



Universal Credit Mental Health

How to get
the right
Claimant
Commitment
for you



What is Your Claimant Commitment?

Your Claimant Commitment is a record of your responsibilities when you are claiming benefit. It should help you to understand what the Department for Communities (DfC) expect of you in order for you to receive Universal Credit. If you have a sanction imposed on you, your Claimant Commitment should also help you to understand what it is that DfC think has gone wrong.

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.

Your Claimant Commitment should be tailored to your “capability and personal circumstances, taking account of any vulnerability, complex needs or health issues”.

What to expect at your claimant commitment interview

At your interview, make sure your Work Coach knows about your health condition. Tell them what you can and can't do and about

any needs you have. If you need extra time to explain your circumstances, ask for a longer appointment when you are booking it. You can ask for a private room to be arranged if you don't want other people to hear what you are saying.

Show your Work Coach a copy of your fit note, and any other evidence you have. Write down what you want to say in advance and take your notes with you.

Give yourself enough time to get to the interview so you don't feel rushed and take a friend or relative with you if you need support. If your mental health condition means you cannot get out, you can ask DfC for a home visit.

DfC has a duty to make reasonable adjustments if you need these because you have a disability (1). Tell DfC if you need help, and the reasons why you need it. If they refuse and you are not satisfied with the reason you are given, ask to speak to a supervisor or to the customer services manager. If they still

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won't help, seek advice from a welfare rights adviser or a solicitor.

Am I in the right conditionality group?

Your conditionality group for Universal Credit determines what, if any, conditions you need to meet in order to receive benefit. Which group you are in is usually decided by a medical assessment known as a “work capability assessment”. However, there are exceptions to this. For instance, if you are transferring from ESA and have already had a work capability assessment.

If you are not sure you are in the right group, seek advice from a welfare rights adviser.

Group	Conditions
All work-related conditions – fit for work	Work focused interviews, work preparation, work search, available for work
Work-related activity group – limited capability for work	Work focused interviews, work preparation, work search
Support group – limited capability for work-related activity	No work-related conditions.

Work search requirements

Work search requirements can be limited to less than 35 hours a week, and you can limit the kind of work you will look for if you have a physical or mental impairment and DfC think it is reasonable to reduce them (3). Your work search requirements can also be reduced if you have caring responsibilities, including childcare, and in other circumstances, such as if you have experienced recent domestic violence or domestic emergencies including homelessness.

“Work search requirements can be suspended for up to two periods of up to 14 days if you are unfit for work”

Work search requirements can be suspended for up to two periods of up to 14 days if you are unfit for work. You may need to provide evidence of this. DfC has a duty to make reasonable adjustments if you have additional needs because of your health condition (as outlined above). This could include things like arranging for you to have online training at home if your condition prevents you from going out.

If you have complex needs

DfC defines “complex needs” as experiencing a difficult life event or personal circumstances that mean it would be unreasonable to expect you to meet your work-related requirements. This includes a mental health condition, such as low self-confidence and self-esteem, anxiety or depression, or if you have said you are at risk of suicide or self-harm.

“DfC has a duty to make reasonable adjustments if you have additional needs because of your health condition”



DfC may want to see evidence of your needs from someone acting in an official capacity, such as a health worker, housing association, support worker or someone from a support service. Your needs should be discussed at an interview.

If you have complex needs, in addition to any allowances or “easements” the law makes in your circumstances, your Work Coach has the discretion to suspend your conditionality requirements if it is unreasonable to expect you to complete these for a certain period of time. If this is appropriate in your case, the easement begins on the date you tell DfC about your needs, and will continue for as long as you provide evidence of your needs.



After a work capability assessment

Your Claimant Commitment should be reviewed and updated following a work capability assessment. DfC guidance says that if your work-related requirements change, your claimant commitment should record this. Even if you are not considered to have limited capability for work or work related activity, the hours you have to be available for work, and the type of work you can be expected to look for, can be adjusted if you have a physical or mental impairment. For instance, if your mental health makes it harder for you to travel to work on public transport, or to do jobs that involve meeting lots of people who are unfamiliar to you.

What should I do if I don't want to sign the claimant commitment?

You need to sign a Claimant Commitment to get paid Universal Credit even if you cannot work or look for work. There are exceptions if you lack capacity or in exceptional circumstances where it would be unreasonable to expect you to sign (4).

If you disagree with the Claimant Contract offered by your Work Coach and don't want to sign it, you should be

“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”

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.

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 your Work Coach at any time. You may want to do this if your circumstances change, or if it is not suitable for you (5).

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 will not review your Claimant Commitment, or if you feel they have failed to take into account your circumstances. You can take this leaflet with you to show your Work Coach.

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
- 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 The Equality (Disability, etc.) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000
- 2 87 2(c) The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 3 Section 19 The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015
- 4 16 The Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016
- 5 Section 19 The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015