

Screenings and Assessments

Overview

1. **Skills Screening** is the process by which potential skills needs in relation to claimant's job goals, or available jobs in the local labour market, are identified.

2. Skills screening is undertaken by Jobcentre Plus advisers and is an integral part of any Work Focused Interview (WFI).

3. It should be conducted as part of every:

- NJI (New Jobseeker Interview)-JSA Claimants
- New Joiners Work Focused Interview- ESA Claimants
- Subsequent work focused interview.

4. Skills screening involves gathering evidence to make informed decisions.

Skills Screening results are used to:

- Determine whether the claimant has the relevant skills to match the job goals on their JSAg /Action Plan, or a job readily available in the local labour market
- Review claimant expectations against their job goals.
- Identify potential skills gaps in relation to job goals, which may require further assessment.

5. Skills Screening enables advisers to make informed decisions on referral to appropriate provision, which includes;

- **Basic Skills:**
 - The ability to read, write and speak English; and
 - The ability to use numbers at a level to function in work and society;
- **English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL):**
 - The ability to communicate effectively in English;
- **Specific Work Skills Need:**
 - Skills required for specific occupations/sectors that are appropriate to the claimants stated job goals
 - Other skills needed to do a job;
- **Generic Work Skills:**
 - Time management;
 - Soft skills such as confidence building;
 - Communication.

6. **Skills Assessments** are carried out by careers advisers and training providers. These are used to identify a claimant's skills levels. Results are measured against national standards to ensure providers make appropriate decisions about training course for claimants.

7. **Diagnostic Skills Assessments**, conducted by providers, give a specific breakdown of claimant's skills needs.

For example, where a claimant has been assessed as having literacy needs, a diagnostic assessment will identify the specific area for improvement eg spelling or punctuation. Results may be shared with Jobcentre Plus.

Skills Screening – Jobcentre Plus

8. Skills Screening is an integral part of any Work Focused Interview and identifies potential skills needs in relation to the claimant's job goals.
9. Skills Screening must be undertaken during the Diagnostic part of the New Jobseekers Interview (NJI) or the New Joiners Work Focused Interview (NJWFI).
10. Skills Screening should be reviewed at all subsequent work focused interviews.
11. Advisers have discretion on whether to use an initial or in-depth screening approach.

- **Initial Skills Screening** involves observation and discussion during work focused interviews to gather evidence on skills, qualifications, previous training and work history.

The information gathered during Work Focused Interviews will inform decisions about any onward referral, and whether the JSAG or Action Plan needs to be updated.

- **In-Depth Skills screening** involves observation/discussion as described in Initial Screening, plus completion of the Fast Track Screening Tool in England and Wales or the Literacy and Numeracy Alerting Questions in Scotland.

12. All claimants attending a Jobcentre Plus Adviser interview must be made aware of any relevant skills support available, either by;

Referral to:

- The National Careers Service In England; where attendance and participation are mandatory under Skills Conditionality;
 - In Scotland, Careers advice through Skills Development Scotland, which is non mandatory.
 - In Wales, Careers advice through Careers Wales, which is non mandatory.
- Mandatory Referral to local skills provision ;
 - In England, attendance and participation is mandatory
 - In Scotland, attendance and participation in Training for Work provision is mandatory (excluding the initial provider interview)
 - In Wales, attendance and participation in Skills for Work (Wales) provision is mandatory.
- Signposting to the National Careers Service (England), Skills Development Scotland (Scotland) or Careers Advice (Wales). All signposted claimants are not subject to Skills Conditionality.

Conducting Skills Screenings- Jobcentre Plus

13. Explain the importance of skills, including reading, numeracy and language in finding and sustaining work; and that help is available if needed.
14. Be aware that claimants may feel uncomfortable discussing educational ability.
15. Advisers should:

- Undertake Skills Screening whilst gathering skills information in relation to the claimants job goals;

- Use the evidence gathered through screening to make informed decisions on the appropriate action required to help the claimant find work and to develop the JSAG or Action Plan.
16. For claimants with no potential need, for example those who provide information on their qualifications which are relevant to their job goals:
- Signpost to careers advice and
 - Signpost to provision where the claimant has an interest in upskilling.
17. For claimants with a clear skills need, refer to appropriate provision.
18. For claimants with less clear skills needs, a referral for further assessment should be made.
- Explain:
- The benefits of a skills assessment
 - The importance of improvements those levels where required
 - What to expect at the assessment.
19. Refer to appropriate Careers Advice Service.

