

In-Work Progression Randomised Control Trials

Q&A

09 April 2015 v.01

1. Background

Q. Why are we running in-work trials?

A. As part of Universal Credit, we will, for the first time, be actively supporting claimants who are in low-paid work to earn more and become more independent and self sufficient.

The offer now to this group of claimants is limited because we don't yet know about the best and most effective ways to help people on Universal Credit earn more.

Through these important trials and your work, we will build this vital evidence so that we can introduce, in the future, a national in-work service.

Q. What is the trial?

A. Through this first large-scale trial, we will start to test the impact of key elements of an in-work service. This uses the core principles of the support we provide to those people looking for work and includes three key elements:

- Providing Work Coach support to set relevant goals, address barriers and define actions for claimants;
- Setting mandatory requirements to ensure that claimants take reasonable action that should help them earn more; and
- Having challenging conversations to monitor and drive the progress that claimants are making.

Q. What is the trial aiming to achieve?

A. In delivering this trial, you will be helping Universal Credit claimants in low earning households to take steps to increase their earnings which will ultimately give them greater independence from benefit.

This is also a great thing for the country. Helping people progress and earn more will make a significant progress in reducing poverty and in-work poverty whilst importantly contributing to the growth of your local economies.

Q. How does this trial impact on Universal Credit performance?

A. The outcomes that we want to achieve from the delivery of this trial are clearly aligned to the new Labour Market Performance Measures that underpins the delivery of Universal Credit. These performance measures are as follows:

1. Supporting claimants to move into work;
2. Helping claimants remain and stay in sustained work; and
3. Supporting claimants to progress and increase their earnings.

This text has been removed as per section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act as disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the programme of research and the integrity of the trial data.

However, Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act enables us to direct you to information, already within the public domain, which covers the information you have requested. Information on the In work Progression Randomised Control Trial can be found at www.gov.uk/uc-at-work-spring-2015.pdf

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5. Conducting Interviews

Q: When should I start to engage with in-work claimants?

A: It is important for Coaches to start discussions as soon as possible. However, Coach support is flexibly applied following the first intervention and conversations are tailored to a claimant's individual circumstances, which will take account of where a claimant needs to settle into their new work and consolidate that position.

The first Assistant Work Coach compliance checks will not begin until 8 weeks after the claimant enters the Trial.

Q: What is the difference between an IWP interview and other interviews?

A: The biggest change is the quality and depth of the conversation you will be having with the claimant. The whole focus of the interview will be about their work, how they can increase hours; any areas which need resolution, how they can move to more hours, a better job or a career.

Q: What are the key messages I need to get across to claimants, as they will be unprepared for an increase in the intensity of the interview, the move from voluntary to mandatory and the threat of sanctions for failure to comply?

A: Firstly it is important to remind claimants that UC is an in and out of work benefit. UC objectives include progress in work. You need to remind them (and yourselves) that those on part time hours and low pay are assessed as being able to do more to support themselves.

Use the Claimant Commitment to help you to be clear in the directions you give claimants – if they fully understand their responsibilities and the consequences of not meeting them, they are more likely to comply.

Q: What are the key messages that I need to consider in my conversations with in-work claimants?

A. Coaches should emphasise to claimants -

- That we want support them to earn more by helping them identify and address barriers to progression.
- That support is tailored to their individual circumstances
- The benefits of progression and financial independence.

Coaches should also refer to the clear expectations and mandatory requirements set out in the Claimant Commitment and re-enforce the consequences of non-compliance, so claimants fully understand the implications of their actions.”

Q: What discretion do I have with in-work claimants and in what circumstances might I consider applying that discretion?

A. The eligibility criteria for participation in this trial is set in legislation and includes provision for excluding claimants who, for example, are recent victims of domestic violence.

Work coaches have some limited discretion to consider whether the participants CET should be reduced to take into account, for example, time spent carrying out caring responsibilities. Claimants whose household earnings are above the CET will be excluded from the trial.

Allocation to control or trial groups must be dictated by the Random Allocation Tool. Work Coaches do not have discretion to reallocate participants based on the claimant’s circumstances.

Q: In conducting trial Work Search Reviews what are the key things I should consider and discuss when examining if an in-work claimant is taking all expected steps to meet their commitments?

A: The purpose of these interviews is to take stock of the current position and confirm that the claimant is taking all the necessary action expected of them. It is expected that the claimant provide evidence to show that they are meeting their mandatory requirements set out in their Claimant Commitment.

Evidence need not cover every individual action taken but should be sufficient for the Coach to be satisfied that requirements have been fully met.”

Q. Can I refund the travel costs of claimants in the trial attending WSI/WSR?

A. The costs of travel will not normally be refunded. These trials will require claimants to attend fortnightly or bi-monthly. As with out of work claimants, where the claimant is exceptionally required to attend more regularly then refunds of travel costs from the Flexible Support Fund can be considered.

Q. What if the claimant wants to deal with another Jobcentre?

A. If a claimant has a change of address, and the new address falls outside the trial area, the claimant will no longer be part of the trial.

However, where a request is received from a trial participant to change Jobcentre and the claimant's address is not changing, each request should be considered on its own merits. Where it is clear that the request is primarily to avoid participation in the trial, the request should be refused and the claimant will continue to be included in the trial.

6. Conditionality and Sanctions

Q. Why are we sanctioning claimants who are already in work?

A. Conditionality is an important element in driving greater independence and ensuring that claimants take greater accountability to earn and work more.

Part of the trial is to understand what impact conditionality and sanctions have in supporting and encouraging progression and what impact that has on a person's earnings.

It is important that we encourage claimants to take up the support on offer and work closely with claimants to set tailored requirements appropriate to individual circumstances.

Claimants will only be sanctioned if they are not taking those reasonable steps to increase their earnings, as agreed with their coach as part of the claimant commitment conversation.

Q. How long will a sanction run under the trial?

A. The normal Universal Credit sanctions process will apply to trial participants, including the actions to take when a sanctioned claimant complies.

7. Training and Support

Q. What training will Coaches receive and when will this start?

A. Helping prepare our Work Coaches to deliver this trial is a crucial aspect of the work we are doing now. We want to ensure that Coaches have a really strong understanding of the things they can do to support and encourage people to earn more and that they have access to information and tools that can help.

This Learning and Development will start in early April.

Q. What support will be available once the trial goes live?

A. There will be lots of support available. Above the usual routes (Line Managers and district support), we will be introducing specific new roles to ensure that Coaches receive on-going support and help whilst they are delivery this trial, that best practices are shared and that we can clearly understand what is working well and what needs improving.