

My Work Plan Booklet Guidance

Introduction

- 1. This guidance has been developed to support the phased national roll-out of the Claimant Commitment and other supporting products for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants.**
- 2. For the purposes of section 1(2) (b) of the Jobseeker's Act 1995, the Claimant Commitment is the Jobseeker's Agreement.**
- 3. Districts should continue to follow existing JSA guidance until their agreed scheduled roll-out date.**

Overview

4. The Claimant Commitment is where key information will be recorded about the claimant's availability for work, the types of work they are most suited to do and the high level regular work search activities the claimant will do to help them find and keep a job.
5. The claimant should build on the regular work search activities within their Claimant Commitment by turning these into individual, personalised plans and specific actions about what they are going to do to look for work and how, when and where they are going to do it. The My Work Plan booklet should be used to help the claimant plan and record these specific actions. The coach should discuss how to make effective plans with the claimant using the skills described below.
6. The expectation is that coaches will work with their claimants to actively use the My Work Plan booklet. The coach should actively encourage the claimant to use their My Work Plan booklet to record their plans as it will help them to better plan, manage and review their work search activity. It will also provide a strong basis upon which the coach can determine whether the claimant is meeting their requirements for actively seeking work and make it easy for the claimant to provide evidence that they are undertaking reasonable steps to secure employment.
7. There may be times when the claimant has recorded their activities to the same standard in a different format. In cases like these, the coach should then encourage the claimant to revert to use of the My Work Plan booklet. However, this booklet is not a mandatory product for demonstrating evidence of work search and claimants have the right to demonstrate what they have done to look for work through whichever means they deem suitable and most effective.
8. For example, the claimant may prefer to use Universal Jobmatch to record their activities and their plans for what they will do to look for work or may bring in a CV that they have developed to demonstrate that they have undertaken this activity. Claimants can use their Universal Jobmatch account to show details of saved jobs; saved searches; CVs created and saved; their

application history and activity history. There is also a free text area that the claimant can use to record their plans and any specific actions they will undertake. Claimants should still use their planning skills even if they are not using the My Work Plan booklet, and the coach should be encouraging and checking the claimant's planning skills.

9. During every Work Search Review, these specific actions will be reviewed alongside the Claimant Commitment and evidence provided by the claimant to ensure they remain entitled to benefit. It is therefore crucial that all of the documents – the Claimant Commitment and the My Work Plan booklet - are viewed alongside any the other information the claimant provides to show us what they have done.

16/17 year old claimants

10. As the discussion and agreed activities to be undertaken will reflect the requirement for the claimant to look for training as well as work, a separate under 18's My Work & Training Plan has been created.

11. This guidance is still to be used by coaches when discussing the My Work & Training Plan booklet with 16/17 year olds.

12. Therefore references to 'Work' should be treated as 'Work and /or Training' when using this guidance with 16/17 year olds.

Purpose

13. The purpose of the My Work Plan booklet is to help claimants to plan and record the specific actions they will undertake to look for and find a job. It will also help claimants to manage and review their work search activity.

14. The booklet will enable claimants to record the how, where and when they will undertake the key activities they have agreed to do in the Claimant Commitment. This detail should be proposed by the claimant, but agreed with the coach to make sure it is stretching and represents, if undertaken, all the claimant could reasonably be expected to do.

15. The claimant should complete the booklet themselves, except in circumstances where a skills need means they cannot, for example, literacy or English language skills. It is important the claimant writes their actions down in the booklet themselves because they will be more likely to remember, buy into and carry out a task if they write it down themselves.

16. Having recorded what they are going to do, how, when and where they are going to do it and any evidence they may provide, the claimant should, before their next Work Search Review, record their progress against these actions. They should include what they did and what the result of any action was.

17. At the Work Search Review, the coach will be able to use this evidence in the booklet, along with the Claimant Commitment and any other evidence the claimant provides to demonstrate what they have done, to discuss what the claimant has undertaken to look for a job.

18. If the claimant is confident in making plans that adhere to the framework detailed below, they should also plan the next set of activities they will undertake to look for and find a job. In these cases, the coach should discuss these with them to ensure they are sufficiently stretching and challenging.

19. If the claimant wishes to use the My Work Plan, but creates plans which do not adhere to the ABCDE framework, they should be referred to an experienced member of staff to help them with their planning.

