

The Jobcentre Plus Offer - Including Flexible Interventions, Work Related Activity and Work Experience & Work Placements

Background - What is the Jobcentre Plus Offer?

1. The Jobcentre Plus Offer is a package of personalised advice and support available from Jobcentre Plus. It supports the Government's strategy for economic growth and reduction in poverty by supporting people to find and retain work.
2. Jobcentre Plus has a key role to play in supporting claimants back to work by undertaking mandatory interventions and adopting a flexible approach to supporting claimant's individual needs. The Jobcentre Plus offer consists of four elements:
 - Core interventions which must be undertaken,
 - Flexible interventions, the frequency and duration of which is decided by the Adviser,
 - Access to a flexible menu of back to work support, and
 - Access to the Flexible Support Fund.
3. The policy behind the Jobcentre Plus Offer is the acknowledgement that District Managers and Advisers are best placed to understand how to support the local community. Districts have been empowered to decide when and how to support customers, albeit some of that support may be subject to voluntary take-up or mandatory participation depending on the benefit being claimed.
4. Greater flexibility for Districts in how local services are delivered in addition to less process driven national guidance, brings enormous benefits for advisers to support claimants into work.

ESA claimants and the Jobcentre Plus Offer

5. ESA claimants who are not referred to the Work Programme will be supported through the Jobcentre Plus Offer on a mandatory or voluntary basis.
6. As with any claimant group, Advisers will need a comprehensive understanding of how to manage a range of claimant needs. It may take time and patience to build a rapport. Advisers may encounter ESA claimants that:
 - Are ready to return to work,
 - Don't want to work ,
 - Don't realise that they can work,
 - May not have the knowledge and skills needed to engage effectively in the local labour market,
 - Want to work but don't know what is available and/or suitable for them, or
 - May be a fair distance from the labour market and their goal is to prepare for a time when work is appropriate.
7. Taking the time to identify and prioritise the help each claimant needs, as well as understanding the combinations and order of support that will help the

claimant the most, is vital and is more likely to achieve a positive outcome for both the claimant and Jobcentre Plus.

8. Whilst supporting ESA claimants through the Jobcentre Plus Offer it is important to remember it is not the role of an adviser to diagnose the claimant's ability to work; rather based on their capability, help them move forward by positive encouragement to help them recognise that their health condition does not necessarily signal the end of their working life. In addition help them identify and take steps towards work or in preparation for a time when they can work.

The four elements of the Jobcentre Plus Offer and what they mean for ESA claimants

- Core Interventions which must be undertaken; ,
- Flexible Interventions, the frequency and duration of which is decided by the Adviser; ,
- Access to a flexible menu of back to work support; flexible menu of back to work support, and
- Access to the Flexible Support Fund.

Core Interventions

9. Core Interventions for ESA claimants subject to mandatory conditionality can be any of the following:

- A NJWFI,
- A Work Programme Referral Interview, or
- A Post Work Programme Support Interview.

10. The core interventions that are applicable to ESA claimants are detailed in other chapters of this guidance. For further information on each of these core interventions please use the links by selecting each of the bullet points above.

Flexible Interventions

11. ESA claimants supported through the Jobcentre Plus Offer will have a series of Flexible Interventions that will be conducted on either a mandatory or voluntary basis.

12. Flexible Interventions are work focused interviews aimed at moving claimants closer to the labour market or into work. They are delivered for the most part at the Adviser's discretion. The aim is for the same Adviser to work with an individual claimant throughout the period they access support via the Jobcentre Plus offer. Such continuity ensures that the Adviser is in the best position to understand the claimant's personal circumstances and how these may limit their capability for work. Agreeing appropriate and achievable work related activity is not possible without it.

13. It is important that Advisers use Flexible Interventions to continually assess the claimants individual needs and effectively deliver interventions that:

- assess the support required and available (based on local priorities),
- agree appropriate work related activities where required, and

- set the frequency, content, duration and method of contact (face to face, over the phone, group information session or at a mutually convenient location).

14. Flexible Interventions can be delivered as face to face interviews (in a mutually convenient location), over the telephone or as group information sessions

Note: The decision to deliver Group Information Sessions is a local one based on local priorities.

Mandatory Flexible Interventions

15. Mandatory WRAG claimants must have at least two flexible interventions each year. This ensures that the claimant:

- remains in touch with their adviser,
- continues to be aware of the support available to them; and
- fulfils the conditions of their entitlement to the full amount of ESA.

