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### BE OPEN AND ASK FOR HELP.

Tell the Jobcentre about anything that limits what you can do to look for work or the jobs you could do.

**Ask to see a disability adviser if you have any health problems.**

Your Claimant Commitment should say what help you need and who is helping you with your 'CV', job applications or Universal Jobmatch.

### MORE HINTS AND TIPS

**You will have more freedom to seek work in ways that suit you if you do not give your Work Coach access to your Universal Jobmatch account. You can say 'no'.**

Aim to arrive **early** for meetings with your Work Coach. Have appointment letters handed to you, not sent by post, so you always get them.

**If you miss a Jobcentre appointment, phone at once to explain why and make a fresh appointment as soon as possible so your claim is not closed.**

Never refuse to apply for a job your Work Coach tells you about. You could face a high level sanction of 13 weeks

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### **Most importantly...**

**Keep careful, detailed records of everything you do to look for work, no matter how small.**

### IF YOU ARE SANCTIONED

- \*Keep 'signing on'.
- \*Ask for JSA Hardship Payments
- \*Make a new Housing Benefit claim.
- \*Insist you get a written decision
- \*Challenge it within the time limit!

Our **Potteries Gold** "Guide to surviving sanctions" will help you manage if you are sanctioned.

Our **Potteries Gold** "Guide to fighting sanctions" will tell you more about challenging wrong decisions.

Get more help and advice from our  
**CITIZENS ADVICE HELPLINE**

**03444 111 444**



If you think you may be involved with a loan shark,  
call the team in confidence on

**0300 555 2222**

Text 'loan shark + your message' to 60003  
E-mail [reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk](mailto:reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk)

# Potteries Gold

## Guide to...

# Avoiding Sanctions



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## WHAT ARE SANCTIONS?

Sanctions are a reduction in your benefit or the removal of benefit. Sanctions can affect Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and even Income Support. They can last for days, weeks or up to 3 years.

This guide looks at what you can do to avoid JSA sanctions.

## GETTING JSA

To get JSA, you must be *Available for Work* and *Actively seeking Work*.

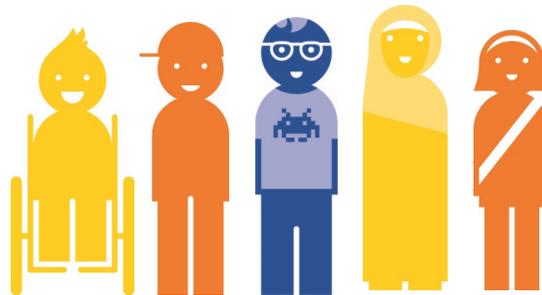
**AVAILABLE FOR WORK** means:

- you can start work at once,
- you can work any time of the day and any day of the week *and*
- you can work full time.

This does not mean you have to be available to do *any* job. You can put reasonable restrictions on what you can do, when and where you can work, to take account of any health problems you have or your caring responsibilities.

You may be told to apply for jobs up to 90 minutes travelling time (each way) from your home. If you refuse outright, you could be sanctioned.

**ACTIVELY SEEKING WORK** means you are taking what the Jobcentre calls 'steps' to find work. If you have to look for full-time work, the Jobcentre say looking for work should be your full-time job until you find work. This does not mean you have to look for work *every day* of *every week* but you should aim to do 35 hours Jobseeking per week.



## YOUR CLAIMANT COMMITMENT

When you first go to the Jobcentre after making your claim for JSA (usually online or by telephone) you have to make a contract called your **CLAIMANT COMMITMENT**. You agree this with your 'Work Coach' at the Jobcentre. It is your personal plan to find work.

## HAVE A PLAN WHEN YOU CLAIM

You cannot be sanctioned for not keeping to your Claimant Commitment, but the Jobcentre may use it as evidence that you are not available for or actively seeking work. It pays to make a Claimant Commitment you can keep.

**Be kind to yourself!**

Don't over-commit at the start of your claim. Your Work Coach will push you to do more over time. Leave yourself options for later.

**Don't go alone!**

You can take a friend or support worker with you when you make your Claimant Commitment and for other appointments. Phone up in advance to let the Jobcentre know who is coming with you. If you don't do this their security people may not let your companion in.

**Be practical**

When agreeing the hours you could work, think about how you will get to a job. If you use public transport, when do the buses to your neighbourhood start and stop?

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