

## Claimant Commitment

You usually need to show that you are ready to work and looking for work when you claim JSA or UC. Some of the usual rules were relaxed during the Covid-19 emergency.

After you make your online claim, you have to see a Work Coach at the Jobcentre and sign a [Claimant Commitment](#), setting out the hours you are available for work and the things that you must do to look for work.

Tell your work coach about anything that limits the time you can spend looking for work or the work you can do, for instance if you are coping with a crisis like homelessness or domestic violence.

Your work coach will usually expect you to:

- spend at least 35 hours a week looking for work
- be prepared to take any job that pays at least the National Minimum Wage
- look for work within 90 minutes travel time from home.



These rules can sometimes be relaxed. Tell your Work Coach if you have [caring responsibilities](#) or [health problems](#) that restrict what you can do. You should not have to commit to all these things if you have children under 13, a disability, or you are a carer.

If you have problems keeping to your Claimant Commitment, you need to tell your Work Coach and ask to change it. During the Covid-19 crisis, also tell them if you are, or you live with, someone who is 'shielding'.

## Sanctions

Usually, if you are not doing everything you have agreed to do, the Work Coach may apply a sanction. This is a cut in your benefit. See our sanctions leaflet for more information.

## Further Help

Many services for Jobseekers have been suspended due to Covid-19. Usually, Job Clubs can be found in local libraries across the city.

They can assist with claims for JSA and UC and help you to prepare a CV and look for work online. Some community groups also run job clubs and have computers you can use, when they are open.

For more information go to [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or contact our

**Citizens Advice Helpline: 03444 111 444**



Potteries Gold is a **Citizens Advice Staffordshire North & Stoke-on-Trent** project to help people in Stoke-on-Trent cope with changes to the benefit system

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## Benefits for Jobseekers

### Changes of Circumstances No 3



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## Benefits for Jobseekers

There are two main benefits for jobseekers. These are **Universal Credit (UC)** and **Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)**.

You claim both from the **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)**.

### Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (IbJSA)

This is a **means-tested benefit**. Very few people can now make a new claim for income-based JSA although, if you already get IbJSA, you can carry on getting it for now.

Some **disabled people** can still claim IbJSA, and are better off on this benefit than Universal Credit. If you get **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** for daily living, get more advice to check which you should claim.

### Contribution-based or New-style JSA

You can get New-style JSA if you have worked as an employee and paid enough **Class 1 National Insurance contributions** in both of the last two tax years before the current benefit year. Benefit years run from January to December, but tax years run from April to March.

If you have been self-employed or did not pay enough Class 1 contributions, you will not get New-style JSA.

The relevant tax years for the 2020 benefit year are April 2017 to March 2018, and April 2018 to March 2019.

New-style JSA is not a means-tested benefit. You can claim new style JSA even if you have a partner who works or have savings.

You cannot claim New-style JSA if you are working more than **16 hours a week**. Part-time earnings and private pensions can reduce your JSA.

New-style JSA is just for you. It does not include money for your partner or children. You may be able to claim Universal Credit for them.

New-style JSA is paid for **up to 26 weeks**. It is usually paid fortnightly. You get a **lower rate** of JSA if you are **under 25**.

You can claim New-style JSA online or by calling Jobcentre Plus on **0800 055 6688**.

If you claim by phone, make it clear that you want to claim New-style JSA, based on you NI record, or you might be told to claim UC instead.

You do not automatically qualify for free prescriptions on New-style JSA.

You will need to get an HC1 form to claim these if you have a low income.

See our Help with Health Costs leaflet for more advice.



## Universal Credit (UC)

If you cannot get New-style JSA, or you have a partner or children or housing costs, you may need to claim **Universal Credit**.

This is a means-tested benefit for **working age** people. This means that income you or your partner have affects how much UC you are paid.

The amount also depends on your **age**, whether you are **single** or **part of a couple**, whether you have **children** or if anyone is **disabled** or a **carer**.

You will not get UC if your **savings or capital**, like property or investments, is worth **over £16,000**, but if you own your home, it does not count as capital while you are living in it. If you are out-of-work long-term, you may be able to claim help with your **mortgage interest** but this is now via a **secured loan** from the Government, not extra benefit.

If you rent your home, Universal Credit will usually include an allowance for your **rent**. The amount you receive might be reduced by the **Local Housing Allowance** rules or the **Bedroom Tax**. Ask us for more information about this.

If you have **more than two children**, you might not get a Universal Credit allowance for all of them. Your money might also be cut due to the **Benefit Cap**.

