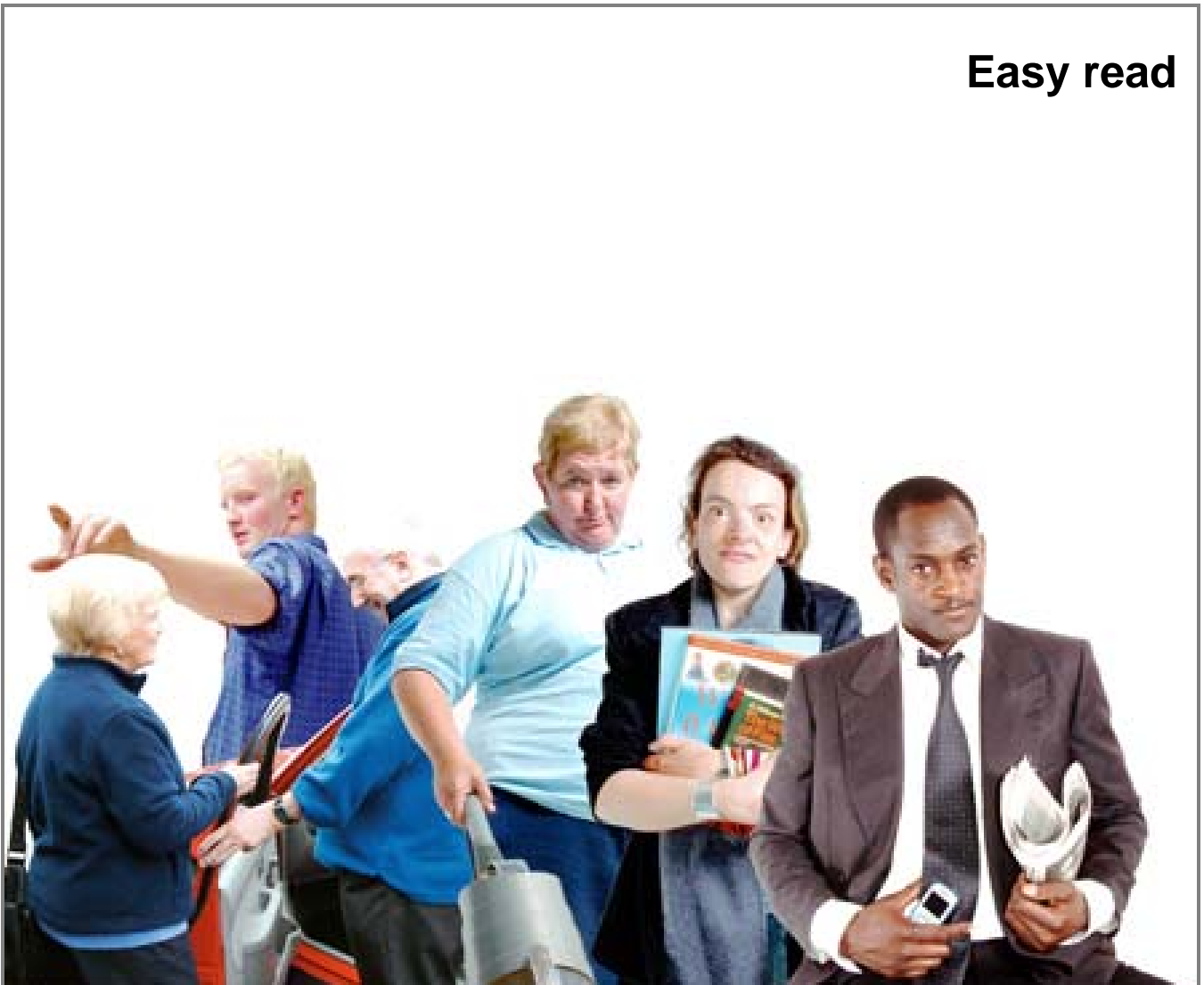


# Your guide to employment and support allowance

A new benefit for people with a disability or health problems

Easy read



**Disability  
alliance**

Written by Disability Alliance  
March 2011

## Read this first



Claiming any benefit can be hard.

There are lots of forms to fill in and meetings to go to.



Make sure that you have someone you know and trust to support you.

Get as much help as you need.



Employment and support allowance is run by **Jobcentre Plus**.

