

Skills & Experience Opportunities

Universal Credit

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Universal Credit: Opportunities to develop skills and experience to help you find work

When you claim Universal Credit because you are unemployed and expected to look, or prepare for work, there are a range of opportunities available to develop your skills and experience to help you find work.

During your time on Universal Credit you and your work coach will agree on the steps you need to take to prepare for work now or in the future and you may be referred to one or more of these opportunities. For example if your English or maths needs improving, or if getting a recognised qualification would help get work in a particular sector.

A work experience placement with an employer will allow you to add some career history to your CV and gain many of the skills employers require.

Your work coach can tell you if the opportunities described in this guide are suitable for you.

This guide gives information about the different opportunities available to you, including what DWP expect of you if you agree to start and whilst you attend. You should tell your work coach if you have concerns about what any opportunity, training or work experience, involves or what is required of you.

Your work coach will want you to ask questions so you can benefit from attending the most appropriate opportunity. Remember the reason we offer these opportunities is to help you prepare for and move into work.

Some opportunities are delivered by employers and others by organisations working with us to offer you the training and work experience you need – we refer to them as ‘providers’.

If, after reading this guide, you feel one or more of these opportunities would help you, please discuss it with your work coach. Your work coach can also discuss other local support available through your Jobcentre.

Please speak to your work coach if you need help understanding this guide, or have any other questions.

Please note:

This guide is intended for you if you are receiving Universal Credit and have agreed work related or work preparation activities described in your claimant commitment.

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Work coaches check the skills you have and those you lack that are preventing you from starting work. If lacking certain skills is the main thing stopping you working, you can be referred to a skills assessment with a provider to get the training you need to learn these skills.

Sector-based work academy

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These opportunities are available if you live in England or Scotland. It will help you to develop the skills and behaviours employers are looking for in new employees.

A sector-based work academy offers training and work experience in a particular job type. At the end, you'll either get a job interview or help with the employer's application process.

Traineeship

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Traineeships are available in England, and are designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who don't yet have appropriate work skills or experience - traineeships provide the essential work preparation training, English and maths where appropriate and the work experience needed to prepare you for an apprenticeship or other job.

Work experience

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You may be able to volunteer to do a work experience opportunity with an employer local to you. These opportunities usually last for 2 to 8 weeks, and you'll normally be expected to attend for up to 30 hours a week giving you an ideal experience of the workplace.

New Enterprise Allowance

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This scheme helps people to start their own business, and offers business mentoring and financial support if you want to become self-employed.

You'll need to have your business idea assessed by a mentoring provider, and if you are accepted onto the scheme, you'll then have support to produce your business plan.

You may also be able to apply for the weekly New Enterprise Allowance financial support.

Work Trials

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Work Trials are a trial period for an actual job where both you and the employer can take part without further commitment. This is an ideal opportunity to make sure the job is right for you, before you start. Work Trial last for no more than 30 days, though they are likely to be shorter.

Benefit sanctions

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A benefit sanction is when your money is stopped or reduced for a certain period. Sanctions usually happen if you haven't met the conditions for getting benefit, including refusing to take part or complete certain activities or schemes.

Training or other help to gain new skills

If you don't have the type of skills employers are looking for, you may be offered the support needed to improve your skills, including having your skills assessed, and/or attending training to help you get the skills needed to move into, and stay in work.

Your Work Coach may ask you to take action to improve your skills. You may be asked to:

- Meet with a careers adviser to discuss your skills and job aims
- Meet with a training provider (e.g. at a college) to discuss training
- Complete a training course.

This may be agreed as part of your claimant commitment. If so, you must complete this activity or your benefits may be reduced or stopped. This is called a **benefit sanction**.

A careers adviser will help you consider the type of jobs you might like to do, the skills you have and how training may improve your chances of finding work or a better-paid job.

A training provider will look to assess:

- Your English, maths, and Information & Computer Technology (ICT) skills
- Your spoken language skills, if English is not your first language
- Any job-specific skills or qualifications you already have
- Other work skills from previous jobs or work experience.

How long does it last for?

