

The **Potteries Gold** Post

CLAIMANT COMMITMENTS!

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO FOR UNIVERSAL CREDIT.

Universal Credit (UC) is slowly replacing **six existing benefits** - Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit (for people under Pension Credit Age).

There are many differences between UC and these **legacy benefits**, as the DWP calls them. One of these is the **Claimant Commitment**.

WHAT IS A CLAIMANT COMMITMENT?

If you claim **Jobseeker's Allowance**, you will already have signed a Claimant Commitment agreeing **what you must do** to get your benefit. For example, it might say how many jobs you need to apply for each week and what you will do to find out about them. If you **fail to keep to it**, you may have your benefit **sanctioned** (reduced or stopped) for a period of time.

Other legacy benefits also have **conditions**. Some people getting Employment and Support Allowance have to do **work-related activity**. This is supposed to prepare them for a return to work when they are in better health. Lone parents getting Income Support have to attend **work-focused interviews**, to get them ready for work when their children start pre-school.

Full-time carers and people who meet the conditions to be in the **ESA Support Group** do not have to do any work-related activities, although they may still be called in for work-focused interviews.

The **UC** Claimant Commitment has very similar rules for these people but **applies conditions where the benefits it replaces do not**. Some people who get benefits **without job-seeking conditions** will face these in future, including people who are working or have retired early.



Emma: a lone parent



Emma works 12 hours a week. Her son is three. Emma claims **Child Tax Credit** and **Housing Benefit** to top up her wages. She doesn't have to look for extra work to get these benefits; they are paid because her income is low.

To get Universal Credit she would have to make a **claimant commitment** to look for **more hours** or **better paid** work. The **Jobcentre** will usually expect her to aim to earn the equivalent of the **Minimum Wage** for **16 hours** and could **sanction** her if she doesn't take steps to do this.

Eric: retired early

Eric is 59. He **retired early** due to poor health but was found **fit for work** when he claimed Employment and Support Allowance. He now lives on his **occupational pension** but claims **Housing Benefit** from the Council. He gets this because his pension is assessed as too low to cover his rent. To get **Universal Credit** for housing costs, he would need to make a **claimant commitment** with the DWP. As he was found fit for work, he would also have to agree to **look for a job** and have regular meetings with a **Work Coach**.



What if I already get Tax Credits or Housing Benefit?

Nothing will change for people in Stoke in **March 2018** if you are already getting legacy benefits – it is people making **new claims** who face new conditions after then. However, people getting Housing Benefit and Child Tax Credit will need to make claimant commitments when the **legacy benefits** are **abolished** several years later. Dates will vary for claimants in other parts of the country.

Potteries Gold is a **Citizens Advice Staffordshire North & Stoke-on-Trent** project to help people in Stoke-on-Trent cope with changes to the benefit system

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