

Postal claimants

Overview

1. Postal claimants are those who are exempt from attending the Jobcentre for Work Search Reviews and are required to provide evidence of their work search by post instead.
2. Postal claimants must meet the same conditions for receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance as claimants who are required to attend the office by showing that they are Available for and have been Actively Seeking Work. To do this they must provide a signed declaration and written evidence of their Work search activity.
3. Postal claimants **are** required to attend Interventions.

Eligibility criteria

4. Claimants must be offered postal status if:
 - they have caring responsibilities for a child and are unable to make arrangements for short-term childcare to cover their attendance. For example, during school holidays
 - they live more than one hour, door to door, in either direction, from the nearest Jobcentre by using public transport
 - attendance would result in an absence from home in excess of four hours
 - they have a mental or physical disability, which restricts their mobility.
5. If no public transport is available, postal status is determined by whether or not the claimant can reasonably be expected to walk from home to the Jobcentre in one hour. Claimants must not be asked to walk more than 3 miles. This will depend on things like:
 - their age
 - their health
 - the terrain over which they must walk
6. Rather than calculating the specific time span for each individual claimant, decisions should be taken locally on which areas are beyond the one hour/four hour limits.

One hour travel

7. The one hour travel criteria are calculated from door to door, home to office, or office to home, with each way classed as a separate journey. If either journey takes longer than one hour, the claimant qualifies for postal status. The criteria are also based on public transport, as the availability of personal transport may vary throughout the course of a claim.

Example

- claimant leaves home at 9.00am
- bus is due at nearest bus stop at 9.10am
- bus is due to arrive at Any Town Bus Depot at 9.50am
- claimant walks to Jobcentre and arrives at 9.55am
 - outward travelling time = 55 minutes
- walking time from Jobcentre to bus depot is five minutes

- next available bus is due to leave depot at 11.00am
- bus is due at nearest bus stop to claimant's home at 11.50am
- walking time from bus stop to home is ten minutes
 - return travelling time = one hour five minutes
 - total time away from home = 3 hours.

8. In this example, the claimant qualifies for postal status on the basis of the return journey.

Four hours absence

9. The four hours absence criteria are based on the time from leaving home to returning home.

Example

- claimant leaves home at 8.00am
- only bus available in the morning is due at nearest bus stop at 8.10am
- bus is due to arrive at Any Town Bus Depot at 8.50am
- claimant walks to the Jobcentre and arrives at 8.55am
 - outward travelling time = 55 minutes
- walking time from Jobcentre to bus depot is five minutes
- next available bus is due to leave at 12.00 noon
- bus is due at nearest bus stop to claimant's home at 12.40pm
- walking time from bus stop to home is ten minutes
- claimant due to arrive home at 12.50pm
 - return travelling time = 55 minutes
 - total time away from home = 4 hours 50 minutes

10. In this example, the claimant qualifies for postal status under the four hours absence criteria, as they would have to be absent from home for a total of four hours and 50 minutes, in order to attend the Jobcentre.

Claimant requests postal status

11. If a claimant requests postal status and they meet the eligibility criteria, it should be explained to them that they must fulfil the same availability and actively seeking employment conditions for the receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance.

12. If it is determined that the claimant is eligible for postal status they must be:

- issued with a postal declaration form ES24PJP, to cover the first period of signing
- issued with a postal work search activity log ES10JP, or blank 'my actions for getting work' templates
- informed of the address to which their postal declarations must be sent. A suggested good practice is to issue the claimant with a letter detailing the process for returning mail with a typed note of the address
- informed that they are responsible for the postage cost

Work Search Work search Reviews for postal claimants

13. Good quality Work Search Reviews are important for postal claimants, to ensure that their search for work remains focused and effective, despite the reduction in face to face contact.

Receiving and checking the postal declaration

14. Each fortnight, the claimant must submit a postal declaration (ES24PJP or blank 'my actions for getting work' template) to confirm their unemployment and provide written evidence of their work search activity.

