

Kickstart Partner FAQ

This FAQ is to support your members and address any questions they may have.

Employers

What type of business/employer is the Kickstart Scheme suitable for?

- We welcome applications from a wide range of employers and organisations.
- Depending on your organisation's size or the number of Kickstart job placements you can offer, there are different ways of applying to the scheme:
 - If you are looking for 30 or more placements, you can apply directly to the Kickstart Scheme.
 - If you are looking for 29 or fewer placements, then you can apply through a Kickstart gateway. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>
 - If you are applying as a gateway, you will act on behalf of employers offering 29 or less job placements by batching together applications so that, collectively, the group is offering 30 or more placements.

Does the Kickstart Scheme replace existing jobs?

- No. To successfully receive grant funding for a Kickstart Scheme job placement, an employer must demonstrate that the job placement is additional to its planned resource requirements and is not filling existing vacancies. Kickstart Scheme job placements must not replace existing jobs, or cause existing employees, apprentices or contractors to lose work or reduce their working hours.

What is the Department for Work and Pension's process for considering applications?

- We assess each application by checking applicants through the Spotlight tool– a tool used across government to carry out due diligence checks for grant applications.
- Thanks to changes we've made on how we use Spotlight, we are able to apply these checks in a more focussed way, ensuring that we are protecting taxpayers' money whilst making the scheme accessible to a wide range of organisations.
- We then consider the application in full and carefully assess evidence to demonstrate that the proposed placement will develop a young person's employability, that the job placement is new and not replacing existing jobs or other planned recruitment, that the role will be for a minimum of 25 hours a week and last for six months.

Does a young person need to have been on Universal Credit for a certain length of time before becoming eligible for the Kickstart Scheme?

- No, but our Work Coaches will consider those who are most at risk of long-term unemployment and make referrals on that basis.

Can employers source their own Kickstart Scheme applicants?

- Any referral must be made through a Job Centre; the vacancies are made visible to Work Coaches through a bespoke digital tool.

Is the Kickstart Scheme suitable for disadvantaged/disabled young people?

- Yes. The Scheme is for any young person aged 16-24 on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Reasonable adjustments are possible to offer reduced hours for young people such as those with disabilities.

What is the average processing time for a Kickstart Scheme application?

- Our aim is to process an application within a month, but this can take longer if we require additional information. As the Scheme continues to roll-out, we expect that the time taken to process applications will improve.

What are the Spotlight checks?

- Spotlight is a Government tool used to assess grant applicants. It saves time by performing automated financial due diligence checks on each application. The system checks large amounts of data to highlight potential risks.
- We have now changed how we use Spotlight so that we focus on applying those key tests to safeguard public money, whilst ensuring more organisations can access the Kickstart Scheme.

Why does the Department for Work and Pensions use Spotlight?

- Recognising the key purpose of the Kickstart Scheme is to help young people get into the job market with wraparound support, we must ensure quality of training but also protect public funds by avoiding fraud.
- Spotlight is a tool to ensure that any organisation receiving grant funding for Kickstart Scheme job placements passes our financial due diligence checks.
- Where Spotlight raises areas of concern about an application, we assess these carefully against the evidence provided in the application.

How can I pass Spotlight checks?

- Spotlight does not automatically pass or fail applications but highlights potential risks. Organisations should provide as much evidence as possible when submitting their applications.
- We have recently improved the assessment process to allow more flexibility when considering applications, this includes our use of Spotlight. Whilst maintaining a high standard for Kickstart job placements, these changes will mean that more applications are likely to be successful.

How do we find out why our application has been unsuccessful?

- All organisations that have applied to the Kickstart Scheme will receive a letter informing them of the outcome of the application.
- We are considering how we might provide more enhanced feedback to employers and Kickstart gateways on the outcome of their applications. We have established regional points of contact for the Kickstart Scheme which will allow employers to contact local representatives to discuss their applications.
- We have also published additional guidance on what we are looking for in applications.

Is there any guidance available?

- Yes. We are continually looking to improve our guidance. This can be found on GOV.uk, here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kickstart-scheme-employer-resources>

What standard of young people can we expect to be referred?

- The Kickstart Scheme is open to anyone aged between 16 and 24 who is claiming Universal Credit at risk of long-term unemployment.
- Work Coaches, who have established relationships with the young people, will make referrals based on the requirements of the role and qualifications and experience of the young person.

How quickly can young people be referred to a placement?

- Once a placement is advertised, Work Coaches can make a referral straight away.

What is the process for employing a young person following the six-month period?

- The Work Coach will be in contact with the young person towards the end of the job placement to ensure they have support to progress into an opportunity either with their Kickstart employer or elsewhere.

Is there a process to be followed at the end of six months to end a young person's placement?

- Once the job placement is over, you should inform DWP about the job placement coming to an end and, if they are not moving into another role in your organisation or elsewhere, we will make arrangements to work with the young person to focus their employability training towards further employment.

What should training for the young person look like?

- The Kickstart placement should help the young person get basic work skills, which can include timekeeping, teamwork and communication.
- Mentoring the young person can also form a key part of developing employability skills.
- Some Kickstart placements will also offer the opportunity to participate in on the job training that would be relevant to roles with other employers e.g. health and safety, food hygiene, IT skills etc.

Does the Kickstart Scheme detract from apprenticeships?

- No. In fact, some Kickstart Scheme participants may transition to apprenticeships once their placement is over.
- Kickstart offers short-term, fully funded job placements to those at risk of long-term unemployment, whilst apprenticeships are part-funded placements that produce an educational qualification upon completion.

Can a young person undertaking a Kickstart Scheme job placement be taken on as an apprentice during their placement?

- Yes. This is something we can support employers with exploring, although it would end the Kickstart Scheme job placement.

