

Flexible Support Fund application appointment

Booking the appointment

1. Before booking the interview, the telephony agent (TA) or account developer (AD) checks that the claimant is not participating in;
 - Work Programme
 - Work and Health Programme (WHP) with the exception of those customers in the Districts operating the DWP Public Sector Comparison Pilot where FSF can be considered)
 - Fair Start Scotland
 - Work Choice
 - Specialist Employability Support (SES)
 - Residential Training
 - Community Work Placements, or
 - any other scheme where FSF must not be paid. (FSF does not support these claimants)
2. The claimant has an on-going voluntary work focused work-related interview booked with the WC.
3. Inform the claimant that they must bring evidence for the FSF application. This may include:
 - evidence of a job start (for example an email or letter)
 - job interview (for example an email or letter)
 - bank statement
 - costing of clothes from supplier

This list is not exhaustive.

During an appointment

4. When considering the application, the WC refers to the claimant's record to see if a payment has already been made. If a payment has already been made, the WC will need to consider whether another award will help a claimant to start or move towards finding work.
5. If a claimant has already paid for goods or services, Universal Credit can't normally award a back payment of FSF
6. The WC needs to establish if evidence is needed to support a request for FSF. If not enough evidence is provided then the WC will tell the claimant to provide it.
7. An award can be made by cash or directly into a claimant's bank account. If the payment is made in advance, they will need to show the receipts for any goods or services that they have paid for with the FSF award. The WC will contact the claimant after 14 days if receipts have not been provided.
8. If a claimant has already paid for goods or services and receives the FSF award to cover these costs, and they can't show receipts, action should be taken as per the following FSF instructions

Work coach action to award or not award Flexible Support Fund payments

9. To action an FSF payment, the WC will:
 - Discuss with the claimant what support is needed.

- Check that the claimant meets the criteria set out in the current FSF operational guidance.
 - Check the 'Notes' on both Works Service Platform (WSP) and Labour Market Systems (LMS), as well as 'Flexible Support Fund' (FSF) referrals made to the WSP 'District's Flexible Support Fund (FSF) Monitoring' Opportunity or the Advisory Discretionary Fund (ADF) 'Hotspot' to see if any previous awards of FSF have been paid to the claimant. Please note any open referrals on WSP may mean the claimant has failed to provide receipts and possibly 'Over payment action' is being considered or undertaken.
 - Consider if evidence has been provided to support the application. If there is not enough evidence, the WC will request the claimant provides it.
 - Advises the claimant that the award is being considered.
 - Completes all relevant forms with the claimant. Both the claimant and the WC must sign the declaration.
 - Submits the forms to an authorising officer who must have the correct level of Designated Financial Authority (DFA).
10. The Authorising Officer
- Considers if the application can be approved.
 - Returns the form to the original WC. The award will either be approved, declined or an amendment maybe required before approval.
11. The WC will then:
- Discuss the outcome of the authorising officer's decision with the claimant. If there is an amended offer and the claimant agrees to it, new forms will need to be completed.
 - Decide if a receipt is required. If a receipt is required, the WC advises the claimant that they need to provide a receipt within 14 days. (full action can be found in the following FSF instructions) A 14 day task needs to be set to contact the claimant if no receipts have been provided. On WSP the referral remains open until the receipts are received (if receipts are required)
 - Record the FSF award on WSP /LMS conversations, followed by details of the award made, for example the amount, reason for the award, date of award, specific details of what the money will be used to pay for, the Jobcentre location and the work coach's initials.
12. If the award is rejected the WC:
- Gives the claimant an explanation.
 - Enters notes in WSP/LMS, stating: 'FSF award declined' followed by details of the reasons for refusing the application, the Jobcentre location and the work coach's initials.
 - Selects 'Save and close'.

Refusing a request for support

13. If a claimant's request for support is considered inappropriate (for whatever reason) Work Coaches do not have to complete a FSF claim form.
14. It is sufficient to give the claimant a full verbal explanation and make a detailed note in LMS Conversations or Work Services Platform (WSP) Notes space recording the FSF award request followed by details of the amount, reason for refusal, date of refusal, the location of the Jobcentre and the work coach initials
15. This information is available in the event of the claimant:
- making a complaint

- asking for the decision to be reconsidered
- making a claim for the same thing to a different member of the Work Coach Team.

Note: Where FSF underpins a national policy and the individual concerned meets the eligibility criteria laid down, an award must be made.

Refusing award for outstanding receipt

16. Where there is an outstanding receipt or proof of purchase notification, a further Flexible Support Fund (FSF) award mustn't be made until cleared.
17. In exceptional cases, permission must be sought from the Service Leader (SL) to override this restriction.
18. This will encourage greater compliance to clear outstanding FSF transactions by the claimant.