

## Claimant Commitment

You usually need to show that you are ready to work and looking for work when you claim JSA or UC.

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, each way](#), from your 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. Your Claimant Commitment should be less strict if you have [children under 13](#), health issues or disabilities, or you are a carer.

If you have problems keeping to your Claimant Commitment, you need to contact your Work Coach and ask to change it.

## Sanctions

If you are not doing everything you have agreed to do, the Work Coach may apply a sanction to your benefit. This is a cut in your benefit for a fixed period of time. You have the [right to appeal](#) against this decision.

See our [sanctions leaflet](#) for more information.

## Further Help

Our **Help to Claim** service can assist you with new claims for Universal Credit. Call them on **0800 144 8 444**

Local libraries may run Job Clubs, where you can get help with claims for JSA and UC, help to prepare a CV and to look for work online.

Some community groups also run job clubs and may have computers you can use.

For more information go to [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://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  
[www.snsCab.org.uk/about-us/potteries-gold](http://www.snsCab.org.uk/about-us/potteries-gold)  
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# PotteriesGold

# Benefits for Jobseekers

## Changes of Circumstances No 4



## Benefits for Jobseekers

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

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

### New-style Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

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

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 did not pay enough Class 1 contributions in the years that matter, you will not get New-style JSA.

The relevant tax years for the 2023 benefit year are April 2020 to March 2021, and April 2021 to March 2022.



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 to get extra support for them.

New-style JSA is paid for up to 26 weeks. It is £84.80 per week, usually paid fortnightly. You get a lower rate of JSA if you are under 25 - £67.20 per week.

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 your 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.

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

is a means-tested benefit. It is one of the benefits being replaced by Universal Credit.

You cannot make a new claim for income-based JSA. If you already get IbJSA, you can carry on getting it for now. You might have to switch to Universal Credit if there is a change in your circumstances.

## Universal Credit (UC)

If you cannot get New-style JSA, or you have a partner, dependent 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, if you have children or if someone in your family is disabled or a carer.

You will not get UC if your savings or capital, including property or investments, is worth over £16,000.

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 due to the Two-child Limit. Your money might also be cut due to the Benefit Cap.