Initial Skills Screening

20. Initial Skills Screening is an integral part of a Work Focused Interview delivered by a Jobcentre Plus Adviser.
21. Initial screening involves gathering evidence on skills, qualifications, previous training and work history to make informed decisions on skills needs.
22. This information is used to develop a JSAG/Action Plan in relation to job goals.
23. Initial Skills Screening does not involve the use of any screening tools and is an established part of any Work Focused Interview; using a light touch approach to identify specific barriers to finding employment.
24. Initial Skills Screening includes:
- Observing the claimant's ability to:
 - Read
 - Write; and/or
 - Speak English.
 - Discussing any previous experience the claimant may have in a work environment;
 - Gathering evidence of skills, qualifications and previous training as part of developing the Jobseeker's Agreement (JSAG) or Action Plan (For ESA Claimants).
 - Looking at areas of the claimant's life where English and Maths are used.

Outcome of Initial Skills Screening

25. The Outcome of the Skills Screening is that the claimant has:
- Clear skills needs
 - Unclear skills needs or;
 - No skills needs.
26. Depending on the outcome of the Initial Skills Screening, one of the following activities is undertaken:
- **Clear skills needs.** Refer claimants with an identified skills need as their main barrier to work, to appropriate skills provider for an initial

provider interview, or where skills is not the main barrier, to alternative provision which will help to address those barriers.

Explain:

- Attendance and participation at skills provision are mandatory in England under Skills Conditionality.
- In Wales, Skills conditionality only applies to Skills for Work (Wales) Provision. Careers advice is non mandatory.
- In Scotland, Skills Conditionality applies to Training for Work provision, although not for the Initial Provider Interview or Careers advice.
- **Unclear skills needs.** Refer claimants with:
 - A poor employment history; and / or
 - Outdated skills; and / or
 - An employability skills gap; and / or lack of understanding of their current skills levels and those required by the labour market to the National Careers Service (Mandatory referral in England), Careers Wales (Wales) or Skills Development Scotland / Careers Advice face-to-face service in Scotland.
- **No skills needs-** Signpost claimants who have no skills needs and no other barriers relating to their job goals to the National Careers Service in England, Careers Wales in Wales or Skills Development Scotland in Scotland.
- Signpost to provision where the claimant shown an interest in upskilling.

In Depth Skills Screening

27. In-depth Skills Screening utilises screening tools to help gather information on skills relating to claimant's job goals.

28. Screening involves gathering information during Work Focused Interviews to make informed decisions as to whether the claimant has the skills needed to move into a job stated on their JSAG/ Action Plan, or a job readily available in the local labour market.

29. In-depth screening involves:

- The Fast Track Screening Tool (England and Wales) or the Literacy and Numeracy Alerting Questions (Scotland) screening tools for basic skills,
- Gathering evidence as described under Initial Skills Screening, and
- Updating the Customer Assessment Tool (CAT).

Fast Track Screening Tool (England & Wales)

30. When introducing the Fast Track Screening Tool in England and Wales:

- Explain to the claimant that this is part of the Jobcentre Plus process to determine whether additional skills or training may be necessary to help them find a job;
- Issue the paper to the claimant; and
- Explain that they should complete as much as they can starting with their name.

31. Do not leave the claimant to complete screening tools unsupervised.

Carry out other tasks at the same time, but monitor how the claimant deals with the form.

Literacy & Numeracy Alerting Questions (Scotland)

32. When introducing the Literacy & Numeracy alerting questions in Scotland;

- Explain to the claimant that you will ask them a few questions which will help determine whether additional skills or training may be necessary to help them to find a job.
- On the Alerting Questions template circle the appropriate answer then follow the instructions to determine the level of support required.
- Do not leave the claimant to complete screening tools unsupervised. Carry out other tasks at the same time, but monitor how the claimant deals with the form.

33. If the claimant struggles to complete the Fast Track screening tool or literacy & numeracy alerting questions.

Outcome of the in depth skills screening

34. The Outcome of the in depth Skills Screening will either be that the claimant has:

- Clear skills needs
- Unclear skills needs or;
- No skills needs.

35. Depending on the outcome of the In Depth Skills Screening the following activities are undertaken:

- **Clear Skills needs**- Refer claimants with an identified skills need that is their main barrier to work, to appropriate skills provider for an initial provider interview.
- Where skills are not the main barrier, refer to alternative provision which will help to address those barriers.
 - Explain the importance of skills for finding work;
 - Identify and discuss available options to address the claimant's skills needs; using the District Provision Tool for local provision.
 - Advise claimants (as appropriate) that:
 - In England, attendance and participation in Skills Provision are mandatory under Skills Conditionality;
 - In Wales, Skills conditionality only applies to Skills for Work (Wales) Provision. Careers advice is non mandatory.
 - In Scotland, Skills Conditionality applies to Training for Work provision, although not for the Initial Provider Interview or careers advice.
 - Incorporate agreed steps into the Jobseeker's Agreement (JSAG) or Action Plan, alongside other activities to find work
- **Unclear Skills needs** -Refer claimants with:
 - A poor employment history; and / or
 - Outdated skills; and / or
 - An employability skills gap; and / or lack of understanding of their current skills levels and those required by the labour market to the National Careers Service (Mandatory referral in England)/ Skills Development Scotland / Careers Advice Wales face-to-face service (Non mandatory in Scotland & Wales).

