

Back to Work schemes

Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit

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Department
for Work &
Pensions

When you claim Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit because you are unemployed and expected to look for work, there are a range of schemes available to develop your skills and experience to help you find work.

During your time on Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, your work coach may refer you to these schemes. For example if your English or Maths needs improving, or if getting a recognised qualification would help. Or you may do work experience to add some career history to your CV. Your work coach can tell you if the schemes mentioned in this guide are suitable for you.

This guide gives information about the different schemes, including what we expect you to do when you are on one. You should tell your work coach if you have any concerns about what a scheme involves or what is required of you. Your work coach will want you to ask questions so you are able to benefit from being on a scheme. Remember the reason we have these schemes is to help with a return back into work.

Some of the schemes are delivered for Jobcentre Plus by other organisations, which we call 'providers'.

If you feel one of the schemes would help you, then please discuss it with your work coach. Make sure you ask about other local support available through your Jobcentre too.

Please speak to your work coach if you need help understanding this guide, or have any other questions.

Please note:

This guide is intended for those on Jobseeker's Allowance and some Universal Credit claimants (those expected to look for work). You may be able to do some of these schemes if you claim other benefits (such as Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support or for some people claiming Universal Credit who are not yet ready to look for or be available for work). If you are interested in one of these schemes, you should speak to your work coach about whether you can do it and how it may affect your benefit.

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We assess what skills you need to start work. If lacking certain skills is the main thing stopping you getting a job, we will refer you to a skills assessment or training.

In England, if it is not clear what skills you need to help you find work you'll be referred for an in-depth skills assessment with the National Careers Service.

Sector-based work academy

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You may be able to attend a sector-based work academy if you live in England or Scotland. It will help you to develop the skills and behaviours employers are looking for in new employees.

A sector-based work academy offers training and work experience in a particular job type. At the end, you'll either get a job interview or help with the employer's application process.

Traineeship

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Traineeships offer those who are not too far from getting a job the opportunity to focus on the work related skills they need to enter and progress in the workplace.

Traineeships can include work preparation, English and maths and a work experience placement, designed to fit individual needs.

Work experience

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You may be able to volunteer to do a work experience opportunity. Work experience usually lasts for 2 to 8 weeks, and you'll be expected to do 25 to 30 hours a week.

We call employers who offer work experience opportunities 'host employers' and it is referred to as 'work experience'.

New Enterprise Allowance

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This scheme helps people to start their own business, and offers business mentoring and financial support if you want to become self-employed.

You'll need to have your business idea assessed by a mentoring provider, and if you are accepted onto the scheme, you'll then have support to produce your business plan.

You may also be able to apply for the weekly New Enterprise Allowance financial support.

The Work Programme

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This scheme is delivered by our partner organisations who we refer to as 'providers', whose aim is to help you prepare for, find and stay in work. They will tailor their service to your personal needs and circumstances.

Some claimants will be referred to the Work Programme by their work coach after a certain period of time. You may also be able to join the Work Programme before

this, depending on your individual circumstances. You can discuss your options with your work coach.

Benefit sanctions

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A benefit sanction is when your money is stopped or reduced for a certain period. Sanctions usually happen if you haven't met the conditions for getting benefit, including refusing to take part or complete certain activities or schemes.

Skills Conditionality

If you don't have the type of skills employers are looking for, you may be offered the support needed to improve your skills. If your work coach tells you that you are expected to take up this support, this becomes a condition for receiving benefit. This is called Skills Conditionality. It involves having your skills assessed, or attending training to help you get the skills needed to move into work.

In England, if your work coach thinks you need a complete skills check, you'll be sent to the National Careers Service or to a meeting with a training provider. You **must** attend these meetings.

In England, Scotland or Wales, if we believe your skills will stop you finding work, you **must** attend, take part in and complete the appropriate training. This could include a course to improve your English or Maths or more work-based vocational skills.

Will all the training I do be through Skills Conditionality?

