



Universal Credit

Claimant Commitments



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 of you in order to receive your Universal Credit money. If you ever have a sanction imposed on your claim, your Claimant Commitment should also help you understand what it is that DfC think has gone wrong. This is why it is important that everyone who claims Universal Credit agrees a Claimant Commitment that properly reflects their personal circumstances.



How do I go about agreeing my Claimant Commitment?

Once your Universal Credit claim has been received by DfC, they will contact you to arrange an interview. At this interview your Claimant Commitment will be drawn up with your Work Coach.

What will I have to do in order to get paid Universal Credit?

There are different categories of requirements or 'conditionality' that you have to meet to qualify for Universal Credit.

Some people will have no work-related requirements (1). This could be because they are already earning enough money from work (2), because of an illness, disability or impairment, or because they have caring responsibilities for a disabled

person or a child under 1 year old. Others will have only interview requirements, which may be combined with work preparation requirements. The requirements that apply to you will depend on your circumstances, such as childcare responsibilities or whether you have limited capability for work.

Some people will have all work-related requirements as a condition of claim. This means that as a general rule, DfC will impose a work search requirement and a work availability requirement on people in this group. They may also impose interview and/or preparation requirements.

What does ‘work availability’ mean?

‘Available for work’ means that you are able and willing immediately to take up paid work (or more paid work or better paid work). This includes being able to immediately attend a job interview (3). Allowances are made if you have caring responsibilities or if you are doing voluntary work.

How much time will I have to spend applying for jobs?

The 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. This is before any deductions that might be relevant to you are applied (4). If you don't do the number of expected hours of work search set out in your Claimant Commitment each week, you may be sanctioned. Sanctions may be avoided if your Work Coach agrees that you have taken all reasonable action to find work, and that the actions you have taken give you the best prospects of finding work (5).

“Available for work’ means that you are able and willing immediately to take up paid work (or more paid work or better paid work)”

What sort of jobs will I have to apply for?

Your work search requirement and a work availability requirement are limited to work in a location that would normally take you a maximum of 90 minutes each way to travel, using your normal method of transport and considering the availability of public transport to you. If you have previously carried out work of a particular nature, or at a particular level of pay, this should be taken into account too (6).

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

Your Claimant Commitment can be tailored to your circumstances. It can be reviewed and changed if needed at any time. Work Coaches have a broad discretion to customise your Claimant Commitment to meet your needs. You can take this leaflet with you to show your Work Coach.



What circumstances should be taken into account?

Anything at all that affects your ability to do what would otherwise be expected of you in your Claimant Commitment. For example, if you have childcare responsibilities, if you or anyone in your household has an illness or disability, or if you have recently experienced homelessness or domestic violence.

If you have caring responsibilities for someone else, such as a disabled relative, you should also tell your Work Coach about this.

What should I do if I don't want to sign the Claimant Commitment that my Work Coach offers me?

If you disagree with the Claimant Contract offered by your Work Coach and don't want to sign it, you should be offered a "cooling off" period to think about this. DfC guidance suggests that the "cooling off" period can be a maximum of seven calendar days. Your Work Coach should explain to you the consequences of not signing a Claimant Commitment. An alternative option to refusing to sign your Claimant Commitment would be to sign and accept it so that your Universal Credit claim is able to progress, but to request a review or amendment as soon as possible afterwards.

“If you disagree with the Claimant Contract offered by your Work Coach and don’t want to sign it, you should be offered a “cooling off” period to think about this”





“You should seek specialist advice from a welfare rights advisor or solicitor before refusing to sign your Claimant Commitment”



What are the consequences of not signing a Claimant Commitment?

Accepting a Claimant Commitment is a 'basic condition' (7) of claiming Universal Credit. This means that you normally must accept a Claimant Commitment in order to receive payments. If you don't sign your Claimant Commitment, you may not be paid any Universal Credit. You should seek specialist advice from a welfare rights advisor or solicitor before refusing to sign your Claimant Commitment.

What if I want to change what is on my Claimant Commitment?

If you want your Claimant Commitment to be reviewed, you can ask for this at any time (8). Each time your Claimant Commitment changes, you will need to agree and accept a new one. Seek advice from a welfare rights adviser or a solicitor if DfC refuse to review your Claimant Commitment, or if you feel they have failed to take into account your circumstances. Some DfC decisions have a right of appeal or review. Others may be challenged by a type of legal challenge called judicial review.

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
- Childcare
- Domestic Abuse
- Bed-Room Tax

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



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 Section 24 The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015
- 2 Reg. 89, The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 3 Reg. 94(1), The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 4 Reg. 87(1), The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 5 Reg. 93(1), The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 6 Reg. 95(4), The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 7 Section 9 The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015
- 8 Section 19 The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015