

Group Information Sessions

Guidance Queries and Help

1. If you are unable to find an answer to a particular question regarding policy within this guide you must contact the Jobcentre Plus Live Support Advice Line. Do not give the Advice Line number to claimants 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.
2. 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.

Introduction

3. Group Information Sessions form part of the Flexible Interventions Regime and can be an effective, alternative way of providing a number of claimants with the same information at the same time.
4. For example, it may be used to make claimants aware of the local support services available to help them find work, or it may be to provide more detail of a specific provision.
5. There is no mandatory requirement for claimants to attend a Group Information Session and as such DMA action does not apply. If a claimant does not attend their Group Information Session their claim **must not** be closed.
6. The considerations outlined in the Group Session Guidance will have been made when deciding to utilise Group Information Sessions.
7. It is however important to note that the Group Information Session environment is not suitable for all claimants and that some may object to being dealt with as part of a group and as such, alternatives to the group session should be made available where requested by the claimant.
8. Wherever possible, the session should be arranged for the day each claimant is due to attend their Jobsearch Review.
9. The session must not be used as a substitute for the flexible one-to-one interventions, or one-to-one Jobsearch Reviews.
10. This approach:
 - allows claimants to find out about the opportunities available, ask questions and consider the options before discussing their situation with an adviser;
 - helps get individual interviews off to a good start because claimants are better informed about what is available; and
 - should shorten interviews because information about available options has been given during the session.

Jobseeker Directions for Group Information Sessions

11. **By law** claimants cannot be mandated to attend a Group Information Session by means of a Jobseeker Direction, unless the Personal Adviser can demonstrate that attendance at the Group Information Session will:
 - assist the claimant to find employment; or

- improve the claimant to find employment.

Please note: these are quoted from regulations.

12. If the Personal Adviser can demonstrate the above, a Jobseeker Direction can be issued making attendance at the Group Information Session mandatory for that claimant. If not, a Jobseeker Direction **must not** be issued and attendance at the Group Information Session is voluntary.

Example 1

13. An office is running Group Information Sessions to advise claimants how to create an effective CV. Mr Bloggs' Personal Adviser feels he would benefit from this support as it will assist him to find employment and improve his ability to find employment. In this situation it would be acceptable to issue a Jobseeker Direction to make attendance at the Group Information Session mandatory.

Example 2

14. An office is running Group Information Sessions to advise claimants of their responsibilities whilst claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and want to issue Jobseeker Directions to claimants as a rule to make attendance mandatory. As attendance at this particular Group Information Session would not assist the claimants to find employment; or improve their ability to find employment a Jobseeker Direction cannot be issued

Selecting claimants

15. This depends upon where it is planned to hold the session, the type of claimants being dealt with and the local labour market. Once decided the appropriate invitation letter is issued to all claimants.

16. Consideration should be given to grouping claimants:

- of similar lengths of unemployment;
- who have previously failed to attend programmes. However, note that such a group might be difficult to handle;
- who have similar characteristics. For example:
 - age;
 - skills;
 - experience;
 - sex; and
 - ethnic origin or
- from a similar geographical area. For example, there may be a number of postal claimants grouped in one particular area.

17. Wherever possible, people with a disability should be integrated into mainstream groups but their disability and circumstances must always be taken into account, to make sure that this will not cause problems or isolate them within the group.

Content of the session

18. The presentation should last no more than an hour. Any longer and the group may become restless and inattentive.

19. The content will vary, depending upon the type of claimants that you are dealing with. The following structure provides a general outline but will need to be tailored to meet local circumstances:

- introduction:
 - introduction of the facilitators and explanation of their role;
 - the domestics are explained. For example:
 - travel expenses;
 - refreshments;
 - fire instructions;
 - toilets; and
 - finishing times
 - an outline of the presentation is given. For example:
 - how long it will take; and
 - what will be covered; and
 - claimants should be reassured that they will not be expected to discuss their personal circumstances in front of the group
- employment, training and other opportunities:
 - information about the range of opportunities available in the area is given. For example, the Jobcentre Plus Support Contract provision;
 - information on In-Work and alternative benefits is given;
 - if suitable, claimants should be given basic information about Pension Credit and directed to further sources of information, where appropriate;
 - consideration should be given to using supporting materials, such as videos, or guest speakers, such as a Jobcentre Plus Support Contract leader;
 - the benefits and features of each opportunity are to be stressed to the group, using reference sells and success stories; and
 - time should not be overly spent on the operational aspects of the opportunities. If necessary, the main eligibility conditions should be explained. The need for this will depend upon the claimants present - they may all be eligible for all the available opportunities
- Jobcentre Plus services outline the mainstream Jobcentre Plus services that are available. For example:
 - Jobpoints;
 - help for people with disabilities; and
 - Flexible Support Fund.
- summary:
 - the presentation is summarised;
 - questions are invited;
 - an explanation of what happens next is given; and
 - any requested one-to one interviews are arranged.

Booking a Group Information Session

20. The Group Information Session is booked using the LMS interview type **'Group Info Session (Non New Deal)**.

21. The appropriate clerical Group information Session letter below, in place of the system generated claimant appointment letter relating to this interview type.

- JSA Group Information Session clerical letter (English)
 - JSA Group Information Session clerical letter (Welsh)
22. The LMS User Guide gives further details of how to set up a Group Information Session.

Labour market declarations

23. Unless they have already done so on that day, the claimant must sign labour market declarations at every attendance. This is so that if they Fail to Attend a future Flexible Intervention or Jobsearch Review, their claim will only be terminated from the last day they actually attended.