No. Your work coach will send you to training under the Skills Conditionality scheme if they believe your lack of certain skills is stopping you finding work.

If you don't lack skills to find work, you can still do other training, but if it is not related to your job goals then your work coach won't ask you to attend.

You must speak to your work coach if you want to do a training course which isn't through Skills Conditionality, particularly if you have been told by your work coach that you have to be available for work and looking for jobs, as it must not get in the way of you being able to do this.

When can I take part?

After a skills assessment by a work coach, if you:

- live in England, Scotland or Wales, and
- your lack of certain skills is the main thing stopping you finding work.

What could Skills Conditionality involve?

Your work coach will do an initial skills check with you, to see if training will help you find work.

In England	If your work coach thinks you need a complete skills check, you'll be sent for up to 3 meetings with the National Careers Service or to a meeting with a training provider. These may be at either your Jobcentre or another office.
In England, Scotland and Wales	If we believe your lack of certain skills is stopping you finding work, we'll send you on training. You may have to travel to where the course is held. This might be a course to improve your English or Maths, increase your IT ability or to learn more work-based vocational skills.

We expect you to go to any training course within the hours you've agreed with your work coach that you can work (known as your 'availability'). This will be written on your Claimant Commitment.

How long training lasts depends on each course - you should mention any concerns about course times to your work coach. You must finish the whole course.

Do I have to attend these meetings?

Yes. If your work coach sends you to either meet with a training provider or the National Careers Service (in England), then you must go to all of the appointments with them.

The training provider or National Careers Service will tell your work coach if you do not attend meetings or take part and complete training.

What happens if I don't attend or take part?

Jobseeker's Allowance	Part 1 of the Jobseekers Act 1995 and the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations 1996 will apply.
Universal Credit	Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

It is important that you attend, take part in and complete the skills assessment or training. Your benefit will be stopped or reduced if you fail to do so and cannot give good reason.

Please [see page 20](#) for more about sanctions.

Must I take part in Skills Conditionality if my work coach has told me to?

Yes. If your work coach has sent you on the Skills Conditionality scheme, you will need to take part in and complete the course. If you cannot give good reason why you did not, your benefit will be sanctioned.

You should discuss the scheme with your work coach, so you understand why you should do the course. Any training the work coach sends you to will be to improve your skills to help you get a job. If your job goals change, then it's important you tell your work coach.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

If you're on JSA, you'll normally still have to sign on, so if your training will stop you signing on at your usual time, you must contact your work coach in advance. Your work coach will also tell you if they expect you to look for work while you're on training. This will depend on the number of hours you are in training and your individual circumstances.

You'll also have to attend any other meetings at the Jobcentre you are asked to attend. You'll need to do this if you're on Universal Credit as well, as your work coach will want to check that you're carrying out any actions that have been agreed as part of your Claimant Commitment, as well as whether there have been any changes in your circumstances.

Again, if your training will stop you going to a Jobcentre meeting, as agreed with your work coach, you should contact them in advance.

What happens if I get a job?

Jobseeker's Allowance	If you get a job or your Jobseeker's Allowance claim stops, you should contact your Jobcentre work coach.
Universal Credit	Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

Sector-based work academy

The sector-based work academy scheme is run in England and Scotland. It is designed to help people who are ready to start work, but who may need to learn the skills and behaviours that employers in particular industries look for in new employees.

If your work coach discusses a sector-based work academy with you, you can decide whether or not to take part, but once you've agreed to join you must complete certain parts of the scheme. Your chances of getting and keeping a job with the host employer, or another employer offering similar work, will be improved by completing a sector-based work academy.

The sector-based work academy scheme is used by employers to help them recruit into job sectors with a high demand for staff. So the type of sector-based work academy on offer locally will vary. A sector-based work academy is designed to help you build confidence in a way that improves your job prospects and adds to your CV.

How long does it last for?

The sector-based work academy lasts up to 6 weeks and gives you training and work experience in a particular job type. At the end, you'll get either a job interview or help with the employer's application process.