16. Failure to attend a mandatory flexible intervention or failure to participate in one may mean that the claimant's benefit will be sanctioned.

17. A claimant can not be mandated to attend a FI that is delivered as a group session. If the claimant is required to attend a mandatory FI it must be either face to face or over the telephone.

18. At each on-going Flexible Intervention for mandatory WRAG claimants, the adviser should discuss appropriate work related activity that that when undertaken gives the claimant the best prospects of preparing for work. These discussions must always be recorded. WRA must always be appropriate to individual claimant. A Flexible Intervention can be specifically booked to review the progress/completion of mandatory Work Related Activity.

19. Although it is the responsibility for ESA claimants, mandated to the Jobcentre Plus Offer, to show how they are preparing for work, it is important that the adviser and claimant work together. It is important that Advisers have an understanding of how the claimant's personal circumstances limit their capability for work; agreeing appropriate and achievable work related activity is not possible without it.

20. Advisers must use their discretion in setting what work related activity a claimant must do, in accordance with the claimant's individual's capability and circumstances. See Work Related Activity for further information.

Voluntary Flexible Interventions

21. ESA claimants who are classed as voluntary can access support through the Jobcentre Plus Offer and will be managed through a series of voluntary flexible interventions.

22. Voluntary claimants may not have attended a NJWFI. In these instances the first Flexible Intervention must be used as an initial diagnostic interview.

Access to a flexible menu of back to work support

23. Flexible Interventions should be used to discuss the support available to ESA claimants and agree which would be suitable to help ESA claimants prepare for a return to work when they are able.

24. Support on offer to claimants can differ and Advisers should utilise their District Provision Tool when conducting these discussions.

25. In addition to localised support there are a number of National Initiatives that ESA claimants have access to:

- Sector based work academies (sbwa),
- Work Clubs,
- Working Together,
- Enterprise Clubs,
- New Enterprise Allowance,
- Work Choice,
- The Work Programme,
- Skills conditionality - claimants must be mandated to attend provision where 'skills' is a barrier to moving into work,
- Health Related Support,
- Youth Contract - The wage incentive scheme, if eligible (aged between 18 & 24 and been in receipt of combination of ESA/JSA/IS/IB benefits for 6 months),
- National Careers Service,
- Work Trials,
- Youth Contract Work Experience opportunities are part of the government's Youth Contract and can be used to help young people develop the skills required for work. Claimant must be in WRAG and aged between 18-24
- work experience and work placements for ESA claimants,
- Movement to Work is an employer-led initiative. ESA customers can access Pre-employment Training (PET) offered as 'Movement to Work' activity by an employer as part of a sector-based work academy (sbwa). Movement to Work can also be delivered as a Youth Contract, so some sbwa (as part of Movement to Work) can be restricted to 18-24 year olds only. The YC work experience opportunity MUST be for a minimum of two weeks. The Movement to Work period can be made up of a mixture of PET and work experience conforming to this flexibility.
 - However, ESA claimants can still access PET as part of Skills Conditionality, but this would be on a mandatory basis in line with Skills Conditionality guidance.
- Permitted work - Permitted Work rules allow claimants to try some paid work as a stepping stone back into full-time employment, whilst still receiving ESA,
- Volunteering, and
- Troubled Families.

26. Support available through the flexible menu of back to work support can be set as Work Related Activity for mandatory ESA claimants.

Access to the Flexible Support Fund

Flexible Support Fund

27. As part of the Jobcentre Plus Offer, District Managers have been allocated funding to help deliver their business objectives. This is known as the Flexible Support Fund (FSF).

28. District Managers have considerable flexibility in using the fund to supplement mainstream services and to tailor support to the needs of individuals and the local area. They may, for example, use FSF to support local partnership arrangements and purchase provision.

29. FSF is also the source of funding that underpins a range of DWP national policies. One example here is the payment of a claimant's expenses incurred as a result of attending mandatory provision and certain interviews with Jobcentre Plus advisers – in such cases, a claimant's expenses **must** be met. Further details of where FSF underpins national policies can be found in subject specific guidance.

30. The District Manager will, almost certainly, allocate some of the fund to Advisory Teams and, in doing so, issue local guidelines about priorities, any restrictions that might apply or limits that are imposed on the amount that can be spent in particular circumstances. Within the limits set by the District Manager, any such allocation gives Advisory Teams flexibility and discretion to make awards that will enhance the employment prospects of the claimants, and other customers, with whom they are engaged.