20. In cases where a claimant has not completed or created plans independently, the coach can discuss future plans with the claimant.

My Work Plan

21. Before the claimant is given the My Work Plan booklet, it should be explained to them that the main purpose of the booklet is to help them look for work by allowing them to:

- consider and discuss the details of the specific actions they have agreed to take with their coach. These specific actions will move the claimant closer to completing the regular work search activities agreed and recorded on their Claimant Commitment;
- easily keep a record of what they have done to complete those actions, including details of the results of any of those actions; and
- keep track of the actions needed to start and continue their journey from benefit to work.

22. It also includes:

- a reminder of their responsibilities and the penalties for not meeting them;
- details on where to find suitable vacancies;
- changes in their circumstances they must notify DWP about;
- a section to complete when they want to close their claim; and
- details of their attendance at the Jobcentre.

Completing the My Work Plan booklet

23. The activities included in the My Work Plan booklet should follow the ABCDE framework and should be:

- Ambitious;
- Behavioural;
- Challenging;
- Detailed; and
- Evidence embedded.

Ambitious

24. All plans need to be stretching but realistic. We recognise that meeting the high level work search requirement to take all reasonable steps to give the best prospects of finding work is challenging. Setting stretching but realistic goals is important. Setting minimum standards reduces motivation and may result in lower outputs.

25. The coach should negotiate with the claimant to ensure the level of activity they plan to do is ambitious. This negotiation should start with the claimant describing their daily activity and the coach pushing them to see where they can achieve more. The negotiation should reach a point at which a plan is jointly agreed.

26. When asking the claimant to increase the amount of time they are investing in their job search, the coach should start from a high point and negotiate down to a jointly agreed realistic target, rather than up from the current number.

27. For example, if a claimant appears to need to spend more time looking for jobs online, or has not set an initial benchmark, saying something like “the

most effective claimants I see invest around 4 hours a day in searching for jobs online. How much do you think you could do to reach this goal?" will be more effective than saying "You are currently doing one hour a week, how can we increase this?"

Behavioural

28. A plan should specify the detailed actions that a claimant needs to complete to achieve a high level goal. These are not high-level goals themselves. Goals are what the claimant wants to achieve, and behaviours are the specific actions that they need to take to achieve the high level goals that will be specified in the Claimant Commitment. For example, a plan should not state that a claimant will find a job vacancy, but rather that they will look out for a vacancy on a specific website, at a specific time, in a specific place.

29. The language used to describe behaviours should be clear and simple and should not involve any jargon. They should literally describe what a claimant is undertaking. For example, the term "sell yourself" does not describe a specific behaviour that is useful for job seeking, but calling employers directly on the telephone about their strengths is something that they can do directly.

Challenging, but consider Contingencies

30. The claimant's assumptions about their work search should be challenged. Rather than saying "that job doesn't exist anymore", it is better to say "OK, I'll give you two days to try and find that type of work. If you have no luck we will look at different options". This approach helps to build new constructive beliefs.

31. This will also help the coach test whether their understanding of the local labour is correct, as some claimants will state that they are looking for an obscure type of work, which the coach may not be aware of. By challenging the claimant to find this work locally, the coach places more responsibility onto the claimant looking for particular work.

32. If the claimant is looking for work the coach does not believe is available in the local area, the claimant should be encouraged to conduct other worksearch activities alongside those that they feel are not available.

33. If the claimant fails to find vacancies in the local area to match the specific work they state they are looking for and, therefore, confirm the coach's beliefs about the local labour market, the coach should discuss what other types of work they can do.

34. The plan should also consider the risks that may occur during the claimant's job search and how they can be mitigated. This will stop the claimant giving up on failed plans. For example, if a claimant is working on a friend's computer to create a CV, the coach should ask how likely it is that the computer remains available to the claimant and what happens if the computer no longer becomes available. These contingencies should be built into plans.

35. The coach should discuss likely pitfalls with their claimants and work together to find solutions that will mitigate any risks. These should be written in their plans.

Detailed

36. Plans should contain what, where, when, why and how. What specific actions are required? Formulating a plan in as much detail as possible will

encourage the claimant to fulfil the task. Having concrete implementation plans makes it much more likely they will be followed through.