When can I take part?

Jobseeker's Allowance	A sector-based work academy is open to you from day 1 of your claim, as long as you don't need basic training in English or Maths to find work.
Universal Credit	Your work coach will discuss with you if a sector-based work academy is suitable for you.

Do I have to attend?

Jobseeker's Allowance	No. Joining a sector-based work academy is voluntary. But once you have agreed to join, you must complete the pre-employment training, and attend the guaranteed job interview (if included). If you can't give a good reason for doing so your benefit will be sanctioned.
Universal Credit	No. Joining a sector-based work academy is voluntary. But once you have agreed to join, you must complete the scheme. If you are working, how much you earn will be a factor in what you are required to do. If you fail to complete the parts of the scheme you are required to do without good reason, your benefit will be sanctioned.

The sector-based work academy also includes work experience. This is not something you will be required to do but we encourage you to take part wherever possible. Work experience is invaluable, and allows both you and the host employer to see whether you're suited to the type of work on offer.

Your benefit will not be sanctioned if you decide not to take up the work experience opportunity. If you do start work experience and you're asked to leave

because of gross misconduct (such as stealing, violence or verbal abuse), your benefit may be sanctioned.

Jobseeker's Allowance	Part 1 of the Jobseekers Act 1995 and the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations 1996 will apply.
Universal Credit	Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

Please [see page 20](#) for more about sanctions.

Do I have to accept the job if it is offered to me following the guaranteed interview?

If you are offered a job following the guaranteed interview, your work coach may require you to accept it. If this happens but you do not accept the job, it is called 'refusal of employment' and you will be sanctioned for not accepting the job unless you have a good reason. You should speak to your work coach to find out more information.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

Jobseeker's Allowance	You'll normally have to still sign on, attend any other meetings at the Jobcentre and be actively looking for work. If being on the sector-based work academy will stop you signing on at your usual time, or going to other Jobcentre meetings, you must contact your work coach in advance.
Universal Credit	If you claim Universal Credit, you will have accepted a Claimant Commitment that sets out what you need to do to keep in contact with your Work Coach and the things you must do to prepare for and look for work. If being on the sector-based work academy will stop you going to Jobcentre meetings or doing other things set out in your Claimant Commitment, you must contact your work coach in advance.

What happens if I get a job?

Jobseeker's Allowance	If you get a job or your Jobseeker's Allowance claim stops, you should contact your Jobcentre work coach.
Universal Credit	Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

Traineeships

Traineeships are an opportunity to gain real work experience, job skills and improve your English and maths, if needed. The programme operates in England only and aims to unlock the great potential of young people, help them become “work-ready” and prepare them for their future careers.

Designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who don't yet have the appropriate skills or experience, traineeships provide the essential work preparation training, English, maths (if you need it) and work experience needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment

If you and your work coach discuss you taking part in a traineeship, you will be asked to attend an assessment with a college or training provider. You can decide whether or not to take part, but once you've agreed it is in your best interests to attend, although not doing so will not impact on your benefit claim. Your chances of getting and keeping a job with an employer will be improved by completing a traineeship.

The work experience placement within a traineeship is delivered by an employer and designed with your needs in mind. So the type of placement on offer locally will vary. A traineeship is designed to help you build confidence in a way that improves your job prospects and adds to your CV.

How long does it last for?

A traineeship can last up to 6 months, however, on average most opportunities last around 15 weeks. It is likely that the work experience placement with an employer will be the longest part of a traineeship. At the end, there is the potential to be offered an apprenticeship or other, but if not, you will get an exit interview to discuss what you have been doing, and plan for the future.

When can I take part?

Jobseeker's Allowance	A traineeship is open to you from day 1 of your claim, as long as you are motivated by the prospect of work and have little or no experience of it.
Universal Credit	Your work coach will discuss with you if a traineeship is suitable for you.

Do I have to attend?

