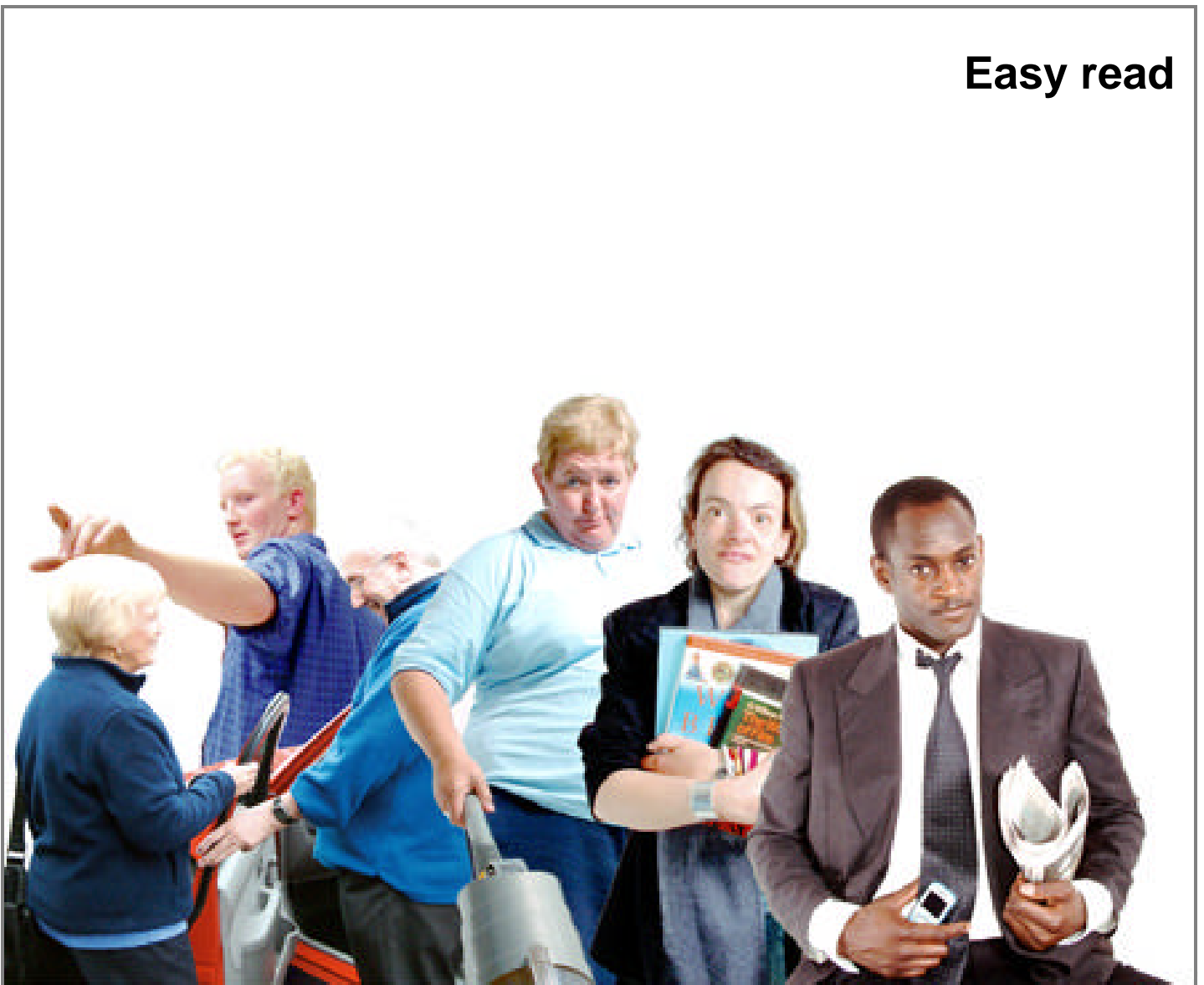


Your guide to employment and support allowance

A new benefit for people with a disability or health problems

Easy read



**Disability
alliance**

Written by Disability Alliance
October 2008

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



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 **new** benefit.



It is 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 does it start?

October



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

From **2009** people who have been getting incapacity benefit and income support because of their disability or health problems will start to change to **employment and 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 than incapacity benefit and income support.

It should also 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 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 helpline.

- telephone 0800 055 6688
- textphone 0800 023 4888



You can ask someone to help you with this call.

The person at Jobcentre Plus 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

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 look 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 do them all.

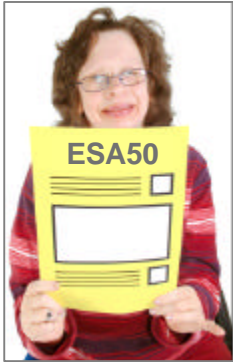
You may be asked to get sick notes from your doctor and send these to Jobcentre Plus.

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

After 13 weeks, if Jobcentre Plus decide 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.

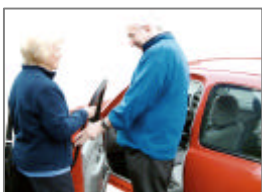
This is usually in a health centre or surgery but it can be done in your home if going to a health centre causes you lots of problems.

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

You have **5 days** after the appointment date to tell Jobcentre Plus why you could not go.



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 decide whether 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 and what help you need 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.

These might include

- 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 finds out if you could do some kinds of work and get a paid job.

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 use what the doctor tells them to 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.

The work-related activity group

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



If you are in this group you need to go to another appointment with a doctor or nurse. This is called a work-focused health-related assessment.

The doctor or nurse talks about how you feel about going to work. They look at what stops you from getting a job and what support you need to work.



You will also 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.

To you

Claiming ESA - step by step

Remember

✉ Claim form
ESA1 →

1 Starting your claim

- Phone Jobcentre Plus
- They ask you questions on the phone
- If you do not want to claim on the phone you can ask for a claim form to fill in

Have someone you know and trust to support you

You may need to get sick notes from your doctor

✉ Confirmation letter →

2 Jobcentre Plus confirm your claim

- A letter will be sent to you. It confirms what you told them on the phone

Check the letter to make sure what it says about you is true

££ You get basic rate ESA →

3 The assessment phase

Jobcentre Plus look at your claim

- You may have to fill in an ESA50 form and send it back to Jobcentre Plus
- You may have to go to an appointment with a doctor or nurse

← **13** weeks The assessment phase is 13 weeks

✉ ESA50 form →

← **4** weeks You have 4 weeks to send back the ESA50

✉ A letter at least 7 days before the appointment →

If you miss the appointment you must have a very good reason.

← **ESA50** Take your copy of the form with you

← **5** days To explain why, if you miss the appointment

£££ If you stay on ESA, then after 13 weeks you get more money →

4 Jobcentre Plus make decisions

- Can you stay on ESA?
- Can you work?
- Could you do some kinds of work?
- What help do you need if you could work?
- Which of the 2 groups you go into

Support group

You would find it hard to work and get a paid job.

You can volunteer to see an adviser who can talk about helping you into work.

Work-related activity group

With the right help you could work and get a paid job.

You must go to 6 interviews with an adviser who will talk about helping you into work.

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



With thanks to the National Autistic Society (NAS)
telephone 0845 070 4004 (10am to 4pm Monday to Friday)
www.autism.org.uk

The images are from Photosymbols
www.photosymbols.com

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



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