

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. When you claim JSA, you'll meet one of our work coaches at the Jobcentre who'll help you find work. They'll find out about your situation and:

- help identify what you must do to find work and confirm it in your Claimant Commitment. This is sometimes called a Jobseeker's Agreement
- meet you regularly to review your progress

Your work coach may tell you to take part in an employment scheme, such as the Work Programme. Employment schemes are delivered by specialist organisations to help you find and stay in work. Your scheme provider may also identify things you must do 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 everything they can. If you don't, your benefit payment could be stopped (sanctioned) or your claim could be ended.

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

You won't get a benefit payment for a period at the start of a new claim if you were dismissed for misconduct from your last job, or left it without good reason. Once you start to get a benefit payment, this will continue as long as you:

- are available for work and agree to do the things in your Claimant Commitment (Jobseeker's Agreement)
- go to meetings on time with your work coach and take part in interviews
- apply for suitable jobs your work coach tells you about
- do everything your work coach tells you to do to find work, such as attending a training course or updating your CV
- take part in employment schemes when your work coach tells you to. You'll need to meet your employment scheme provider on time and do the things they tell you to do to find work. You'll still need to meet your work coach and do what they tell you to do
- do all you can to find work

If you can't do, or haven't done these things, tell your work coach or employment scheme provider why straight away.

You'll get your benefit payment if you can show you had good reason for not doing what you were told to do. Provide as much information as you can, as quickly as possible. For example, call your work coach as soon as you can before an interview if you can't attend. Let them know why. Your work coach can use this time to help others find work, and you'll continue to get your benefit payment if we decide you had good reason for not going.



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 that you understand everything you need to do to get your benefit payment and what will happen if you don't. Ask your work coach to explain if you're not sure.

3. How long could my benefit payment be stopped if I don't have good reason?

Your benefit payment could be stopped for between four weeks and 156 weeks (three years). This is called a sanction. There are three sanction levels; lower, intermediate or higher level. The level and length of your sanction depends on:

- the reason you're claiming JSA – for example, if you were dismissed for misconduct from your last job, or left it without good reason
- what you haven't done to find work
- whether you've received an earlier sanction in the last year, or your claim has been ended, and the reason(s) for this

Lower and intermediate level sanctions

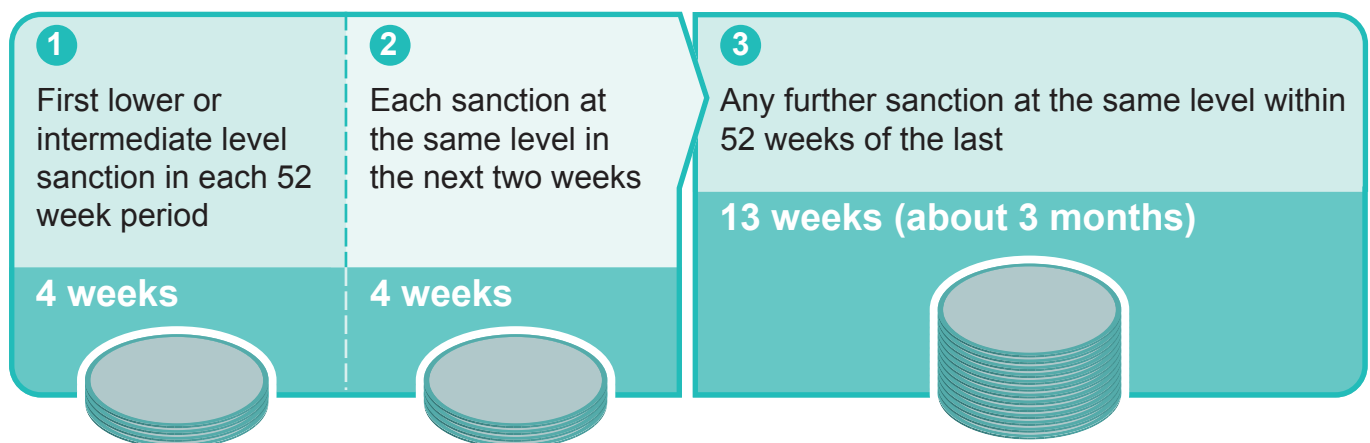
You may get a lower level sanction (4 or 13 weeks) if:

- you don't go to meetings on time with your work coach or take part in interviews
- you don't do what your work coach tells you to do to find work, such as 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
- you lose an employment scheme place through misconduct or give up a place on a scheme voluntarily

You may get an intermediate level sanction (4 or 13 weeks), and your claim may be ended, if:

- you aren't available for and actively seeking work

How long your benefit payment will be stopped for:



"I let my work coach know well in advance that I couldn't go to our meeting because I had a hospital appointment.

Because I gave good reason I still received my benefit payment and my work coach can use that time to help other people. We've arranged another appointment at a time I can attend."