Flexible Interventions

Conducting Flexible Interventions for ESA claimants

31. If you are conducting a Flexible Intervention following a claimant's attendance at a Work Programme Information Session, you must follow the action to take in the ESA Work Programme Information Session chapter.

32. Flexible Interventions for ESA claimants can be delivered face to face in a Jobcentre or a mutually convenient location or over the telephone.

33. Claimants can be placed in the WRAG using Regulation 29(2). This means that the WCA Decision Maker has decided that, even though the claimant does not have sufficient disabilities to be in the WRAG, substantial risk to the mental or physical health of any person would be triggered if they were not placed in the WRAG, for example, if they were found to have no limited capability for work.

34. From 14.1.16, prior to conducting the interview, you must check in JSA Dialogue 510 to see if there is a note 'Reg 29'.

35. If there is, this means the claimant has been placed in the WRAG using Regulation 29(2). Work Related Activity can still be set for the claimant, but as with all claimants, their circumstances and health condition must be taken into account.

36. Claimants in receipt of ESA (IR) and have a prognosis of 18-24 months may be required to participate in one of three pilots if the claimant lives in:

- Any District within Southern Group,

- One of five Districts in Central (Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland; Leicestershire and Northamptonshire; Derbyshire; Black Country; and Staffordshire), or
- One of three Districts in North East England Group (Durham and Tees Valley – CPA 5; Northumberland, Tyne and Wear – CPA 5; North East Yorkshire and the Humber – CPA 18).

In these instances you must follow action to take in the relevant pilot guidance.

37. Flexible Interventions are delivered to support claimants' individual needs and will therefore be structured accordingly. Below is suggestive content of a Flexible Intervention and not an instruction on how each one must be delivered.

38. It is expected that Flexible Interventions for ESA claimants will contain some or all of the following.

Step	Action	Notes
1	Meet and greet the claimant. Introduce yourself and if applicable verify the claimant's identity by asking appropriate security questions Start the interview on LMS	Regardless of the content, purpose and delivery method of a Flexible Intervention each one must be recorded on LMS for both voluntary and mandatory claimants.
2	Review any sanctions in place – has the claimant recompiled? Has the sanction been lifted etc.	
3	Review the claimants Action Plan. For those claimants that don't have an action plan, one must be created.	See the Action Plan Guidance for information on creating and maintaining Action Plans.
4	Discuss with the claimant any factors which make it harder for them to prepare for work or obtain work. Identify activities and solutions which will remove or mitigate these factors.	It may not always be necessary to undertake these discussions. The length of the claim, the relationship between the adviser and claimant and the individual circumstances will all determine the necessity of such discussions. Note: You should check if the Armed Forces LMS Marker needs to be set. Completion of this marker is voluntary for all claimants. However, advisers are encouraged to ask claimants during interviews whether they fit into one of the marker categories. This will provide the necessary information so DWP can show what help and support we are

		providing for ex-Armed Forces personnel. See the Armed Forces LMS Marker guidance for further details.
5	Review the claimants Universal Jobmatch account. Where claimants don't have one, encourage them to create on and give DWP access to it.	For further details on Universal Jobmatch accounts please refer to the Universal Jobmatch Homepage.
6	<p>Discuss, search and match work related activities that are available through the Flexible Menu of Support.</p> <p>Explain to all Lone Parents with a youngest child aged 1 – 4, that when their youngest child is aged 3 or 4, they may be required to undertake mandatory WRA. If they have not received a copy previously issue the factsheet (Welsh Version). It is good practice to note on the Action Plan that the factsheet has been issued.</p>	<p>See the Chapter 04 Conducting the NJWFI to determine if claimant needs to be referred to the Work Programme. For further details see ESA WP Referral guidance and Work Programme Information Sessions</p> <p>When discussing a referral to provision you must consider the claimant's benefit status before making an actual referral. ESA (IR) claimants may lose their benefit if they attend provision over 16 hours per week. Full details of how education/training may affect an entitlement to ESA (IR) and ESA (C) is available in the ESA Guidance for Benefit Centres - Conditions of Entitlement – Education.</p>
7	<p>Record all activity discussed on an Action Plan, such as steps forward and progress made including any next steps to be completed before the next intervention.</p> <p>Ensure you give a copy of the latest version of the Action Plan to the claimant.</p>	See Action Plan Guidance for information on creating and maintaining action plans.

