

## **Factsheet 13: Universal credit and out of work benefits**

### **Conditionality**

Under Universal Credit, individuals who are able to look or prepare for work will be required to do so as a condition of receiving benefits.

The government will be introducing a “claimant commitment” to clearly highlight what is expected of each recipient. The requirements placed on some individuals will be raised and tougher sanctions introduced, to ensure that recipients meet their responsibilities.

Requirements will be set out according to individual capability and circumstance. There will be four conditionality groups:

1. Fully conditioned – jobseekers  
Receipts of this group will be subject to the same requirements to actively seek work and to be available for work as they would under Jobseekers Allowance
2. Work preparation – individuals with a disability or those with a health condition which means they have limited capacity to work at the current time  
Individuals in this category will be expected to take reasonable steps to prepare for work.
3. Keeping in touch with the labour market – lone parent or lead carer in a couple with a child over the age of one but under the age of five  
Recipients under this group will be required to attend periodic interviews to discuss their plans for returning to the labour market
4. No conditionality – individuals with a disability or health condition which prevents them from working, carers, lone parents or lead carers with a child under the age of one  
This group will not be subject to conditionality.

### **Mandatory Work Activity:**

Where Jobcentre advisors feel that an individual will benefit from experiencing working life, they will have the authority to refer the claimant to Mandatory Work Activity. The placement will be for up to four weeks and aims to help recipients develop the labour-market discipline associated with full time employment such as good time management and organisational skills.

### **Sanctions:**

Failure to meet your responsibilities will result in facing a sanction:

- Failure to meet a requirement to prepare for work (applicable to those in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Group) will result in 100% of payments ceasing until the recipient re-complies with their requirements and for a fixed period after re-compliance (fixed period sanctions start at one week, rising to two, then to four weeks with each subsequent failure to comply)
- Failure to actively seek employment or be available for work will lead to payment being ceased for four weeks for first failure and up to three months for a second
- Jobseekers can see their Jobseekers Allowance be ceased for a fixed period of at least three months (longer for repeat offences) if an individual fails to accept a reasonable job offer, failure to apply for a job or fail to attend Mandatory Work Activity
- Some receipts such as lone parents with young children are only required to attend work-focused interviews and their failure to attend is more often due to challenging circumstances rather than an evasion to the rules. As a result measures will be enhanced to ensure that lone parents are aware and able to comply with their responsibilities. However, sanctions will be imposed where necessary.