15. It is the claimant's responsibility to ensure their declaration and work search evidence is received on time. Any delays will result in their payment being released late.

16. The signature on the declaration should be checked to ensure that it matches with that on the ES80JP Labour Market Unit as per the Confirming Attendance guidance.

17. The date of the declaration was received in the Mail Opening Unit (MOU) must also be checked.

18. If the MOU date stamp is within 5 working days of the claimant's period ending date but the declaration is not signed and / or is not dated correctly, or there is evidence that the claimant has sent it at a wrong time, further action is required. If the declaration:

- **is not signed** – the declaration is returned to the claimant with a letter explaining that they must sign and return it immediately. The claimant is given a discretionary 5 working days to return the signed declaration to the MOU. If it is not received in the MOU within the 5 working days, the claim is terminated up to the day they last provided a signed declaration
- **is dated earlier than the period ending date** – a further declaration is sent to the claimant with a letter explaining the need to complete it for the correct period. If it is not received in the MOU within 5 working days from their benefit period ending date, the claim is terminated up to the day on the declaration received early, provided the work search evidence is sufficient
- **is dated later than the period ending date and date stamped within 5 days of the period ending date** – an attempt to contact the claimant must be made on the day the declaration is received, as they only have 5 working days from their benefit period ending date in which to show good reason for providing this information late
 - if contact is made, their reason(s) for providing the declaration late are considered.
 - if contact is not made, a letter is issued to the claimant advising them to contact the Jobcentre urgently. The date the claim will be terminated, if the claimant does not make contact, should be detailed on the letter
 - if the claimant's reply is not received in the MOU within five working days from the period ending date, the claim is terminated. The date of termination will be the day after the last declaration ended

Postal declaration received in the MOU within 5 days of the period ending date

19. If the declaration was not received on the day it would normally be received but is received within five working days of the benefit period ending date and is dated correctly then, in the absence of any other information, such

as a post marked envelope, the declaration should be considered to be on time and the claimant's work search evidence reviewed as normal.

Postal declaration not received in the Jobcentre within 8 working days of the period ending date

20. To allow for the declaration to be delivered to the Jobcentre, no action is necessary until 8 working days after the benefit period ending date if it is not received earlier. If the declaration is not received by the eighth working day, the claim is terminated from the day they last provided a signed declaration.

21. A call should be made to the claimant to inform them that:

- their benefit claim has been terminated and that they will need to make a new claim if they wish to continue receiving benefit
- they will need to attend an Initial Work Search Interview if they make a new claim
- if they wish to make a backdated claim they must complete a JSA5

Postal declaration received after the claim has been terminated

22. If the declaration was signed on the correct date and there is evidence to suggest that the reason for it not being received in the MOU within 5 working days was due to the postal service, the claimant must be contacted to advise that their claim has been closed and that they will need to make a new claim and that the decision to close the claim will be reconsidered.

Conducting the Work Search Review for postal claimants

23. A Work Search Review is conducted for Postal claimants by reviewing the written evidence provided, in order to be assured that they have undertaken sufficient work search activity to satisfy the requirements of receiving Jobseeker's Allowance. Written evidence may be provided on a Postal Work search Activity Stencil (ES10JP), blank 'my actions for getting work' templates or some other document(s).

24. If any of the following are identified during the review or as a result of a telephone call the appropriate action should be taken to follow-up or make appropriate referrals:

- any difficulties they may be having with their work search
- they may require additional support
- potential fraud
- a change in circumstances
- they are starting or have undertaken part-time work

Work search evidence provided sufficient

25. If the claimant has satisfied the conditions for receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance and provided an appropriately signed and dated declaration, Jobseeker's Allowance Payment System Dialogue JA470 is updated (and if appropriate, Dialogue JA504 to confirm payment details are held).

26. The outcome of the review is recorded on the claimant's LMS record.

Work search evidence provided insufficient

27. If the claimant has not satisfied the conditions for receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, an attempt must be made to contact them by telephone.