8	<p>At the end of the Flexible Intervention determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the claimant will continue to be supported to check they are continuing to take steps to prepare for or obtain work, and • Whether contact will be face to face or by telephone. <p>Book a subsequent Flexible Intervention or set a workflow to contact the claimant to book an appointment (where applicable issue the appropriate notification letter).</p>	The claimant's personal circumstances, distance from the labour market, and their work preparation activities will determine the extent of the contact necessary.
9	End the interview on LMS.	

Note: Advisers should be aware that they maybe approached by ESA claimants who are potentially subject to the benefit cap (which started April 2013). They may want to access the support available through the Work Programme (where eligible) or the Jobcentre Plus offer to help them move into work or closer to the labour market. For more information see the Benefit Cap guidance 39. Full details on preparing for and conducting flexible interventions is available in the WFI Process and Supporting Tools for Advisers and ATMs guidance.

Claimant Fails to Attend or Participate in a Flexible Intervention

40. Mandatory ESA claimants can have a sanction imposed on their benefit if they fail to attend (FTA) an interview or fail to participate (FTP) in an intervention. If this occurs follow the action stated in Chapter 08 FTA/FTP in a WFI and Failure to Undertake Work-Related Activity.

41. When an ESA claimant FTA or FTP you must always consider their current circumstances and/or health condition (including their vulnerable status) before action is taken to begin the DMA process.

42. After taking the above into consideration it may become clear that the intervention or work related activity at this time would be of no benefit to the claimant or not appropriate in the current circumstances. In these instances the intervention should be re-arranged and/or the work related activity removed or given a longer completion date.

Note: Deferring attendance of a mandatory intervention is only applicable to a NJWFI. Flexible Interventions must simply be rearranged for a more appropriate time.

Work-Related Activity

What is Work Related Activity (WRA)

43. WRA can be a single or several defined activities that enable the claimant to move into work, remain in work or move closer to the labour market.

44. Work related activity is simply work preparation activities that give the claimant the best possible prospects of moving into work when they are able.

45. Work Related Activity must not be confused with job search requirements or work availability requirements such as those applicable to JSA claimants.

46. Defined WRA will be very different for each individual claimant as it must be appropriate and reasonable taking into account their circumstances. .

Who is Work Related Activity Applicable to?

47. Work Related Activity (WRA) is only applicable to mandatory claimants in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG)

Agreeing Work-Related Activity

48. It is expected that ESA mandatory WRAG claimants receiving support through the Jobcentre Plus Offer will undertake some work related activity (WRA).

49. An adviser can identify that work related activity is appropriate at any given point and can issue a Mandatory Work Related Activity requirement to a claimant that is expected to undertake it.

50. However, Advisers have the freedom to determine, in consultation with the claimant, what WRA is appropriate and reasonable. It is vital that when agreeing work related activities that the claimant's circumstances are taken into account; including physical or mental health and any learning or cognitive issues, as failure to undertake WRA can result in a sanction applied to the claimants benefit.

51. When agreeing WRA the following must be adhered to:

- It must be appropriate, personal to the customer and aimed at improving access to opportunities in the labour market.
- Claimants must not be asked to undertake anything that is unrealistic, that could put their health at risk or be contrary to their religious beliefs.
- It must be recorded on an Action Plan and a copy given to the claimant. For full details on how to record WRA on an Action Plan see Notification of WRA on the Action Plan. (Mandatory claimants do not have to sign the Action Plan but a copy must be given to them). and
- It must be recorded as part of an interview. During the interview select 'NAct' button and choose 'Req to undertake ESA WRA given' from the list.

Setting Work Related Activity

52. When setting work related activity Advisers must ensure each activity is SMART. That is:

- **Specific** – it must identify any factors which may impact on the claimant's ability or opportunity to prepare for work or obtain work, and identify any solutions or activities which may remove or mitigate these factors,
- **Measurable** – if activities are to be undertaken regularly, how often must be specified. For example: 'I will attend my training course (name specified) every Monday (times specified) for 6 weeks (dates specified),
- **Achievable** – be reasonable, having regard to the claimant's circumstances, in particular their health condition or disability. Activities that are clearly beyond the claimant's capabilities or are simply unreasonable should not be included,
- **Realistic** – Taking into account the claimant's capabilities, skills, experience they must be able to realistically achieve their WRA requirement. Their future job goal must also be realistic taking into account their circumstances, capabilities and local labour market, and
- **Time Bound** – activities should be time bound and will be reviewed at appropriate points. Activities can be regular (weekly), one-off, or undertaken within a certain time frame.