Jobseeker's Allowance	There are clear advantages of attending and completing a traineeship – you improve your chances of an apprenticeship or other job. However, if you decide that a traineeship is not for you, leaving will not affect your entitlement to benefit.
Universal Credit	There are clear advantages of attending and completing a traineeship – you improve your chances of an apprenticeship or other job. However, if you decide that a traineeship is not for you, leaving will not affect your entitlement to benefit.

The traineeship includes a work experience placement. As with all elements of a traineeship, this is not something you will be required to do but are encouraged to do so. Work experience is invaluable, and allows both you and an employer to see whether you're suited to the type of work on offer.

Your benefit will not be sanctioned if you decide not to take up the work experience opportunity. If you do start work experience and you're asked to leave because of gross misconduct (such as stealing, violence or verbal abuse), your benefit may be sanctioned.

Do I have to accept the job if it is offered to me during or following the traineeship?

If you are offered a job during or following the traineeship, your work coach is likely to encourage you to accept it, and you will probably be required to accept it. If this happens and you do not accept the job, it is called 'refusal of employment' and you will be sanctioned for not accepting the job unless you have a good reason. You should speak to your work coach to find out more information.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

Jobseeker's Allowance	You'll normally still have to sign at the Jobcentre for your benefit. Attendance at any other meetings at the Jobcentre may not be necessary. If being on the traineeship stops you signing on at your usual time, or going to other Jobcentre meetings, you must contact your work coach in advance.
Universal Credit	If you claim Universal Credit, you will have accepted a Claimant Commitment that sets out what you need to do to keep in contact with your Work Coach and the things you must do to prepare for and look for work. If being on the traineeship will stop you going to Jobcentre meetings or doing other things set out in your Claimant Commitment, you must contact your work coach in advance.

What happens if I get a job?

Jobseeker's Allowance	If you get a job or your Jobseeker's Allowance claim stops, you should contact your Jobcentre work coach.
Universal Credit	Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

Work experience

If you're 18 to 24 years old and have little or no work history, work experience can help you to get experience with host employers which can add to your CV.

You can do work experience with a host employer in the area you live in. Your work coach can tell you what's available locally. Work experience lasts for 2 to 8 weeks, and you'll be expected to do 25 to 30 hours a week (unless you've agreed restrictions on the hours you can work, known as 'availability', with your work coach).

If the host employer offers you an apprenticeship (which is a job with an accompanying skills development programme), and you accept, you can do up to 4 extra weeks of work experience while the paperwork for your apprenticeship is completed. You'll keep getting benefit until your apprenticeship starts.

You can either look for work experience directly, or your work coach may contact local employers to see if they're interested in offering work experience. If you find something yourself, you must always speak to your work coach before starting because the Jobcentre needs to ensure the employer is suitable. Ask your work coach for a leaflet you can hand to employers if you are contacting them yourself.

Why should I be interested in work experience?

Work experience gives you the chance to add some vital experience to the career section of application forms and your CV, including having a referee. It also helps with:

- improving your job prospects
- seeing what skills and behaviours employers want from people
- seeing how your skills fit into the workplace
- building your confidence, and
- showing an employer the skills that you have.

What will being on work experience involve?

This will vary, but some examples include working in an office, warehouse, retail store or restaurant. Your duties will be explained by the host employer, but might include things like customer service, stock management or administrative duties.

You'll need to ensure that you show the same standards of behaviours as other employees, especially:

- attendance
- timekeeping
- personal hygiene and appearance, and
- following all Health & Safety rules given to you by the host employer.

When can I take part?

Jobseeker's Allowance

You can take part from week 13 of your Jobseeker's Allowance claim if you're aged 18 to 24. Some people can take part sooner depending on their circumstances, so it is worth speaking to your work coach to see if you can do work experience earlier.

	Work coaches may suggest it to claimants aged over 24 if they think they would be suitable.
Universal Credit	If you claim Universal Credit, you should discuss work experience with your work coach.

