

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

Sanctions for the work related activity group

jobcentreplus

Department for
Work and Pensions

How do I keep my full benefit payment?



Most people do everything they can to get ready for work. In return, we pay Employment Support Allowance and give our support.

If you don't do everything you can, you could lose some of your benefit for a number of weeks. We call this a sanction.

It's important that you understand what you need to do to get your benefit.

- You must do all the things your work coach or work programme provider asks you to do to prepare for work.
- You must take part in all meetings arranged for you by your work coach or work programme provider.
- You must tell us straight away if you can't do the things you were asked to do and the reason why.

How do I get help preparing for work?

Together with your work coach you'll plan steps to prepare for work. You may also be asked to take part in a [Work Programme](#) with a provider who can help you find suitable work. You'll get a copy of what's been agreed and this will be your action plan.

Please tell your work coach or work programme provider if you're unsure about anything or if you need any extra help or support.

What if I can't do what was agreed?

There may be times when you're not able to do the things we asked you to.

- [Call us](#) straight away and before the time you're supposed to do what was agreed. If you can't call before the time, call us as soon as possible afterwards.
- If you show that you had a good reason for not doing what was agreed, your benefit might not be affected.

If we decide that you didn't have a good reason, your payments will be reduced. We will send you a letter explaining our decision.

Zac's story



I kept in contact when I couldn't get to a meeting

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

I had a good reason for not going to the meeting and proof of the appointment. My benefit payment hasn't changed and we booked another meeting I could get to."

When will my payments go down?

Your payments will go down from the week you don't do something we asked you to do. If you've already been paid that week, your benefit will stay the same until the week after.

Once you start doing what we asked, we will write and tell you when your payments will go back up.

You will lose some of your payment for at least a week, but it could be two or four weeks:



It's important that you do all the things you agreed to, even when your benefit is reduced. If you don't, your payments could be reduced for longer.

Sarah's story



I didn't complete the CV I agreed to do on my action plan

"I didn't think a CV would help me but my work coach told me that all employers need one. I didn't have a good reason for not doing it and I was told I'd lose some of my payment. I decided to complete the CV and told my work coach.

I got a letter to say my benefit would go down for two weeks. I was told it was longer than a week because I missed a meeting with my work coach back in March.

My benefit is back to normal now and I'm really pleased with how my CV looks. It's going to help me when I'm ready to go back to work."

What can I do if I think the decision is wrong?

Give us any additional information you have

Tell us if you have any new information about why you didn't do what was agreed. You must give us this information within one week of the date on the decision letter, otherwise we can't consider it.

You can ask us to explain our decision

You, or someone who has the authority to act for you, can ask why a decision has been made by [calling](#) or writing to your [Jobcentre](#). Please do this within one month of the date on the decision letter we will send you.

You can ask us to look at a decision again

Tell us if you have more information that could affect the decision, or you think we've over-looked something. Please do this within one month of the date on the decision letter we will send you.

When we've looked at what you've told us, we will send you a letter to tell you what we've decided and why. We call this letter a Mandatory Reconsideration Notice.

If you still disagree, you can appeal

If you disagree with the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice, you can appeal to a tribunal. Please do this within one month of the date on the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice.

You can only start an appeal once you have the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax

Contact your local council straight away if your payments are reduced as it may affect your Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction. They will tell you what you need to do next.

Can I get help if my payment is reduced?

If you don't have enough money to live on, you may be able to get a hardship payment. Contact Jobcentre Plus to find out more:

Jobcentre Plus

Telephone: 0345 608 8545

Textphone: 0345 608 8551

Welsh language 0345 600 3018

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

[Find out about call charges](#)