



Universal Credit Claimant Commitment

The claimant commitment is being phased in from October 2013 alongside Universal Credit; here is what you need to know:

What is a Claimant Commitment? How Will It Affect You?

Under Universal Credit there is a new, tougher conditionality regime meaning there are conditions and requirements that you need meet to be entitled to benefits. **All** claimants, even those not expected to look for work, will be required to accept a claimant commitment as a condition of entitlement to Universal Credit.

In the case of joint claims **both** eligible claimants will be required to accept an individual Claimant Commitment which will set out each of their requirements. If one of the couple does not accept **neither** will be entitled to Universal Credit if they continue to apply as a couple.

There may be circumstances where the claimant is reluctant to accept the Claimant Commitment. If the claimant refuses to accept, the adviser must offer a cooling off period of a maximum of seven days. If the claimant still refuses to accept their Claimant Commitment they will no longer be entitled to claim Universal Credit.

The claimant can also request reconsideration (second opinion) of the Claimant Commitment. If the original requirements still stand, then the date of entitlement may be moved to the date the claimant does accept the Claimant Commitment.

A new Claimant Commitment should be drawn up in response to a change of circumstance, when the old requirements expire, or when work search or work preparations activities are proving ineffective. Any revised Claimant Commitment has to be accepted by the claimant for entitlement to continue.

How Will It Be Decided What Should Be In Your Commitment?

There will be 4 “conditionality” groups. The group you are in will to a large degree affect what is in your Claimant Commitment. The groups are:

- **The all work related requirement group** – These claimants will be subject to an intensive conditionality regime and will be expected to actively look and prepare for work.
- **Work-Focused Interview Only Group** – Primarily parents of young children and foster carers
- **Work Preparation Group** – People with limited capability for work because of health issues
- **No Work-Related Requirement Group** – For people not expected to work in the future.

Claimant Commitments Will Be Individualised:

Even though a claimant will be allocated a conditionality group, JCP staff are supposed to undertake an individual diagnosis of each claimant capability and circumstance. This will include looking at their work history, qualifications health and caring responsibilities ensuring they are in the correct conditionality group

The Sort Of Things Covered By A Claimant Commitment?

The advisor will identify a job requirement that sets out **the work a claimant is expected to look for and accept** if offered. The advisor will establish the type, location, hours and pattern of a work that should be looked for. Claimants will normally be expected to look for any suitable employment paying the relevant national minimum wage within 1.5 hours travelling distance from their home. If accepted claimants in the all work group will be expected to start immediately unless they need to make childcare arrangements in which case they will be given one month to do so.

The advisor and claimant will set up an **action plan articulating the steps a claimant must take to find work**. The claimant will be expected to devote the same number of hours to work search in accordance with the action plan – up to a maximum of 35 hours per week. The action plan in the Claimant Commitment will reflect things like:

- Work preparation a claimant has to do such as training or CV clinics.
- Non – compulsory activity that the claimant has chosen to engage in and that the advisor agree improves their work prospects. For example volunteering can only for 50% of the hours on the claimant commitment hours (but only if the JCP advisor agrees).
- Work search activity (actually looking for jobs) – usually 35 hours per week although preparation activity will be taken into account.

Ongoing Support and “Monitoring”

An advisor will support the claimant, check progress and ensure the claimant is meeting their requirements. Contact will be made at least fortnightly telephone, electronically or face to face.

Sanctions

Where a claimant has not completed a requirement the advisor will need to ask the claimant why this is. Sanctions only apply if the claimant failed to meet a requirement without good reason.

Claimants will be invited to provide evidence of good reason for not meeting the requirement. The decision maker will take all available evidence into account and may contact the claimant or third parties for further information.

The Universal Credit sanctions regime is very tough, it is vital that claimants try to stick to their agreement and if they cannot let their advisor know immediately.