How can I do a work experience opportunity?

You may find an opportunity yourself or your work coach will identify what's available, and depending on the employer you may have to go through an application process. This might mean completing an application form, or attending an informal interview. This process will help you to build up your application skills.

Your work coach will ask you to sign a data consent form so they are able to share your information to the host employer

Will this affect my benefit?

You do not have to do work experience and it will not affect your Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit if you do not want to take part in an opportunity.

If you do start work experience and you're asked to leave because of gross misconduct (such as stealing, violence or verbal abuse), your benefit may be sanctioned.

Will I still need to attend Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

Jobseeker's Allowance	You'll normally have to still sign on, attend any other meetings at the Jobcentre, and be actively looking for work. Your host employer will be aware of this, and your work coach may be able to schedule meetings around your time on work experience.
Universal Credit	If you claim Universal Credit, your Claimant Commitment sets out what you are required to do to keep in contact with your work coach and to meet other work-related requirements while you are on work experience.

What happens if I get a job?

Jobseeker's Allowance	If you get a job or your Jobseeker's Allowance claim stops, you should contact your Jobcentre work coach.
Universal Credit	Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

New Enterprise Allowance

The New Enterprise Allowance scheme offers business mentoring and financial support if you want to become self-employed. You'll get an interview with a mentoring partner organisation, who will carry out an initial assessment of your business idea.

If you're accepted onto the New Enterprise Allowance scheme then you will work with a business mentor for approximately 8 weeks to produce a business plan. The business plan will then be subject to an approval process.

You can claim the New Enterprise Allowance financial support within 13 weeks of your business plan being approved.

Jobseeker's Allowance	To claim the weekly allowance, you must first close your claim to Jobseeker's Allowance and start trading your business.
Universal Credit	You will not need to close your claim to get the New Enterprise Allowance provided that you continue to meet the other conditions of entitlement for Universal Credit

How long does it last for?

You'll be in the 'mentoring stage' of New Enterprise Allowance for up to 8 weeks (this can be extended to 12 weeks in exceptional circumstances). Your mentor can continue to support you for a further 6 months while you're getting the weekly New Enterprise Allowance.

The weekly allowance is paid for up to 26 weeks, after approval of your business plan and closure of your benefit claim.

When can I take part?

Anyone can join from day 1 of their claim to Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, **unless**

- you're on the Work Programme,
- you have or have had a sanction because you left your last job voluntarily or were dismissed for misconduct. If so, you can't join until you have claimed benefit for 13 weeks, or
- you stopped running your own business in the 3 months before benefit. You can't join until you have claimed for 13 weeks, and your business idea must be demonstrably different from your previous business.

Your work coach will want to ensure you're ready to join the New Enterprise Allowance scheme, and will discuss whether you have an established idea for your business and if you can commit to exploring further options to turn the idea into a reality.

If your work coach thinks you're right for the New Enterprise Allowance scheme and you wish to proceed, then they will send you to the mentoring provider.

What happens if I claim Universal Credit?

You can join the New Enterprise Allowance Scheme when claiming Universal Credit as long as you qualify, in the same way as you would for Jobseeker's Allowance.

Universal Credit works differently than other benefits, so you won't need to close your claim. But other money that you get, including New Enterprise Allowance, may be taken into account when calculating your benefit amount.

What do I need to do while part of New Enterprise Allowance?

Once you're accepted onto the scheme, you will need to meet these conditions:

- go to all meetings with mentor / mentoring provider organisation, where you've been given at least 24 hours notice
- do things each week to develop the business proposal, and
- tell Jobcentre Plus within 2 working days if the business idea is no longer being pursued and/or the mentoring relationship ends.

If you don't meet these conditions your benefit will be sanctioned unless you have good reason for why you didn't do so.

Please [see page 20](#) for more about sanctions.