Contact is made

28. If contact is made, any additional work search action should be identified and reviewed to determine if they have satisfied the conditions for receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance

29. Consideration should be given to whether the claimant can provide sufficient information so that we can be reasonably sure that they have done what they have claimed.

30. If the claimant cannot show that they have undertaken sufficient work search activity to satisfy the conditions for receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, the reason(s) must be identified and considered.

31. If the reason(s) are acceptable, the doubt can be treated as straightforward. For example, if the review period included a Bank Holiday, domestic emergency, or other circumstances that reduced the claimant's ability to undertake work search activity.

32. If the reason(s) cannot be accepted, consideration of Labour Market Decision Maker's action should be made by an appropriate Band C.

33. If it is identified that the claimant's failure to satisfy the conditions for receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance was because their Claimant Commitment is no longer appropriate, a Follow up Work Search Interview should be booked to review it.

Contact cannot be made

34. If contact cannot be made, a Follow up Work Search Interview/Flexible Intervention should be booked to review their availability, work search activity and Claimant Commitment. An interview letter should be posted to the claimant and normal failure to attend action taken if they do not attend.

Claimant with caring responsibilities for a child (children) fails to provide a signed declaration

35. If a claimant with caring responsibilities for a child (children) fails to provide a declaration, an attempt must be made to contact them on the day that their declaration should have been received. If contact is made, they should be asked if they wish to continue claiming and if so, why a declaration was not submitted.

36. If the claimant wishes to continue claiming their reason(s) for providing their declaration late are considered.

37. If contact cannot be made, a letter is issued, advising the claimant to make contact within five working days of their period ending date and that their benefit claim will be terminated if they do not.

38. If the claimant does not reply within five working days of their period ending date the claim is terminated. The date of termination will be the day after the last declaration ended.

Interventions for postal claimants

39. There is no set frequency that postal claimants must attend interventions. Their requirement to attend should be based on their labour market needs and the discretion of the Jobcentre.

40. Interventions for postal claimants should be booked as Follow up Work Search Interviews/Flexible Interventions and where possible, arranged on the claimant's period ending day.

41. These interviews should take place in the Jobcentre, although certain claimants could be interviewed in their village hall or community centre.

Particularly those:

- whose attendance would result in an absence from home of more than eight hours
- with a disability or health problem which severely limits their mobility

42. Where possible, interviews held away from the Jobcentre should be co-ordinated for cost effectiveness.

43. If the claimant is part of a joint claim, separate interventions must be arranged for each claimant. They can choose to attend each other's intervention.

44. Postal claimants attending Initial Work Search Interviews and Follow up Work Search Interviews/Flexible Interventions must have their Travel Expenses refunded.

45. In addition to the reason for the interview, the following actions should be taken:

- a check to whether their circumstances have changed and appropriate action taken
- a check of any existing forms that need renewing
- a re-emphasis of the conditions for receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance. Particularly those relating to Availability and Actively Seeking Employment
- a fresh supply of blank 'my actions for getting work' templates issued, if needed
- if everything is straightforward:
 - attendance is confirmed
 - LMS is updated

Claimant fails to attend an interview

Notification to attend was received

46. If a claimant fails to attend an interview and any of the following apply failure to attend action is taken:

- the interview letter was issued by hand
- the interview letter was issued by recorded delivery and signed for
- a conversation is recorded on LMS to confirm that the claimant was notified verbally

Notification to attend was not received

47. If a claimant fails to attend an interview and the interview letter was not issued by hand and no record is held to confirm that the claimant was aware of the interview, an attempt to contact the claimant must be made, to check that:

- the letter was received
- it was posted to the correct address

48. If the letter was not received, or was sent to the wrong address, a new interview is arranged and the claimant notified verbally and a record of this made on LMS. An interview letter is also issued, confirming the interview.

49. If the claimant confirms that the letter was received but failed to attend the interview, failure to attend action is taken.

50. If the claimant cannot be contacted by telephone, a new appointment is arranged and the letter posted by recorded delivery.