

Splitting the Initial Work Search Interview

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. Districts will start to phase in the Claimant Commitment for new JSA claimants and Work Programme completers from 28 October 2013.
2. Stock claimants and 16-17 year old JSA claimants have not been included in this phased roll-out.
3. For the purposes of section 1(2)(b) of the Jobseeker's Act 1995, the Claimant Commitment is the Jobseeker's Agreement.
4. Districts should continue to follow existing JSA guidance until their agreed scheduled roll-out date.

Overview

5. Diagnosing individual claimant needs at the outset of a claim is important, in terms of making sure people receive the help they need to find work as quickly as possible.
6. With that in mind, District Managers may split the Initial Work Search Interview into two separate interviews, a Conditionality Interview shortly followed by a Diagnostic Interview with a Work Coach. This does not include Rapid Reclaims which **must not** be split.
7. The more in-depth Diagnostic Interview should be conducted as soon as possible after the Conditionality Interview and no more than 28 days following the date the claim was made.
8. Contact centres will continue to book Initial Work Search Interview appointments as normal, so if districts wish to adopt split interviews as above, local diaries must be managed accordingly.

Identifying claimants currently on the Work Programme

9. At the Conditionality Interview, claimants on the Work Programme will need to be identified. These claimants will be identified by viewing the WP Hotspot on LMS.
10. Once a claimant on the Work Programme has been identified, the Initial Work Search Interview (WP participants) is followed.

The Conditionality Interview

11. The purpose of the Conditionality Interview is to gather any outstanding information needed to process the claim and to put in place a Claimant Commitment, which will remain in force until reviewed at the more in-depth Diagnostic Interview.

Using Band Bs

12. Band Bs may be used to undertake Conditionality Interviews, providing a Claimant Commitment is straightforward and can readily be put in place.
- Note:** offices must put in place systems to ensure Conditionality Interviews are undertaken by officers of the appropriate grade. Where possible, this

should be done ahead of the Conditionality Interview, by identifying claimants for whom it is unlikely that the Claimant Commitment will be straightforward and allocating those interviews to a Work Coach. Offices must also ensure that where it becomes apparent during a Band B Conditionality Interview that the Claimant Commitment will not be straightforward, a Work Coach is on hand to step-in and take over the interview.

Circumstances in which it would be inappropriate for a Band B to undertake the Conditionality Interview

13. Circumstances in which it would be inappropriate for a Band B to undertake the Conditionality Interview and a referral to a Work Coach is necessary include:

- the claim is a Joint Claim;
- claimant has transferred from Incapacity Benefit / Employment Support Allowance to Jobseeker's Allowance;
- claimant is potentially violent;
- claimant has a drug and/or alcohol dependency;
- claimant is approaching state pension age;
- claimant has or requires a Special Customer Record status;
- claimant provides Statement of Fitness for Work;
- claimant is pregnant; or
- there are restrictions on the claimant's availability

Preparing for the interview

14. Any existing information (on LMS and elsewhere) that may usefully inform the interview must be reviewed. This may also help identify claimants who need to see a Work Coach for their Conditionality Interview, rather than a Band B. For example, information that suggests that there will be restrictions on the claimant's availability.

Introduction and explanation of purpose

15. The person conducting the interview must always introduce themselves and outline the purpose of the interview.

Confirming the claimant's identity

16. The claimant's identity must always be confirmed and if appropriate, enrolled for the Signature Capture Service.

Travel expenses

17. Arrangements should be made to Refund any travel expenses.

Conditions for entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance

18. The main conditions of entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance are to be explained to the claimant. For example, they must:

- be capable of work;
- be immediately available to take up work;
- be actively seeking work during their claim; and
- have a Claimant Commitment in place.

Gathering information

19. The appropriate action is taken, depending on the type of information gathered, including update of LMS as appropriate:

- set the claim and restart dates;
- update attending office, if prompted;
- update the claimant's previous activity, including
- qualifications;
- update the Ethnicity Marker;
- update other markers;
- update the 'More' box with the claimant's previous work history;
- the reason the claimant left their last job;
 - claimant left their last job voluntarily;
 - misconduct and other termination of employment issues; and
 - temporary workers; and
- update the disadvantaged markers;

Conditionality & Sanctions checks

20. A check of the claimant's decision history [Decn] in LMS **must** be made to determine if the claimant has been disallowed and a sanction referral needs to be made or whether an existing sanction can be lifted. See the Conditionality & Sanctions checks guidance for further information.

Change of circumstances

21. The importance of reporting any change of circumstances which may affect their claim must be made clear to the claimant, as well as an explanation of how they would do this and the consequences of not doing so.

The Claimant Commitment

22. A key output from the Conditionality Interview is an interim Claimant Commitment, which will remain in force until reviewed at the more in-depth Diagnostic Interview.

23. If a Work Coach is undertaking the Conditionality Interview, the Claimant Commitment should be as detailed as possible in the time allowed.

24. If conducted by a Band B, the Claimant Commitment should be completed as follows:

Page 1:

- **My types of work**, from the available pull down options select **No Restrictions Agreed**. Claimant must have agreed with the coach that they will look and apply for all types of work they are capable of doing;
- **Where I will work**, the default entry here is **90 minutes** and the claimant must agree that they will look for work they can travel to within 90 minutes each way from their home;
- **My availability for work**, from the available pull down options within I'm available to attend a job interview, and also I'm available to start work, select **Immediately**;
- **Restrictions**, select No Restrictions on availability. Claimant must agree to be available to work for any hours on any day up to a minimum of 40 hours per week and have no obvious barriers to employment.