Are there any resources available to help Kickstart Scheme organisations promote themselves?

- Yes, these can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kickstart-scheme-employer-resources>

Can businesses reapply to the scheme if initially rejected?

- Applications that fail to meet the financial due diligence standards may not be resubmitted except through agreement between you and an approved Gateway Direct where they will act as the employer on your behalf
- Those that have not supplied sufficient evidence that the jobs are additional or that the employability support will be of sufficient quality can revise their application and resubmit.

How can sole traders/small businesses support the Kickstart Scheme?

- We welcome applications from employers of all sizes.
- Smaller organisations that can accommodate only a small number of placements can sign up through a Kickstart gateway.
- Sole traders can apply to the scheme through a Kickstart gateway. Although if they are not registered with Companies House and/or do not have the systems to pay participants through PAYE, they will need to work with a Kickstart gateway which is able to put the participant on the gateway's PAYE system.

How will national and regional lockdowns impact the Kickstart Scheme?

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- Our intention is to continue to deliver the Kickstart Scheme through the changes in COVID restrictions which may come across in the UK.
- COVID restrictions will affect workplaces differently. For example, the latest announcements for England have permitted construction and manufacturing to continue under COVID-secure practices, whilst other workplaces are moving to more remote working.
- We are talking to employers already on the Kickstart Scheme to check whether changes in restrictions mean that they want to adjust their plans to take on young people.

Kickstart Gateways

What is a Kickstart gateway?

- Kickstart gateways are organisations that act on behalf of employers offering 29 or less job placements by batching together applications so that collectively the group is offering 30 or more placements.
- They can help you with your initial application and some will support you in the training and development of your Kickstart placement.

How do organisations apply to become a Kickstart gateway?

- You can apply to be a Kickstart gateway here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-employers-apply-for-a-kickstart-scheme-grant-kickstart-gateway>
- To successfully apply, you must demonstrate that you have experience of managing partnership agreements with third parties and robust financial and governance processes to manage the application.

How can employers find the right Kickstart gateway for them?

- A list of organisations who have expressed an interest in becoming a Kickstart gateway is available here: <https://secure.dwp.gov.uk/find-a-kickstart-gateway>
- We have published guidance for organisations to consider when deciding upon the right Kickstart gateway for them, that can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kickstart-scheme-employer-resources/guidance-on-choosing-a-kickstart-gateway>

How can we improve the quality of our application?

- Guidance can be found here: <https://intranet.dwp.gov.uk/section/organisation/work-and-health-services-group/universal-credit-hub/get-britain-working/kickstart-scheme>

Are Kickstart gateway applications taking longer to process?

- We are aware of a specific issue around applications from Kickstart gateways which is currently contributing to longer processing times. This happens where a Kickstart gateway sends a series of applications as new employers join their bid.
- We are reviewing our approach to assessing these applications and the information we collect from Kickstart gateway applicants. We would encourage Kickstart gateways to send in one application and await the outcome of their application before sending in any further applications.

Are Kickstart gateway applications assessed differently?

- We need to consider the evidence the Kickstart gateway provides about the additionality of the roles and the support that will be provided to improve the longer-term employability of young people.
- We also consider the scale of application. For example, we will assess if it is small and from a group of organisations with a long-standing relationship or a much larger proposal from organisations who have only come together in the context of the Kickstart Scheme.

How involved in training and support should a Kickstart gateway be?

- Kickstart gateways are free to choose their approach to this.
- Some Kickstart gateways will simply pass the employability funding directly to employers, whilst other gateway organisations may build support provision into their offer to employers, they might take a portion of the £1500 to deliver this. You should discuss this with a potential Kickstart gateway before agreeing to let them apply on your behalf.

How is the division of the £1,500 between an employer and a Kickstart gateway calculated?

- The allocation of the £1,500 should be determined between a Kickstart gateway and an employer.
- If a Kickstart gateway is providing some or all of the employability support training for young people, then some or all of the funding should be allocated to them.
- We will provide a template grant agreement for the Kickstart gateway organisation to use with the employers they represent. This agreement will confirm, between the gateway and employer, what support will be put in place for the young person.

What is the best way for a Kickstart gateway to advertise themselves?

- Kickstart gateways may consider advertising themselves through other means, such as trade bodies, local authorities or sector specific forums, we have created specific products that may help to do this. They can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kickstart-scheme-promotional-materials>

Improvements

Are you listening to stakeholders?

- We continue to listen and engage with our stakeholders to ensure that Kickstart is working as effectively as it can be.
- We have recently improved the assessment process to allow more flexibility when considering applications. Whilst maintaining a high standard for Kickstart places, these changes will mean that more applications are likely to be successful. We are improving all our guidance and checks, and in particular making changes to our internal procedures to allow Kickstart placement decisions to be turned around and lead more quickly to employment outcomes for young people. Our aim has been to process an application within a month but this can take longer where we require additional information.
- The improvements to the assessment process is just one example of how we are adapting Kickstart as a result of feedback, we have also:
 - Refined our approach to enabling the smallest employers to participate by developing a more flexible Kickstart gateway model to accommodate these. This includes sole traders, who will often need to apply through a Gateway which can provide a PAYE scheme. We have recently given approval for such a Gateway and there are a number of other organisations developing similar plans.
 - Refined and expanded guidance to ensure that its clear and concise and assists applicants with quality, for example; producing multimedia products that provide 'Tips for making a successful application'. Further work is underway to provide additional material specifically for Kickstart gateways.
 - Improved the turn-around time for applications after some initial issues, with full processing also becoming more streamlined as we roll out the scheme.
 - Confirmed monthly grant payments to make sure that employers are not excluded because of cash flow challenges.
 - Developed a clearer choice of Kickstart gateway models so all employers can find one that works for them