53. An ESA claimant cannot be mandated to undertake WRA that includes:

- Applying for a job or undertaking work as an employee or otherwise,
- Work experience through Get Britain Working,
- Undergo medical treatment,
- Undertaking WRA outside of their youngest child's normal school hours if the claimant is a lone parent with a child under the age of 13 (WRA can only be mandatory for an ESA Lone Parent during a child's normal school hours, which may include nursery school).
- Undertaking WRA if the claimant is a lone parent and the child is under the age of 3 years, or
- Undertake WRA if the claimant is a voluntary claimant

Note: If a sanction has been applied for FTP in WRA and the claimant's circumstances change meaning they are no longer required to undertake WRA (i.e. they become a voluntary claimant, by moving from the WRAG to the Support Group, or they become a Lone Parent with a child under the age of 3, or any other exempt claimant groups) the mandatory WRA will no longer apply. Any sanctions imposed as a result of failing to undertake WRA will need to be lifted from the date of the change of circumstance.

Examples of work related activity

54. WRA is individual to each mandatory ESA claimant and it must always be appropriate, personal to the customer and aimed at improving access to opportunities in the labour market.

55. ESA claimants have very individual circumstances and what WRA activity is suitable for one claimant it will not be suitable for others.

56. Below are some examples of what work related activity could look like:

- A WRAG claimant (not subject to referral to the Work Programme) who has a skills need. This skills need is the main barrier preventing them moving into work. These claimants would be referred to skills provision (funded by

the Skills Funding Agency or the Education Funding Agency) on a mandatory basis, and it would be recorded on their Action Plan as mandatory WRA.

- A WRAG claimant (not subject to referral to the Work Programme) has a barrier to work that could be addressed by attending a work placement. These claimants can be mandated to attend a work placement that is suitable to their circumstances and it would be recorded on their Action Plan as mandatory work related activity.
- A WRAG claimant (not subject to referral to the Work Programme) who wants to work but does not have a CV that informs of all their experience and skills. Not having an up to date CV is hindering their ability to find suitable employment. These claimants can be mandated to obtain an up to date CV and it would be recorded on their action plan as mandatory work related activity.
- A WRAG claimant (not subject to referral to the Work Programme) has a health condition that has occurred through their previous employment. Due to their condition they are no longer able to return to their previous line of work. The adviser and claimant agree that a short training course would enable the claimant to return to work in a different field. The claimant can be mandated to participate in the training course and it would be recorded on their action plan as mandatory WRA.

Note: This list of examples is not exhaustive and must not be used to determine acceptable mandatory work related activity for all ESA claimants.

Recording a WRA on the Action Plan

57. The claimant must be informed that they are required to undertake WRA via their Action Plan. Failure to follow the procedure below would result in the claimant being unable to be referred to a decision maker if they were to fail to participate and/or undertake the required WRA.

Step	Action	Notes
1	Open up the Action Plan functionality on the claimants LMS Record.	If the claimant does not have an Action Plan one must be created.
2	Record the mandatory work related activity in the Action Plan. The Action Plan must state: 'To continue to receive my full entitlement to ESA I will ...' then specify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WRA they are required to undertake, • How the WRA will be met (it can consist of several steps), • When it must be done by, and 	When giving a deadline for WRA, it is suggested that the completion date should be aligned with a further intervention.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any other information the Adviser considers appropriate. 	
3	If a Flexible Intervention is not already booked, arrange one to check that the WRA has been completed.	
4	Give a copy of the Action Plan to the claimant.	If you are conducting the Flexible Intervention by telephone you must send a copy of the written Action Plan detailing the specifics of the WRA the claimant must undertake.

If the Claimant feels the WRA is inappropriate or unreasonable

58. If the claimant feels that the work related activity they have been asked to complete is inappropriate or unreasonable, they must first discuss their concerns with the Adviser who set it. If the Adviser is content that the WRA is appropriate, personal to the customer and aimed at improving their access to opportunities in the labour market, the claimant can request a formal reconsideration.

59. If a claimant requests that their work related activity is reconsidered this must be done so by a different Adviser. Once the other Adviser has made their decision they must notify the claimant in writing using the ESA WRA Reconsideration letter.

