



---

# *A parent's guide to moving into work*

This guide includes information about the help you are entitled to as you move from out-of-work benefits into work. It is divided into sections depending on whether you are looking for work, have found a job, or have started work. Each section includes information about financial help available to you, including help with childcare costs. The final section includes useful tips to make sure you get all the help you are entitled to.

### **Looking for work**

#### **I am a single parent; can I claim Income Support instead of Jobseeker's Allowance?**

As a single parent, you can claim Income Support until your youngest child is aged five. This means that you do not have to search for work, although you may still be able to get help from Jobcentre Plus if you are looking for work. Once your youngest child is aged five, if you claim Income Support on the sole grounds of being a single parent, your claim will be switched to Jobseeker's Allowance and you must be available for and actively seeking work, unless you are unable to work due to ill health.

#### **I am a parent claiming Jobseekers Allowance; do I have to look for full-time work?**

If you have parental responsibility for a child under the age of 16, you can limit your work availability from as few as 16 hours per week up to a maximum of as many hours as your caring allows.

If you are a single parent and your child is aged under 13, you must:

- be available for work during your child's normal school hours (for at least 16 hours per week) and;
- be able to take up a suitable job offer with 1 week's notice – or if you can show that your caring responsibilities make this unreasonable, within 28 days (and attend an interview with 7 days' notice).

Universal Credit: Since Autumn 2013, Universal Credit has gradually been replacing out-of-work benefits and tax credits. For further information about how you might be affected, visit: [www.gov.uk/universalcredit](http://www.gov.uk/universalcredit)



### **I am claiming Income Support/Jobseeker's Allowance; can I get any extra help whilst I'm looking for work?**

You may be able to get extra support while you are looking for work from a Budgeting Loan.

Budgeting Loans can help with the costs associated with finding or moving into work if:

- you have been claiming Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-based Employment and Support Allowance for at least 26 weeks; and
- you have savings of less than £1,000.

You can apply to Jobcentre Plus for a Budgeting Loan. Loans must be repaid normally within two years, but you will not have to pay interest on them. Find out more about Budgeting Loans at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

### **Help finding work**

There are a number of work support programmes available through Jobcentre Plus and other employment support organisations. These include:

- The Work programme.
- The New Enterprise allowance.
- Sector based Work Academies.

Speak to your personal advisor about which is the most appropriate for you and what is available in your area. Visit: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) for details about each scheme.

### **Work preparation support for carers**

If you are aged over 18 and are responsible for a child or adult with a disability or long-term illness, who does not work or works less than 16 hours per week, you may be eligible for additional support through Work preparation support for carers. It is accessed through Jobcentre Plus or other employment services and includes a range of activities and intensive support for people who are out of work.

Some areas may also offer support to disabled parents who are unable to work. Contact Jobcentre Plus for more information. You can find contact details on their website at: [www.gov.uk/jobseekers](http://www.gov.uk/jobseekers), or call **0800 055 6688**.

### **Flexible Support Fund**

Personal Advisers have access to the Flexible Support Fund to help individual claimants move into work sooner than would otherwise be possible. District Managers decide how best to maximise use of this fund and determine the circumstances in which awards may be granted to individuals in their district. The fund is available to Personal Advisers to use at their discretion where no other financial assistance is available, but can be used towards childcare while you attend interviews. The maximum award is: £175 per week for 1 child and £300 per week for 2 or more children.

To qualify for help with your childcare costs, you must:

- meet the criteria of the particular employment support programme you are on; and
- use registered childcare for a child under 16-years-old (where the help is towards childcare costs).



## Replacement Care

If you have specialist childcare costs for a child with a disability or long-term illness, the extra costs could be covered through the Flexible Support Fund.

Support varies in different parts of the country, so always speak to your adviser about your options and how to apply for financial assistance. In some areas, you may be able to get help with paying a deposit for childcare or doing a work trial period.

