

Skills Conditionality – Wales

Partnership Managers Guide

Introduction

1. This guidance provides the details and processes involved in Skills Conditionality for Partnership Managers working in District offices in Wales.
2. Jobcentre Plus adviser guidance is available in the separate Skills Conditionality-Wales/Skills for Work (Wales) guide.

Skills Conditionality - Overview

3. Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) who have a literacy, numeracy or ESOL skills need which is the main barrier to them moving into work should be mandated to skills provision to address these needs.
4. Under Skills Conditionality claimants are mandated to attend, take part and complete the provision.
5. Skills Conditionality policy is about reducing the number of claimants who fail to start or fail to complete training through the use of mandatory referrals.
6. Where a claimant fails to attend, take part or complete the provision they risk having sanctions applied to their benefit.
7. Skills Conditionality is to be used for skills referrals from 15 October 2012.

The Welsh Assembly Government's Position on Skills Conditionality

8. The Welsh Assembly Government is yet to be convinced of the effectiveness of using mandatory referrals to address people's skills needs and does not want claimants to be mandated to attend provision funded by the Welsh Government.
9. The Welsh government is content for mandatory referrals to take place in Wales where the provision is funded by the DWP.
10. To enable DWP to introduce skills conditionality in Wales a bespoke DWP programme has been procured (Skills for Work (Wales)). This programme is currently scheduled to run for 12 months (from October 2012) and will be evaluated with the aim of providing an evidence base to persuade the Welsh Government to accept mandatory referrals to their skills programmes
11. Future developments will be linked to evaluation over 12 months and to the introduction of Universal Credit in October 2013.

Types of Provision

Provision included in Skills Conditionality

12. In Wales Skills Conditionality only applies to claimants referred to Skills for Work (Wales) provision.

Skills for Work (Wales)

Overview

13. Skills for Work (Wales) is a DWP funded programme which enables advisers to mandate claimants to provision to address skills barriers where these are the main barrier to someone finding work.
14. Skills for Work (Wales) addresses basic skills (literacy/numeracy) and ESOL. These skills are acknowledged as providing the essential building blocks to all forms of employment.
15. The provision is part-time (less than 16 hours per week).
16. The key features of Skills for Work (Wales) are:
 - Targeted at JSA and ESA WRAG claimants who are not in the Work Programme and are identified as having a skills need which is the main barrier to gaining employment.
 - Basic skills provision will mainly be targeted on those who are below Entry Level 3
 - ESOL provision will focus on those with clear language barriers below Entry Level 2.
 - All attendance is on a mandatory basis, all individuals potentially subject to sanctions if they fail to start, attend or complete provision.
 - Part-time provision of a minimum of 7.5 hours and less than 16 hours a week, overall provision lasting a maximum of 8 weeks.
 - Provision is 100% funded on qualification outcomes; the expectation being a minimum of 95% of participants to achieve a qualification at a higher level than their initial assessment score in Essential Skills (literacy/numeracy) or ESOL Entry Level 2.

Length of contract

17. Skills for Work (Wales) will run for 12 months from 15 October 2012, ongoing arrangements to deliver skills conditionality will be subject to the outcome of discussions with the Welsh Government outlined in paragraph 10.

Interface with other Welsh skills programmes

18. Although Skills for Work (Wales) has been designed as a distinct DWP programme, mandatory attendance being the key requirement, it is not intended that it operates in isolation of other skills programmes in Wales such as Steps to Employment which will continue to operate on a voluntary basis.
19. Within basic skills, the clear focus of Skills to Work (Wales) is on supporting those with very low levels of basic skills (primarily below Entry Level 3) to obtain a next-level qualification.
20. It is fully acknowledged that not everyone will be job-ready on conclusion of Skills for Work (Wales). With this in mind there will be situations where claimants progress to further training/learning opportunities, the difference being a period of mandatory provision would precede any voluntary support.

LMS

21. The LMS opportunity type used for Skills Conditionality in Wales:

- **Skills for Work (Wales)**

22. These referrals will be made via PRaP using the Skills for Work (Wales) LMS opportunity.

23. Opportunities set up under this provision category should include the following information:

- Skills Conditionality applies to referrals to this provision;
- The appropriate Skills Conditionality referral notification letter must be issued to the claimant; and

District Provision Tool

24. The information on the District Provision Tool (or any other local products which are used to identify provision) for Skills for Work (Wales) should make it clear that:

- Skills Conditionality applies to referrals of claimants referred to Skills for Work (Wales);
- The appropriate Skills Conditionality referral notification letter must be issued to the claimant; and
- the referral should also be recorded using Skills for Work (Wales) LMS opportunity type.

25. Full details of how to publish details on the District Provision Tool are included on the DPT Support Guidance.

Change of Provision Requirements

Change of Provision requirements after start

26. Local arrangements should be in place for providers to inform Jobcentre Plus of cases where they decide partway through the course that it:

- is not suitable for the claimant;
- is not the most suitable course of action; or
- the claimant needs something different first (e.g. non-skills support such as to address dependency).

Travel, Childcare and Replacement Care Costs

27. Travel, childcare and replacement care costs must be paid (where required) for JSA and ESA WRAG claimants mandated to provision under Skills Conditionality.

Childcare Costs

28. Mandated claimants attending provision must be offered help with their childcare costs where required.

29. Payment for these costs will be reimbursed from the Flexible Support Fund.

30. Where the claimant requires help with childcare costs, payments should be made following the guidance in the Flexible Support Fund - Childcare Costs guidance.

31. The ACME – Account Codes Made Easy tool must be used to identify the correct Skills Conditionality account codes.

32. Any payments must be recorded on LMS on the ADF hotspot.

Replacement Care Costs

- 33. Mandated claimants attending provision must be offered help with their travel costs where required.
- 34. Payment for these costs will be reimbursed from the Flexible Support Fund.
- 35. Where the claimant requires help with replacement care costs, payments should be made following the guidance in the Flexible Support Fund - Replacement Care guidance.
- 36. The ACME – Account Codes Made Easy tool must be used to identify the correct Skills Conditionality account codes.
- 37. Any payments must be recorded on LMS on the ADF hotspot.

Help with travel costs

- 38. Mandated claimants attending provision must be offered help with their travel costs where required.
- 39. Payment for these costs will be reimbursed from the Flexible Support Fund.
- 40. Where the claimant requires help with replacement travel costs, payments should be made following the guidance in the Flexible Support Fund - Payment of Travel Expenses guidance.
- 41. ACME – Account Codes Made Easy tool must be used to identify the correct Skills Conditionality account codes.
- 42. Any payments must be recorded on LMS on the ADF hotspot.

Contract Management

- 43. Contracted Services, which are part of the Work Programme Division will be performance managing the Skills for Work (Wales) contract.
- 44. However, partnerships managers will be key in ensuring that opportunities for progression for individuals following Skill for Work (Wales) are maximised.