

# Generic Template

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Key:

**Mandatory information**

Optional information

\* Field visible to users

**KM Team Only** – field used internally by KM team only – no field required in Knowledge Base

**Category name\***

Delivering Universal Credit

**Sub-category\***

**Work Services**

**Content item name\***

Initial Work Search Interview

*Alternative names (enter any other names that staff or public might use to refer to this item)*

**Summary\***

How to conduct an initial Work Search Interview

**Content\***

The aim of the initial Work Search Interview (WSI) is to encourage claimants to take as much work as they can reasonably do as quickly as possible.

To help this process the work coach should:

- motivate and challenge claimants to help them identify their needs and skills
- Offer flexible advice and support
- support the claimant in developing new skills
- produce and agree a tailored Claimant Commitment
- clearly explain the consequences of not meeting requirements (sanction) and the availability of Recoverable Hardship Payments
- ensure claimants are able to identify and engage third party support see DPT
- be confident in asking positive, supportive questions/language and in taking a positive approach keeping claimants engaged and moving forward

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The work coach (WC) takes account of individual circumstances and sets requirements (that if complied with) will give the claimant the best possible prospects of finding;

- paid work
- more work
- better paid work

<b>The consequences of not doing this may include</b>
A claimant not receiving the help and support they need
A claimant not being fully prepared to apply for jobs

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

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

- Universal Credit payments are made to the household, but each individual has personalised requirements that need to be met in order for the household to receive payment (this interview is to establish the work-related requirements)
- in the case of joint claims, both eligible claimants within a household are required to accept their individual Claimant Commitments and any work-related requirements are detailed for each person (if one member of the couple doesn't accept their Claimant Commitment, neither will be entitled to Universal Credit and this will apply throughout the lifetime of the Universal Credit claim, not just at the onset of a new claim)
- conditionality is set at an individual level and therefore interviews including the initial WSI and Work-Focused Interviews (WFI), must be on an individual basis
- the ultimate goal is to ensure that individuals and their partner increase their earnings and ultimately become independent by progression into work, work retention or by increasing work
- for couples with children, the couple must agree who will be the lead carer – the conditionality group of the lead carer is determined by the age of the youngest child (if the couple cannot agree who will be the lead carer, both claimants will be placed in the All Work Related Requirements (AWRR) group – Intensive Work Search regime

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- lead carers (including lone parents) with children have a Claimant Commitment that reflects their caring responsibilities and this must include any special educational needs and disabilities the children may have (see Diagnosis of claimant capabilities and circumstances) – the WC must also discuss the following depending on the circumstances and age of the child or children:
  - available free childcare – the WC must encourage them to start thinking about this, and to investigate the childcare available to them
  - children aged 3 and 4 are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare per week – this is available to all children and is not dependent of the parent working so the claimant will also be able to access this when they are engaged in work-related activities (from September 2017 this will be further extended to 30 hours in some parts of England to claimants who are working, for more information click here Link to gov.uk).
  - support available from the Local Authority Family Information Service
  - provision for children aged 2 to receive 15 hours of free childcare if a claimant is in receipt of certain benefits, including Universal Credit, or are on a low income (Childcare for 2 -4 year olds)
  - access to the Flexible Support Fund if the claimant needs to pay up-front deposits or joining fees
  - claimants who are working and pay for additional childcare, may also be entitled to claim back up to 85% of their childcare costs (up to a monthly cap of £646.35 per month for one child and £1108.04 for two or more children)

The WC must also:

- encourage a claimant to look into and access the free childcare available in their area and work coaches should support them in doing this
- consider setting (depending on the claimant's current conditionality) a voluntary or compulsory work preparation activity to research childcare provision (see Work preparation activities - setting requirements)
- record any action the claimant has already taken regarding childcare, whether they already access it and to what extent
- explain that other support may be available, for example Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) which will be discussed later as part of the

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PBS conversation (during the conversation, the WC identifies if a PBS referral to local authority provision is required and determines if an Alternative Payment Arrangement is needed or a referral to Online Budgeting Support - Money Manager Tool as long as the claimant is able to use digital services and is not considered vulnerable – the WC updates the Claimant Commitment with details of what has been agreed regarding PBS)

After conducting the initial WSI, the IWSI Checklist may be completed by the WC to make sure all relevant actions have been undertaken. Completion of the Checklist is not mandatory but it is recommended that the WC refers to this throughout the interview.