If you are referred to attend a training course, how much time you spend training will depend on the type of course and the help you need to improve your skills. Training for specific jobs – such as customer service training – typically lasts one to two weeks. Training to improve your English, maths or computer skills will usually be longer. Your work coach will explain what the course involves and when you need to attend.

When can I take part?

When you attend your first work coach interview, your work coach will discuss with you if assessing your skills and starting appropriate training is suitable for you.

Do I have to attend?

If your work coach sends you to meet a careers adviser or a training provider, you **must** attend the appointment.

If you are required to attend training, you **must** attend and complete any activity agreed with your Work Coach and recorded on your Claimant Commitment.

If you fail to attend an appointment with a careers adviser or a training provider or you fail to attend any training course as agreed by your Work Coach, without good reason, your benefit could be reduced or stopped. This is called a **benefit sanction**.

If you do start training and you're asked to leave because of gross misconduct (such as stealing, violence or verbal abuse), your benefit may be sanctioned.

Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

Please [see page 21](#) for more about sanctions.

Will I Get Help with Any Costs?

You may have to travel to where the training is held. You can get help for the cost of your journey by public transport and any appropriate childcare costs. Discuss this with your Work Coach who will be able to tell you if you qualify for help with costs and how you apply.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

If you claim Universal Credit, you will have accepted a Claimant Commitment that sets out what you need to do to keep in contact with your Work Coach and the things you must do to prepare for and look for work. If being on training will stop you going to Jobcentre meetings or doing other things set out in your Claimant Commitment, you must contact your work coach in advance.

What happens if I get a job?

Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

Sector-based work academy

Sector-based work academies are available in England and Scotland. They are designed to help people who are ready to start work, but who may need to learn the skills and behaviours that employers in particular industries look for in new employees.

If your work coach discusses a sector-based work academy with you, you can decide whether or not to take part, but once you've agreed to join you must complete certain parts of the scheme. Your chances of getting and keeping a job with the host employer, or another employer offering similar work, will be improved by completing a sector-based work academy.

The sector-based work academy scheme is used by employers to help them recruit into job sectors with a high demand for staff. So the type of sector-based work academy on offer locally will vary. A sector-based work academy is designed to help you build confidence in a way that improves your job prospects and that will add to your CV.

How long does it last for?

The sector-based work academy lasts up to 6 weeks and gives you training and work experience in a particular job type. At the end, you'll get either a job interview or help with the employer's application process.

When can I take part?

If you are interested in starting a sector-based work academy, speak to your work coach, who will discuss with you the kind of opportunities available in your local area and if a sector-based work academy is suitable for you.

Do I have to attend?

Deciding to accept the offer of a sector-based work academy is entirely voluntary. But once you have agreed to start, you **must** complete the pre-employment training and attend the guaranteed job interview (if included).

If you fail to complete the parts of the sector-based work academy you are required to do without good reason, your benefit could be reduced or stopped.

The sector-based work academy also includes work experience. This is not something you will be required to do but it is in your interest to do so and we encourage you to take part wherever possible. Work experience is invaluable, and allows both you and the host employer to see whether you're suited to the type of work on offer.

Your benefit will not be stopped or reduced (sanctioned) if you decide not to take up the work experience placement.

If you do start a sector-based work academy and you're asked to leave because of gross misconduct (such as stealing, violence or verbal abuse), including during work experience, your benefit may be sanctioned.

Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

Please [see page 21](#) for more about sanctions.

Will I Get Help with Any Costs?

You may have to travel to the employer's place of work. You can get help to cover the cost of your journey by public transport and any appropriate childcare costs. Discuss this with your Work Coach who will be able to tell you if you qualify for help with costs and how you apply.

You may have to travel to the employer's place of work or to where the training is held. You can get help for the cost of your journey by public transport and any appropriate childcare costs.

Do I have to accept the job if it is offered to me following the guaranteed interview?

People receiving Universal Credit because of unemployment are required to take a job when offered. If you are offered a job or an apprenticeship following the sector-based work academy guaranteed interview, your work coach may require you to accept it.

