

Youth Obligation

Youth Obligation for 18-21 year olds in areas with Universal Credit Full Service

Introduction

As of 26 April 2017, young people aged 18 to 21 may be subject to the government's new Youth Obligation policy.

Young people, aged 18 to 21, who claim Universal Credit will be required, from April 2017, to participate in an intensive regime of support from day one of their benefit claim. After six months they should be offered an apprenticeship or traineeship, gain work-based skills, or undertake a work placement to give them the skills they need to move into sustainable employment.

Who will be subject to the Youth Obligation?

The policy will only apply to those living in areas with [Universal Credit Full Service](#) and will only affect 18 to 21 year olds who are making new claims and are in the conditionality group **subject to all work-related requirements**.

This essentially means those who would have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in the old system. Those who would claim the equivalent of Income Support or Employment Support Allowance would not be subject to Youth Obligation under Universal Credit – though they will continue to have a claimant commitment which could include a condition that if they ever moved over to the group subject to all work-related requirements they would be expected to comply with the Youth Obligation.

What will the Youth Obligation entail?

Young people must apply for Universal Credit online. They should expect to wait up to six weeks to have their claim accepted. They will then have an initial face-to-face diagnostic interview to determine their claimant commitment. This will be a live document that will be reviewed weekly and will be available online for the claimant to refer to. During this first meeting, the young person will be informed they are to be put on the Youth Obligation (a six month journey) and referred to the Intensive Activity Programme (IAP).

Week-by-week

Weeks one to three

From the date the claimant's commitment is agreed, all eligible 18 to 21 year olds will undergo an Intensive Activity Programme. This includes a set of activities including:

- IAP work coach led workshops
- post-workshop feedback sessions
- active job search activities, including applying for apprenticeship places and other jobs

Weeks four to 17

After the IAP, young people will need to attend tailored weekly work search reviews and could be referred to provision tailored to their individual need. This period of the

Obligation is similar to the types of support on offer to young people before the policy was introduced.

Week 18 onward

At this point, work search reviews could be reduced to fortnightly.

Month five

An assessment will take place in the first week of month five with a job coach to discuss why a young person has not found work or training and to try and put measures in place to ensure they are able to in the month remaining.

Month six

Young people who are still not in employment, education or training at the six month point may be offered:

- a sector-based work academy
- a traineeship
- three months guaranteed work experience in a public sector organisation or a registered charity

What are the potential risks for young people and providers?

The main risk to young people will be that the Youth Obligation will become a stricter sanctioning regime without the support into work that has been promised.

Important: A young person should not have their housing benefit stopped due to a sanction. [The government has clarified that housing benefit should never be stopped due to a sanction](#). If this does happen the young person, or their key worker, should contact the housing benefit office and remind them of this.

There will also be the risk that young people coming into supported accommodation are already on the Youth Obligation without staff being made aware of the fact, or at what point they are in their Youth Obligation journey. It is therefore important to ask young people if they fall into the eligible category, if they are on the Youth Obligation and when they began their claim.

The Centrepont policy team would like to know if young people are being put on the Youth Obligation and about their experiences.

For more information regarding the Youth Obligation, please contact Abigail Gill, Policy & Research Manager a.gill@centrepont.org 020 7423 6902