

Introduction

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is a benefit for people who are unemployed or who work less than 16 hours per week and who are looking for full-time work.

There are two main types of JSA:

1. Contribution-based JSA; and
2. Income-based JSA

Criteria

The basic criteria for the Applicant for both types of JSA are as follows:

- The Applicant must not be in full-time paid work (if the Applicant is claiming Income-based JSA, then their partner must not be in full-time paid work);
- The Applicant must be capable of work;
- The Applicant must be available for work. This means that the Applicant must be willing and able to take up full-time work, for at least 40 hours per week, immediately;
- The Applicant must be actively seeking work;
- The Applicant must enter into a Jobseeker's Agreement which is in force. A Jobseeker's Agreement is a signed agreement between the Applicant and the DWP. It contains a description of the type of work the Applicant is looking for, hours of availability and the action that the Applicant is expected to take to improve their job prospects. It is however likely that at some point in 2012, instead of the current jobseekers agreement, the Applicant will have to accept a 'Claimant Commitment' that records what your responsibilities are in return for receiving JSA;
- The Applicant must not be in full-time education;
- The Applicant must be below the pension age;
- The Applicant must not be receiving Income Support; and
- The Applicant resides in the United Kingdom.

Contribution-based JSA

In order to qualify for contribution-based JSA (CBJSA) the Applicant must also satisfy the following criteria:

- The Applicant must have paid or been credited with sufficient National Insurance contributions in the two tax years immediately before the benefit year in which the jobseeking period begins;
- The Applicant must not have earnings above a specified amount.

If they satisfy the above they will receive the following:

Age 16-24	£56.25 per week
Age 25 or over	£71.00 per week

CBJSA is paid for a maximum of six months.

Income-based JSA

In order to qualify Income-based JSA (IBJSA), the Applicant must also satisfy the following criteria:

- The Applicant must have no income or their income must be less than the 'applicable amount' (this is the amount the law says they need to live on. See the Income Support fact sheet for details of how to calculate the applicable amount); and
- The Applicant's savings and other capital must be £16,000 or less. Some capital, in particular the Applicant's home, is ignored. Capital of between £6,000 and £16,000 will produce a tariff income of £1 for every £250 of capital;
- Neither the Applicant or their partner are in receipt of Pension Credit;
- If the Applicant has a partner, they must not be working for 24 hours or more a week;
- The Applicant is aged 18 or over (although if aged 16 or 17 they may get IBJSA if they satisfy special rules); and
- They must be habitually resident in the UK and not subject to immigration control.

Amount

The amount of IBJSA the Applicant receives will depend on the Applicant's individual circumstances.

The maximum weekly rates are:

Single person, aged 16-24	£56.25 per week
Single person, age 25 or over	£71.00 per week
Couple and civil partnerships (both aged 18 or over)	£111.45 per week

Other Benefits

If the Applicant is incapable of work, they should claim Employment and Support Allowance instead.

Future Changes

From April 2013, the total benefits payments to many working-age households will be 'capped'. However, there will be limited exceptions, including households in which someone is entitled to working tax credit or receives Disability Living Allowance. JSA will be included in the capped amount.

Instead of the requirement to be available for and actively seeking work, there will be new 'work-related' requirements. It is likely that these will be introduced from October 2013.

From October 2013, it is proposed that no new claims for income-based JSA or joint claim JSA will be allowed. If you are already claiming these benefits, you will be transferred to Universal Credit between April 2014 and October 2017. You will however still be able to claim contribution-based JSA.

Further Information

To claim:

Department of Works and Pensions - www.dwp.gov.uk

For help:

Benefits Enquiry Line - 0800 88 22 00/0800 055 6688
www.direct.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau - www.citizensadvice.org.uk
www.adviceguide.org.uk

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