'Consider Work Prog Referral' WorkFlow::
 - Select the 'Consider Work Prog Referral' 'Action Type:';

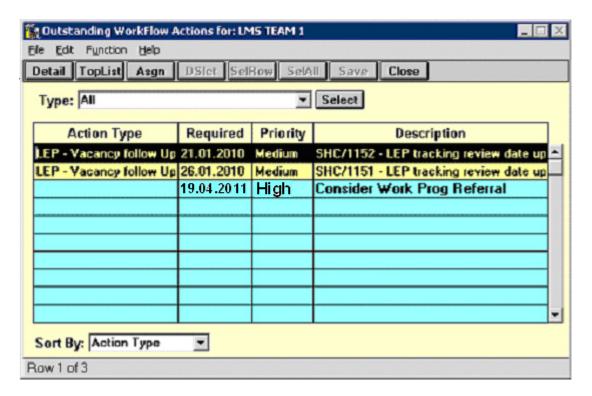
- Set the 'Required Date:' 2 weeks prior to the claimant's entry to the Work Programme;
- Change the 'Priority:' from the default to 'High'; and
- Type 'Consider Work Prog Referral' in the 'Description:' free text field.
- 73. The following screen shot shows a 'Create New WorkFlow Queue Action' window set to create a 'Consider Work Prog Referral' WorkFlow.



74. As the 'Consider Work Prog Referral' 'Action Type:' was not created during an LMS Release; the 'Action Type:' field will be blank when the WorkFlow is viewed in either 'Outstanding WorkFlow Actions for:' or 'View WorkFlow Actions Detail' window. Typing 'Consider Work Prog Referral' in the 'Description:' free text field when creating these WorkFlows will ensure their visibility.

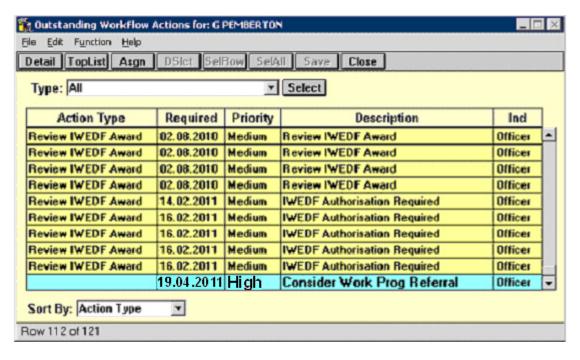
75. When the 'Outstanding WorkFlow Actions for:' Team window is viewed, it will show the blank 'Action Type:' field instead of 'Consider Work Programme Referral' WorkFlow.

Note: Selecting 'Priority' from the 'Sort By:' drop down menu will sort the WorkFlows by priority (high, medium or low) with high priority first.

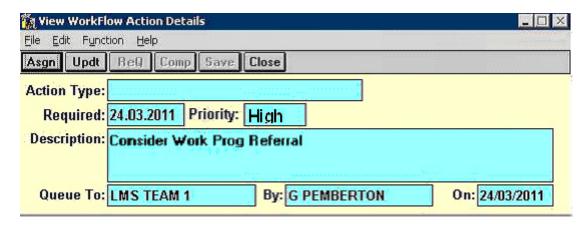


76. When the 'Outstanding WorkFlow Actions for:' User window is viewed, it will show the blank 'Action Type:' field instead of 'Consider Work Prog Referral' WorkFlow.

Note: Selecting 'Priority' from the 'Sort By:' drop down menu will sort the WorkFlows by priority (high, medium or low) with high priority first.



77. When a 'View WorkFlow Actions Detail' window for a 'Consider Work Prog Referral' WorkFlow is viewed, its 'Action Type:' field will be blank.



Optional Early Access

78. Those claimants who could opt for Early Access to the Work Programme from a date earlier than their mandatory entry point should be identified and consideration given to whether early access would be beneficial to them. 79. If so, the most appropriate point at which to make the claimant aware of this is considered and arrangements made to discuss this further with them.

Booking an Follow-up Work Search Interview

80. Guidance on booking a Follow-up Work Search Interview can be found here.

Backdating a claim

- 81. If, during First Contact, the claimant requested that their claim be backdated, their labour market decision should be recorded on the CMS1JSA form before it is sent to the Benefit Centre.
- 82. If the claimant requests that they wish to backdate their claim at their Initial Work Search Interview, they complete a JSA5, the labour market decision is recorded on the back, before it is sent to the Benefit Centre. A CMS1JSA is **not** required in these cases.
- 83. If there is not enough time to complete the JSA5 at the Initial Work Search Interview, the claimant should be asked to take it with them, advised to fully complete it and return it to the jobcentre as soon as possible.
- 84. On receipt of the completed JSA5, action is taken as in the Backdated Claims guidance.

End of interview action

85. Before ending the interview, the coach must be assured that the claimant, their interpreter, Appointee, or other representative fully understands their requirements, as agreed on the Claimant Commitment or as outlined in a Jobseeker's Direction.

Step	Action
1	Any appropriate markers are set and the interview is ended on LMS
2	Once the Work Services Coach is satisfied that the claimant has been
	available for work since the date of their claim, they are asked to read
	and sign the Labour Market declaration, either on form ES24JP or via
	the Signature Capture Service.

3	Unless updated automatically by the Signature Capture Service,
	JSAPS dialogue JA470 is updated appropriately
4	CMS Conditionality screens are updated
5	Documentation is passed to the Financial Assessor

Useful Links

86. Additional action may be required for some claimants at their Initial Work Search Interview or at a Follow-up Work Search Interview. Details of some of the common actions are listed below. **This list is not exhaustive:**

- Better off Calculation (BOC);
- Customer Assessment Tool;
- ESA to JSA transition claimants;
- CV Job Broking Service;
- Mandatory Work Activity Procedural Guidance;
- · Childcare and recording child details;
- Backdating a claim;
- Flexible Support Fund;
- European Social Fund- Support for Families;
- Claimant works part-time;
- Claimant is attending a course of study;
- If it becomes apparent that the claimant is a Victim of Domestic Violence;
- Claimant wishes to withdraw their claim;
- Work Together and Work Clubs;
- National Careers Service
- Drug and Alcohol Misuser Guide;
- Adviser Knowledge Hub; and
- LMS User guide;