

Factsheet

For single parents in England and Wales **May 2016**

Freephone

0808 802 0925

Gingerbread Single Parent Helpline

Using Jobcentre Plus 'moving into work' schemes

This factsheet is mainly for single parents who are receiving jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance in the work-related activity group. Jobcentre Plus runs schemes to help people who are unemployed move into work. If you're claiming jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance in the work-related activity group, you might have to join a scheme. The table on page four shows who can join the schemes, and whether they are compulsory or voluntary. Page five has a checklist of things to think about when starting work.

If you are a foster parent, full-time carer, pregnant, or thinking of working fewer than 16 hours a week the rules are different – call our helpline on 0808 802 0925. Calls are free.

'Moving into work' schemes

Jobcentre Plus has several schemes to encourage and direct parents to move into paid employment. Some are compulsory, and your benefit can be stopped if you do not take part. This is called a sanction.

Other schemes are voluntary, so you can choose whether to join. However, you can still be sanctioned in some voluntary schemes if you do not fully participate after you have joined. Therefore, you should carefully consider the risk of sanctions if you do decide to voluntarily join a scheme.

If you're claiming jobseeker's allowance

To claim jobseeker's allowance, you need to be available for and actively seeking work. See our factsheet [claiming jobseeker's allowance](#).

You can be referred to any relevant Jobcentre Plus scheme while you are on jobseeker's allowance. A referral can be made by either a Jobcentre Plus or a Work Programme adviser. For details of the Work Programme see page three.

If you're claiming employment and support allowance

If you're in the work-related activity group you're expected to take part in work-related activity once your youngest child is three.

You're not expected to start work but Jobcentre Plus will require you to take certain steps to improve your chances of getting a job when your employment and support allowance ends.

See our factsheet [benefits and tax credits for ill-health or disability](#).

You can be referred to most of the Jobcentre Plus schemes while you are in the work-related activity group. See the table on page four for details.

Jobcentre Plus schemes

Jobcentre Plus has many different schemes. Some of the schemes are voluntary, so you can choose whether or not to join them.

These are:

- Work clubs
- Enterprise clubs
- New enterprise allowance
- Work together
- Work experience
- Sector-based work academies
- Work choice for disabled parents.

There are three compulsory schemes. If you are referred to one of these schemes you must take part or your benefit can be stopped.

These are:

- Skills conditionality
- The Work Programme
- Help to Work.

Voluntary schemes

Work clubs

Work clubs are a place to meet other jobseekers, exchange skills and information, make contacts and get support to return to work. Support may include help writing a CV, visits to workplaces or help with interview techniques.

Work clubs are run by organisations that are not part of Jobcentre Plus, such as community colleges or other local groups. Services will vary depending on the club. Your Jobcentre Plus adviser can refer you to a local work club. Participation is voluntary.

Enterprise clubs

These are community based clubs for unemployed people who want to become self-employed. Participation is voluntary.

Enterprise clubs are run by organisations that are not part of Jobcentre Plus, such as a community business group or college. The opportunities offered vary, but may include guidance from local self-employed people, help to write a business plan, financial and legal advice.

New enterprise allowance

New enterprise allowance could help you to set up your own business. The scheme can provide business mentoring, and financial help. You can't join the scheme if you have already been referred to the Work Programme.

Business mentoring

Help includes advice and support from the mentor who is likely to be a local businessperson. Getting a mentor depends on availability in your area.

Financial support

The support includes access to a loan of up to £1000 to help with start-up costs and a weekly allowance of £65 for the first 13 weeks of the scheme, then £33 for the following 13 weeks.

What conditions do I have to meet?

Joining the new enterprise allowance scheme is voluntary but if you join, you're expected to fully participate. If you don't fully participate, without a good reason, your benefit could be stopped. This is called a sanction, see page four.

Work together

This scheme can help you find a voluntary work placement in your local community. Your benefit can't be stopped or reduced if you leave the placement or don't fully participate in the scheme.

If you're claiming jobseeker's allowance you must continue to sign-on and be available for and actively seeking work.

Work experience programme

This is for jobseeker's allowance claimants aged 16 to 24. It provides a work experience placement for between two and eight weeks. Claimants will work 25-30 hours.

You will receive jobseeker's allowance while on the scheme as long as you're still available for and actively seeking paid work.

The scheme is voluntary; you don't have to take part.

Sector-based work academies

Sector-based work academies provide training and work placements. The scheme runs in certain areas in England, lasts up to six weeks, and ends with a job interview or help with the employer's application process.

