

Young people's views on Universal Credit

Toolkit



Background

Universal Credit is money provided by the government to support people and families to pay for food and bills.

Researchers and policymakers don't yet know what children and young people think about Universal Credit.

This toolkit was designed by **Investing in Children (IiC)** in collaboration with young people and researchers from the **National Institute for Health and Social Care Research Applied Research Collaboration for the North East & North Cumbria (NIHR ARC NENC)**.

IiC is a Community Interest Company concerned with the **human rights of children**. At the heart of IiC is the belief that **children and young people have the right to be heard on issues and decisions that affect them and have their opinions taken into account**, as set out in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. IiC works to create spaces in which children and young people can come together, discuss issues and develop arguments about how things might change.



Contents

Overview	3
Activity 1. '9 Cups'	5
Activity 2. Fast Track Ticket word search	10
Activity 3. Log Flume	15
Activity 4. Arcade	18
Additional materials	25

Overview

To best develop creative, young people-friendly methods to explore Universal Credit, we spoke to some of the young people that had been involved in Agenda Days™ hosted by IiC focusing on Universal Credit.

Eight young people gave us a variety of suggestions, including games, online quizzes, word searches and escape room-style challenges. They advised that workshops should take place at school, rather than in community venues.

We thought that a Theme Park experience workshop would enable us to incorporate the young people's suggestions for activities and give a fun and engaging vehicle for participants to explore Universal Credit. We took our plans back to young people at IiC who were happy with the activities we had planned; they said, "[interactive games are] the best way to do it" and "definitely do games".

One young person raised the need to be very sensitive, if the young people we are working with are facing financial difficulties or are in challenging situations. As such, we decided that participants would take part in the activities as characters, grouped into family teams, so that feedback given on the impact of Universal Credit would capture their team's opinion but not reflect individual circumstances. All of the family teams are on Universal Credit but have different dynamics, resilience factors and challenges. They all face the same changes in circumstances and the young people decide how these could affect the family and what the impact of Universal Credit might be as they learn more about it through each activity.

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Activities



The activities are linked to the Universal Credit information we needed to share and issues we wanted the young people to consider:

1. **'9 cups'** – participants take steps towards or away from the activity depending on strength or challenge factors and throw balls into cups; if successful, they read out the Universal Credit general knowledge fact inside.
2. **Timed word search** – exploring the claimant commitment and the impact of time as a resource.
3. **'Log flume' word association game** – one person writes down a necessity or luxury – if you say the word written down, confetti will be thrown at you!
4. **Arcade quiz** – an interactive quiz on the price of common utilities and goods, followed by preparing a budget for the month.

Young people's views from the sessions are captured on audio recordings and via worksheets. At the beginning and end of the workshop, participants select the four things they think are most needed for a good life, giving their reasons for any changes, if their answers have changed. After each activity, family teams are asked to reflect on how the change in circumstance associated with that activity affected their wellbeing (quantitatively measuring happiness, physical health, mental health and hopefulness) and what their thoughts on Universal Credit are.

Dialogue with young people was integral to developing this workshop and something we maintained throughout. The workshop was piloted with a group of young people from IiC and their feedback helped us to amend the workshop, before running it with a group of students at a secondary school.

Activity 1. '9 Cups'

Narrative

The families have arrived at the theme park and come to the fair ground area. They are queuing up to have a go at a throwing game: '9 cups'. There's a bit of drama as people are jumping the queue to get in. The families then play the 9 cups game.

Link to UC

General knowledge about Universal Credit.



Materials & set-up

- 9 plastic cups
- A ping pong ball (spares recommended)
- Slips of paper with UC facts on – see below

4 sets of 9 cups (like 9 pins) are set up on tables at the end of the room.

In each cup are a different number of tokens to win.

On the bottom of each cup is also a slip of paper with some information about UC.

Rules

1. Players look at the cups and see which they want to aim for.
2. They line up to throw into the 9 cups.
3. The drama of the queue is acted out in stepping forward or back, based on the family bio. "Roll up" list mixes up the families' bios and circumstances. Individuals make a choice whether it applies to them, whether this is a protective factor, or a challenge, and step forwards or backwards accordingly.
 - a. There is parental illness in your family – stopping work
 - b. A parent has been made redundant in your family
 - c. One child has additional needs in your family
 - d. Your single parent is on a zero hours contract
 - e. Your family live in an isolated community
 - f. Your parents are not fluent in English
 - g. Your siblings have to share a bedroom
 - h. Your family have access to a computer or tablet
 - i. Your parents have gone to university
 - j. Your family have a family car
 - k. Your parent has an apprenticeship starting soon
 - l. Your family can afford back to school supplies
 - m. Your family have broadband at home
 - n. Your family live in an area with strong community spirit
 - o. Your grandparents give the children in your family pocket money
 - p. Your family live in a noisy area and struggle to sleep
4. Extra rule: if you miss a throw your whole family must take another step back.
5. Once all the families are in their position, they throw balls one at a time, starting with the closest family to the tables, family 1 one throw, 2, 3, 4 and repeat until all done.
6. If a ball lands in a cup, the family can remove the tokens and read the information slip about UC to the whole group.
7. Tally up tokens after game one.