If this happens but you do not accept the job, it is called 'refusal of employment' and your benefit will be stopped or reduced (sanctioned) for not accepting the job unless you have a good reason. You should speak to your work coach to find out more information.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

If you claim Universal Credit, you will have accepted a Claimant Commitment that sets out what you need to do to keep in contact with your Work Coach and the things you must do to prepare for and look for work. If being on the sector-based work academy will stop you going to Jobcentre meetings or doing other things set out in your Claimant Commitment, you must contact your work coach in advance.

What happens if I get a job?

Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

Traineeships

Traineeships are an opportunity to gain real work experience, job skills and improve your English and maths, if needed. The programme operates in England only and aims to unlock the great potential of young people, help them become “work-ready” and prepare them for their future careers.

Designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who don't yet have the appropriate skills or experience, traineeships provide the essential work preparation training, English, maths (if you do not hold a Level 2 qualification) and work experience needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment

The training will be delivered by a local college or provider, and your work experience placement within a traineeship is delivered by an employer and designed with your needs in mind. So the type of placement on offer locally will vary. A traineeship is designed to help you build confidence in a way that improves your job prospects and adds to your CV.

How long does it last for?

A traineeship can last up to 6 months, however, on average most last around 3 months. On completion of your traineeship, you may be offered an apprenticeship or other job, but if not, the employer will offer you an exit interview to discuss what you have been doing, and to plan for the future.

When can I take part?

A traineeship is open to you from day 1 of your claim, if you are interested in starting a traineeship, speak to your work coach who will discuss with you the kind of traineeships available in your local area and if a traineeship is suitable for you.

Do I have to attend?

Deciding to accept the offer of a traineeship is entirely voluntary.

Once you have agreed to attend the traineeship assessment, and you are receiving Universal Credit because you are unemployed, you **must** attend and complete the traineeship assessment.

Your benefit will be stopped or reduced (sanctioned) if you decide not to attend or complete your traineeship assessment.

After the assessment, it is in your best interest to attend and participate in all aspects of the traineeship designed for you, but it is not something you are required to do.

Your benefit will not be stopped or reduced (sanctioned) if you decide not to take up or complete your traineeship.

Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

Please [see page 21](#) for more about sanctions.

Will I Get Help with Any Costs?

You may have to travel to the employer's place of work or to where the training is held. You can get help for the cost of your journey by public transport and any

appropriate childcare costs. Discuss this with your Work Coach who will be able to tell you if you qualify for help with costs and how you apply.

Do I have to accept the job if it is offered to me during or following the traineeship?

If you are offered a job during or following the traineeship, your work coach is likely to encourage you to accept it, and you will probably be required to accept it. If this happens and you do not accept the job, it is called 'refusal of employment' and you could be sanctioned for not accepting the job unless you have a good reason. You should speak to your work coach to find out more.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

If you claim Universal Credit, you will have accepted a Claimant Commitment that sets out what you need to do to keep in contact with your Work Coach and the things you must do to prepare for and look for work. If being on the traineeship will stop you going to Jobcentre meetings or doing other things set out in your Claimant Commitment, you must contact your work coach in advance.

What happens if I get a job?

Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

Work experience

If you have little or no work history, work experience can help you to get experience with host employers which can add to your CV. Work experience is usually aimed at people aged 18 to 24 years, but can also be useful for older jobseekers. Your work coach will tell you what opportunities are available.

Why should I be interested in work experience?

Work experience gives you the chance to add some vital experience to the career section of application forms and your CV, including having a referee. It also helps with:

- improving your job prospects
- seeing what skills and behaviours employers want from people
- seeing how your skills fit into the workplace
- building your confidence, and
- showing an employer the skills that you have.

What will being on work experience involve?

This will vary, but some examples include working in an office, warehouse, retail store or restaurant. Your duties will be explained by the host employer, but might include things like customer service, stock management or administrative duties.

You'll need to ensure that you show the same standards of behaviours as other employees, especially:

- attendance
- timekeeping
- personal hygiene and appearance, and
- following all Health & Safety rules given to you by the host employer.

How long does it last for?

You can do work experience with a host employer in the area you live in. Work experience lasts for 2 to 8 weeks, and you'll usually be expected to do 25 to 30 hours a week (unless you've agreed restrictions on the hours you can work, known as 'availability', with your work coach).