## Found a job

### Is there any help I can get when I stop claiming benefits and start work?

If you have been claiming certain benefits for at least 26 weeks, you may be entitled to the following help when you stop claiming benefits in order to start work.

To find your local Jobcentre Plus office, call **0800 055 6688** or visit: **[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

### Tip

Think about starting to save while you're looking for work. Just putting a couple of pounds into a savings account each week could give you a safety net when you start work. Find out about saving for your family at: **[www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/parents](http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/parents)**

## Extended Payments of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction

Extended Payments of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction are an extra four weeks of maximum help with your rent/council tax after your entitlement to out-of-work benefits stops. The work you are starting must be expected to last for at least five weeks. If you are eligible for Extended Payments of Housing Benefit, your council will contact you directly.

For Council Tax Reduction, you need to contact your local council as each area runs its own scheme.

You must have been getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance for 26 weeks prior to starting work.

## Can I get any help with childcare costs when I start work?

You may be entitled to the following help if you have been participating in work preparation support:

## Flexible Support Fund

Personal Advisers have access to the Flexible Support Fund to help with costs when moving into work, for example up-front childcare costs and travel costs until you receive your first wage. The fund is available to Personal Advisers to use at their discretion where no other financial assistance is available and awards must be made before you start work.

Financial help (including help with childcare) from the Flexible Support Fund will vary by area, so be sure to contact your Jobcentre Plus for information.



## In work

### **I am now working but it is for less than 16 hours a week. Are there any extra benefits I can claim?**

If you start work of less than 16 hours per week, you may still be entitled to out-of-work benefits, for example, Income Support or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. This will depend on how much you earn from work. Your adviser should be able to tell you whether you can get any help.

### **I am now working full time. What benefits can I claim?**

Different benefits work in different ways, so some of the benefits you received whilst looking for work will carry on when you start work, some may still be paid but at a different amount and some will stop. See below for a summary of how different benefits change when you move into work.

When you start working full time (16 hours per week or more), you may be entitled to:

## Jobcentre Plus support

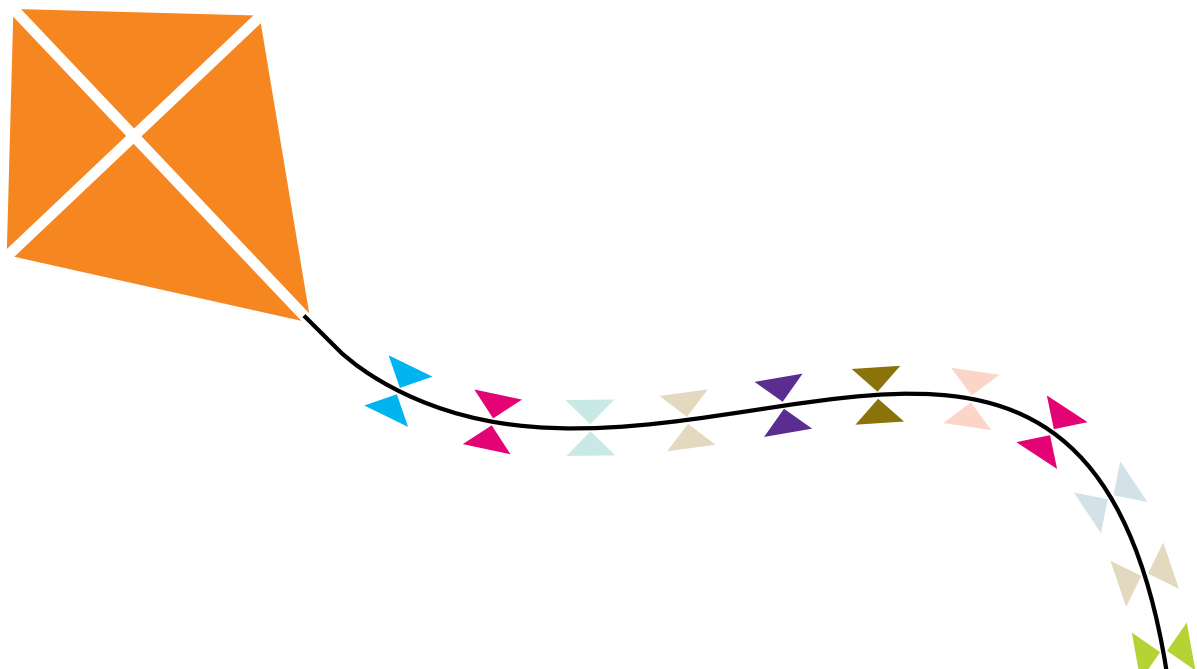
You may be able to get additional help from an In Work Advisor in the first 26 weeks of work.