60. If it is decided that the WRA is inappropriate or unreasonable the claimant's action plan must be updated.

Youth Contract(YC) work experience for 18-24 year old WRAG claimants

Summary

61. ESA WRAG claimants aged 18 to 24 can volunteer to take part in a YC work experience opportunity.

62. YC work experience opportunities are part of the government's Youth Contract and can be used to help young people develop the skills required for work.

63. For ESA WRAG claimants' participation in YC work experience is entirely voluntary and no sanction can be applied for failing to start, undertake or complete the work experience. However if a claimant fails to complete their YC work experience, advisers should book a flexible intervention to discuss the circumstances with the claimant to identify any issues which need to be addressed.

64. If the claimant is aged 18-24 year old and an appropriate opportunity is available it would be expected that the claimant would participate in the YC work experience rather than the ESA work experience available to all other ESA claimants.

65. Participants will continue to receive their ESA personal allowance, and their work related activity component whilst on YC work experience.

66. For further detail around YC work experience including how to refer please see YE work experience guidance

Work Experience and Work Placements for ESA claimants

Background

67. Work experience and work placements are additional measures that Advisers can use to help ESA claimants move closer to the labour market.

68. Work experience and work placements provide an opportunity for claimants to experience a structured work environment to learn new skills, increase their confidence and employability. They can also help claimants address barriers to work such as lack of work experience and confidence issues due to their limited capability for work.

69. Each work environment must be tailored to the individual's health and personal circumstances; including any physical or mental limitations of the claimant as all employers are subject to the Equality Act 2010 i.e. reasonable adjustments must be made where necessary such as location, hours of attendance, placement content. Advisers must ensure that claimants are only referred to suitable places.

70. There is no minimum or maximum duration for a work experience or work placement but they will generally be over a short period, and will often require restricted hours in recognition of the claimant's limited capability for work.

71. Work experience or work placements for ESA claimants must not be a substitute for temporarily filling an employer's vacancy. Where an employer has an existing vacancy or apprenticeship they must fill those vacancies through normal recruitment methods.

72. A work experience agreement must be signed by the employer and DWP (Employer and partner facing teams). The agreement includes information about health & safety liabilities and sets out the terms and conditions under which the work experience and work placement operate.

Work experience and work placements are open to all ESA claimants but for some referral to a work placement can be mandatory. Please see the information in the table below for more details.

73. Participants will continue to receive their ESA personal allowance, and for those in ESA WRAG their work related activity component whilst on work experience or work placement, and must attend Work Focused Interviews (WFI) as required.

74. Work experience and work placements for ESA claimants must not be confused with the Youth Contract work experience opportunities and sector based work academies work experience placements. ESA claimants in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) can on a voluntary basis participate in a sector-based work academy; however once they agree to participate they must

complete the pre-employment training element, but the work experience placement and guaranteed job interview are voluntary.

75. ESA WRAG claimants who are aged 18 to 24 who are looking to undertake Work Experience should be referred to YC Work Experience provided they meet the criteria.

76. The table below shows the differences between each of the work experience / placements available:

Offer	Which claimants are eligible	Mandatory?
Work experience (for ESA claimants).	ESA (WRAG), ESA volunteer claimants (i.e. from support group).	No.
Work placements (with community benefit) for (ESA claimants).	ESA (WRAG), ESA volunteer claimants (i.e. from support group).	Yes for ESA (WRAG) claimants but not for ESA volunteer claimants or those exempt from WRA.
Sector-based work academy work experience placement element (GBW).	JSA and ESA (WRAG) pre-work programme claimants.	No. However, if a JSA claimant is dismissed for gross misconduct they may be sanctioned. Not mandatory / sanctionable for any reason for ESA (WRAG) claimants
Work experience opportunities (YC)	JSA / ESA claimants aged 18-24.	No unless JSA claimant dismissed for gross misconduct.

Work Experience for ESA claimants

77. All ESA claimants have access to work experience on an entirely voluntary basis; i.e. ESA claimants can not be mandated to undertake a work experience position, no sanctions can be applied, even in cases of gross misconduct. However if a claimant fails to complete their work experience, advisers should discuss the circumstances with the claimant to identify any issues which need to be addressed.

78. ESA claimants can only be referred to work experience if the claimant agrees that it would be helpful. Consideration must be given to the claimant's health condition or disabilities to ensure that work experience is appropriate.