Jobseeker's Allowance	Part 1 of the Jobseekers Act 1995 and the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations 1996 will apply.
Universal Credit	Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

My work coach is going to refer me to the New Enterprise Allowance scheme, but I've changed my mind. What should I do?

Before your work coach sets up the meeting with the mentoring provider, they'll check if you still want to take part. If you don't, this will not affect your Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit claim as long as you tell your work coach before they make the referral. If you change your mind after you've been referred, but before you start the scheme, inform Jobcentre Plus of your decision as soon as possible. You will not be sanctioned if you change your mind before you start the scheme.

I have been accepted onto New Enterprise Allowance scheme and have decided self-employment is not right for me. What should I do?

If you decide that self-employment isn't right for you while developing your business plan, you can leave the scheme without your benefit being sanctioned. It is essential that you inform Jobcentre Plus of your decision to leave the scheme within 2 working days to avoid a sanction being applied.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings?

Yes. You will still need to attend Jobcentre meetings and will be expected to supply evidence for how you are progressing your business ideas.

What if I get a job as well as, or instead of, being self-employed?

Jobseeker's Allowance	If you get a job, you should contact your Jobcentre work coach for more information.
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**Universal
Credit**

Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

The Work Programme

The Work Programme is delivered by providers and designed to help people by offering personalised support to help them prepare for, find and stay in work.

When you join the Work Programme, your provider will discuss your individual circumstances with you and develop a plan that is tailored to meet your needs. They will make sure that your time with them is positive and helps you to obtain and keep employment.

When will I be referred to the Work Programme?

The Work Programme is mandatory for some claimants, and if this is the case for you, you will be sent by your work coach when you reach a certain point in your claim.

If you are receiving benefit, where you are expected to look for work (either JSA or Universal Credit), and are told that you have to go on the Work Programme, this will generally be at the following point:

Aged 18 to 24	Normally after 9 months of getting Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit
Aged 25 or over	Normally after 12 months of getting Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit
Aged 18, and you've not been in employment, education or training	<p>If you've not been in employment, education or training for 6 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at the start of your Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit claim, the time when you are normally referred will be after claiming for 3 months • during your Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit claim, the time when you are normally referred will be determined by how long you've been claiming. Your work coach will explain this to you.
Aged 18, and used to get income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit as a 16/17 year old	Normally after 3 months of getting Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit as an 18 year old
Aged 18 or over, having claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit for 22 months out of the last 24 months at start of your claim	Normally after 3 months of being on your adult Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit claim
Aged 18 and over, and used to get Incapacity Benefit (or you have been told of an appeal decision about your Incapacity Benefit reassessment) at any time within 6 months of your claim	Normally after 3 months of getting Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit

The exact point at which people are referred to the Work Programme may vary though, so you should discuss this with your work coach, if you would like more information.

Can I be referred before this?

Certain Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit claimants can join the Work Programme earlier, and can usually be sent at 3 months.

Important: If you do decide to join the Work Programme voluntarily, once you start you must continue to take part. If you do not, your benefit will be sanctioned unless you have good reason for why you didn't do so.

You can volunteer to join the Work Programme after 3 months of claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit if you:

- are an ex-offender or offender (if claim made later than 13 weeks after release)
- are disabled
- have mild or moderate mental health issues
- have left care
- are a carer or ex-carer
- are homeless
- used to work for HM Armed Forces
- are a partner of current or former HM Armed Forces personnel
- are an HM Armed Forces reservist
- have a current or past drug or alcohol dependency that is a main reason stopping you getting work, or
- are affected by the benefit cap.

How long does it last for?

The Work Programme lasts for 2 years. Your provider will give you all the support you need during this time, even if you:

- change benefits, such as going from Jobseeker's Allowance to Employment and Support Allowance
- have a change in circumstances while claiming Universal Credit, or

Once you find a job, your provider may continue to offer you support to help you stay in employment.

What will happen during the Work Programme?