### **Claimant responsibility - Day 1 Conditionality**

Day 1 Conditionality only applies to claimants in the AWRR – Intensive regime.

These activities may include creating an account and uploading a CV in Find a job or if more appropriate, another jobsite, or creating an email account and/or a CV.

If the claimant has completed all day 1 Conditionality activities the WC updates WSP. See Day 1 Conditionality - updating the marker in the Work Services Platform.

The WC then checks if the claimant is a Work Programme completer. See 'Work Programme completers – Day 1 Conditionality' below.

If the claimant has not completed all day 1 Conditionality activities the WC must establish which activity the claimant has not completed.

If the claimant has not created an account and uploaded a CV in Find a job or if more appropriate, another jobsite, the WC must explore the reasons why - see Find a job or other jobsites and Work Services Platform under the heading 'Claimant has not created an account and uploaded a CV in Find a job or if more appropriate, another jobsite'.

If the claimant is not yet able to create an account and upload a CV in Find a job, or if more appropriate, another jobsite, the WC must instead consider whether it is appropriate for the claimant to:

- create an email account which can be used for employment purposes, and/or
- create a CV which can be used for employment purposes

Having taken account of the claimant's circumstances, if the WC decides it isn't reasonable or appropriate for the claimant to undertake any of these activities at this time, they must refer them for the help and support needed to complete the activities as soon as possible.

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### Example:

A claimant must not be required to create an account and upload a CV in Find a job or if more appropriate, another jobsite if they don't have the necessary IT skills because these skills must be addressed first

The WC establishes that it is reasonable and appropriate for the claimant to completed any or all of the Day 1 Conditionality activities (and the claimant has not yet completed any of these activities), the WC mandates them to do so by recording this within 'Work preparation activities' on their CC.

If the WC decides that it isn't yet appropriate for the claimant to create an account and upload a CV in Find a job or if more appropriate another jobsite, but it is reasonable for them to have an email account and/or a separate CV for employment purposes, the WC must explain the benefits of this and mandate the claimant by recording it as a work preparation activity in the Work Services Platform (WSP) – see Work preparation activities - recording requirements on the Work Services Platform.

The WC must set a review for each outstanding activity in WSP.

The work preparation activities must be followed-up as soon as is reasonable possible (following the initial WSI) preferably to coincide with the next pre-arranged appointment.

#### **The consequences of not doing this may include**

A claimant not receiving the help and support they need

A claimant not being fully prepared to apply for jobs

The WC updates the Day 1 Conditionality on WSP. See Day 1 Conditionality - updating the marker in the Work Services Platform.

#### **Work Programme completers – Day 1 Conditionality**

##### Work Programme completers:

- whose benefit claim is continuous, or who have had a break of less than 12 weeks, will not be subject to Day 1 Conditionality
- who have reclaimed Universal Credit within 12 weeks will follow the 'Help to Work' package of support
- who break their Universal Credit claim and re-claim after the 12 week linking period, will be subject to Day 1 Conditionality requirements

#### **Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements**

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

### **Interview content**

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

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

The WC must develop and record a set of personalised requirements (that when complied with) give the claimant the best prospect of finding work. See [Claimant Commitment hub](#).

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

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

### **English language requirements**

During the initial WSI if the WC is unsure whether the claimant has English language requirements, they should undertake the English language screening. See [English language requirement skills screening](#).

If it is clear the claimant doesn't have English language requirements, the WC updates the 'English Language Requirements' marker to 'not applicable' on WSP. See [English language requirements - updating the marker in the Work Services Platform](#).

### **Welsh language requirements (Wales only)**

To be considered for Welsh language requirements the WC must establish if the claimant meets the following criteria:

- their ability to speak both the English and Welsh languages is below E2
- they live in an area where Welsh is the predominant language needed for employment

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- if it is identified from the discussion that the absence of Welsh language skills (as opposed to English) is the main barrier to finding employment

If the claimant is a Welsh only speaker with speaking and listening skills below E2 level for Welsh, they would be eligible for the Welsh language option provision.

