

JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE

Durham
County Council



What is Jobseeker's Allowance?

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is for people who are unemployed or working less than 16 hours a week and who are available for and actively seeking work.

There are two types of Jobseeker's Allowance:

- Contribution-based ('new style') Jobseeker's Allowance—this is a personal flat rate benefit based on your National Insurance contributions. It is payable for up to six months, is not means tested, and is taxable. It has been renamed 'new style JSA' in areas where Universal Credit is in force.
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance—this is means tested and taxable. For new claimants, it has been replaced by Universal Credit so can no longer be claimed. Those currently receiving income-based JSA will

You cannot receive another contributory benefit at the same time as new style JSA. New claimants wishing to claim income based JSA must claim Universal Credit instead. See factsheet F29: Universal Credit for more details. The rest of this factsheet deals with new style JSA.

Eligibility

You can claim new style Jobseeker's Allowance if you live in Great Britain and you:

- Are available for work
- Are actively seeking work
- Have a claimant commitment
- Are not working 16 hours or more a week
- Are capable of work
- Are under pension age
- Are not in full time, non-advanced education if you are under age 19

How to claim

You can claim new style JSA online at <https://www.dwpe-services.direct.gov.uk/portal/page/portal/jsaol/lp> or, if you are unable to claim online, by telephone on 0800 055 6688.



Welfare Rights Service
Revenues and Benefits
Durham County Council

www.durham.gov.uk/welfarerights
welfare.rights@durham.gov.uk

Problems with claiming

If there is a delay in your claim, or benefit is suspended or disallowed, or a sanction is applied, or you are told you are not eligible, seek advice. You should continue to actively seek work while you are challenging the decision.

Payments

New style Jobseeker's Allowance is paid every two weeks in arrears. Rates vary according to your age and in the case of income-based JSA, you and your partner's income and savings.

Available for and actively seeking work

You must generally be willing to and able to take up any paid employment of 35 hours or more a week, but you may be able to agree limitations to this in certain circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities or ill health/disability). For up to the first 13 weeks of your claim you may be allowed to restrict your availability and jobseeking to your usual occupation and/or to your usual pay. This is known as the 'permitted period'.

You are expected to spend an agreed number of hours a week (up to 35) looking for work and must evidence this jobsearch activity.

The Claimant Commitment

The claimant commitment contains details of the types of work you are looking for, the hours you are available for and seeking work, and any 'pattern of availability'.

Providing that you show that you have 'reasonable prospects of securing employment' you are allowed to make certain restrictions to the nature of employment you're looking for, the terms and conditions of the employment, the rate of pay and the locality you are prepared to work in.

Your personalised commitment is drawn up between you and your 'work coach' at the Jobcentre Plus. It will reflect the actions you are expected to take to improve your job prospects, how many hours a week you are expected to undertake job search activities, details of any restrictions on availability to work, the dates of any 'permitted period' in which you can place extra restrictions on your job search activities, and details of other tasks you are expected to do.

Sanctions

If you fail to meet the conditions in your agreement you can be sanctioned and your benefit reduced or stopped altogether for up to 13 weeks in the case of low and intermediate-level failures, and up to 3 years in the case of high-level ones. Decisions to impose sanctions can often be challenged as your reasons for not complying may have mitigating circumstances that can act in your favour.

Ill or disabled

If you have very limited capability for work owing to ill health or disability, you might not be eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance but you may be able to claim new-style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) instead. Seek advice in this situation.



Jobseeker's Allowance and pensions

If you are getting new style JSA, income you have from an occupational or personal pension of over £50 a week is deducted from the amount of your JSA. For example, if your pension is £55.00 a week then £5.00 is deducted from your JSA each week. ■



Need more advice? CONTACT WELFARE RIGHTS:

By telephone:

Advice Line
03000 268 968
9 am – 12 noon

By email:

welfare.rights@durham.gov.uk

By post:

Welfare Rights • Durham County Council • Revenues and Benefits • PO Box 254
Stanley • County Durham • DH8 1GG

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