Page 2: My actions for getting into work

25. The following drop downs need to be completed as a minimum:

- I will search for vacancies I can do by contacting employers directly;
- I will look at adverts in local and National newspapers for vacancies I can do;
- I will ask family, friends and people I have worked with before about any vacancies I can do;
- I will respond promptly to contacts and notifications from employers and jobsites;
- I will apply for vacancies I find that I can do;
- I will register and maintain contact with recruitment agencies; and
- Final 'blank' drop down with any other relevant information applicable to the claimant.

NOTE: If the claimant offers any further actions, these can be added to this list.

26. If none of the above conditions can be agreed with the claimant then they must be referred to a Work Coach to complete the interview. If they agree to these actions the claimant must be advised to read and agree to the conditions outlined in the Claimant Commitment, before they are asked to sign it.

My Jobseeker Profile

27. The 'My Jobseeker Profile' is a summary of the key information discussed in the Work Search Interview about the claimant's capabilities and circumstances relating to work.

28. The claimant is advised to think about how the information being asked for in this section will help them plan their work search and complete it as best they can.

Skills screening and split Initial Work Search Interviews

29. The Conditionality and Diagnostic Interviews offer opportunities, through discussion and observation, to identify a potential skills need.

30. Band Bs undertaking Conditionality Interviews are not expected to undertake any kind of claimant diagnosis but they should look out for potential signs of a skills need and flag any potential issues for the adviser to probe at the Diagnostic Interview.

31. At the end of the Conditionality Interview, LMS must be updated.

Permitted Periods

32. A Permitted Period can be formally agreed at the Conditionality Interview but only by a Work Coach and must be reviewed at the subsequent Diagnostic Interview.

33. Where Band Bs are undertaking Conditionality Interviews, a Permitted Period will not be discussed or formally agreed.

Payment procedures

34. The payment procedures should be explained to the claimant and, if appropriate, the benefits of Direct Payment. Payment by cheque is only to be agreed in exceptional circumstances and as a last resort.

Work Search Reviews

- 35. The purpose of Work Search Reviews is explained.
- 36. The attendance arrangements are established using the Periodicity & Payday Calculator.
- 37. The claimant should be advised to contact us immediately if they cannot attend.
- 38. The need for them to show what they have been doing to look for work during each week at every Work Search Review must be stressed.

My Work Plan

- 39. The My Work Plan booklet is issued and it is explained to the claimant that its purpose will be discussed in more detail during their Diagnostic Interview.
- 40. The claimant is advised to use the 'my actions for getting work' to record the actions they:
 - have taken to find work up to the date of their next attendance; and
 - plan to take in the following period.
- 41. The fact that the 'My Work Plan' booklet includes details of the claimant's attendance at the jobcentre and the importance/consequences of not attending is also explained, as well as what they need to do if they wish to terminate their claim.

Booking the Diagnostic Interview

- 42. The purpose of the interview is explained.
- 43. The appointment is arranged in accordance with local arrangements.
- NOTE: The same considerations must be made when making these arrangements. For example, booking it on the claimant's normal attendance day wherever possible, making sure that interpreters, etc. are in place.**
- 44. The appointment is booked using interview type 'JSA Diagnostic Interview'.
- 45. The claimant is given a completed appointment letter.
- 46. Guidance on the Diagnostic Interview is in the main Initial Work Search Interview guidance.

Identifying the Work Programme Entry Point

- 47. The point at which it is mandatory for the claimant to enter the Work Programme, or for whom early access should be identified.

Mandatory Entry

- 48. Once the entry date for the Work Programme has been identified, the steps in Work Programme LMS Guidance are followed to set a workflow to follow up the referral.

Optional Early Access

- 49. Those claimants who could opt for Early Access to the Work Programme from a date earlier than their mandatory entry point should be identified and consideration given to whether early access would be beneficial to the claimant.
- 50. If so, the most appropriate point at which to make the claimant aware of this is considered and arrangements made to discuss this further with them.

End of interview action

- 51. Action any backdating requests
- 52. The interview is ended End the interview on LMS.
- 53. If it has been accepted that the claimant has been available for work since the date of their claim, they are asked to read and sign the Labour Market declaration (ES24JP) or on the Signature Capture Service pad. If not, they should be referred to a Work Coach
- 54. dialogue JA470 into JSAPS is updated appropriately.
- 55. The claimant should be aided in completing any forms, if appropriate. For example, Housing Benefit claim forms.
- 56. Any doubts are to be referred to a Work Coach.
- 57. Form CMS1 is completed and sent to the Benefit Centre.
- 58. Arrangements are made for the conditionality screen in CMS to be updated by a Work Coach.

Useful Links

59. Some claimants may require additional action at their Initial Work Search Interview. Some of the common actions are listed below. **This list is not exhaustive:**

- Claimant works part-time;
- Claimant is attending a course of study;
- If it becomes apparent that the claimant is a Victim of Domestic Violence; and
- Claimant wishes to withdraw their claim.