If the host employer offers you an apprenticeship (which is a paid job with training), and you accept, you can do up to four extra weeks of work experience while the paperwork for your apprenticeship is completed. You'll keep getting benefit until your apprenticeship starts.

If you are on the Youth Obligation Support Programme (for 18-21 year old jobseekers) and have been unemployed for 6 months, you will be offered a guaranteed 3 month work experience opportunity, if you do not go on other work-related training at this point, to help you achieve your job goals.

When can I take part?

Work experience placements are open to you from day 1 of your claim, your work coach will discuss with you if there are placements suitable for you.

How can I Find out about a work experience opportunity?

You may find an opportunity yourself or your work coach will identify what's available, and depending on the employer you may have to go through an application process. This might mean completing an application form, or attending an informal interview. This process will help you to build up your application skills.

If you do find an opportunity yourself, it is important to inform your work coach who can ensure the employer is suitable and is offering a quality work experience opportunity

Your work coach will ask you to sign a data consent form so they are able to share your information to the host employer.

Do I have to attend?

Deciding to accept the offer of a work experience placement is entirely voluntary.

Once you have agreed to attend the work experience placement, it is in your best interest to attend and participate, but it is not something you are required to do.

Your benefit will not be stopped or reduced (sanctioned) if you decide not to take up or complete work experience.

Will I Get Help with Any Costs?

You will have to travel to the employer's place of work, you can get help for the cost of your journey by public transport and any appropriate childcare costs.

Do I have to accept the job if it is offered to me during or following work experience?

If you are offered a job during or following your work experience, your work coach is likely to encourage you to accept it, and you will probably be required to accept it. If this happens and you do not accept the job, it is called 'refusal of employment' and you could be sanctioned for not accepting the job unless you have a good reason. You should speak to your work coach to find out more information.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

If you claim Universal Credit, you will have accepted a Claimant Commitment that sets out what you need to do to keep in contact with your Work Coach and the things you must do to prepare for and look for work. If being on the work experience placement will stop you going to Jobcentre meetings or doing other things set out in your Claimant Commitment, you must contact your work coach in advance.

What happens if I get a job?

Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we

might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

New Enterprise Allowance

The New Enterprise Allowance scheme offers business mentoring and financial support if you want to become self-employed. You'll get an interview with a mentoring partner organisation, who will carry out an initial assessment of your business idea.

If you're accepted onto the New Enterprise Allowance scheme then you will work with a business mentor for approximately 8 weeks to produce a business plan. The business plan will then be subject to an approval process.

You can claim the New Enterprise Allowance financial support within 13 weeks of your business plan being approved.

You will not need to close your claim to get the New Enterprise Allowance provided that you continue to meet the other conditions of entitlement for Universal Credit

How long does it last for?

You'll be in the 'mentoring stage' of New Enterprise Allowance for up to 8 weeks (this can be extended to 12 weeks in exceptional circumstances). Your mentor can continue to support you for a further 6 months while you're getting the weekly New Enterprise Allowance.

The weekly allowance is paid for up to 26 weeks, after approval of your business plan and closure of your benefit claim.

When can I take part?

Anyone can join from day 1 of their claim to Universal Credit, **unless**

- you have or have had a sanction because you left your last job voluntarily or were dismissed for misconduct. If so, you can't join until you have claimed benefit for 13 weeks, or
- you stopped running your own business in the 3 months before benefit. You can't join until you have claimed for 13 weeks, and your business idea must be demonstrably different from your previous business.

Your work coach will want to ensure you're ready to join the New Enterprise Allowance scheme, and will discuss whether you have an established idea for your business and if you can commit to exploring further options to turn the idea into a reality.

If your work coach thinks you're right for the New Enterprise Allowance scheme and you wish to proceed, then they will send you to the mentoring provider.

What happens if I claim Universal Credit?

You can join the New Enterprise Allowance Scheme when claiming Universal Credit as long as you qualify, in the same way as you would for Jobseeker's Allowance.

Universal Credit works differently than other benefits, so you won't need to close your claim. But other money that you get, including New Enterprise Allowance, may be taken into account when calculating your benefit amount.

What do I need to do while part of New Enterprise Allowance?

