

Hardship Payments

If you have been sanctioned, you may be able to get a [hardship payment](#).

The DWP will need evidence that you are suffering hardship and lack essentials like food, clothes, heating and accommodation. This might be a note from your doctor about medical problems, bank or building society statements to show you have no money or a letter from a support worker about other issues.

If you get [JSA](#), [ESA](#) or [Income Support](#), ask for a [hardship provision claim form](#) from the Jobcentre.

A hardship payment of JSA, ESA or Income Support is [60% of your personal allowance](#). **It does not have to be paid back.**



To claim a [Universal Credit](#) hardship payment you need to [call the UC helpline](#) to get an appointment for an interview.

A hardship payment of UC is [60% of your standard allowance](#) but **it is a loan**, and is recovered in monthly instalments from your benefit once your sanction ends.

We advise you get benefits and money advice before asking for a Universal Credit hardship payment.

Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit

If you are getting Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction and a sanction takes away all of your JSA, ESA or Income Support, [contact the Council](#).

The Jobcentre will have told the Council that your benefit has stopped, but not that you have been sanctioned. The council then stop paying benefits and you risk getting into arrears with rent and Council Tax

Tell your council quickly that you have been sanctioned. Take or send them [proof of the sanction](#) and your [reduced income](#). You can continue getting Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction on [nil income](#); these are not sanctioned.

You might also need to [contact us](#), a social worker or a health professional to get help from a [Foodbank](#) or from other charities supporting people in severe hardship.

For more information go to www.citizensadvice.org.uk or contact our

Citizens Advice Helpline: 0800 144 8848



[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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Benefit Sanctions

Means-tested Benefits No 10



What is a sanction?

If you get **Universal Credit (UC)** or **Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)**, you have to sign an contract with the DWP called your **Claimant Commitment**.

You only get your benefits if you do what your Claimant Commitment says you will do. If you don't, the Jobcentre can **sanction** you.

This might be because you are not **actively seeking work**, you missed a **work-focused interview**, or for some other reason.

What happens if I am Sanctioned?

If you are sanctioned, the DWP reduce or stop your benefit for a period of time. Your benefit is cut by the amount the DWP say a single person of your age needs to live on.

How long do sanctions last?



The sanction you get and how long it lasts depends on what your Claimant Commitment says and what the Jobcentre thinks **you have failed to do**.

Some sanctions go on until **you do something to stop them**.

For example, if you miss a work-focused interview, your sanction might last until you make an appointment for another one.

Other sanctions can last for a month, three months or six months. You are likely to get sanctioned for at least three months if you **miss a job interview** or **leave a job without good cause**.

Sanctions can last longer if you had a previous sanction less than a year before.

How to Avoid Sanctions

You must agree a Claimant Commitment to get UC, so it is important to get it right. Tell your work-coach if you:

- have health problems or disabilities,
- have child care or other caring responsibilities,
- are ex-armed forces,
- are homeless,
- are fleeing domestic violence,
- have been released from prison
- are a care leaver.

Make sure that you **understand what your Claimant Commitment says** you must do and that it takes account of your circumstances.

Even if your Claimant Commitment is not perfect, it is best to agree it, to start your claim and get your payments. **You can ask to change it later**.

Get organised! Keep records of everything you do to meet your Claimant Commitment.

Record the dates and times things happened, what you did and who you saw or spoke to.

Changing your Claimant Commitment

If things change, making it harder for you to look for work, limiting the type of work you can do or the times you can work, you can ask your work coach to change your Claimant Commitment.

Do all you can to keep to your old agreement until any changes are agreed.

What if I get Sanctioned?

If you are sanctioned, you must still keep doing all the things in your Claimant Commitment. If you do not, you could get **sanctioned again** or even find the DWP have **closed your claim**.

If you think a decision is unfair, you can **appeal against a sanction**. Ask us for more advice.

You need to ask for the decision to be looked at again **within one calendar month** of the date the decision was made. You can challenge the length of the sanction or the decision to sanction you at all.

You could also **complain about the service** you got from the Jobcentre. You could do this if you were sanctioned without being given chance to explain your side of the story, or if the DWP ignored your health problems when drawing up your Claimant Commitment.