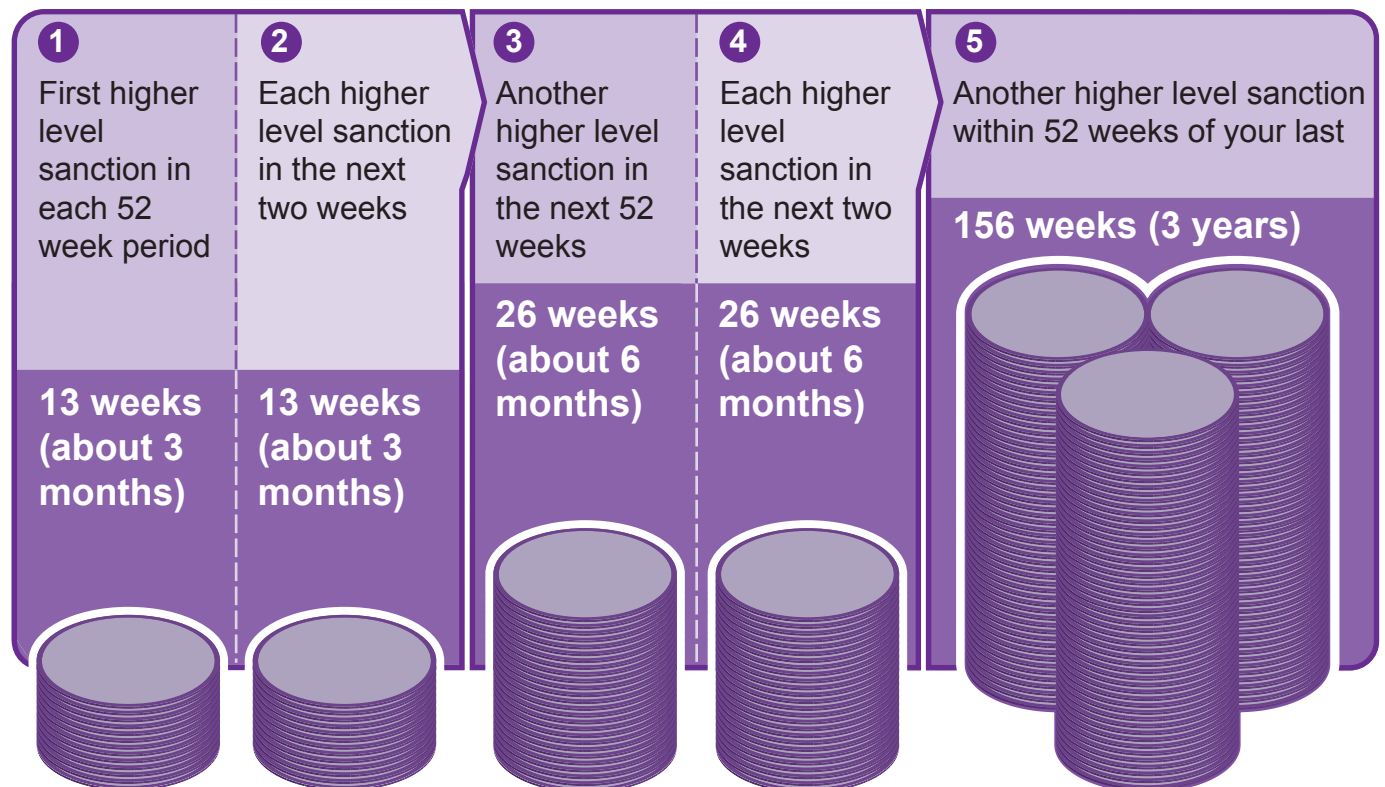


Higher level sanctions

You'll get a higher level sanction (13 to 156 weeks) if:

- you were dismissed for misconduct from your last job
- you left your last job without good reason
- you don't apply for suitable jobs your work coach or employment scheme adviser tells you about
- you don't take a job that your work coach or employment scheme adviser has told you about if you are offered it
- you don't take part in the Mandatory Work Activity scheme when asked to

How long your benefit payment will be stopped for:



"I didn't take part in the Mandatory Work Activity scheme. Then my work coach found me a job that suited my skills but I didn't apply for it, so my JSA has been stopped for six months.

If I don't apply for jobs my work coach asks me to apply for I could end up losing my benefit for three years."

Please note: this factsheet contains general information about sanctions. How long a sanction lasts and how your payment is affected may change depending on your circumstances. If you get a sanction, you'll be told what this means for you.

4. What if I don't agree that my benefit payment should be stopped or my claim should be ended?

Step 1

Provide us with full information

If you're told your benefit payment may be stopped, or your claim may be ended, you should provide new information straight away about why you haven't done the things you were told to do.

A DWP decision maker, rather than your work coach or employment scheme provider, will decide if you have good reason. If they decide you don't have good reason, they'll decide how long to stop your benefit payment for, or whether to end your claim.

You can ask us why a decision has been made by calling **0345 608 8545**.

Step 2

Ask us to reconsider the decision

If you think a decision is wrong, you can ask us to look at it again within one month of it being made.

If you asked us for a written statement of reasons you'll have an additional 14 days to ask us to look at the decision again.

Explain why the decision is wrong and show any evidence you have. When we've looked at what you've told us, we'll send you a letter to tell you what has been decided and why.

We call this letter a 'Mandatory Reconsideration Notice'.

Step 3

Appeal

If you disagree with the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice, you can appeal to a tribunal. You must wait for the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice before you start an appeal.

You can download an appeal form on www.gov.uk by searching 'SSCS1'.

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

Do all you can to find work

If your benefit payment is stopped, you should continue to do all you can to find work, including attending interviews with your work coach. If you don't do this, your benefit payment could be stopped for a longer period or your claim could be ended.

Re-apply for JSA

If your claim is ended you can apply for JSA again immediately, as long as you're ready to do all you can to find work. Your benefit may be stopped for a period at the start of a new claim.

Housing benefit and council tax

Your local council may need information from you to ensure you get your housing benefit and council tax reduction. If your benefit payment is stopped, or your claim is ended, you should contact them straight away.

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. You'll only be able to receive a hardship payment if your claim hasn't been closed and you're doing all you can to find work.