37. When discussing when a claimant will undertake an activity, it is important to tie the activity to an event that occurs in the claimant's daily routine, rather than a numerical time. For example, "after breakfast", rather than "9am"; although the coach needs to establish whether the claimant regularly eats breakfast. This will tie an activity to an event, which will serve as a reminder to undertake an activity. It is harder to miss an event than a numerical time of day due to oversight.

Evidence embedded

38. For conditionality to be effective, claimants need to understand what is expected of them. If the claimant feels that their coach is trying to trip them up in order to sanction them, the relationship between the claimant and the coach suffers. The specific action must state exactly what they are expected to show.

39. Claimants cannot be mandated to bring in their evidence in a specific form, like using the My Work Plan booklet. However, the coach should discuss what the likely outputs of an activity are and specify what evidence the claimant will bring in if their activity goes according to plan.

40. For example, the claimant has agreed they will speculatively contact employers on a regular basis. The claimant has previously worked in retail so decides to structure one of their plans to say "I will do a CV drop in the shopping mall. To do this, on Monday after breakfast I will make a list of all the employers I wish to contact and ensure I have an appropriate CV and covering letter to leave with the employer. On Tuesday after my girlfriend returns from the gym, I will personally take my CV to each store I am applying to and ask if they have any vacancies and/or leave my CV with them."

My Work Plan booklet front page

41. The front page of the My Work Plan booklet contains basic information about the claimant's identity and information about what the booklet contains. The claimant should complete this information. It also includes a statement reminding the claimant of their responsibilities, which the claimant should read, sign and date.

My work search journey

42. The 'my work search journey' section should be completed by the claimant as they work through the steps to finding and keeping a job. The claimant should continue to refer back to this section as they go through their journey, as it will help them to realise the progress they are making, as well as keep them focused on moving forward. It may help them work out what else they could be doing to look for work, should they need it.

43. It also has details what the claimant should do if they need to stop their claim for any reason.

Preparing for my Work Search Reviews

44. This section makes clear to the claimant what their responsibilities are in terms of providing evidence of what they have done. It is the claimant's

responsibility to prove to the coach that they have done everything they reasonably can to look for a job.

45. It should be made clear to the claimant that they can use whatever evidence they deem to be suitable to show us what they have done. This can include the My Work Plan booklet, giving us access to their Universal Jobmatch account or providing print-outs of that information if they don't want to give us access or any other information they wish to provide.