You must have been accessing work preparation support through Jobcentre Plus or been in receipt of Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance, Carers Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance or Bereavement Benefits before starting work.

Personal Advisers have access to the Flexible Support Fund which can offer up to £300 to help with the cost of small emergencies in the first 26 weeks of work. This is a discretionary fund and not an automatic entitlement.

## In Work Credit

In Work Credit has now been withdrawn. No new claims for In Work Credit will be accepted after 30 September 2013.





### Working Tax Credit

If you work at least 16 hours per week, you may be eligible for help from Working Tax Credit. If you have a partner, one of you must work at least 16 hours per week, and you must work a combined total of at least 24 hours per week. Working Tax Credit can top up your income if your earnings are low.

If you use registered childcare and both you and your partner (if you have one) work at least 16 hours per week, you may also be entitled to the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, which is paid in addition to the main element of Working Tax Credit.

The amount of help that you receive from Working Tax Credit will depend on your family income and circumstances. Many factors affect your entitlement, so it is recommended that you check your eligibility. You can do this by contacting the Tax Credit Helpline on **0345 300 3900** or by visiting: **[www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits)**

### Employer-supported childcare

Employer-supported childcare describes the help that is offered by employers with your childcare costs. Employers are not obliged by law to offer this support, so talk to your line manager/ Human Resources department to find out if they offer a scheme and what this includes.

The benefit of employer-supported childcare is that you save money by not paying tax and National Insurance Contributions on some/all of the amount you receive for childcare and your employer saves by not paying National Insurance Contributions on the same amount.

Receiving employer-supported childcare may affect the amount of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit you are entitled to. HMRC have created a tool to help you decide whether you are better off receiving tax credits or employer-supported childcare. It is available on their website: **[www.hmrc.gov.uk/calcs/ccin.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/calcs/ccin.htm)**

Make sure you tell your council (for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction) and the Tax Credits Helpline about your change of income as soon as you can when you start work to avoid breaking your claim or owing money back for overpayment of benefit.



## Useful information

Summary of benefit changes when you move into work

The table below shows which benefits and payments continue to be paid, change and stop when you move into full-time work (i.e. 16 hours per week or more).

\*Check with an adviser to see if you are eligible.

Benefit/Payments	Out of work	Change period	In work full time
Jobseeker's Allowance	Paid	Stop	Stop
Income Support	Paid	Stop	Stop
Employment and Support Allowance	Paid	Stop	Stop
Healthy Start Scheme	May be paid *	Usually Stop *	Usually Stop *
Free school meals	May be paid *	Usually Stop *	Usually Stop *
Free healthcare (prescriptions/dental treatment)	May be paid *	Usually Stop *	Usually Stop *
Housing Benefit	Paid	Extended Payments for 4 weeks	May be paid *
Council Tax Reduction	Paid	Extended Payments for 4 weeks	May be paid *
Child Tax Credit	Paid	Change	May be paid *
Working Tax Credit	Not paid (unless partner works full time)	Change or start	May be paid *
Child Benefit	Paid	Paid	Paid
Disability Living Allowance	Paid	Paid	Paid
Carers Allowance	Paid	Only continues if you continue to care for at least 35 hours per week and earn less than £100 per week	



