
HOW DO I SURVIVE A SANCTION?

Ask the Jobcentre for form JSA10 to claim **Hardship Payments**.

Tell the Jobcentre about any special circumstances, such as ill-health or pregnancy. Hardship payments are not usually paid for the first two weeks of a sanction

The Jobcentre may offer you a Foodbank voucher. These are not an alternative to Hardship Payments. Claim Hardship Payments whatever other help the Jobcentre tell you about.

Foodbank vouchers can be issued by professionals (including social workers, health visitors and Citizens Advice). They are for three days food for you and your family. **Stoke-on-Trent Council's Social Fund** may help with vouchers for food and fuel prepayment meters if you are sanctioned. Call 01782 238888. You cannot be given more than three vouchers.

If you are on a **pre-payment meter for fuel**, contact your energy supplier and ask them to stop recovering fuel debt or take less arrears while you are sanctioned.

Check your Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support: if your JSA stops, your HB may stop too.

You can make a 'nil income' claim for Housing Benefit or a claim based on Tax Credits or other benefits. Don't add rent arrears to your problems.

If you have to borrow money, **don't** borrow money from high-interest 'pay-day' lenders and **never** borrow from illegal lenders or loan sharks.

ARE YOU ON THE WRONG BENEFIT?

If your doctor thinks you are **too ill to work** and gives you a medical certificate, you could claim **ESA**.

If you **look after someone** who gets Attendance Allowance, some rates of DLA or PIP for daily living, you may be able to claim **Carer's Allowance** or **Income Support**.

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

Potteries Gold

Guide to...

Surviving Sanctions



LOTTERY FUNDED

CLAIMING JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE

To get JSA, you must be 'Available for Work' and 'Actively seeking Work'. To prove this, you have to make a contract called your **Claimant Commitment** with your 'Work Coach' at the Jobcentre. It is your personal plan to find work.

You cannot be sanctioned for breaking your Claimant Commitment, but the Jobcentre may use that as evidence that you are not fully available for or actively seeking work.

SANCTIONED MEANS YOUR JSA STOPS!

FIND OUT WHAT HAS GONE WRONG.

You can be sanctioned if you fail to follow some instructions from your Work Coach. The Jobcentre can also sanction you in some other circumstances. If your Work Coach says there is a problem, ask for the full reasons **in writing**.

For example, 'Failed to follow a Jobseeker's Direction' doesn't tell you what you were told to do, or why you 'failed'. Without clear information, you cannot decide if the sanction is unfair, and it will be harder for you to avoid future sanctions.

FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR PAYMENTS

Your Work Coach cannot sanction you, but can send a recommendation to a Decision Maker to stop your benefit. Ask if your JSA will be suspended while the Decision Maker looks at your case so you know if you will get your next payment.

IF YOUR PAYMENTS ARE SUSPENDED, OR YOU ARE SANCTIONED AND YOUR JSA STOPS, YOU MUST STILL 'SIGN ON' AND LOOK FOR WORK AS USUAL OR YOUR CLAIM WILL END.

HOW LONG WILL THE SANCTION LAST?

This depends on the type of sanction you are given.

Most **first sanctions** are for 4 weeks, perhaps for not doing something your Work Coach told you to do to find work. If you are sanctioned again within 12 months, the **second sanction** is at least 13 weeks.

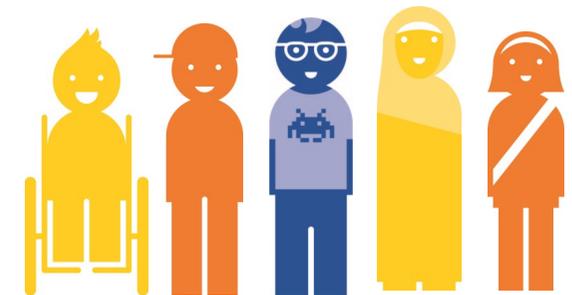
High level sanctions apply if you leave a job when you don't have to, get sacked for bad behaviour or turn down a job offer or a place on a 'mandatory' Work Programme course. These can last **13 weeks, 26 weeks** or **3 years** if you have been sanctioned before.

If you miss an interview with your Work Coach and don't contact them quickly, your claim may be closed down. Your payments will stop, but this is **not a sanction**.

DON'T SETTLE FOR UNFAIR SANCTIONS

If you think a sanction is unfair, challenge it. You have one calendar month from the date on the formal decision letter telling you about the sanction to ask for a **mandatory reconsideration**.

If the decision isn't changed, you can appeal to an **independent tribunal** if you act within one calendar month of the reconsideration.



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

Our **Potteries Gold** "Guide to avoiding sanctions" will help you make a Claimant Commitment you can keep.
