

Jobseeker's Allowance Sanctions

How to keep your benefit payment

jobcentreplus

Department for
Work and Pensions

1. How does Jobseeker's allowance work?

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is a benefit to help you when you're unemployed and looking for work. How much you get depends on your circumstances and the type of JSA you qualify for. When you claim JSA, you'll meet a work coach who will find out about your situation. They will:

- help identify actions you must take to find work. Actions will be added to your Jobseeker's Agreement, sometimes referred to as a Claimant Commitment
- meet you regularly to review your progress and update your actions

You may need to take part in an employment scheme. Employment schemes are delivered by specialist organisations to help you find and stay in work. Your employment scheme provider may also identify actions you must take to find work.



It's your responsibility to do all you can to find work. In return, you'll get your benefit payment and our support. Most people do all they can. If you don't, your benefit payment could be stopped or your claim could be ended.

2. What must I do to keep my benefit payment?

You'll get your benefit payment as long as you:

- go to meetings on time with your work coach and take part in interviews
- take actions to apply for suitable jobs your work coach tells you about
- take actions to do any activity your work coach tells you to do to find work e.g. attend a training course or update your CV
- do all you can to find work, including taking actions in your Claimant Commitment or Jobseeker's Agreement
- take part in employment schemes when your work coach tells you to. You'll need to meet your employment scheme provider on time and take actions they tell you to take. You'll need to continue to meet with your work coach and take actions in your Jobseeker's Agreement or Claimant Commitment.

If you can't or haven't taken these actions, tell your work coach or employment scheme provider why straight away. You'll continue to get your benefit payment if you can show you have good reason. Provide as much information as you can, as quickly as possible. For example, call your work coach if you can't attend a meeting and let them know why. Your work coach can use this time to help others find work.



If you don't do these things, and you don't have good reason, your benefit payment could be stopped or your claim could be ended. It's important you understand what you must do to get your benefit payment and what will happen if you don't do this. Ask your work coach to explain if you're not sure.

3. How long could my benefit payment be stopped for?

If you don't have good reason your benefit payment could be stopped for between four weeks and 156 weeks (three years). How long depends on:

- the reason you claim JSA e.g. if you were dismissed for misconduct from your last job or left it without good reason
- what action you haven't taken to find work
- whether, and why, your benefit payment has been stopped, or your claim has been ended, in the last year

Why and how long benefit payment is stopped (If you don't have good reason)

High level sanctions

- You were dismissed for misconduct from your last job
- You left your last job without good reason
- You don't take actions to apply for suitable jobs your work coach tells you about
- You don't take a job if offered
- You don't take part in the Mandatory Work Activity scheme when asked to

Other sanctions

- You don't go to meetings on time with your work coach and take part in interviews
- You don't take actions your work coach tells you to do to find work e.g. attend a training course or update your CV
- You don't take part in employment schemes when your work coach tells you to
- You don't meet your employment scheme provider on time or take actions they tell you to take
- You start a new claim within 13 weeks of your last claim being ended because you were not doing all you could to find work

First time benefit is stopped in a year (and each time benefit is stopped again within two weeks of this happening)

13 weeks (high)	4 weeks (other)
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Second time benefit is stopped again if within two weeks and a year of the first time benefit was stopped (and each time benefit is stopped again within two weeks of this happening)

26 weeks (high)	13 weeks (other)
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Third time benefit is stopped if within two weeks and a year of the second time benefit was stopped

156 weeks (high)

Each time benefit is stopped again within a year of the last time benefit was stopped.

13 weeks (other)



If you don't do these things, and you don't have good reason, your benefit payment could be stopped or your claim could be ended. It's important you understand what you must do to get your benefit payment and what will happen if you don't do this. Ask your work coach to explain if you're not sure.

4. What if I don't agree with the decision to stop my benefit?

If you're told your benefit may be stopped, provide new information about why you haven't met with, or taken actions agreed. A DWP decision maker, rather than your Work Coach or Work Programme provider, will decide if you have good reason, whether to stop your benefit and for how long. You can ask why a decision has been made by telephoning 0345 608 8545.

If you think the decision is wrong, ask us to look at it again within one month. You should explain why the decision is wrong and show any evidence you have. We'll write to you to tell you if we change the decision, explaining why in a 'Mandatory Reconsideration Notice'.

If you disagree with the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice, you can appeal to a tribunal. You can download an appeal form on www.gov.uk by searching 'SSCS1'. You must wait for the 'Mandatory Reconsideration Notice' before you start an appeal.

5. What should I do if my benefit payment is stopped or my claim is ended?

If your benefit payment is stopped, you should continue to do all you can to find work. If you don't your benefit payment could be stopped for a longer period or your claim could be ended. If your benefit payment is stopped, or your claim is ended, you should contact your local council straight away. You should contact them to understand what information they'll want from you to ensure you still get your housing benefit and council tax reduction.

6. Hardship payments

If your benefit payment is stopped, and you don't have enough money to live on, you may be able to get a hardship payment. This is a reduced amount of JSA. Call 0345 608 8545 if you want to understand more about hardship payments and whether you can apply.