Tell the people at your local Jobcentre Plus that you need help and support.

### To find out more

Your family or support staff can get information about employment and support allowance



A detailed guide is available from Disability Alliance  
You can order it from their website

- [www.disabilityalliance.org/esa.htm](http://www.disabilityalliance.org/esa.htm)



You can also call the Mencap helpline for advice

- telephone 0808 808 1111

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# About employment and support allowance

This is often shortened to **ESA**.



Employment and support allowance is a benefit for people who find it harder to get a job because

- they have a disability
- they have a problem with their health and will have this problem for a long time or the rest of their lives

It replaces 2 benefits

- incapacity benefit and
- income support (because of a disability)

## When did it start?

**October**



From **27 October 2008** people who got benefits for the first time because they have a disability or health problems got **employment and support allowance**.

From **2010** people who have been getting incapacity benefit, severe disability allowance and income support because of their disability or health problems will have a new assessment called a **work capability assessment**. This assessment is to see if you can get employment support allowance.

As people move over this should not change the amount of money they get.

## Why are benefits changing?



Employment and support allowance should be simpler to claim.

It should help disabled people and people with health problems come off benefits and in to paid work.

## How does it work?



You make a claim for employment and support allowance by telephoning Jobcentre Plus.

You need to answer some questions and will probably have a medical assessment at an appointment with a doctor or nurse.

- Read more about the appointment on page 9



After your assessment you are put in 1 of 2 groups.

- 1 People who find it very hard to work and get a paid job go into the **support group**.
- 2 People who with the right help and support can learn skills to help them work and get a paid job go into the **work-related activity group**.

The group you are in affects how much money you get and what you need to do to keep the benefit.

- Read more about these groups on page 13

## How do I start my claim?

The word **claim** means to **ask for** a benefit.



You claim by telephoning the Jobcentre Plus Claimline.

- telephone 0800 055 6688
- textphone 0800 023 4888



You can ask someone to help you with this call.

The person on the telephone asks questions about your disability or health problems.



After the telephone call the person you talked to sends you a letter. The letter should list the things you have told them.

Check the letter to make sure what is written about you is true.



If you do not want to claim over the telephone you can get a claim form instead.

To ask for an **ESA1** claim form

- telephone 0800 055 6688 or
- go to your local Jobcentre Plus office or
- from [www.dwp.gov.uk/service](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/service)
- you can fill in the form on the computer at [www.dwp.gov.uk/cservice](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/cservice)

Fill the form in and send it back to Jobcentre Plus.

## What happens next?



After you have made your claim, you start the **assessment phase**. This lasts for 13 weeks.

**Assessment phase** is the name for the time when Jobcentre Plus looks at your claim.



- They assess you and decide if you keep getting employment and support allowance.
- They decide if you could work and get a paid job.
- If you can work, they decide what support you need.

There are several parts to the assessment but you may not have to do them all.

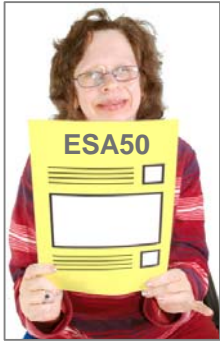
You may be asked to get sick notes from your doctor and send these to Jobcentre Plus.



During the assessment phase you get employment and support allowance at the basic (lowest) rate.

After 13 weeks, if Jobcentre Plus decides you can stay on employment and support allowance you will be paid more money.

## Telling Jobcentre Plus about yourself



As part of your claim you may get a form to fill in.

This form is called **ESA50**.

The form asks you about things you can do and things you find hard.



You can ask for help to fill in the form from people who know you well like family or support staff.



Write down as much as you can about your disability or health problems and support needs.

Before you send it back make a copy for yourself.



You have **4 weeks** to send the form back from the date it was sent to you. If you do not send it back you get a reminder.

You have **2 more weeks** from the date the reminder was sent to send the form back to Jobcentre Plus.

If you do not send the form back you will not get employment and support allowance.

## An appointment with a doctor



You may be asked to go to an appointment with a doctor or nurse. The appointment is so the doctor can examine you. They will ask you questions about your disability.

This is usually in a health centre or surgery but it can be done in your home if going to a health centre causes you lots of problems.

You must go. If you do not, you may not get employment and support allowance.



