

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 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.
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 can be an effective, alternative way of organising advisory interviews. However, they must not be used as a replacement of the End of Permitted Period Interview.
4. The intention is that a group of customers are given a presentation about the employment, training and other opportunities available to help them back into work. This session is followed immediately by one-to-one interviews with advisers of at least Band C.
5. This approach:
 - allows customers 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 customers are better informed about what is available and
 - should shorten interviews because information about available options has been given during the session.

Selecting customers

6. This depends upon where you plan to hold the session, the type of customers you are dealing with and the local labour market. Issue the appropriate invitation letter to all customers.
7. Consider grouping customers:
 - 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
 - ethnic origin or
 - from a similar geographical area. For example, you may have a number of postal customers grouped in one particular area.

8. Wherever possible, integrate people with a disability into mainstream groups but take into account their disability and circumstances, to make sure that this will not cause problems or isolate them within the group.

Size of the group

9. Ideally the group should be made up of between 6 -15 customers. It should be large enough to stimulate discussion but small enough to allow active participation. The optimum size will be about eight.

10. Also take into consideration:

- the number of advisers needed and available to carry out individual customer interviews which must be undertaken immediately after the group presentation
- the size of the room
- over booking, to cater for customers who fail to attend and
- the experience of the group presenter. If they are inexperienced they may prefer to have a smaller group.

Content of the session

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

12. The content will vary, depending upon the type of customers that you are dealing with. The following structure is, therefore, a general outline and will need to be tailored to meet local circumstances:

- introduction:
 - introduce yourself and explain what your role is
 - find out if any customers already have a programme start date. If they have:
 - arrange an adviser interview immediately. There is little point in asking them to sit through the presentation
 - go through the domestics. For example:
 - travel expenses
 - refreshments
 - fire instructions
 - toilets and
 - finishing times
 - give an outline of the presentation. For example:
 - how long it will take and
 - what will be covered
 - explain that the session will be followed by a one-to-one interview with an adviser
 - explain the purpose of the interview and
 - reassure customers that they will not be expected to discuss their personal circumstances in front of the group
- employment, training and other opportunities:
 - give information about the range of opportunities available in your area. For example, the Jobcentre Plus Support Contract provision
 - give information on In-Work and alternative benefits
 - give information about Flexible Support Fund where appropriate

- identify, provide basic information about and refer customers where appropriate for Pension Credit
- consider using supporting materials, such as videos, or guest speakers. For example, a Jobcentre Plus Support Contract leader
- stress the benefits and features of each opportunity, using reference sells and success stories and
- do not dwell too much on operational aspects of the opportunities. If necessary, explain the main eligibility conditions. The need for this will depend upon the customers 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 and
 - help for people with disabilities
- summary:
 - summarise your presentation
 - invite questions and
 - explain what happens next.

Individual interviews

13. Every customer must attend an individual interview with an adviser, immediately following the group session. The session alone must not be used as a substitute for the regular one-to-one advisory interviews, to which all customers are guaranteed.

Labour market declarations

14. Unless they have already done so on that day, the customer must sign labour market declarations at every interview. This is so that if they Fail to Attend a future interview or jobsearch review, their claim will only be terminated from the last day they actually attended.