

Spotlight on: Fortnightly work search reviews

Work search support

As we come out of lockdown and claimants face the challenges of getting back to work, it is important that we provide the information, advice and help they need.

Guidance around labour market conditions and work search review appointments has not changed.

Work coaches must consider current Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions and national and local health advice when supporting claimants and considering what is reasonable for them to do.

Recruitment

We need to continue to encourage claimants to prepare and look for work where it is safe to do so.

Employers are still advertising vacancies, but the current situation makes traditional means of hiring more challenging.

Despite the challenges, employers are finding ways of hiring new staff.

Claimants applying for jobs online may find the recruitment process takes longer, and may take part in:

- telephone interviews
- video interviews
- online tests

Where possible, we will continue to offer support to our claimants. Find a Job (link is external) can be used by claimants to search and apply for jobs.

Work search reviews

As always, when reviewing work search activity, work coaches must take into account the claimant's individual and current circumstances. It is important that claimants are only asked to do what is reasonable. This is especially important under the current coronavirus restrictions and government health advice.

In these times work coaches are able to agree reduced claimant availability on an individual basis, even if that means reducing to zero hours.

Work coaches should tailor support for all claimants. This must be personalised whilst taking into consideration those who:

- have declared a health condition that restricts their ability to work
- are self-isolating
- are caring for vulnerable relatives, friends and neighbours
- have child care responsibilities
- have been affected by school closures
- are shielding

This list is not exhaustive.

Compliance

Claimants are only expected to do what is reasonable. When work coaches are considering expected hours of work search and work related requirements, they must include the impact of coronavirus. Work coaches should not take any action if the claimant has not met all their work related requirements, but can show a reasonable level of activity.

Work coaches should focus on supporting claimants to do everything reasonable to find work as quickly as possible.

Work coaches should not specify what actions a claimant should do to search for work each week day. The current circumstances mean that claimants should be able to organise their own time and work search. For further information please see, Work Search Reviews guidance.

Work search reviews

The next contact after the 'First commitments by phone' appointment must be a 10-minute work search review by phone appointment.

After the first appointment, work coaches have the discretion to decide whether the next intervention is digital or by phone.

A minimum of 1 intervention in every 3 interventions must be by phone.

When considering whether a digital work search review is appropriate, work coaches should check if claimants are recording evidence in their journal and/or Job Applications and do not appear to need telephony support.

When supporting claimants, work coaches have the discretion to make the best use of:

- work search review by phone appointments (10 minutes only)
- digital work search reviews: digital check of recorded activity on their journal and/or Job Applications
- digital nudges: a tailored message sent to the claimant's journal

Work coaches must explain to claimants:

- the importance of recording work search activity on their account
 - that between work search reviews by phone appointments, their account will be reviewed for work search activity
- If a work coach decides that digital interventions are appropriate, a pinned note must be added to the claimant's history.

Unless easements are applied, claimants must have a fortnightly phone or digital work search review.

Work search review by phone appointments

It is essential that the claimant's identity is confirmed before discussing any personal details.

Work search review by phone appointments are an opportunity for work coaches to:

- discuss any coronavirus impacts that may require tailoring
- look at Job Applications
- look at the claimant's journal and review what actions they have taken
- determine whether the claimant has done all that can be reasonably expected of them to find paid work
- explain sanctions and the consequences of failing to comply with requirements set out in their claimant commitment
- review the claimant's commitments to make sure they are still current
- discuss and agree new activities with the claimant
- discuss the use of labour market tools

- discuss if circumstances have changed
- identify suitable provision

Where there is doubt that a claimant has not done reasonable work related activities, work coaches should case conference with their site leader to consider whether a referral to a Labour Market decision maker is appropriate.

Work coaches should decide on how the next intervention in 2 weeks time will take place. This will be either by phone or digitally.

Once the telephone appointment has been completed, the work coach must book a further work search review by phone appointment in 2, 4 or 6 weeks time. This depends on whether the next review will be by phone or digitally.

Digital work search review

A digital work search review is a check on:

- recorded job applications on the claimant's account
- recorded journal entries
- the claimant's commitments to make sure they are still current
- the use of labour market tools

Reasonable digital work search activity

If reasonable work search activity is recorded a tailored message (digital nudge), must be used after every digital work search review.

Work coaches must update the claimant's journal with a tailored digital nudge.

Example of digital nudge

"Thank you for recording your work search activity. I'll keep in contact with you regularly to check on your progress. Feel free to drop me a message in your journal if you need any further support or advice."

Lack of digital work search activity

If there is a lack of work search activity recorded on the claimant's account, the work coach should try to phone the claimant to discuss their work related activity.

Work coaches should:

- discuss what the claimant has done to look for work
- gather any reasons which may have prevented them from recording what they have done to look for work

- gather any reasons which may have prevented the claimant from looking for work
- record the discussion in claimant history
The work coach may consider at this point if future digital interventions are suitable for the claimant.

Where there is doubt that a claimant has not done reasonable work related activities, work coaches should case conference with their site leader to consider whether a referral to a Labour Market Decision Maker is appropriate.

If the claimant does not answer the phone, the work coach must book a work search review by phone (giving the claimant at least 32 hours' notice).

At this work search review appointment work coaches should:

- discuss what the claimant has done to look for work
 - gather any reasons which may have prevented them from recording what they have done to look for work
 - gather any reasons which may have prevented the claimant from looking for work
 - record the discussion in claimant history
- For further updates regarding coronavirus please see, Coronavirus section