Once you're accepted onto the scheme, you will need to meet these conditions:

- go to all meetings with mentor / mentoring provider organisation, where you've been given at least 24 hours' notice
- do things each week to develop the business proposal, and
- tell Jobcentre Plus within 2 working days if the business idea is no longer being pursued and/or the mentoring relationship ends.

If you don't meet these conditions your benefit will be sanctioned unless you have good reason for why you didn't do so.

Please [see page 21](#) for more about sanctions.

Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

My work coach is going to refer me to the New Enterprise Allowance scheme, but I've changed my mind. What should I do?

Before your work coach sets up the meeting with the mentoring provider, they'll check if you still want to take part. If you don't, this will not affect your Universal Credit claim as long as you tell your work coach before they make the referral. If you change your mind after you've been referred, but before you start the scheme, inform Jobcentre Plus of your decision as soon as possible. You will not be sanctioned if you change your mind before you start the scheme.

I have been accepted onto New Enterprise Allowance scheme and have decided self-employment is not right for me. What should I do?

If you decide that self-employment isn't right for you while developing your business plan, you can leave the scheme without your benefit being sanctioned. It is essential that you inform Jobcentre Plus of your decision to leave the scheme within 2 working days to avoid a sanction being applied.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings?

Yes. You will still need to attend Jobcentre meetings and will be expected to supply evidence for how you are progressing your business ideas.

What if I get a job as well as, or instead of, being self-employed?

Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

The Work and Health Programme

The Work and Health Programme is delivered by private, public and voluntary and community sector providers to deliver sustained employment for disabled people, disadvantaged groups and the long term unemployed.

When you join the Work and Health Programme your provider will tell you about the support they will be able to give you and how they can help you. Together you'll make an action plan of things you need to do to prepare for work.

When will I be referred to the Work and Health Programme?

If you are within the intensive work search regime in Universal Credit and have not moved into employment within 24 months of your claim you will be referred to the Work and Health Programme after 24 months.

Can I be referred before this?

You can volunteer to join the Work and Health Programme if you are –

- an ex-offender (someone who has completed a custodial sentence or a community sentence), or offender (someone who is serving a community sentence)
- a carer
- an ex-carer
- a homeless person
- a former member of HM Armed Forces
- an HM Armed Forces reservist
- a partner of current or former Armed Forces personnel
- a person for whom a drug/alcohol dependency (including a history of) presents a significant barrier to employment
- a care leaver
- a refugee
- a young person in a gang
- a victim of domestic violence

How long does it last for?

Your Work and Health Programme provider will support you for 456 days (15 months), even if your benefit changes or you find a job.

If you find a job they can increase the support to 639 days (21 months) if you need this.

What will happen during the Work and Health Programme?

Because the Work and Health Programme is tailored to individuals the type of support will be personalised to the needs of each participant. Examples of the type of support available includes participants having a personal key worker with regular face to face contact, mentoring and peer support, integrated access to specialist support networks at a local level including health and wellbeing professionals and support from dedicated employer experts with knowledge of local job opportunities.

Where will my Work and Health Programme meetings be held?

Your Work and Health Programme provider will send you a letter to let you know the time, date and place of your meeting

What happens if I don't go to meetings or do the activities they ask me to do?

Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

You must complete any activity your provider tells you to do; this may include applying for employment opportunities or attending job interviews. If you don't then your benefit will be sanctioned, unless you have good reason for why you didn't do so. It's very important that you tell your provider if you're having problems or cannot take part in the required activity at any time for any reason.

Just like with your Jobcentre meetings, if you can't go to a Work and Health Programme meeting you must let your provider know in good time.

What am I expected to do during the Work and Health Programme?

While you're on the Work and Health Programme you must:

- do the things your provider ask you to do to prepare for work
- take part in all meetings and phone calls arranged for you by your provider
- apply for a job, attend a job interview or accept a job offer if told to by your provider
- take part in all meetings with your work coach
- tell your provider or your work coach straight away, if you can't do something they've asked and give your reason
- let us and your provider know straightaway if your circumstances change

Work Trials

There are some people that we know are more likely to struggle when it comes to competing for jobs and securing employment. We also know that some employers can have doubts about some people, and they might be less likely to employ someone they have doubts about.