If it is clear the claimant doesn't have Welsh language requirements, the WC updates the 'English language requirements' marker to 'not applicable' on WSP (WSP does not hold a marker specifically for Welsh language requirements). See [English language requirements - updating the marker in the Work Services Platform](#).

If the claimant is a Welsh only speaker and has speaking and listening skills below E2, they must be mandated to attend a course. See [English or Welsh language requirements skills training](#).

If the claimant has speaking and listening skills above E2 in English they are not eligible for English language requirements, regardless of whether they live in a majority Welsh speaking area or Labour Market.

If the WC is unsure whether the claimant has English and Welsh language requirements, they should undertake the English language screening to ascertain if they may have English language requirements. See [English or Welsh language requirements skills screening](#).

### Information gather

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

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

### Completing a Work Services Platform record for the claimant

#### Claim section

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

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

The WC has previewed the claimant's 'General Notes' to establish whether any requirements for an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) and/or PBS exist.

If WSP 'General notes' show: 'Claimant has POca and has not provided any other account details', the WC will need to have a method of payment discussion with the

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claimant which may identify financial difficulties. The WC considers PBS face to face referral.

### Personal

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

If the claimant's date of claim is within 12 weeks of their Work Programme end date, this will be noted on the 'General notes' in WSP. The claimant is treated as a Work Programme completer and the Work Programme completer process is then followed.

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

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

### Special requirements

The WC determines with the claimant if they have any complex needs or additional special requirements which are not recorded on WSP. See [http://intralink.link2.gpn.gov.uk/1/jcp/guidance/bus\\_del/a-z/vulnerability/DWP\\_T779646.asp](http://intralink.link2.gpn.gov.uk/1/jcp/guidance/bus_del/a-z/vulnerability/DWP_T779646.asp)

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

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

1. Selects 'Has special needs' and then the 'Yes' radio button to display the 'Active special need' pane.
2. Selects the 'Active special need' pane.
3. Selects 'Add new special need' from the ribbon menu.
4. Selects the 'Special need type' look-up menu.
5. Selects the appropriate 'Special need type' and then 'OK'.
6. Selects 'Save and close' from the ribbon menu.

### Employment history

The WC selects 'Active employment' and then the 'Add new employment' from the toolbar menu. This opens the Employment New screen. The following fields are selected and completed:

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



- Frequency

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

### **Skills and qualifications**

The WC:

1. Obtains information regarding a claimant's qualifications by discussing these during the interview. The WC identifies the qualifications which are needed for the claimant's job requirements.
2. Selects 'Qualifications' from the 'Common' menu. This displays the 'Qualifications', 'Qualification associated view' (this box is pre-selected and doesn't need to be selected by the WC).
3. Selects 'Add new qualification' from the menu bar. This displays the Qualification new screen and the WC enters the qualification 'Subject' in the Qualification record.
4. Selects 'Date started' in the Qualification record. Dates should be entered using the format (dd/mm/yy).
5. Completes the 'Date completed' field. Dates should be entered using the format (dd/mm/yy).
6. Selects the 'Outcome' from the drop-down list in the Qualification record and selects from the following outcomes:
  - Not known
  - Achieved
  - Part achieved
  - Not achieved
  - Discontinued
  - Exceeded
7. Selects the drop-down list from the 'Skills level' field in the Qualification record. This shows a list of skill levels and the WC selects the appropriate skills level in the 'Qualification New' field.
8. Updates the 'Skills' field. This is a free format text box for the WC to enter additional detail around the screening.

### **Skills screening**

The WC:

1. Uses their judgement to determine if 'Skills screening' is required.
2. Selects 'Add new skill screening'. The screen is pre-populated with the

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claimant's details and the WC selects the 'Screening type' from a drop-down list. In a new claim interview, the WC selects 'Initial' and enters this in the 'Description' free text box.

3. Conducts the 'Initial skills screening' using the 'Skills Screening and Assessments' guidance and considers if there is a basic skills need.
4. Views the 'Skills screening result look-up view' by selecting the 'Result' field. The WC selects the appropriate result and 'OK' and then updates the 'Description' free text box with the additional detail.