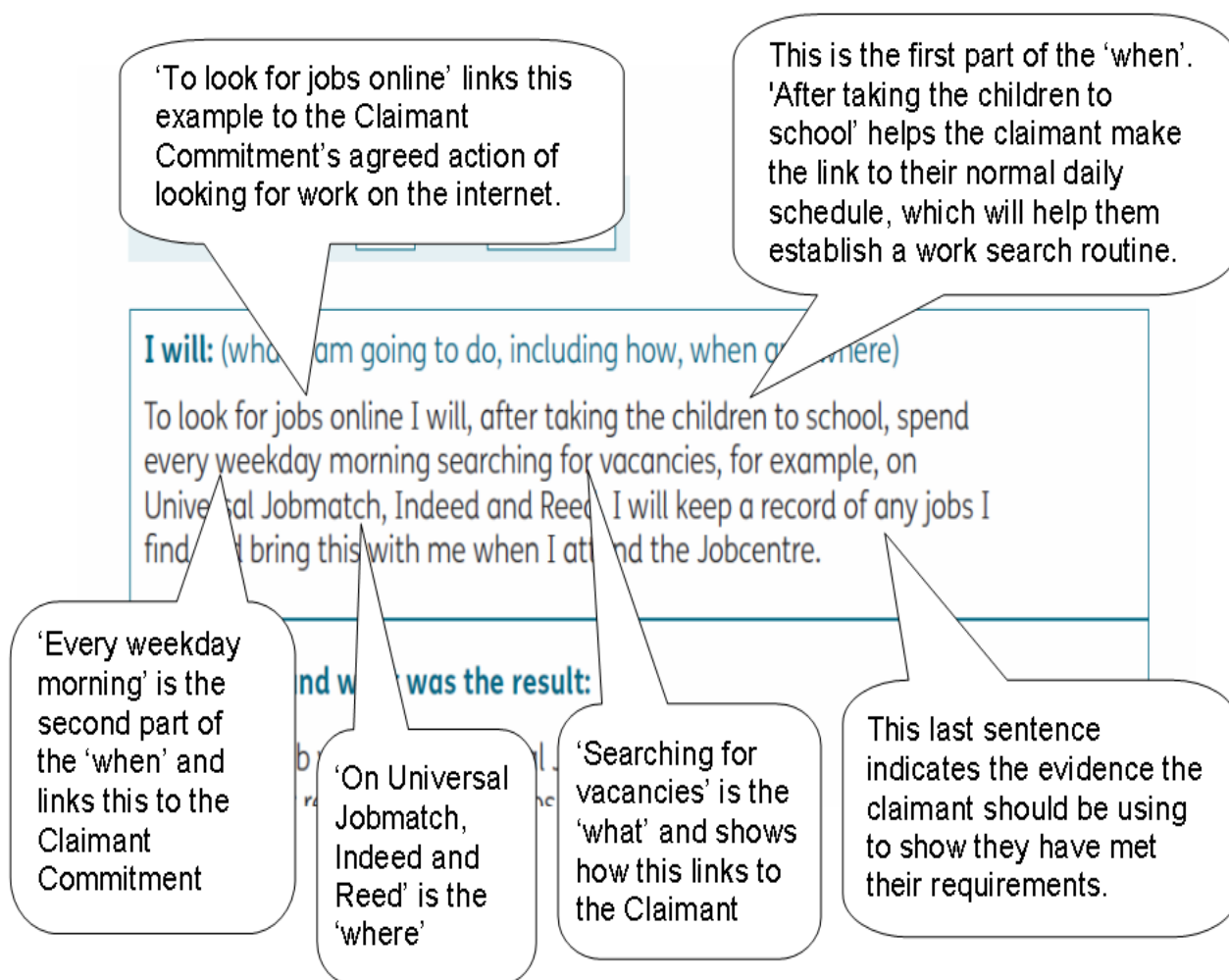
What I will do and record

46. This section explains to the claimant how they should use the booklet, how it will help them and what they should record on it. It is important that the claimant understands how the booklet will help them to plan and structure their work search activities, as this understanding will enable them to use it to maximum effect.

47. In this section there are some good examples of what specific work search activities should look like. It is important that the coach explains to the claimant how these specific activities should be linked to and underpin the regular work search activities they have agreed in their Claimant Commitment. The coach will need to explain how the claimant needs to turn the regular work search activities they agreed on their Claimant Commitment into realistic, challenging and specific actions to record in their My Work Plan booklet.

48. For example, the claimant has agreed that one of their regular work search activities on their Claimant Commitment will be to look for work on the internet at least three times a week. The specific action that needs to be included in their My Work Plan booklet should underpin this by explaining the detail of what they will do, how they will do it, when they will do it and where they will do it.

49. The screenshot below uses the example as laid out in the My Work Plan booklet to show how it underpins this regular work search activity.



50. It is important the claimant is as specific as possible when completing these actions, as this will help them to focus on what it is they need to do. Making a plan and agreeing to undertake specific actions can help them to find a job more quickly.

51. Planning and recording specific actions also breaks a large goal, like finding a job, into more manageable chunks. For many claimants though, the thought of undertaking the actions required to find work can seem very daunting. Helping them to see the immediate actions they can take today, tomorrow and next week to move closer to this large goal can help manage this stress and focus their activities. For example; To look for jobs on-line, I will, spend every weekday morning after breakfast searching for vacancies on job boards, such as Universal Jobmatch, Indeed and Reed.

52. In instances where a claimant has a restriction on their availability the claimant and the coach would need to take this into account when agreeing specific actions. For example, if the claimant is responsible for taking their children to school and is therefore restricting their availability to 9:30am to 2.30pm, their specific action in their My work Plan booklet should not say they will look for work online between 9am and 11am. It should say they will look for work online after they have taken the children to school.

53. Once the coach has discussed and agreed these specific actions with the claimant, they should put their initials in the box above, next to the date. The

date box should show when the claimant will start to undertake the specific action detailed in the box beneath it.

54. The claimant should record what they did and what the outcome of that action was in the box underneath the specific action. Again, they should be as detailed as possible about what they did to achieve what they set out to do. Once they have reviewed the evidence the claimant has brought to their Work Search Review, the coach should fill in the 'completed' and 'initials' boxes, if they are content that it shows proof the claimant has done all they could be reasonably expected to do to achieve the specific action.