You continue to receive benefits during the scheme and should get help with travel and childcare costs.

The scheme is voluntary but if you take part you must fully participate in the scheme or your benefit could be stopped.

Work choice for disabled parents

Work choice is for disabled people who need extra support to find or stay in a job. Jobcentre Plus must agree that your needs could not be met through their other schemes.

You must have a recognised disability, which is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

Participation is voluntary. After the first six months you will usually be expected to look for work that's at least 16 hours a week.

Support varies but may include help to prepare for work, coaching in a specific task, or work with your employer to help them adapt tasks so that you can continue to be employed.

Compulsory schemes

Skills conditionality

The scheme provides training in skills such as maths, English and IT to parents who need to increase these skills in order to find a job.

During this scheme you could also be referred to a careers adviser to help you draw up an action plan for finding work.

You can be referred by your Jobcentre Plus or Work Programme adviser.

Your benefit continues while you are on the scheme and your travel and childcare costs should be paid. If you are getting jobseeker's allowance, you must still be available for and actively seeking work.

Participation is compulsory. Your benefit can be stopped if you fail to attend, do not fully participate without providing a good reason, or are dismissed because of your behaviour.

Work Programme

The Work Programme lasts up to two years, or less if you find a job. The programme is run by private organisations that provide various activities and training including: help with your CV, interview skills, confidence building, training and work experience.

Participation is compulsory if you are claiming jobseeker's allowance and are referred by

Jobcentre Plus. Participation is also compulsory for some claimants of employment and support allowance in the work-related activity group.

If you are over 25 you will usually be referred to the programme after you have been receiving jobseeker's allowance for 12 months.

You could be referred earlier if you're aged 18 to 24.

Your benefit can be stopped or reduced if you do not take part. See the information on sanctions below.

Help To Work

This scheme is for people who have been through the work programme and come out without finding a job. If you're claiming jobseekers allowance your work coach at Jobcentre Plus can decide that you will have to do one of the following:

- Go to the jobcentre every day
- Accept intensive support from Jobcentre Plus.

Your work coach at the jobcentre will decide which of the three options is the most appropriate, and should discuss with you what issues you face when trying to move into work. For example, if you don't have any work experience, Jobcentre Plus can decide that a community work placement would be most appropriate, as this would give you the opportunity to do some volunteer work. If the jobcentre decides that motivation is the issue, they may decide that attending the jobcentre daily would be the best option.

Participation is compulsory. Your benefit can be stopped if you don't take part and you haven't given a good reason.

The schemes

Jobcentre Plus scheme	What must I be claiming?	Compulsory or voluntary?	Sanctions?
Work clubs	Available to all unemployed people.	Voluntary	No
New enterprise allowance	Jobseeker's allowance, employment and support allowance, income support or universal credit.	Voluntary	Yes
Work together	Available to all unemployed people looking for work.	Voluntary	No
Work experience	You must be aged 16 to 24 and claiming jobseeker's allowance. Your work coach can also suggest work experience if you are over 24.	Voluntary	Yes
Sector based work academies	You must be over 18 and claiming jobseeker's allowance, or claiming employment and support allowance and in the work-related activity group.	Voluntary	Yes
Work choice (for disabled parents)	Eligibility criteria apply, but you do not need to be claiming benefits.	Voluntary	No
Skills conditionality	Jobseeker's allowance, or employment and support allowance and are in the work-related activity group.	Compulsory	Yes
Help to Work	For those who have completed the Work Programme.	Compulsory	Yes
Work Programme	Jobseeker's allowance, employment and support allowance or income support.	Both (see above)	Yes

Sanctions

Your benefit can be stopped or reduced if you:

- Refuse to take part in a compulsory scheme
- Do not fully participate in a compulsory scheme
- Join a voluntary scheme and don't fully take part.

If your benefit is stopped or reduced this is called a sanction. For example, you might receive a sanction if you frequently turn up late or miss days without a good reason.

For more information see our factsheet [sanctions](#).

Financial help when you start work

If you start working 16 hours a week or more you may be entitled to some extra financial help.

Financial support can include:

- **Working tax credit or universal credit.** The amount you receive depends on your income. You can also get help with childcare costs.
- **Help with housing costs.** If you received benefits for at least 26 weeks before starting work you can qualify for an extra four weeks of housing benefit, or help with mortgage interest. You may also be entitled to housing benefit or universal credit after you start work. This depends on your income.

