

Work Search Reviews

Summary

How to prepare for and conduct Work Search Reviews

Content

Universal Credit aims for claimants to get as much work as they reasonably can do as quickly as possible. Work coaches (WC) will take account of individual circumstances and set requirements that, if complied with, give the claimant the best possible prospects of finding paid work quickly. All such requirements will be recorded on the [Claimant Commitment](#).

For claimants participating in the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) scheme, see heading 'Work Search Reviews following New Enterprise Allowance referral' below.

Compliance with the work-related requirements set out in the Claimant Commitment, actively searching work and engagement with agents, increases the chances that claimants find work more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

The claimant must take all reasonable action for the purpose of obtaining paid work and will be expected to undertake the same number of hours of work search and work preparation activity each week as the number of hours they are available for work (up to a maximum of 35 hours a week). See [Availability and hours of work search overview](#).

This means that the claimant must conduct work search for their [expected hours](#) (this is the number of hours that the claimant is available for work or 35 hours, whichever is the lower figure) less the total amount of time they spend undertaking agreed work preparation activities, [voluntary work](#) and [paid work](#).

Work search activities and the time it takes to undertake these will differ for each claimant, based on their job requirement(s) and individual circumstances.

This should not be a numerical exercise in adding up the individual hours spent on each activity, as this will not provide an assessment of the quality of the activities undertaken or the capabilities of individual claimants.

Where a claimant has done all that could reasonably be expected of them – for example they have applied for all suitable jobs and undertaken all the activities set out in their Claimant Commitment - this will be considered sufficient even if the time taken was less than their expected hours.

Work Search Reviews are a key component of the Universal Credit conditionality approach. Evidence shows that regular face-to-face reviews can help people move into work more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

The primary purpose of Work Search Reviews is to check that the claimant has complied with their work-related requirements. They also provide an opportunity to identify anything that makes it harder for the claimant to get paid work and determine appropriate support.

It is important that work coaches work closely together to deliver a consistent approach. This means understanding what has been agreed previously and making sure each Work Search Review adds value, building upon previous contacts.

Timing of Work Search Reviews

Unless the claimant is not required to attend, or has been granted postal status, Work Search Reviews must be conducted face to face and carried out at least fortnightly.

Previewing Work Search Reviews

The WC should confirm if the claimant has any special arrangements, See [Special arrangements for claimant attendance](#).

The claimant's Work Services Platform (WSP) 'General notes/Archived notes' must also be checked to see if anything was agreed previously which needs to be discussed or followed up. To locate WSP archived notes See Work Services Platform guide (claimant records - maintaining claimant records).

Conducting the Work Search Review

A discussion with the claimant must take place to find out what they have done to look for paid work since their last Work Search Review. The core elements of the Work Search Review are:

- explanation of the purpose of the Work Search Review
- check outstanding actions from the WSP Record
- review of work search activity and work preparation actions set out on the Claimant Commitment
- review of the claimant's Universal Jobmatch activity
- consideration of other work search and work preparation evidence presented by the claimant

- determination of whether the claimant has done all that can be reasonably expected of them to find paid work
- explanation of sanctions and the consequences of failing to attend their Work Search Reviews and failing to comply with the actions detailed on their Claimant Commitment
- where a claimant has not complied with a work-related requirement, consideration of whether a sanctionable failure has occurred
- confirming the claimant's next appointment date and time with them and recording this on 'Your meeting plan' which is part 1 of the claimant commitment pack

The Work Search Review should start with introductions, confirmation of identity and explaining the purpose of the Work Search Review. If the claimant reports that they have a change of circumstances the WC advises them to report this by telephone.

Review of work preparation activity

Work preparation activities should be reviewed by viewing the Claimant Commitment. If any are at / past their review date, the WC checks if the claimant has completed them:

- if they have, the WC updates the claimant record
- if they have not (once the claimant has been given the opportunity to provide evidence of good reason and the importance of providing good reason has been explained to them), work coaches should consider whether a sanctionable failure has occurred - the claimant should be reminded that Universal Credit may be cut for every day until they undertake the required action or until they undertake an alternative activity they have been notified of by the WC (see 'Identifying sanctionable failures' below)

If any new work preparation activities have been identified the WC updates the claimant's WSP record.

Other work-related activities should be reviewed. If any are past their review date, the agent checks if the claimant has completed them:

- if they have completed them, the WC updates the claimant WSP record
- if they have not completed them, the WC checks if there are any other work related activities to add, delete or edit - if there are any other work related activities to add, delete or edit, work coaches can update the claimant record

Review of Work Search activities

Both work search and work preparation activities should be reviewed. See [Universal Jobmatch](#) and [Work Service Platform](#).

When making an assessment on whether the claimant has met their work search activities in their Claimant Commitment, the WC must consider whether the claimant has spent sufficient time doing these activities and has done all they can reasonably be expected to do to find work. This is based on:

- their conversation with the claimant
- evidence available including the quality of the activities undertaken and the time spent doing them
- outcomes resulting from the activities

This should not be a numerical exercise in adding up the individual hours spent on each activity, as this will not provide an assessment of the quality of the activities undertaken or the capabilities of individual claimants.

