

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 providing a number of customers with the same information at the same time.
4. For example, it may be used to make customers 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. The considerations outlined in the Group Session Guidance will have been made when deciding to utilise Group Sessions.
6. Wherever possible, the session should be arranged for the day each customer is due to attend their Jobsearch Review.
7. The session alone must not be used as a substitute for the regular one-to-one advisory interviews, to which all customers are guaranteed.
8. As such, customers attending will be given the opportunity to arrange a one-to one interview with their adviser, immediately following the session.
9. 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

10. 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.
11. 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; and
 - ethnic origin or
 - from a similar geographical area. For example, you may have a number of postal customers grouped in one particular area.
12. 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

13. 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.

14. 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

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

16. 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;
 - 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; 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;
 - 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;
 - help for people with disabilities; and
 - Flexible Support Fund.
- summary:
 - summarise your presentation;
 - invite questions;
 - explain what happens next; and
 - arrange any requested one-to one interviews.

Labour market declarations

17. 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.