The purpose of a Work Trial is to overcome any remaining doubts an employer and/or you may have following a formal interview for a vacant post. In simple terms, for both parties, Work Trial is an opportunity to 'try before you buy'.

You can start a Work Trial if the job the employer is actively trying to fill is one you are offered to apply for. This means that for the duration of the trial, you are the only person under consideration for the vacancy in question i.e. the job is yours if **both** you and the employer are satisfied following the trial period.

The employer must have an actual vacancy that they are looking to fill;

- the vacancy must last for 16 hours per week or more
- the vacancy must be expected to last at least 13 weeks
- the vacancy must be based in the United Kingdom, and
- the vacancy will not be in an occupation/sector that DWP deems as inappropriate

These crucial points give Work Trial its unique identity and separate it from Work Experience or other work-based training which might be undertaken within other labour market programmes.

They are designed to help people who are ready to start work, but who may need to learn the skills and behaviours that employers in particular industries look for in new employees.

How long does it last for?

We strongly recommend that the initial trial period should just be for a few days. This can then be reviewed and extended, if all parties are in agreement.

In exceptional circumstances only, a trial can last up to a maximum of 30 working days (over a period not exceeding 6 calendar weeks), and you decide the length of each Work Trial with the employer.

When can I take part?

If you think starting a Work Trial would help you with the jobs you are applying for, speak to your work coach, who will discuss it with you and if appropriate, help you to take up an offer of a Work Trial.

Do I have to attend?

Participation in a work trial is entirely voluntary, if a trial period is agreed with an employer, we do encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to overcome any doubts you or the employer might have.

Your benefit will not be stopped or reduced (sanctioned) if you decide not to take up the Work Trial or decide during it that the job is not for you.

Will I Get Help with Any Costs?

You will clearly have to travel to the employers place of work and DWP is clear that no claimant will be “out of pocket”, therefore discuss your travel expenses with your Work Coach as you can get help to cover the cost of your journey by public transport and any appropriate childcare costs.

You will be expected to cover the costs of any meals purchased during your Work Trial.

Do I have to accept the job if it is offered to me following the Work Trial?

Work Trials are designed to help you make the correct decision in accepting a job - if you are offered the job or an apprenticeship during/following the Work Trial, you decide whether you want to accept it or not. Your work coach does not require you to accept it as part of your Universal Credit benefit claim.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

If you claim Universal Credit, you will have accepted a Claimant Commitment that sets out what you need to do to keep in contact with your Work Coach and the things you must do to prepare for and look for work. While on Work Trial you are still required to meet the requirements set out in your claimant commitment, including attending meetings with your Work Coach. Your Work Coach will make arrangements with you to ensure you are able to attend any such meeting.

If you feel your Work Trial stops you doing the things set out in your Claimant Commitment, you must contact your Work Coach in advance.

Benefit sanctions – if you're unemployed and looking for work

If you are claiming Universal Credit there are some things we expect you to do to keep receiving your benefit.

You'll meet a work coach who will find out about your situation. They will:

- help identify what you must do to find work (these actions will be added to your Claimant Commitment)
- regularly review your progress either face to face or through your journal.

You may need to take part in opportunities designed to improve your prospects of work and described in this guide. These opportunities are delivered by providers to help you find and stay in work. Your provider may also identify additional things you must do to find work.



It's your responsibility to do all you can to find work. In return, you'll get your benefit payment and our support.

Most people do all they can. If you don't, your benefit payment could be temporarily reduced or stopped (a sanction).

What must I do to keep my full benefit payment?

You'll get your full benefit payment as long as you:

- go to meetings on time with your work coach and take part in interviews
- apply for suitable jobs either you or your work coach identifies
- action activities/To do's sent to you through your Journal (for those claiming UC Full Service), such as attending a training course or updating your CV
- do all you can to find work by undertaking all actions described in your Claimant Commitment
- take part in opportunities you agree to attend following discussions with your work coach or an assessment with a provider. You'll need to continue to meet with your work coach (action your journal in UC Full Service) and do the activities set out in your Claimant Commitment.
- **If you can't or haven't done these things, tell your work coach or provider why straight away.**

If you can show you have good reason, you'll continue to get your full benefit payment. Provide as much information as you can, as quickly as possible. For

example, call your work coach if you can't attend a meeting and let them know why.



