

## Paving the Way for Universal Credit – One Story

Universal Credit (UC) is being introduced as a pathfinder from April 2013 with national implementation expected to roll-out from October 2013.

The policy intent is to make work pay; one aspect of this is about getting a job or for those already in work, looking to increase their earnings so that they can become more self sufficient. We know this is the right choice for individuals and families because work pays and will always make financial sense.

To receive UC, claimants will need to agree a new 'personal contract' called the Claimant Commitment and claimants will need to fulfill the terms and conditions of their commitment, based on their personal circumstances.

Claimants who are fit and ready for work will be expected to satisfy the full work search requirements and if they don't, tough but fair sanctions will be applied.

Universal Credit will be very much at the heart of our business. To help pave the way for this we are starting to make changes to the way we do things now. These changes outlined in the following paragraphs are essentially linked to Universal Credit and each other. Therefore, they must not be implemented in isolation. In particular, the New Conditionality and Sanctions Regime and Universal Jobmatch will be key performance enablers in making sure UC is only paid to claimants who are entitled to receive it.

### New Conditionality and Sanctions Regime

A new conditionality and sanctions regime will be applied for JSA claimants from 22 October 2012 and ESA claimants from 3 December 2012. This regime has been introduced in preparation for UC and aligned to the tougher sanctions regime. Sanctions will still be applied if people do not meet the required conditions for receiving benefit. However, the length of sanction and how these are applied will be different.

<b>JSA</b>				
<b>Level of Sanction</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sanction Period in weeks (over a 52 week period)</b>		
		<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> / Subsequent</b>
Higher	Misconduct; LV; RE; Neglect to Avail (work); and MWA.	13	26	156
Intermediate	ASE; and Availability.	4	13	13

Lower	FTA; Jobseeker's Direction; Failure to participate in Employment, Skills and Enterprise Scheme; Voluntarily leaves training scheme or employment programme; Neglect to avail (opportunities); and Refuses, fails to attend or loses through misconduct (a place on training scheme or employment programme).	4	13	13
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## ESA

If a decision is made to reduce ESA, the personal allowance component of ESA will be stopped until the claimant complies. Compliance is:

- attendance at the interview; or
- completing the work-related activity they were asked to do; or
- coming to an agreement with the adviser about attending the interview or completing the work-related activity.

After the claimant demonstrates compliance the sanction will continue for a further fixed period of either:

- one week if it was the first offence; or
- two weeks if they have previously failed to attend or take part in a work focused interview or undertake work related activity in the last 52 weeks; or
- four weeks if they have had their benefit reduced for those reasons more than once and the most recent of the previous failures was within 52 weeks of the current failure.

Further information about the new sanctions regime can be found on the [Conditionality and Sanctions site](#).

## Universal Jobmatch

Universal Jobmatch (UJ) is our new, modern, online job posting and automated matching service that will be launched on 19 November.

It will be an essential tool to help jobseekers find work and in particular, JSA claimants must be encouraged to create a profile and CV to ensure that they start getting automatic matches to vacancies as quickly as possible.

Claimants will need to obtain a Government Gateway account to enable them create a profile and CV in UJ.

Our ultimate aim is to get claimants to use the service voluntarily. However, any JSA claimants who persistently refuse to create a profile and CV in UJ can be mandated to create one through a Jobseeker's Direction. Further guidance about considerations that need to be made before issuing a

Jobseeker's Direction for this purpose is available in the [Jobseeker's Direction](#) part of the Universal Jobmatch Toolkit.

UJ is therefore fundamental to our conditionality and sanctions regime, particularly when assessing Actively Seeking Employment and Refusal of Employment.

To help Assistant Advisers, Personal Advisers, Decision Makers and their managers understand what Universal Jobmatch means for them we have developed a series of storyboards with supporting notes and key messages.

These can be found on the [Conditionality Hub](#) and may be used as desk aids by individuals or as part of a group discussion.

More detailed information is available in the [Universal Jobmatch Toolkit](#) to help staff decide whether to issue a [Jobseeker's Direction](#) and help them assess [Actively Seeking Employment](#) and [Refusal of Employment](#).

## **My Benefits on-line**

In addition to the two major changes mentioned above, My Benefits on-line is also being launched on 19 November.

My benefits on-line will enable claimants to obtain the answers to a limited selection of questions they may have about their claim. This service is available to anyone claiming the following benefits:

- Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA),
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA),
- Income Support (IS),
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA); and
- Attendance Allowance (AA).

Claimants wishing to use this service must have a level 2 authenticated Government Gateway account. Anyone with this level of authentication will also be able to register for Universal Jobmatch using this Government Gateway User ID.

See [My Benefits Online](#) for further information about this service.