Because the Work Programme is tailored to individuals, when you are referred your provider will want to find out your circumstances to best support you back into work. They will want you to find a job while they are supporting you, and may ask you to do activities to improve your skills. These activities might be: doing a training course, helping you with your CV, going to jobsearch workshops, or having a work placement in the community. Your provider will always tell you what these activities will be, as well as where and when they will happen.

As part of the Work Programme you can expect to:

- work with your provider and discuss what help you need to prepare for and find work, as well as what you will do to improve your chances of getting a job, and
- be treated politely, fairly and considerately.

Whilst you are on the Work Programme, you will not be eligible for the other Department for Work and Pensions schemes outlined in this guide (Skills Conditionality, sector-based work academies, work experience and New Enterprise Allowance).

Your Work Programme provider may be able to arrange work experience for you but this is done through them. If you are interested then you should ask them about it. If you do work experience through your provider and are on Jobseeker's Allowance, then you should be aware your Jobseeker's Allowance can be sanctioned if you are dismissed for gross misconduct.

Where will my Work Programme meetings be held?

You may be asked to meet with the provider at your local Jobcentre or at a meeting place in your local area.

What happens if I don't go to meetings, or do the activities they ask me to?

Jobseeker's Allowance	Part 1 of the Jobseekers Act 1995 and the Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations 1996 will apply.
Universal Credit	Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 will apply.

You must complete any activity your provider tells you to do; this may include applying for employment opportunities or attending job interviews. If you don't then your benefit will be sanctioned, unless you have good reason for why you didn't do so. It's very important that you tell your provider if you're having problems or cannot take part in the required activity at any time for any reason.

Just like with your Jobcentre meetings, if you can't go to a Work Programme meeting you must let your provider know in good time.

Please [see page 20](#) for more about sanctions.

What am I expected to do during the Work Programme?

While taking part in the Work Programme, your responsibilities are to:

- make the most of the help your provider gives you
- treat the provider and other participants politely, fairly and considerately
- attend meetings or take phone calls at the times agreed
- complete any activities the provider tells you to do and
- tell Jobcentre Plus about any change in your circumstances.

Will I still need to go to Jobcentre meetings and look for work?

If you are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, you will need to sign on and be available and looking for work. You may also need to attend other meetings at the Jobcentre.

If you are claiming Universal Credit, your work coach will ask you to attend regular meetings at the Jobcentre to check that you are carrying out any actions that have been agreed as part of your Claimant Commitment, as well as whether there have been any changes in your circumstances.

What happens if I get a job?

Jobseeker's Allowance	If you get a job or your Jobseeker's Allowance claim stops, you should tell your provider.
Universal Credit	Because you can still claim Universal Credit when you're working, it's important to tell us if you find paid work. If you're working, you may no longer have to attend interviews with us and we might still be able to pay you Universal Credit. Keep in touch with us to make sure you don't miss out on money you're entitled to.

Remember you are likely to be with the Work Programme for 2 years, even if your circumstances change, and you can get support from your provider even while you are working.

Benefit sanctions – if you're unemployed and looking for work

If you are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit because you're unemployed and looking for work, there are some things we expect you to do to keep receiving your benefit.

You'll meet a work coach who will find out about your situation. They will:

- help identify what you must do to find work (these actions will be added to your Claimant Commitment)
- meet you regularly to review your progress.

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 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 all they can. If you don't, your benefit payment could be temporarily stopped or reduced (a sanction), or your claim could be ended.

What must I do to keep my full benefit payment?

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

- 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 any activity your work coach tells you to do to find work, such as attending a training course or updating your CV
- do all you can to find work, including taking actions in your Claimant Commitment
- 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 do the activity set out in your Claimant Commitment.
- **If you can't or haven't done these things, tell your work coach or employment scheme provider why straight away.**

If you can show you have good reason, you'll continue to get your full benefit payment. 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.



If you don't do these things, and you don't have good reason, your benefit payment could be stopped or reduced for a period of time, or your claim could be ended.

It's important that 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.

How long could my benefit payment be stopped or reduced for?

