



Universal Credit Childcare

How to get
the right
Claimant
Commitment
for you



What is a Universal Credit Claimant Commitment?

Your Claimant Commitment should help you understand what the Department for Communities (DfC) expect from you so you can receive your Universal Credit money.

If you ever have a sanction imposed on your claim, your Claimant Commitment should also help you to understand what it is that the DfC think has gone wrong. This is why it is important that everyone who claims Universal Credit is able to agree a Claimant Commitment that properly reflects their personal circumstances. Work Coaches have a broad discretion to do this.



What does it mean to have 'childcare responsibilities'?

You are considered to be 'responsible' for a child if they normally live with you (1).

I am part of a couple and live with my partner. How do childcare responsibilities work for us?

If you claim Universal Credit as a couple, both of you will need to accept a Claimant Commitment (2). You will each have your own Claimant Commitment. You will need to nominate a 'lead carer' or 'main carer' who will be the one deemed to have 'childcare responsibilities' (3). DfC guidance says that you can change the nominated lead carer once a year or following a change of

circumstance affecting who cares for the child (4).

My child spends time living at more than one home. How does that affect things?

If the child normally lives with two or more people who are not a couple (e.g. where there are shared care arrangements between separated parents) then only one person can have ‘main responsibility’ (5). You can decide between you which person to nominate as having ‘responsibility’ for the purpose of a Universal Credit claim. If you can’t agree, then DfC can decide (6).

I have childcare responsibilities. Will I be expected to apply for jobs?

This depends on the age of the youngest child you are responsible for (7). The table below sets out what is expected of you depending on the child’s age.



“You will need to nominate a ‘lead carer’ or ‘main carer’ who will be the one deemed to have ‘childcare responsibilities’”

Age of Child	Work- focused interview	Work Preparation	Work Search	Work Availability
Under 1	No	No	No	No
1	Yes	No	No	No
2	Yes	Yes	No	No
3 older	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

“Your Claimant
Commitment can be
tailored to your
circumstances and
can also be reviewed
and changed if
needed at any time”



How much time will I have to spend applying for jobs?
How will this fit around my children?

The default number of ‘expected hours’ of work search for those who are required to look for work in order to receive Universal Credit is 35 hours a week. However, this is subject to several different factors. If you are responsible for a child who has not yet reached school age, your expected number of hours of work search should be compatible with your caring responsibilities (8).

If you have a child of school age, DfC should take account of how long it takes your child to travel to and from school, and what their normal school hours are (9). The table below sets out the DfC guidance on the default number of hours of work search required if you are the responsible carer for a child aged 3 or older.

Age of child	Normal number of hours expected work search
Age 3 or 4	16 hours per week (10)
5-12	25 hours per week (11)
13+	No default, but some reduction on the standard 35 hours (12)

However, your expected hours may be different depending on the circumstances, such as if the child has a disability (13).

How does my childcare affect the jobs I can be expected to apply for?

DfC guidance says that if your expected hours of work search are between 10 and 16 hours per week, you should not be expected to travel more than 60 minutes to work.

If your expected hours of work search are up to 10 hours per week, you should not be expected to travel more than 30 minutes to work (14).

How do I make sure that my Claimant Commitment is suitable for me?

Your Claimant Commitment can be tailored to your circumstances and can also be reviewed and changed if needed at any time. It’s important to tell your Work Coach about your children’s school hours, how long it takes you to take them to school or childcare, and anything else about you and looking after your children that affects how much time you have available to look for work because of your childcare responsibilities. You can take this leaflet with you to show your Work Coach.

Apart from childcare, what other circumstances should be taken into account? Tell your Work Coach about anything at all that you think is relevant to your ability to meet what is expected of you in your Claimant Commitment. For example, if anyone in your household has an illness or disability, or if you have recently experienced homelessness or domestic violence. If you also have caring responsibilities for someone else, such as a disabled relative, you should tell your Work Coach about this.

What if there's a crisis or emergency that means I can't meet my work-related requirements?

There is a legal requirement to switch off your requirements in certain circumstances, such as for victims of domestic violence or those suffering from a bereavement (15).



There is a discretion to switch them off where it is unreasonable to expect you to complete your requirements, for example because of illness or childcare (16). Tell your Work Coach as soon as you can if you need your requirements to be switched off. Seek advice from a welfare rights adviser or a solicitor if your request is refused.

Help for Clanmil Tenants

Our Benefits and Money Advice Team is here to provide free and confidential advice on all welfare benefits, debts and day-to-day money management for Clanmil tenants. If you have problems with your benefits, are struggling to afford your rent or manage your bills, we can help. Last year we helped over 500 people get back on track with their finances.

To talk to us, call 02890877047 or email moneyadvice@clanmil.org.uk

Where can I get further information?

Clanmil can provide information leaflets on:

- Care Leavers
- Mental Health
- Domestic Abuse
- Bed-Room Tax

You can find these on our website www.clanmil.org

“Our Benefits and Money Advice Team is here to provide free and confidential advice on all welfare benefits, debts and day-to-day money management for Clanmil tenants”



This information leaflet has been produced by Clanmil Housing as part of our Money and Benefits Advice Service to help claimants understand how to negotiate their Claimant Commitment. It should not be taken as legal advice.

- 1 Reg. 4(2) The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 2 Section 8(2) The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015
- 3 Reg. 4(5) The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.
- 4 House of Commons deposited papers, DEP2017-0556, 'Work related requirements for claimants with children', v.1, 3rd April 2017.
- 5 Reg. 4(4) The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 6 Reg. 4(5) The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 7 24, 25, 26 and 27 The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015
- 8 Reg. 87(2)(i) The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 9 Reg. 87(2)(b) The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 10 DfC Advice for Decision Making - J: Universal Credit, J3, para. J3058.
- 11 DfC Advice for Decision Making - J: Universal Credit J3, para.J3058.
- 12 DfC Advice for, Decision Making, J3, para. J3059.
- 13 DfC Advice for Decision Making J3, para. J3055.
- 14 House of Commons deposited papers, DEP2017-0556, 'Work related requirements for claimants with children', v.1,3rd April 2017.
- 15 Regs. 96 and 97 The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 16 House of Commons deposited papers, DEP2018-0759, 'Switching off WA and WRA', v.8.2nd July 2018.