- **Flexible support fund.** Ask your Jobcentre Plus adviser about this fund. It helps cover costs such as travel or buying work clothes. The fund is limited and it is up to Jobcentre Plus to decide if you qualify for it.

For more information see our factsheet [benefits and tax credits if you work 16 hours a week or more](#).

Checklist: Starting work for 16 hours a week or more

Things to consider	Where to get more information
Find out what your total household income and extra expenses will be once you start work.	Gingerbread helpline; Jobcentre Plus personal adviser.
Organise childcare if you need it.	Find out what is available in your area by contacting your local Family Information Service.
If deductions were made from your benefits to pay your bills directly, you will need to make new arrangements. The amount of the repayments may go up.	If you need help managing debts or negotiating with organisations that you owe money to, contact one of the organisations listed at the end of this factsheet.
If you are repaying a social fund loan you will need to make new arrangements for repayment, for example, by standing order. The amount of the repayments normally stays the same.	Contact Jobcentre Plus, or one of the debt advice organisations listed at the end of this factsheet if you need help with other debts.
If you are repaying an overpayment from your benefits, or tax credits, you will need to make alternative arrangements to pay these back.	Speak to Jobcentre Plus for benefits, HMRC for tax credits, or your local council if it is for housing benefit or council tax benefit.
Find out if you can claim working tax credit, including help with childcare costs. Claim child tax credit at the same time if you are not already receiving it.	Contact the HMRC Tax Credit Helpline. You can also check how much you are entitled to by calling the Gingerbread helpline.
Check if you will be entitled to housing benefit and a council tax reduction. If you were already receiving either of these benefits, tell your local council within a month that you are starting work.	Contact your local council to make a claim. You can call the Gingerbread helpline to find out how much you may be entitled to.
Check if you are entitled to free prescriptions, sight tests, vouchers for glasses and fares to hospital. You qualify if you receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child tax credit; or ■ Child tax credit and working tax credit; or ■ A disability or severe disability element of working tax credit; and ■ Your household income is below £15,276 a year. 	If you do not automatically qualify but are on a low income, you may still be entitled to help with some of these costs – claim on form HC1 available from Jobcentre Plus offices.

Useful organisations

Child Maintenance Options

0800 988 0988

www.cmoptions.org

Information about making arrangements for child support, and to make a claim to the Child Maintenance Service.

Citizens Advice

England: 03444 111 444

Wales: 03444 77 20 20

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Information and advice on a wide range of issues including benefits and tax credits.

Family and Childcare Trust

www.familyandchildcaretrust.org

Information on finding and paying for childcare.

Family Information Services

www.familyandchildcaretrust.org

To find your local Family Information Service, who can advise on childcare available in your area. You can also contact your local council for details of your local service.

Jobcentre Plus

Check online to see which number you need to call:

www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

To make a new claim:

Telephone: **0800 055 6688**

Welsh language: **0800 012 1888**

Textphone: **0800 023 4888**

National Debtline

0808 808 4000

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Free and confidential debt advice.

Tax Credit Helpline

0345 300 3900

www.gov.uk/claim-tax-credits

Information about tax credits and to request claim forms.

Working Families

0300 012 0312

www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Advice on benefits and employment law for working parents.

Further help and information

Gingerbread Single Parent Helpline

Freephone 0808 802 0925

www.gingerbread.org.uk

Free information on a range of issues including maintenance, benefits, tax credits, debt, employment, education, legal rights and holidays.

One Parent Families Scotland Lone Parent Helpline

Freephone 0808 801 0323

www.opfs.org.uk

Run by our partner organisation, the Lone Parent Helpline provides confidential advice and information for single parents in Scotland.

More from Gingerbread

Other relevant information sheets for single parents:

- > [Benefits and tax credits if you work 16 hours a week or more](#)
- > [Sanctions](#)
- > [Claiming income support](#)
- > [Claiming jobseeker's allowance](#)
- > [Jobseekers allowance – Special rules for single parents](#)

Download them from our [website](#) or call 0207 428 5420 to request them.

Become a Gingerbread member

Membership is available to single parents in England and Wales. Join a community of thousands of single parents who benefit from the mutual support, free advice and information provided.

You can also meet other single parents at one of our local support groups.

Visit our [website](#), call 0800 018 4318 or email membership@gingerbread.org.uk

Gingerbread
Single parents, equal families

Gingerbread, the charity for single parent families, is registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, no. 402748, and a registered charity, no. 230750. The Gingerbread Single Parent Helpline is supported by the Department for Education, HMRC, The Big Lottery and other funders and is accredited by the Helplines Partnership.

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