### **Personal Budgeting Support and Alternative Payment Arrangements**

The WC discusses with the claimant if there are financial issues using the PBS conversational prompts. This will highlight to the WC the possible need for PBS (either face to face or using the Online Budgeting Support - Money Manager Tool as long as the claimant is able to use digital services and is not considered vulnerable) and/or an APA. For more information about the steps to take see [APA - Alternative Payment Arrangement and Personal Budgeting Support work coach activity](#).

The WC then updates CAMLite Contact history and WSP Notes with details of the discussion.

### **Challenges to finding work**

The claimant may need additional support to prepare for labour market activities, consider signposting to organisations that could offer suitable support/advice. See District Provision Tool.

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

The WC:

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

### **Caring responsibilities**

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

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### Health condition

If the claimant has a health condition the WC:

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

### Claimants with children

For claimants with children the WC will need to record on WSP whilst in discussion with the claimant whether any child or qualifying young person has a disability or special educational needs. See Children - recording a child's disability or special educational needs on the Work Services Platform.

### Establishing any other relevant circumstances

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

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

This is not a complete list.

### Information recorded in Work Services Platform Notes

Some information provided by the claimant may not be able to be recorded in a relevant area of WSP, for example:

- IT skills/ability
- IT access, for example home or local library

This information can be recorded in WSP Notes. This helps support activities held on the CC and provides the WC with a complete understanding of the claimant's circumstances enabling better support.

### The consequences of not doing this may include

A claimant not receiving the help and support they need

A claimant not being fully prepared to apply for jobs

### **Claimant is already attached to a Work Programme provider**

If the claimant is already a Work Programme participant the WC sends a Work Programme (WP) change of circumstances form [UC78](#) to the provider on the same day, to notify them of the new claim to Universal Credit. The claimant must also be issued with a [UC201](#) and the accompanying leaflet [UCWPM](#). See [Work Related Provision - notifying a contracted provider of a change of circumstances](#).

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

### **Work**

If the claimant is working, the WC selects 'Yes' in the 'Currently undertaking work' field. This displays the following fields:

- Variable hours
- Total hours per week
- Work: active working

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

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

- Job title
- Hours per week
- Start date

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

### **Availability and expected hours of work**

The WC decides the claimant's [availability for work](#) and [expected hours of work](#) so that a Claimant Commitment can be tailored to their individual circumstances. See [Claimant Commitment hub](#).

### **Establishing the required attendance**

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

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This consists of a tailored level of WC contact (for example by telephone, electronically, or face-to-face) and regular face-to-face Work Search Reviews (every week for the first 13 weeks of the claim and then at least fortnightly) to check progress and that a claimant is meeting their requirements.

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

The WC determines the date of the 13<sup>th</sup> week of the claim and sets a WSP task to re-consider the frequency of the regular face-to-face Work Search Reviews at the end of the mandatory weekly WSR. The task includes the following details:

- Task: Other
- Subject header: End of weekly WSR
- Body: Consider end of weekly WSR due, day/month/year.
- Maturity: 13 weeks from date of claim
- Audience: Referring WC

See CAMLite and Work Service Platform notes.

The WC updates WSP notes with the date the claimant is due to end weekly WSR

### **Support for young people**

Support for young people is aimed at claimants aged 18-24 if the claimant is not 18-24. See 'Creating a Claimant Commitment' below

### **Background of support for young people**

The back to work support Universal Credit already has in place is helping many young jobless people into employment. However, given the economic climate, some young people are still finding that getting work is not easy and there is a need to extend existing support and introduce new opportunities.

Additional support for young people is a significant cross-Government response to rising youth unemployment and inactivity by increasing opportunities for young people. Youth employment interventions are designed to complement existing approaches and measures so that they provide solutions which offer real value and support for young people (claimants aged between 18 and 24).

All Universal Credit claimants receive help and support that is personalised to their individual need. However, in recognition of the difficulties being experienced by

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young people, this is being supplemented for those aged between 18 and 24 with additional work coach (WC) support.