How long your benefit is stopped or reduced for depends on:

- whether you're claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit
- the reason you claim benefit – 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 your benefit payment has been stopped, or your claim has been ended, in the last year, and the reason(s) for this.

Types of benefit sanction

You will get a lower-level or intermediate-level **sanction** if you receive JSA (or low level sanction if you claim Universal Credit) if:

- You don't go to meetings on time with your work coach and 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 take
- You start a new claim for JSA within 13 weeks of your last claim being ended because you were not doing all you could to find work

* The employment schemes covered by this type of sanction include: Skills Conditionality, the Work Programme, New Enterprise Allowance and sector-based work academies (training). There may be other schemes running locally and your work coach will tell you whether you are expected to attend one of these.

If you're on Jobseeker's Allowance, these are also the sanctions for work experience (including as part of sector-based work academies or the Work Programme) if you choose to take the work experience opportunity then are dismissed for gross misconduct.

Jobseeker's Allowance	Your Jobseeker's Allowance will be stopped for 4 weeks or 13 weeks depending on the number of occasions you have been sanctioned in the last year.
Universal Credit	Your Universal Credit will be reduced or stopped for the number of days from the day you failed to do what you were asked, to the day before you do it or a similar activity set by your work coach or scheme provider. Your benefit will stay reduced or stopped for a further fixed period of 7, 14 or 28 days depending on the number of occasions you have been sanctioned in the last year.

You will get a **high level sanction** if:

- You were dismissed for misconduct from your last job.
- You left your last job, or lost pay as a result of misconduct or voluntarily leaving your last job, without good reason
- You don't take actions to apply for suitable jobs your work coach or a provider tells you about
- You don't take a job if offered

A high level sanction means that your Jobseeker's Allowance will be stopped, or your Universal Credit will be reduced or stopped, for 13, 26 or 156 weeks depending on the number of occasions you have been sanctioned in the last year.

If you are not doing all you can to look for and be available for work



If you are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance your claim could be **ended** if you are not available for, or doing all you can, to find work. You can claim again if you commit to doing all you can to find work. However, your benefit may be stopped at the start of your new claim.

If you are a Universal Credit claimant this does not apply, but you are still expected to do all you reasonably can to find work and immediately take up work. Otherwise you may receive a **medium level sanction** if you do not have good reason for not doing so.

If you get a medium level sanction, your benefit will be reduced or stopped for a fixed period of 28 or 91 days depending on the number of occasions you have been sanctioned in the last year.

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 you receive housing benefit or a council tax reduction, you should contact your local council straight away if your Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit payment is stopped or reduced, or your Jobseeker's Allowance claim is ended. You should contact them to understand what information they'll want from you to ensure you still get any housing benefit and council tax reduction that you may be entitled to.

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 benefit. Contact us if you want to understand more about hardship payments and whether you can apply

What if I don't agree with the decision to stop or reduce my benefit payment, or end my claim?

Provide us with full information

If you're told your benefit payment may be stopped or reduced, or your claim may be ended, you should provide new information straight away about why you haven't attended meetings on time or taken actions.

A DWP decision maker, rather than your work coach or employment scheme provider, will decide if you have good reason.

If they decide there isn't good reason, they will decide how long to stop your benefit payment for, or whether to end your claim. You can ask why a decision has been made by contacting us.

Ask us to reconsider the decision

If you think the decision is wrong, you can ask for it to be looked at again within one month of your benefit being stopped, reduced or your claim being closed. Explain why the decision is wrong and show any evidence you have. The decision will be looked at again and we will send you a letter to tell you what has been decided and why. We call this letter a 'Mandatory Reconsideration Notice'.

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'.

The mandatory Back to Work schemes outlined in this leaflet are covered by the following legislation:

- The Jobseeker's Allowance (Scheme for Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations 2013
- Part 1 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Universal Credit Regulations 2013

This leaflet provides general information only and is not a complete and authoritative statement of the law.