36. Explain:

- The importance of skills for finding work;

- That attendance and participation are mandatory in England under Skills Conditionality.
- What the claimant can expect at their assessment

37. Incorporate agreed steps into the Jobseeker's Agreement (JSAg) or Action Plan, alongside other activities to find work

- **No Needs-** Signpost claimants who have no skills needs and no other barriers relating to their job goals to the National Careers Service (England) Careers Wales advice (Wales) or Skills Development Scotland (Scotland).
- Signpost to provision where the claimant shown an interest in upskilling.

Skills Conditionality

- In England Skills Conditionality applies to all JSA and ESA WRAG claimants referred to the National Careers Service or provision (including Initial Provider Interviews). All claimants must be mandated to attend and participate.
- In Wales, Skills Conditionality only applies to Skills for Work (Wales) Provision. Careers advice is non mandatory.
- In Scotland Skills Conditionality only applies to referrals to Training for Work provision and excludes the initial provider interview. Careers advice is non mandatory.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) claimants

38. Language barriers can seriously undermine the chances of finding and keeping a job and must be addressed.

39. Do not undertake the In-Depth screening process for claimants with very clear ESOL needs, for example, if accompanied by an interpreter.

40. For those claimants, update LMS to show the screening outcome as 'ESOL'.

41. Where a need is identified as part of a claimant interview:

- Explain the importance of English language skills for finding work;
- Identify and discuss available opportunities; using the District Provision Tool for local provision.
- Advise claimants that it is mandatory to take steps to address their needs;
- Incorporate agreed steps into the Jobseeker's Agreement (JSAg) or Action Plan, alongside other activities to find work; and
- Update the Skills Screening field in 'nactions' in LMS and select "ESOL".

42. For JSAg purposes, Steps to improve English might include:

- Attend any locally available ESOL assessment;
- Register for an ESOL course available locally;
- Participate in an ESOL course available locally;

ESOL

43. A list of ESOL level descriptors has been developed to help advisers determine which activities a claimant should be able to undertake at each level, from pre entry level through to entry level 2.

44. Feedback should be obtained as to the claimant's level of achievement as they finish provision.

ESOL future update

45. The current ESOL Skills for Life qualifications will only be available until September 2014.

46. Over the next year, awarding organizations will develop a new generation of Skills for Life qualifications. These will be available from August 2014. See the ESOL Q&A paper for further details.

Claimant unable to complete the Fast Track or struggles to answer the Alerting Questions

47. Where the claimant cannot complete or struggles to answer the questions on the appropriate screening tool for any reason:

- End the activity
- Record the skills screening results as Basic Skills or ESOL need
- Discuss available provision
- Make an appropriate referral.

Claimant refuses to complete the Fast Track or answer the Alerting Questions

48. Where a claimant refuses to complete the Fast Track in England / Wales or answer the Alerting questions in Scotland because they feel:

- They lack the ability
- It is inappropriate for them to do so
- Their skills are adequate
- They are well educated and over qualified or
- They do not need to for the job they want;

49. Consider any evidence gathered from the interview and where appropriate refer to skills provider/careers advice for further assessment.

50. Update LMS screening record with appropriate screening results.

Claimant Groups

51. There are a number of claimant groups where the actions to be taken following screening differs from the normal process:

- Claimants declaring voluntary or part-time work;
- Claimants with health problems / learning difficulties;
- Claimants who have served a custodial or community sentence;

Claimants declaring voluntary or part-time work

52. Where screening identifies those with a potential skills need and the claimant declares part time work or voluntary activity, explain that although valuable experience can be gained from taking part in voluntary activity or part time work, additional skills may make it possible to achieve better job goals.

53. Consider referral to an appropriate provider.

54. Any referrals made in England and Wales will be subject to Skills Conditionality.

55. All screenings must be recorded on LMS.

Claimants with health problems / learning difficulties

56. Where claimants suggest that they have health problems/learning difficulties, or where it is suspected, advisers should decide whether a referral skills training would be suitable and make an appropriate referral.

57. Advisers should consider supporting this claimant group through the Health Related Support Guidance, Toolkit and FSF or should consider referral to the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA).

58. When recording the screening outcome on LMS, also:

- Include information in the notes box about the DEA referral; and
- Set a workflow to follow up the referral.