## Tips for applying for benefits

- When you find a job, ask your adviser to do a 'better off calculation' for you. This will tell you about the in-work benefits you may be entitled to.
  - Make sure you also ask about any help available for one-off costs you have to pay when you start work, for example, childcare fees in advance.
- Claim immediately – don't wait or you could miss out on money you are entitled to!
- Answer all the questions on the claim form. Write outside the box if necessary.
  - Get help from your Housing Association, CAB or Jobcentre Plus if you don't understand the questions.
- Make sure you send all the evidence you are asked for with your application. Jobcentre Plus/HMRC won't pay you until they have had a completed form from you with all the proof they need.
  - For Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction, make sure you get proof of income from any adults (other than your partner) living with you and working or claiming benefits ('non dependents') or you could lose money.
- Hand in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims in person at your local office and always get a receipt for everything you hand in.
- Tell Housing and Council Tax departments that you are starting work and that there may be a delay in your payments.
  - It is important to tell all departments (Housing and Council Tax Departments and Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Departments) about your change of circumstance to make sure that you receive all the help you are entitled to.

- If you haven't heard about your claim within a couple of weeks of sending/handing it in, contact the benefits office to make sure they are dealing with your claim.
- If you are refused a benefit or payment, get advice quickly. You may be able to appeal the decision but there is a 28 day limit to do this.

## Useful organisations

### Find childcare/help with childcare costs

#### Family and Childcare Trust

[www.familyandchildcaretrust.org](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org)

#### Tax Credits Helpline

[www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits) / 0345 300 3900

#### Family Information Service (FIS)

[www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis)  
(to find contact details of your FIS)

## Benefits advice

### Citizens Advice

[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) (for benefits information and to search for your local advice bureau)

### Online benefits calculators:

#### Turn2Us

[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

#### Government Information

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)  
(‘Benefits Adviser’ in the Do it online section)

## Financial advice and information

### Money Advice Service

[www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk](http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk)  
(including the free 'Parents Guide to Money')



Looking for work?	
Start saving now!	Find out more at: <b><a href="http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk">www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk</a></b>
Is your child aged 2, 3 or 4 years? Are they getting their free early years entitlement (15 hours per week free childcare)?	Find out more from your local Family Information Service, visit: <b><a href="http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org">www.familyandchildcaretrust.org</a></b>
Find out about different types of childcare you could use once you are working	Visit: <b><a href="http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org">www.familyandchildcaretrust.org</a></b>
Found a job?	
Ask your adviser for a 'better off calculation' which will tell you about the in-work benefits you may be entitled to.	Speak to your Jobcentre Plus adviser or use the online calculators at: <b><a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a></b>
Find out about childcare in your area	Ask your local Family Information Service (FIS) for information about childcare in your area. Find your local FIS at: <b><a href="http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis">www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis</a></b>
Find out about help with childcare costs	Visit: <b><a href="http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/parentinformation">www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/parentinformation</a></b>
Starting work?	
When you sign off JSA, ask about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended Payments of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction</li> </ul>	Speak to your Jobcentre Plus adviser
Apply for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction (based on your new income)	Visit your local council offices
Report a change in circumstances to the Tax Credits Helpline, telling them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When you start work</li> <li>Your earnings</li> <li>Your childcare costs</li> </ul>	Call the Tax Credits Helpline <b>0345 300 3900</b>

The Family and Childcare Trust is the charity created from a merger of Daycare Trust and the Family and Parenting Institute. Together we bring over 40 years of experience in campaigning and research into family life and childcare.

The information in this factsheet refers to family benefits in England and Wales. For further information specific to Northern Ireland or Scotland, contact your local Family Information Service (FIS). Find details of your local FIS by visiting: [www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/findyourfis) or by searching in your phone book.

This factsheet provides general information only and was accurate at the time of publication. The information is not to be taken as legal advice. You are advised to seek independent advice if you need further assistance.

**[www.familyandchildcaretrust.org](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org)**  
All rights reserved. © Family and Childcare Trust 2013

**October 2013**