If you don't do these things, and you don't have good reason, your benefit payment could be reduced or stopped for a period of time.

It's important that you understand what you must do to get your benefit payment, and what will happen if you don't do this. Ask your work coach to explain if you're not sure.

How long could my benefit payment be reduced or stopped for?

How long your benefit is reduced or stopped depends on:

- the reason you claim benefit – for example, if you were dismissed for misconduct from your last job, or left it without good reason
- what you haven't done to find work
- whether your benefit payment has been stopped, or your claim has been ended, in the last year, and the reason(s) for this.

Types of benefit sanction

You will get a **low-level sanction** if:

- You don't go to meetings on time with your work coach and take part in interviews
- You don't do what you agree to do to find work, such as attend a training course or update your CV
- You don't take part in opportunities as described in this guide after agreeing to attend
- You don't meet your employment scheme provider on time or take actions they require you to take

Your Universal Credit will be reduced or stopped for the number of days **from** the day you failed to do what you were asked/agreed to, **to** the day before you do it or a similar activity set by your work coach or scheme provider.

Your benefit will stay reduced or stopped for a further fixed period of 7, 14 or 28 days depending on the number of occasions you have been sanctioned in the last year.

You will get a **high level sanction** if:

- You were dismissed for misconduct from your last job.
- You left your last job, or lost pay as a result of misconduct or, voluntarily leaving your last job, and without good reason

- You don't take actions to apply for suitable jobs your work coach or a provider tells you about
- You don't take a job if offered

A high level sanction means that your Universal Credit will be reduced or stopped, for 13, 26 or 156 weeks depending on the number of occasions you have been sanctioned in the last year.

If you are not doing all you can to look for and be available for work

If you are a Universal Credit claimant you are expected to do all you reasonably can to find work and immediately take up work. Otherwise you may receive a **medium level sanction** if you do not have good reason for not doing so.

If you get a medium level sanction, your benefit will be reduced or stopped for a fixed period of 28 or 91 days depending on the number of occasions you have been sanctioned in the last year.



What should I do if my benefit payment is stopped or my claim is ended?

If your benefit payment is stopped, you should continue to do all you can to find work. If you don't, your benefit payment could be stopped for a longer period, or your claim could be ended.

If you receive a council tax reduction, you should contact your local authority straight away if your Universal Credit payment is reduced or stopped. You should contact them to understand what information they'll want from you to ensure you still get any council tax reduction that you may be entitled to.

Hardship payments

If your benefit payment is stopped, and you don't have enough money to live on, you may be able to get a hardship payment. This is a reduced amount of benefit. Contact us if you want to understand more about hardship payments and whether you can apply.

What if I don't agree with the decision to stop or reduce my benefit payment, or end my claim?

Provide us with full information

If you're told your benefit payment may be stopped or reduced, or your claim may be ended, you should provide new information straight away about why you haven't attended meetings on time or taken actions.

A DWP decision maker, rather than your work coach or employment scheme provider, will decide if you have good reason.

If they decide there isn't good reason, they will decide how long to stop your benefit payment for, or whether to end your claim. You can ask why a decision has been made by contacting us.

Ask us to reconsider the decision

If you think the decision is wrong, you can ask for it to be looked at again within one month of your benefit being stopped or reduced or your claim being closed. Explain why the decision is wrong and show any evidence you have. The decision will be looked at again and we will send you a letter to tell you what has been decided and why. We call this letter a 'Mandatory Reconsideration Notice'.

Appeal

If you disagree with the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice, you can appeal to a tribunal. You must wait for the 'Mandatory Reconsideration Notice' before you start an appeal. You can download an appeal form on **www.gov.uk** by searching 'SSCS1'.

The Back to Work opportunities outlined in this leaflet are covered by the following legislation:

Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012

Universal Credit Regulations 2013

This leaflet provides general information only and is not a complete and authoritative statement
of the law.