Assisted Digital overview

Introduction

The standard process to make and maintain a Universal Credit claim is via online self-service. Claimants must be made aware that they will increasingly need to be able to use online services to make and maintain their claim and to job search online.

The Department for Work and Pensions must consider the needs of those who may not be able to access services through the standard process.

Claimants who may find difficulty in accessing services online fall into two categories:

- **Assisted Digital** - people who are able to make and maintain their claim by online self-service but need support to do so - this is typically linked to skills, confidence, lack of motivation and access
- **Digital Exclusion** - a very small number of people who are unable to make or maintain their claim by online self-service, for reasons which include ill health, disability or legal limitations such as MAPPA - see Non-Digital Relationships.

Assisted Digital – key points

Claimants must always be asked to apply and maintain claims online independently where possible via GOV.uk.

All reasonable attempts should be made to enable, support and educate claimants to self-serve.

If claimants state they are having difficulty using the online service, reasons for this must be established. Claimants may have an email address, shop online, have a Facebook account or use a PC, tablet or smartphone. This would indicate that a claimant has some IT skills and with assistance would be able to access Universal Credit services online.

Assisted digital support covers:

- coaching, challenging and motivating claimants to become more digitally competent - helping them to create, maintain and use their digital account
- recognising when additional support is required and taking appropriate action to coach or signpost to additional support
- promoting the benefits of work and supporting/coaching claimants to make the most of online services to help them prepare for, find and secure work

Based on their circumstances, claimants must be assisted in accessing the Universal Credit service through a channel that is appropriate for their needs.

Support from family and friends

This can include help using IT devices or simple coaching

Telephone support when using the online channel

A claimant may have access to suitable devices and Wi-Fi but have insufficient IT skills or lack of confidence to complete their claim - and no one to support them. They may initially be unwilling to use the online channel but can be encouraged to do so. In this scenario, coaching can be provided over the phone to help and prompt the claimant to enable them to complete the online claim.

Claimants are still required to attend their commitments meeting at the Jobcentre to complete their Claimant Commitment.

Attendance at a jobcentre

If other means of accessing the online account are not suitable, claimants can book an appointment at the Jobcentre for support from the Assisted Service Team, or alternative job role in some offices.

Universal Credit members of staff must never enter information on a claimant's behalf. The information entered and the accuracy of this information is the responsibility of the claimant.

If a claimant attends a jobcentre but is not capable of making a digital claim even with agent support, they should be signposted to make a claim by phone.

Digital Exclusion Support – key points

In exceptional circumstances (and if all reasonable attempts have been made to enable, support and educate claimants to self-serve), the following two alternative channels are available to help digitally excluded claimants make a claim.

Telephony claim
Telephony claim action must be completed before a home visit referral is considered.

If a claim is taken by telephone, eleven zeros must be used for the phone number on the claim if the claimant does not have a phone number.

Home visit
Home visits should only be used in exceptional circumstances.
If a claimant does not fall into a digitally excluded category but insists on making a claim by phone, they must be allowed to do so.

GOV.UK Verify

If required, Assisted Digital support is available for the full end to end GOV.UK Verify transaction. This must protect the claimant's security. Claimants must not divulge any of their credential information to the supporting member of staff.