

# **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.
6. While there are no mandatory Group Information Sessions within the Jobcentre Plus offer, if the Personal Adviser can demonstrate that attendance at a Group Information Session will an individual claimant's needs, with regards to moving them closer to work, they may issue a Jobseeker's Direction to attend a Group Information Session. This will then make the attendance at the Group Information Session mandatory for that claimant.
7. A Jobseeker's Direction may be appropriate for claimants who persistently fail to take a particular action, or ignore an agreed action that has been discussed at interviews with an adviser. A Jobseeker's Direction should only be considered when a claimant will not voluntarily undertake a particular action, which will improve their prospects of finding work.
8. The considerations outlined in the Group Session Guidance will have been made when deciding to utilise Group Information Sessions.
9. 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.
10. Wherever possible, the session should be arranged for the day each claimant is due to attend their Jobsearch Review.
11. The session alone must not be used as a substitute for the regular one-to-one advisory interviews, to which all claimants are guaranteed.
12. As such, claimants attending will be given the opportunity to arrange a one-to one interview with their adviser, immediately following the session.
13. 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.

## Selecting claimants

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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

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

18. 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**

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

20. 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)

21. The LMS User Guide gives further details of how to set up a Group Information Session.

### **Labour market declarations**

22. Unless they have already done so on that day, the claimant must sign labour market declarations at every interview. 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.