Reflections

You could ask:

“what do you think the different bits of this activity represent?”.

The point of stepping forward and back at the start is to highlight that our circumstances can make it harder to access certain opportunities. UC could be one of these circumstances.

A missed throw and stepping back represents that once you are in a difficult circumstance it can be hard to bounce back easily.

Activity 2.

Fast Track Ticket word search

Narrative

You are going across to the fast ticket booth, to apply for your fast track ticket to avoid queues and access rides quicker in the park.

But you are all travelling to the booth differently.

Whoever won the most tokens last game gets faster transport – they can start the task first.

First GOLF BUGGY – head start of 3 mins

Second RUN – head start of 2 mins

Third WALK – head start of 1 min

Fourth TWIST ANKLE – no head start

Teams compete to complete a ten-word word search in the fastest time.

Link to UC – Claimant Commitment

Explores the implications of time: how close you live to your place of work, having to take on any shift pattern, 5 week delay in receiving your first payment

Materials & set-up

- A3 word search – one per family
- Claimant commitment handout – one per family



Words

- Sanction
- Job centre
- Claimant
- Benefit
- Thirty-five
- Evenings
- Nights
- Weekends
- Coach
- Travel
- Appointment
- Interviews
- Jobs
- Any

At the end of the word search, give each group the handout containing the description of the claimant commitment.

Reflections

Questions to ask verbally:

- How did it feel having to wait longer to start the game?
- What do you think of people having to travel the same distances but on different transport to fulfil the claimant commitment?
- Do you think it is reasonable to work any shift patterns?

Activity 2.

Fast Track Ticket word search



Word Search!

ANSWER KEY



Find and circle each of the words from the list below. Words may appear forwards or backwards, horizontally, vertically or diagonally in the grid.

E	M	S	D	D	O	F	V	A	E	K	G	O	B	I	U
U	E	Q	A	B	W	E	E	K	E	N	D	S	A	E	E
Q	V	O	M	N	D	W	O	U	R	A	S	O	P	N	S
H	A	L	A	T	C	I	S	I	U	M	W	Q	P	I	M
O	A	O	I	I	C	T	H	E	F	M	E	S	O	G	S
T	M	C	I	J	E	L	I	B	V	D	I	M	I	H	J
H	Y	S	T	M	R	O	A	O	O	K	V	F	N	T	H
I	B	E	N	E	F	I	T	I	N	J	R	V	T	S	Q
R	N	C	E	S	R	K	O	C	M	R	E	I	M	Y	S
T	E	A	F	N	H	R	F	M	J	A	T	E	E	T	E
Y	U	E	R	T	N	E	C	B	O	J	N	I	N	R	C
F	P	S	G	N	I	N	E	V	E	W	I	T	T	A	G
I	M	P	F	K	X	A	E	J	A	R	Y	M	S	V	U
V	A	B	R	T	O	H	C	A	O	C	N	Y	P	E	I
E	I	E	U	O	M	O	M	C	N	W	A	Y	C	L	T

WEEKENDS EVENINGS THIRTYFIVE ANY
 JOBCENTRE APPOINTMENTS INTERVIEWS
 CLAIMANT SANCTION TRAVEL BENEFIT
 NIGHTS COACH JOB

Claimant Commitment Handout

A claimant is person who receives Universal Credit.

In order for the claimant to receive their Universal Credit benefit payment, there are some things that they have to do. This is known as the claimant commitment. For most people, this involves looking for work.

As part of the claimant commitment, you have to spend thirty-five hours a week looking for work.

You will be allocated a work coach to help you look for work.

You must attend appointments with your work coach. These may be over the phone or at a jobcentre.

You have to apply for any type of work it is possible for you to do and attend interviews.

You must accept any job you are offered, even if it involves working weekends, evenings or nights and you are expected to travel up to 90 minutes for work.

If you don't do these things your Universal Credit payments may be stopped, this is known as a sanction.

Activity 3. Log Flume

Narrative

Water ride in the park!

Link to UC

What do we value in life.

Luxury vs essential items.

Resilience to hardships (protection from water/confetti).