55. Claimants can also use these specific actions boxes to record any work preparation activities they intend to undertake to help them improve their chances of finding work. Some of these specific actions will be:

- activities that have been included on the Claimant Commitment;
- activities the claimant has been required to do under a Jobseeker's Direction;
- mandatory activities such as referrals to mandatory provision as part of the Jobcentre Plus offer; and
- others may be additional voluntary activities the claimant has chosen to do.

56. Pages 6-20 and 25-38 contain blank sections for the claimant to record their specific actions, what they did and what the result was. Once the claimant has completely filled the booklet, they should be issued with a new one. If the claimant would like an electronic copy of the blank 'My Actions for Getting Work' pages to record their activities on, this can be provided by accessing the products part of the JSA Claimant Commitment guidance pages.

Stopping your claim

57. The centre pages (pages 21 to 24) enable the claimant to tell us when and why they are stopping their claim. They are in the middle of the booklet to allow the claimant to remove them more easily and return them to us when they sign off, if they do not wish to tell us by phone.

58. This sections covers:

- starting work – if the claimant is starting work, they should record details of this in section 1;
- starting full-time training – if the claimant is starting full time training they should record the details in section 2;
- any other reason – if the claimant wishes to stop their claim for any other reason, they should give us the details in the box on section 3; and
- declaration – regardless of the reason the claimant is stopping their benefit, they must read and sign the declaration in section 4.

Your responsibilities

59. The 'your responsibilities' section starts with a summary of the things the claimant needs to do to keep getting Jobseeker's Allowance. This makes it clear to the claimant the consequences they will face if they do not meet their requirements to receive benefit.

60. It also gives the claimant details of what they can do if there is a disagreement about their Claimant Commitment, or a dispute about their benefit.

Looking for work

61. This section gives the claimant information about where they can look for work. It explains briefly how they can use the Universal Jobmatch service to look for a job or match their CV or skills against employers' vacancies.

62. It also provides details on other ways the claimant can look for work, or find further information about benefits.

Attending the Jobcentre

63. This section sets out what the claimant must bring with them when they attend the Jobcentre. It also reminds the claimant of their responsibilities in order to get Jobseeker's Allowance in terms of attending when they are asked to.

Changes you must tell us about

64. This section reminds the claimant that they must tell us immediately if their circumstances change and provides a list of example situations. It also contains a box where the coach should record the telephone number the claimant can ring if they need to ask anything about their Jobseeker's Allowance, or tell us that their circumstances have changed.

About your benefit

65. This page gives the claimant some information about how Jobseeker's Allowance is paid, as well as information about tax and National Insurance contributions. It also reminds the claimant that they should tell us immediately if they change their account details.

My appointments

66. The back page of the booklet contains the information the claimant needs to know about their next Work Search Reviews and work search interviews. The claimant must bring this booklet with them every time they come to see us, as the coach needs to record details of the claimant's next attendance.

67. The coach must also include contact details for themselves and provide a number the claimant can ring should they need to let us know they cannot attend at the day and time shown.

Handling English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) claimants and claimants with a skills need

68. Although coaches should be actively encouraging claimants to complete the My Work Plan booklet, not all claimants will have a level of written English that will enable them to effectively do this.

69. In these circumstances, as long as the claimant understands that they still have a responsibility to demonstrate what they have done to look for work and what they are going to do to look for work that can be understood by their coach then they may provide evidence by a method that suits them better.

70. However, coaches have an overall responsibility to help prepare these claimants for work and as part of this should provide all the necessary help and support needed to enable these claimants to effectively plan their work search (using the My Work Plan booklet if they wish to do so). This may involve making use of local providers who conduct basic skills training and / or mandating the claimant to undertake ESOL training to the appropriate level.

ESOL claimants

71. In addition to all of the above, where possible, ESOL claimants should also be encouraged to ask a friend or family member to translate the outcomes of their work search activities into their plans for a coach to review and/or attend the intervention with the claimant so that they can interpret / translate on their behalf.

72. If the claimant fills in their My Work Plan booklet in a non-English language then they need to bring evidence of their jobsearch to their coach in English. This will allow their coach to assess whether or not they have met their requirements for actively seeking employment