### **Additional support for young people**

For 18 – 24 year olds in the AWRR Intensive regime, there is additional support available consisting of:

- at least weekly contact from day 1 which will be offered at the discretion of the WC including by what channel they contact the claimant (for example, face-to-face interviews, SMS texts, emails, phone calls, Group Information Sessions), and
- from month 5, a weekly face to face appointment focussing on the claimant's work search

Work Service Directorate districts decide how to deliver additional support for young people and document this in their local Young People Plan. Work coaches must ensure that they are familiar with their district's Young People Plan.

At least 50% of Universal Credit claimants will receive the additional support of weekly Work Search Reviews which will be set at the discretion of the WC.

The AWRR Intensive regime 18 – 24 year olds who are required to attend weekly face to face appointments will count towards this overall 50% figure.

The WC sets a WSP task to mature when the claimant has been on Universal Credit for 5 months. See [Work Services Platform - setting a task](#) and [CAMLite and Work Services Platform notes](#).

At each Work Search Review, consideration is given to whether a weekly WSR remains appropriate or whether the claimant is to revert to fortnightly Jobsearch/Work Search Reviews, provided the 50% ratio is maintained overall.

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

### **Creating a Claimant Commitment**

The WC creates a Claimant Commitment using the information gathered in the initial interview. See [Claimant Commitment hub](#).

The Claimant Commitment sets out what the claimant's requirements will be and what will happen if they fail to comply. The WC explains that their Universal Credit may be reduced if they do not do what is expected of them as set out in their Claimant Commitment. If they repeatedly fail to do what was expected of them their Universal Credit could be reduced for up to three years.

The WC tells the claimant:

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- if they are unable to complete any of the activities as set out in their Claimant Commitment they should contact Universal Credit, as this may prevent a reduction of payment
- they will need to provide good reason if they are unable to complete any of the activities, and that if the reasons provided are not accepted they may lose some or all of their Universal Credit
- if they fail to attend any scheduled appointments without good reason their Universal Credit could be reduced

The WC asks the claimant to read the sanctions information in their Claimant Commitment and Commitment Pack and explains it to them. The WC should at this point give an overview of the Recoverable Hardship Payment policy and the basic eligibility criteria that a claimant would have to meet to get this.

<b>The consequences of not doing this may include</b>
A claimant not receiving the help and support they need
A claimant not being fully prepared to apply for jobs

### Joint claimants

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

See [Claimant Commitment Hub](#) and [Claimant Commitment – accepted](#).

### Migrated sanctions

The WC explains the effects that any migrated sanctions from other DWP benefits may have on the claimant's Universal Credit claim. Any unexpired [Jobseeker's Allowance](#) (JSA) or [Employment and Support Allowance](#) (ESA) sanctions the claimant and/or their partner have will reduce their Universal Credit for the remaining balance of time those earlier sanctions still have to run.

The migrated sanctions may increase the duration of any fixed-length period of a sanctionable failure within their Universal Credit claim (this does not apply for JSA pre-claim higher-level sanctions for leaving, losing or refusing work without good reason).

### Loss of pay or paid work

Claimant's may be subject to a sanction if they either:

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- voluntarily terminate their employment
- permanently reduce their pay
- have their employment terminated as a result of misconduct

When the claim information indicates that this is the case, the claimant has to provide the reasons why. The WC considers whether LV/Misconduct action is appropriate, and if so takes the appropriate action. See Earnings - loss of pay or paid work.

If the claimant is on a zero hours contract, see Work Services - zero hours contract.

### Notes from the interview

To add a new note the WC selects 'Add a new note' and then 'Save' from the toolbar menu, for example if the claimant is required to take steps to open a new bank, building society or credit union account for cases where the claimant has requested payment into a Post Office card account (POCa).

The WC then selects 'Save' from the toolbar menu.

### Following the initial Work Search Interview

Taking the claimant's personal circumstances into account, the WC records all work search requirements, any work preparations activities this required to carry out (including the date when this will be reviewed) and any other agreed work-related activities in WSP.

The WC must also explain to the claimant the consequences of failing to undertake the agreed work search activities and/or any work preparation activities they are required to carry out.

If the IWS checklist has been used, the WC ensures that all relevant actions have been considered and completed.

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

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