Materials & set-up

- Water/Confetti cup – we recommend the use paper/plastic cups as they are softer
- A small amount of confetti
- 4 plastic ponchos (as sold at Theme Parks)
- Umbrella
- 4 paper hats – one A4 sheet makes one hat

Activity 3. Log Flume

Rules

1. Whoever wins the word search goes first
2. Hand out 'protective factors' – see below
3. Participants stand in a circle, with one person in the middle (from the family who won the word search). This person holds a cup of water or confetti and thinks of a word/phrase associated with the category, 'luxury items/experiences'. They do not say this word/phrase out loud.
4. Round the circle, each person in turn says a word/phrase linked to that category. You get water/confetti in your face if you:
 - Say the chosen word by the one holding the cup
 - You repeat a word
 - You hesitate
5. Repeat with a new person in the middle
6. Repeat with the new category of 'essential items/experiences'

Activity 3. Log Flume

Rules

N.B. Please check with all group members that they would be comfortable with a, very small, amount of confetti or water being thrown at them and ask for their preference as to which is used. Group members can sit the activity out, if they would prefer.

If your family has this in your family, you can share a 'protective factor' this round:

Round 1: Broadband at home, A car, Starting work soon

Round 2: Live in an area with a strong community spirit, afford supplies

Round 3: None!

Protective factors:

- Umbrellas
- Poncho
- Paper hats

Reflections

Were there any items/experiences which you disagreed with? Why?

How did you feel when some people were protected from the water/confetti and others weren't?

Activity 4. Arcade

Narrative

Internet/gaming café at the Theme Park.

Link to UC

Price of living, costs and money involved with UC.

Materials & set-up

- 4 laptops/PCs to run the PowerPoint quiz on – one per family
- Printed score sheet – one per family



Activity 4. Arcade

Rules

1. On a PowerPoint, participants play a game whereby they have to guess the average cost of some everyday essentials, such as food items and utilities.
2. The families win a token for each question they guess correctly.
3. After the questions, participants move on to a budgeting activity, whereby they have a set budget for the month and have to decide which of the items/utilities from the questions they are going to spend on.
4. The budgeting is interrupted with **CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCE**. This time, their energy bill has doubled.
5. Complete the budget game with the new energy costing

Reflections

Were there any costs that surprised you?

Did you find budgeting easy or difficult?

Does this activity change how you think about food or money?
How?

Activity 4. Arcade

Arcade Game Score Sheet

Heating	
Petrol	
Council tax	
Rent	
Broadband	
Phone contract	
Bread	
Milk	
Coffee	
Rice	
Veg mix	
Apples	
Chicken	
Chocolate cake	
Take-out pizza	



Total score:

Activity 4. Arcade

Guess the price!



1

Guess the **average** price of these
these common household goods and
services.

Most accurate team wins.

Good luck!



2

Heating costs for A 3 bedroom
family home for one month (as of
August 2022)

- a) £49
- b) £55
- c) £78
- d) £42



3

WINNER

[Next
question](#)

4

Unlucky!

The
correct
answer
was:

C) £78

Unlucky!

[Next
question](#)

5

Price for one month's petrol
(as of July 2022)

- a) £101.93
- b) £76.99
- c) £145.59
- d) £120.90



6

Activity 4. Arcade



7



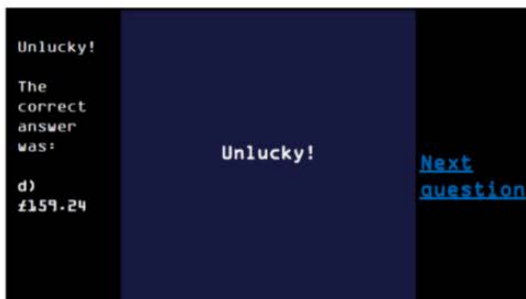
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Activity 4. Arcade



13



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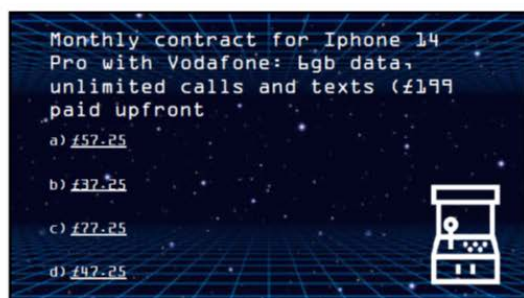
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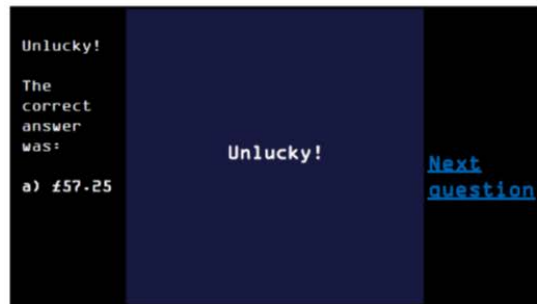


