

QC JSA

Jobseeker's Allowance Qualifying conditions



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What is Jobseeker's Allowance?

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is the main benefit for unemployed people. It can provide financial help during periods when you are unemployed and looking for work.

There are two types of Jobseeker's Allowance.

- Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance is a personal allowance that is based on the National Insurance contributions you have paid over two tax years. We can pay this for up to 182 days.
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance depends on your income and savings and the income and savings of members of your household. The benefit is designed to make sure that you (and your household) have at least the minimum level of income set by the Government.

Am I eligible?

The conditions for Jobseeker's Allowance apply to everyone who claims the benefit – including your partner if you are making a joint claim. To get JSA, you must:

- normally be capable of, available for and actively looking for work (you should usually be available to work for at least 40 hours a week)
- have paid enough National Insurance contributions for contribution-based JSA (see below), or have income and savings below a certain level for income-based JSA
- usually be 18 years old or over, and under pension age (see below for more information if you are 16 or 17 years old)
- have a 'jobseeker's agreement'
- not be in certain types of education
- not be receiving certain other benefits, and
- usually live in Northern Ireland.

To receive income-based Jobseeker's Allowance you must also:

- live in Northern Ireland (or be treated as living in Northern Ireland), or
- have the right to live in Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland.

What else do I need to know?

The jobseeker's agreement

To claim Jobseeker's Allowance you will need to enter into a Jobseeker's agreement with your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office. You will also have to meet regularly with a Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office advisor to confirm that you are available for, and looking for, work.

Being available for work

You must usually be available to start work immediately, but there are some cases when you can have more time. For example, if you:

- have caring responsibilities, you must be available to start work within 48 hours
- are providing a service, you must be available to start work within 24 hours, or
- are involved in voluntary work, you must be available to start work within one week, and to go to an interview within 48 hours.

You may be able to restrict the number of hours you are available for work if you have caring responsibilities, or if you have a physical or mental condition that affects the work you can do.

National Insurance contributions for contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance

Whether you are entitled to contribution-based JSA depends on the National Insurance contributions you have paid over the last two complete tax years before the benefit year you make your claim in.

A benefit year starts in January (on the first Sunday of that month) and ends the following January (on the Saturday immediately before the first Sunday of that month). Here is an example.

If you made a claim on 15 February 2005, this would fall in benefit year 2005. This means that we would use the contributions you paid during the tax years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 to work out your benefit.

If you have received other benefits before you claim Jobseeker's Allowance, this may affect the date your claim will begin. If you are in any doubt about the contributions you have paid and how this will affect your contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance, please speak to your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office. This is especially important towards the end of the tax year. The contribution year your benefit is based on will change in January.

If you are 16 or 17 years old

If you are 16 or 17 years old, you will not normally be able to receive benefits as an unemployed person. However, there are some circumstances where you may be entitled to JSA as long as you meet the other conditions. For example, if you:

- are part of a couple with a responsibility for a child, or
- can show that you would be in severe hardship if you did not receive JSA.

Joint claims for Jobseeker's Allowance

If you have a partner who was born after 28 October 1947 you may need to claim JSA as part of a couple (this is called a joint claim).

In a joint claim for Jobseeker's Allowance, both members of certain couples usually have to claim JSA together, and both people must usually meet all the rules for getting income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. This applies if:

- you, your partner, or both of you are aged 18 or over and were born after 28 October 1947, and
- neither of you are responsible for a child.

The next steps

To find out if you are entitled to either income-based or contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance, contact your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office, or visit our website at www.dsdni.gov.uk The contact details for your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office are in your local phone book or on our website.

Remember this leaflet is only a general guide and not a full statement of the law. We have made every effort to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown below. However, changes in the law make the leaflet become gradually less accurate. For up-to-date information please contact your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office.

www.dsdni.gov.uk

We are committed to applying the principles of equal opportunities in our programmes and services.

This leaflet is available in large print, in Braille and on audio tape. Contact your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office for more details.



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