79. ESA claimants can source their own work experience, however it must be ensured that an employer agreement is signed and in place before the claimant is referred. An adviser would need to liaise with the Employer and Partner facing teams to facilitate the referral and set up the employer agreement if required.

Work Placements for ESA claimants

80. For most ESA claimants Work placements are also available on a voluntary basis however, ESA claimants in the WRAG can be mandated to attend a work placement if it is agreed that a referral would be appropriate. For instance the claimant has a barrier to work which they refuse to address and it could be addressed by a work placement, they must require ESA WRAG claimants to undertake a work placement as an aspect of their WRA.

81. Subsequently, failure to comply without good cause may attract a sanction as part of the current sanctions regime that applies when a claimant fails to participate in a mandated WRA.

Note: Work placements for ESA claimants should not be confused with sector based work academy (sbwa) work experience placements; although ESA claimants can access these they are never mandatory. Work placements for ESA claimants must be of benefit to the community over and above the benefit of providing a placement to the individual. ESA WRAG claimants, with the exception of those who are exempt from Work Related Activity (WRA), should always be referred to work placements as part of their conditionality to undertake WRA if appropriate. Referrals to work placements must always be recorded within the individual's action plan.

82. Where ESA WRAG claimants have already been referred or participated in work experience on a voluntary basis, advisers can still determine that a work placement is appropriate and mandate them to attend if necessary.

83. Those within the ESA WRAG who are exempt from WRA can be referred on a voluntary basis to a work placement, as can ESA voluntary claimants, but no sanction can be applied.

Note: As with work experience, work placements must be reasonable and appropriate to the claimant's personal circumstances. This is a supportive measure and claimants will only be asked to do this if they are not voluntarily taking steps to overcome barriers to moving closer to the labour market.

Sourcing of Work Experience / Work Placements

84. For detail on sourcing work experience / work placements see Employer and Partner facing guidance re work experience / work placements.

85. ESA claimants can source their own work experience / work placement with an employer who is willing to offer them an opportunity, and, if they find one, they are required to inform the Jobcentre immediately, so that the relevant employment agreement can be put in place.

86. Jobcentre Plus claimants that arrange their own work experience placements with an employer **may** be eligible to apply for Access to Work support. For further detail see Access to Work guidance

Discussing work experience and work placements with the claimant

87. Ensure you explain the benefits of taking part in work experience or work placement to the claimant, this may include:

- Improve their job prospects,

- See the skills and behaviours employers want from people,
- See how the skills they have can be adapted to the workplace,
- Gain real life work experience,
- Build their confidence, or
- Add to their CV, including a work related reference/referee.

88. In addition, advisers should explain that:

- Travel, childcare and reasonable adjustment costs may be met via Flexible Support Fund,
- Claimant's benefit will not be affected whilst participating in work experience,
- Participation in work experience is voluntary,
- If the claimant fails to comply in a work placement as a WRA then their benefit may be sanctioned, and
- The claimant is required to maintain the same standards of behaviour of anyone working for that employer.

89. Advisers should also discuss:

- The requirements, including attendance, time keeping, behaviour, appearance, and adherence to health and safety requirements,
- The requirement for the claimant to continue to attend mandatory Work Focused Interviews, when asked, whilst participating in work experience or work placement. It is possible for the adviser to agree to defer the requirement to attend an NJWFI or rearrange a mandatory Flexible Intervention for the period they are attending the work experience,
- Any special needs and reasonable adjustment issues they may have,
- That they may be expected to attend an interview with the host organisation, or provide a CV, depending upon their selection criteria,
- That they may do their own search for an employer who is willing to offer them work experience, and, if they find one, to inform the Jobcentre immediately, so that the relevant agreement can be put in place, and
- That if a claimant feels that the work experience / work placement is unreasonable or inappropriate they should discuss this with their advisers.

90. If discussing a specific work experience or work placement, the adviser should include as much information as possible about the employer, the role, the hours, etc.

Requirement to sign a data sharing consent form

91. In order to be referred and participate in work experience or work placement the claimant will need to sign a data sharing consent form (or Welsh version). This is necessary in order for the adviser to share the claimant details with the host organisation and obtain progress reports from them. Failure to sign the consent form means participation in work experience or work placement can not take place.

92. The data shared with the host organisation will be minimal, and any medical information included must be agreed between the claimant and adviser.

93. If the claimant is not prepared to complete the data sharing form, the adviser should discuss the reasons with the claimant, and seek to address their concerns.