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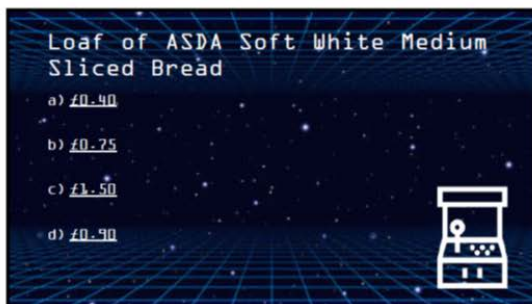
Activity 4. Arcade



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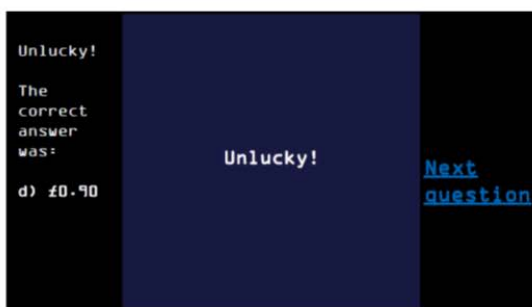
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23



24

Additional materials

Example of fictional families for group work



FAMILY GROUPS LIST

Family 1

Mum, Dad, Child, Child

- There is parental illness in the family – stopping work
- Live in an isolated community
- Parents have gone to university
- Have broadband at their home

Family 2

Mum, Mum, Child, Child

- One mum has been made redundant
- Parents not fluent in English
- Have a family car
- Live in an area with strong community spirit

Family 3

Single Parent, Child, Child, Child

- One child has additional needs
- You have to share a bedroom with your siblings
- Parent has an apprenticeship starting soon
- Grandparents give the children pocket money

Family 4

Single Parent, Grandparent, Child, Child

- Single parent is on a zero hours contract
- Have access to a computer or tablet
- Family can afford back to school supplies
- Live in a noisy area and struggle to sleep

Additional materials

Example of fictional character sheets for family

CHARACTER SHEET: Child 2

Name: _____

Family: _____
(find your family with the same coloured dot)

Draw your character here!

Family Bio:

- Your mum (who is a single parent) is on a zero hours contract
- You have access to a computer or tablet
- Your family can afford back to school supplies
- You live in a noisy area and struggle to get to sleep



Additional materials

Example of fictional character sheets for family

CHARACTER SHEET: Mum 2 •

Name: _____

Family: _____
(find your family with the same coloured dot)

Draw your character here!

Family Bio:

- One mum has been made redundant
- Parents are not fluent in English
- You have a family car
- You live in an area with strong community spirit



Additional materials

Example of fictional character sheets for family

CHARACTER SHEET: Grandparent

Name: _____

Family: _____
(find your family with the same coloured dot)

Draw your character here!

Family Bio:

- Your mum (who is a single parent) is on a zero hours contract
- You have access to a computer or tablet
- Your family can afford back to school supplies
- You live in a noisy area and struggle to get to sleep



Additional materials


Example of the 'Good Life Tracker' sheet


Please tick the **4 things** you think are most needed to live a good life:


Experience/item	Start	Final
Enough money (pocket money, savings)		
Garden or somewhere nearby to play safely		
Friends		
Creative hobbies		
Branded or designer trainers		
Access to family car		
Supportive family		
Sporting hobbies		
Access to your own device		
Good public transport links		
Pets		
Time in nature		
Phone		
Clothes of your choice		
Chance to explore and express your worldview or belief		
To choose what you want to eat / preferred foods		
Yearly holidays with family		
Monthly day trips with family		
Other		
Please state what 'other' →		


Additional materials


Example of the 'Family Wellbeing Tracker' sheet


 **Family Well-being Tracker**
After each game shade how your family feels (on the scale of 0 – 10) and tell us why

After 9 cups 

Happiness 
Why this score:

Physical Health 
Why this score:

Mental Health 
Why this score:

Hopefulness 
Why this score:

Additional materials

Example of a 'Change in Circumstances' sheet



Change in circumstances!

Something has changed for all the families. This time it's:

Your energy bills
are going to double.

What difference does this make to your family? Please
score below (from 0 – 10).

Happiness		Why this score:
Physical Health		Why this score:
Mental Health		Why this score:
Hopefulness		Why this score:

What will be the impacts on the children in the family?

What reflections do you have on Universal Credit after this activity?