

Liaison with Jobcentre Plus

Payment for public involvement for those in receipt of welfare benefits

This document contains useful information if you are in receipt of welfare benefits and are considering paid involvement.

Part One – has information for you about what to consider when offered paid involvement. This includes where to seek expert advice about how payment may affect any welfare benefits that you receive, and suggests what to do once you have received that advice.

Part Two – is an example of a letter from the organisation that will be paying you that is addressed to Jobcentre Plus staff when you are obtaining permission for paid involvement or notifying payments received for involvement in your Universal Credit journal. The letter may be enclosed with a Permitted Work (PW1) form, if you are required to notify paid involvement prior to starting.

This letter includes a description of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (or the organisation that you will be involved with) and the purpose of involvement. It explains the context in which payment is offered and how public involvement in research is different from paid employment (especially important to those receiving benefits for limited capacity for work). The letter also explains that you can withdraw from public involvement activities at any time (important to those participating in a 'work programme' or actively seeking work).

The letter also refers to sections of the Department for Work and Pensions staff guidance that addresses the regulations covering payment for 'service user involvement'.

Part one – benefit conditions and payment

For many public involvement activities, payment for your time will be offered to show our appreciation for you sharing your knowledge, experience and perspectives on health and social care issues.

Before you accept an offer to become involved in paid activities, you should seek advice about how payment might affect any welfare benefits that you receive.

Some welfare benefits have conditions that limit the earnings you can accept, and require you to ask permission from Jobcentre Plus before starting involvement. Other benefits require you to notify earnings. In some circumstances, payment received without permission can lead to welfare benefits being reduced or stopped.

To avoid misunderstandings, the NIHR recommends that you take advice from the Benefits Advice Service, which provides free, confidential and personalised guidance on how payment for involvement might affect any welfare benefits that you receive. This specialist service is provided by the Bedford Citizens Advice Bureau. For more information on the Benefits Advice Service, and how to access this, please read the [Payment Guidance for members of the public](#) or contact ced@nihr.ac.uk

The Payment Guidance for members of the public contains a list of the different benefits with earning limits that you can check. This provides a brief summary so you should also use the Bedford Citizen's Advice Bureau service.

Once you have taken advice, please let the organisation offering you involvement know what payment you wish to accept. The organisation should be able to offer you lesser amounts, or voluntary status, if this is your preference. When this is agreed you can ask the organisation for a letter addressed to Jobcentre Plus that explains about involvement being different to work and about support for mobility or care needs. You can use this letter when you contact Jobcentre Plus. See Part two.

Part two - Letter to show Jobcentre Plus

An explanation of service user involvement for Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus will accept an explanation of service user involvement where this is provided on an organisation's headed paper and is signed by a staff member. This example letter explains about service user involvement and why it is different to work. The letter explains about the support that can be provided for mobility and care needs. The letter also refers to Department for Work and Pensions' regulations about service user involvement in the staff guides, Decision Makers Guide and Advice for Decision Makers.

Example of a letter that is addressed to Jobcentre Plus:

Headed paper

To Jobcentre Plus

Mr/Ms/Mrs xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx has been requested to assist [Organisation] with service user involvement. We wish to ensure that the purpose of service user involvement is understood and is not mistaken for work.

What is the National Institute for Health and Care Research (or relevant organisation)

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) the nation's largest funder of health and care research and provides the people, facilities and technology that enables research to thrive. Working in partnership with the NHS, universities, local government, other research funders, patients and the public, NIHR delivers and enables world-class research that transforms people's lives, promotes economic growth and advances science. NIHR's mission is to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research. NIHR is primarily funded by the Department of Health and Social Care, but also receives UK Aid funding to support research for people in low- and middle-income countries.

What is service user involvement

People who can offer a service user perspective because of their personal experiences of using health and/or social care services are requested to assist in our work.

At NIHR, when using the term 'public' we include patients, potential patients, carers and people who use health and social care services.

DWP have a full description of service users that applies to all benefits and can be found in Advice for Decision Makers Chapter H3: paragraph 3161.

The difference between service user involvement and work

Involvement in research activities should not be mistaken as capacity for work, and recruitment for service user involvement should not be confused with recruitment for employment. People are recruited because of their personal experiences of using health and social care services.

Service user involvement activities:

- are intermittent and people can withdraw at any time
- vary in length and in frequency, and usually last for a few hours (or less) in any one week
- are individual activities and do not imply future involvement
- may include attendance of quarterly or annual meetings
- may include contributing to intermittent meetings or telephone conferences
- may include helping to prepare for meetings, telephone conferences or events
- may include some follow-up activities after meetings or events

Any payment that is offered for service user involvement is intended to cover preparation, attendance and appropriate follow-up activities.

Support provided

Organisations provide support measures that are appropriate for each individual, so that members of the public can attend and contribute to our meetings and events. Some people who we involve may be in receipt of benefits for mobility or care needs. Involvement in activities should not be interpreted as a reduction in the care or mobility needs of service users involved.

Support for care or mobility needs is offered as required by the service user and may cover preparation, travel to and from a venue, and contributions both during and after the activity. For example, support may include provision of childcare, or provision of a personal assistant or a support worker.

Payment for service user involvement

Good practice guidance for service user involvement in research recommends that members of the public should be offered payment for activities such as attending meetings and events, and that reasonable out-of-pocket expenses should be covered. Please note that:

- as involvement activities are often arranged on an ad hoc basis, organisations often pay service users monthly in arrears
- to assist service users who receive welfare benefits which have earnings limits or disregards, organisations offer involvement on a voluntary basis, or at a lesser amount, if requested
- as the payment period may be over a month or more, we anticipate that Jobcentre Plus will treat these payments as averaged over the payment period. See DMG Chapter 48 paras 4080-81 and for a cycle of work para 48094.
- the Department for Work and Pensions legislation exempts 'service users and carers' from the application of notional earnings and treats reimbursed expenses for service user involvement as ignored (see ADM Chapter H3, paras 3160 and 3241)
- service users can withdraw from involvement activities at any time to attend 'employment-related' activities
- the Department for Work and Pensions legislation for persons who receive Employment and Support Allowance on exempt work now allows earnings at the higher level of Permitted work without time limit (see Memo DMG 7/17)

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

[Signed by member of staff](#)