If the claimant has done all they can reasonably be expected to do to find work and this has taken them less than their 'expected hours', this is fine and the claimant should be treated as complying with the requirement.

All available Work Search evidence should be considered, including :

- the claimant's Universal Jobmatch account
- any Claimant Commitment Pack 'My work plan' stencils, diary or record the claimant has kept of their activities

- print-outs of jobs they have applied for
- letters from employers
- updated CVs

Where the claimant needs more copies of the 'My work plan' or any other part of the Claimant Commitment Pack, see [Creating a claimant commitment pack](#).

If the claimant has completed all activities set out in their Claimant Commitment, they have met their requirements and their WSP record should be updated.

Consideration should be given as to whether their work preparation and work search activity fell below the claimant's required [expected hours](#) search. If it did, agents should review these requirements and consider whether the Claimant Commitment should be reviewed.

If the claimant has not completed all work search activities, consider whether the claimant has done all that they reasonably could to find paid work in that week.

The claimant may not need to complete each and every work search activity each week. In some weeks they may be considered to have done everything that was possible even though this may not have filled the total amount of time expected.

For example, they may not have been checking Universal Jobmatch every day as they were concentrating on preparing for a specific job interview by gathering references and re-tailoring their CV.

If they have only completed around 20 hours of work search in the week out of 30 adjusted hours expected of them, this could be reasonable if they have still completed all their normal activities, but have had less job leads to follow up in this period.

Consideration should also be given as to whether the requirements set out on the Claimant Commitment should be reviewed in the light of experience.

Where the claimant has :

- not completed some activities (and this may be particularly relevant where this has happened before or there is a pattern forming)
- is regularly spending a lot of time on one activity but it is not producing any job leads or outcomes

Consideration must be made whether the activities set are the right ones for the claimant and whether the current Claimant Commitment needs to be reviewed.

If the claimant has not done all that they reasonably could to search for work, WC's should consider whether a sanctionable failure has occurred.

Sanctionable failures should not be considered where a claimant does not undertake an individual work search activity (such as a claimant not checking Universal Jobmatch the required number of times), instead a sanctionable failure should be considered where a claimant has failed overall to do their required hours of work search activity and has not taken all reasonable action to find work in that week. See 'Identifying sanctionable failures' below.

If there are any work search activities to add, delete or edit, work coaches update the WSP record.

The WC must:

- follow up any outstanding actions recorded on WSP notes
- identify any additional support that the claimant needs

Outstanding compliance activities

The WC checks if the claimant has any outstanding compliance activities relating to any Low level sanction imposed on the Universal Credit claim. If any compliance activities are outstanding, see [Claimant has met a compliance condition and the agent can update the sanction](#).

Review of the required attendance

The claimant's attendance should be reviewed based on their current circumstances/conditionality. If the WC identifies that the attendance frequency needs changing they will adjust them as appropriate. See [Managing attendance frequency and channel on Work Services Platform](#).

Identifying sanctionable failures

When a WC is not satisfied that the claimant has carried out the required work search or work preparation activities, they should consider whether a sanctionable failure has occurred. See [Identifying a sanctionable failure](#).

If doubt is raised due to non-attendance for claimants in the All Work related Requirements Intensive Regime, see [Sanctions hub](#).

Work Search Reviews following New Enterprise Allowance referral

Claimants referred to the NEA mentoring provider will continue to attend Work Search Reviews.

If the claimant agrees to start NEA the focus of the review is to check the claimant is taking steps each week to develop their business proposal and attending appointments with their business mentor/adviser.

The action the claimant needs to take to develop their business plan will vary depending on a number of factors, for example the type of business being started, the claimant's existing level of skills/knowledge. It is therefore not possible to produce an exhaustive list of the activities a particular claimant may undertake, but these activities could include:

- market research for example, researching potential customers, competitors, potential suppliers, company structures, legal obligations, health and safety, tax and insurance
- applying for licences
- investigating potential funding streams
- opening business bank accounts
- setting up bookkeeping systems
- producing strategies for example, for costs and pricing sales, a marketing plan
- attending business seminars, an Enterprise Club, trade fairs and business network events
- developing their business skills for example, bookkeeping, sales techniques
- acquiring premises / equipment
- arranging utilities for premises

The revised criteria for the reviews lasts until the claimant moves into self-employment or participation in the NEA mentoring scheme ends, this will be no later than 12 weeks after the claimant's start on NEA.

If the during the Work Search Review, doubts arise regarding the activities undertaken by the claimant to develop their business proposal or keeping appointments with their business mentor/adviser, the claimant must be referred to their WC for further action.

Updating Work Services Platform

The outcome of the appointment is recorded on WSP.

See Also

- [Booking Appointments](#)
- [Ongoing Work Search Interviews](#)
- [Initial Work Search Interview](#)
- [Special arrangements for claimant attendance](#)