You will get a letter **7 days** or more before your appointment. The letter tells you where and when your appointment is.

If you cannot go when the letter says, phone the telephone number on the letter and make a new time or date.

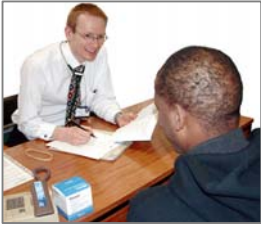


You can have support at the appointment from people who know you well like family or support staff.

### If you miss your appointment

If you miss your appointment, you must have a good reason for why you could not go. If you can not show that you had a good reason you may not get employment and support allowance.

## What happens at the appointment?



The doctor or nurse asks you about your disability or health problems and finds out how your disability affects you.

Remember to take any information you have been asked for with you.



They may also do a physical examination.

This means checking things to do with your body like your blood pressure, walking or bending and stretching.

Jobcentre Plus use what the doctor or nurse tells them to help them decide if you can keep on getting employment and support allowance.

They also use what the doctor or nurse tells them to decide if you can work or if you would need help to get into work.

## Can you work?



**First they look at whether you have a limited capability for work.**

The doctor or nurse talks to you about what you wrote in your ESA50 form.

They look at things you have problems doing.

For example

- walking
- bending
- using your hands
- seeing well

and

- learning things
- remembering things
- finishing jobs



This part helps Jobcentre Plus decide if you can carry on getting employment and support allowance.

If you can carry on getting employment and support allowance then after 13 weeks you are paid more money.

It may be that employment and support allowance is not the right benefit for you. Jobcentre Plus can tell you if you should be getting a different benefit.

## Could you do some kinds of work?

**Next they look at whether you have a limited capability for work-related activity.**

This is about finding out if you could do some kinds of work if you have the right support and help.

The doctor or nurse talks to you more about things you may have problems doing, like

- walking, standing and sitting
- lifting and carrying things
- seeing and hearing well
- talking clearly



It also looks at

- how you learn and remember new things
- if you can follow instructions
- how you find being with other people

Jobcentre Plus uses what the doctor tells them to help them make a decision about which group you go in to.



## The support group

If they think you would find it very hard to work and get a paid job, you go into the **support group**

You can do **voluntary work** if you like. This is work you do for a few hours each week and that you do not get paid for.

Doing voluntary work might help you to get a paid job in the future.

## The work-related activity group

If you could do work and get a paid job with the right help and support you go into the work-related activity group.

You will have to go to 6 interviews with an adviser. The adviser tries to help you get ready to work.

You must go to all these interviews to carry on getting your full amount of employment and support allowance.



## If you think there has been a mistake



You might not agree with a decision that Jobcentre Plus make about your ESA claim.

They might say you cannot get ESA at all. Or it could be to do with your appointments or your interviews.



If you think Jobcentre Plus has made a mistake, you can ask them to look at their decision again.

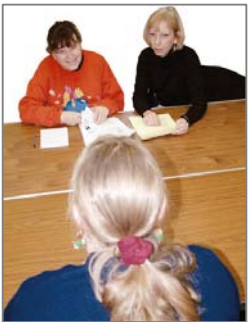
Ask another person or someone in your family or your support staff to help you if you think Jobcentre Plus has made a mistake.

### Making an appeal



If you are still unhappy with the new decision then you can ask for an **appeal**. This is where someone who does not work for Jobcentre Plus looks at the decision again.

You must ask for an **appeal** within 1 month of the decision you do not agree with.



If you ask for an **appeal** then you will probably have to go to an **appeal hearing**. This is where you tell some people why you think Jobcentre Plus has made a mistake.

They will decide whether the decision is right or not.

**Before you ask for an appeal, you should try to get help from a local advice group such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.**

## You can get help and advice about employment and support allowance from

- Mencap  
telephone 0808 808 1111
- Disability Alliance  
88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA  
[www.disabilityalliance.org.uk](http://www.disabilityalliance.org.uk)
- National Autistic Society (NAS)  
helpline telephone 0845 070 4004  
10am to 4pm Monday to Friday  
[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)



With thanks to the National Autistic Society

The images are from Photosymbols  
[www.photosymbols.com](http://www.photosymbols.com)

This guide was written by Disability Alliance  
Mencap helped to make this easy read



