

Freedom of Information request 783/2013

Received 16 February 2013

Published 25 March 2013

Information request

“Please provide information that shows under Universal Credit (UC) someone with a 35 hour UC Work Search commitment can do 35 hours voluntary work and wil then only be committed to 17.5 hours UC Work Search requirement and remain entitled to UC? In this scenario can the 35 hours Voluntary work be Monday to Friday between 8am to 6pm? When will the 35 hour Work Search requirement apply to claims for Jobseekers Allowance?”

DWP response

Voluntary work can be incredibly useful for a person who is looking to develop skills and experience in order to increase their employability. It's particularly useful for someone who has been out of the labour market for some time and is looking to build up their confidence and their CV at the same time.

Therefore, Universal Credit advisers will be able to reduce a claimant's expected hours to up to 50% in order to accommodate voluntary work. However, the claimant is not restricted to the number of hours they wish to do.

For Example:

Mary is looking for work in the retail sector. She has caring responsibilities and a health condition which means that her expected hours have been reduced to 20 hours a week. She finds a voluntary job in the local charity shop for 12 hours a week. Her adviser makes a relevant deduction of 10 hours to her expected hours in order to accommodate her voluntary work. Mary is therefore spending 10 hours a week on work search activities, 10 hours volunteering as part of her relevant deduction, and a further two hours of her own time at the charity shop.

Expected hours are the number of hours which a claimant will be expected to spend on work-related activity in a week. The claimant is not restricted in what time of day they should be doing their work search but (unless they have had their requirements limited by their adviser) they should ensure that they are available to attend a job interview or take up an offer of paid work at any time.

This relevant deduction for voluntary work is relevant for claimants of Universal Credit or the new-style Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance under the Jobseekers Allowance regulations 2013 and the Employment and Support Allowance regulations 2013.