94. When a claimant refuses to sign a consent form and the adviser feels that a referral to a work placement is necessary as part of the claimants work related activity the adviser should explain that failure to do so may be regarded as a failure to undertake work related activity and that the claimants benefits may be reduced. If the claimant still will not sign the consent form then take action as per FTA/FTP in a WFI and Failure to Undertake Work-Related Activity Failure to Undertake Work-Related Activity

Disclosure Barring Service (CRB Checks)

95. Places with young children, the elderly and other vulnerable groups generally require that the employer carry out a criminal record check on prospective employees.

96. DWP cannot fund criminal record checks on behalf of employers / host organisations. During the initial discussion with employers / host organisations, it must be made clear that it is always the employer / host organisation's responsibility to obtain the check.

97. Claimant agrees to participate in work experience or work placement.

Advisers should:

Step	Action	Notes
1	Ensure that any additional employer requirements are completed (as per the submission arrangements).	
2	Ensure any reasonable adjustments are in place.	
3	Check that a work experience agreement signed by the employer is held before the work experience or work placement starts.	See ESA Guidance for Employer and Partner Facing teams for work experience and work placements.
4	Record the referral within LMS.	Referral must be made within an interview; if required you may need to book a Flexible Intervention, such as a Flexible Intervention ESA Vol - 10 mins.
5	Select the ' NAct ' button and choose: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ESA ref'd to Work Exp'- for all ESA references to work experience and work placement referrals for non-WRAG claimants and those in the WRAG exempt from WRA, and• 'ESA WRAG mand to WRA Work Plac' –for ESA WRAG referrals	

	to work placement as WRA.	
6	Issue the notification letter (or the Welsh version). The issuing of the notification letter should be detailed in LMS Conversations.	
7	All WRA direction must be included on an Action Plan.	
8	If the claimant fails to complete the work placement, and is attending as an agreed Work Related Activity, action must be taken as per Failure to Undertake Work-Related Activity.	

Payment of associated costs

98. ESA claimants, attending work experience or work placements or any other approved work related activity, that require assistance with travel, childcare and replacement care in order to participate can be awarded funding through the Districts Flexible Support Fund (FSF) to meet those costs. In certain circumstances the FSF can be used to purchase specialist equipment.

Note: Access to Work funding may only be available for self sourced ESA work experience or ESA work placements see Access to Work guidance.

99. When awarding payments from the FSF to ESA claimants to participate in work experience or work placements you must ensure you use the correct account codes, these are found on ACME.

ACME tool

100. When using the ACME tool you must select the client group, programme and payment type as follows:

- Client Group: Sick/Disabled Customers (ESA/IB Claimants),
- Programme: ESA Work Experience or ESA Work Placement, and
- Payment type:
 - Travel: Training,
 - Childcare: Training,
 - Replacement Care: Training, or
 - Additional support: Other Costs.

Support for Participants if they are unhappy with their work experience or work placement

101. Participants should be encouraged to resolve any issues they have with the employer directly, but there must be a process in place for escalating and dealing with concerns about employers and the quality of places. Districts will need to have local arrangements in place.

102. Any complaints from the participant or suspicion that employers are not operating in the spirit of the work experience / placement must be investigated and, where appropriate discussed with the employer. If doubts remain about the

employer then any work experience agreement must be withdrawn and the participant removed.

103. The nature of the work experience / work placement means that it could be open to abuse by an employer, e.g. they may not be providing the participant with the agreed type or quality of experience, or be using the places inappropriately, just to cover a busy period. DWP has a responsibility to ensure such abuse does not take place and to protect the interests of those participating.

104. Using work experience / work placements as a recruitment tool for new staff or to displace existing staff/ reduce hours/ available overtime is unacceptable and any complaints will be followed-up and agreements will be withdrawn where there is evidence to substantiate the complaint.

Guidance queries and help

105. If you are unable to find an answer to a particular question regarding the process within this chapter you must contact the Jobcentre Plus Live Support Advice Line. Do not give the Advice Line number to customers or outside bodies under any circumstances, it is for the use of Jobcentre Plus staff only. Details of how to contact them can be found by clicking on the following hyperlink, Advice Line Home Page.

106. Please do not use the 'E-mail page owner' and 'Page information' links at the bottom of each page of guidance to raise policy queries. These should only be used to report broken hyperlinks.

107. Please use the comments box at the bottom of each page to submit suggestions for guidance improvement only, any questions raised via this route will not be answered.