59. Where the DEA does not caseload the claimant, make a note in LMS 'Conversations' to explain why.

60. Claimants not accepted for DEA caseloading should be considered for early entry to the Work Programme.

61. Where the claimant chooses not to enter the Work Programme early, the claimant should be referred to the National Careers Service or a skills provider who will assess whether provision is available to address their needs.

Claimants who have served a custodial or community sentence

62. In areas where skills information is not shared between Jobcentre Plus and the Prison/Probation Service, appropriate skills screening should be undertaken at the NJI/NJWFI interview.

63. In areas where Jobcentre Plus, the Prison/Probation Service and the claimant agree to exchange information any previous screening information should be used to update LMS.

64. Where the claimant chooses not to enter the Work Programme early, discuss any skills issues with the claimant and consider referral to appropriate provider. All claimants referred to provision must be mandated to attend and participate. This excludes the initial provider interview in Scotland.

Recording Skills Screening Outcomes

65. LMS (Labour Market System) must be updated promptly and accurately with results of Initial Skills/In-depth Screening:

- Select 'nactions' followed by either 'Initial' or 'In-depth' screening as appropriate.
 - The options available within the Skills Screening drop down menu are:
 - **ESOL Need** – English Speakers of Other Languages;
 - **Basic Skills Need** – The ability to read, write and speak English, and the ability to use numbers at a level to function in work and society;
 - **Generic Work Skills Need** – Employability skills required across all sectors, for example time management;
 - **Specific Work Skills Need** – Skills required for specific occupations / sectors that are appropriate to the claimants stated job goals
 - **No skills Need** – Self explanatory;

Severe Basic Skills need must not be selected – Screening identifies potential needs and processes are not currently designed to support accurate identification of 'severe needs'. We have not yet received a working or legal definition to support this description. Consequently if

information is recorded against this selection on LMS a legal challenge could result.

66. LMS should also be updated to reflect:

- Onward referral to appropriate provision;
- Signposting to the Adult Careers service/ National Careers Service /SDS;
- Referral to a Skills assessment, delivered face-to-face by a careers adviser/ National Careers Service /Adult Literacy Network (ALN).

Recording qualifications

67. As part of the Initial Skills Screening, qualifications that relate to the claimant's job goals must be identified and recorded in the 'Quals/assessment' hotspot on LMS. For full details on how to use the 'Quals/assessment' hotspot please see the LMS User Guide

68. Where a claimant has no qualifications, update the lowest qualified marker.

Setting the Lowest Qualified Marker

69. When a claimant attends for a New Jobseeker Interview, check the LMS record for the Lowest Qualified Marker.

70. The 'DIS GP' marker on the LMS Client Record identifies claimants with qualifications less than Level 2 (equivalent to 5 GCSEs at Grade A-C or the Scottish equivalents). The marker has its own sub-window, which is opened by selecting 'Lowest Qualified' from the 'Other Function' menu.

71. The 'LowQ' menu shows the following options;

- None Selected;
- Yes;
- No;
- Prefer not to say.

72. 'Yes' should only be selected if the claimant has either:

- No qualifications; or
- Entry 1 to 3; or
- Level 1.

73. If higher qualifications are recorded in the 'Qualifications/Assessments' window, a screen message:

- 'You are attempting to set the lowest qualified indication to 'Yes' in contradiction to qualifications currently recorded for the claimant' appears.

74. The screen message will also ask if you want to proceed.

- Select 'No' for any claimant who has qualifications above Level 1.
- Select 'Prefer Not to Say' if the claimant does not want this information to be recorded.

75. Where the 'LowQ' field is set to 'Yes' or 'Prefer not to say' and a new qualification above level 1 is added, the entry in the 'Lowest Qualified' field will change to 'No' automatically.

For more information on recording Lowest Qualified Marker details refer to the LMS User Guide, Chapter H, Customer Functions, Part 1, Qualifications / Assessments.

Recording qualification Levels

76. Information regarding qualification levels can be found on the National Qualification Framework and at Gov.uk.

Repeat / Reclaims

77. For information about previous screenings and participation in provision, Check LMS:

- 'Quals/Assmt';
- 'Int Hist'; or
- 'Conversations'

78. Reclaim claimants who have previously left provision early without gaining a qualification should be mandated to return to the provision to build on progress already made.

79. Referral for a balance of time is appropriate where the claimant returns to the register within 1 and 14 days of leaving.

80. A new referral is appropriate where the claimant has missed 14 days or more of their provision.

Jobsearch Review

81. During Jobsearch Reviews;

- Discuss any previous referral/signposting activity;
- Re-issue the signposting leaflet if appropriate or book an adviser interview where required e.g. the claimant has failed to attend but still requires a referral;
- Update 'Job search review' box;
- Review the progress of claimants who are attending skills training;
- For those who are sanctioned and signing to retain passported benefits advise them to re-engage with the training (England).