

# Bringing up children on your own?

Jobcentre Plus  
services for lone  
parents

Are you thinking about looking for work? Jobcentre Plus can give you the kind of help that can lead to a job. One that's right for you, and makes your life that bit better.

There are lots of possibilities for finding jobs which can fit in with your life and what you want out of it. Through Jobcentre Plus, you have a range of help and support to choose from.

Jobcentre Plus can help if:

- you're bringing up children on your own
- at least one of your children is under 16.

## **Making life a little better**

### **More money**

Finding work, even for only a few days a week, usually means more money coming in. It gives you the chance to spend a little more on the extras that make life worthwhile.

### **More confidence**

Earning your own money also gives you independence. You may find new confidence to take on more, and find out what you're really capable of.

### **More interests**

A job can make good use of your skills, including the skills you've gained as a parent, but you're likely to learn many more at work. Just getting out of the house, meeting new people and doing something new are ways that taking a job can help you get more out of life.

## **What's holding you back?**

But it can be quite a challenge. Making a big change in your life can seem too difficult, especially if you're not sure where to start. There might be things that are really holding you back – perhaps a disability or health problem, or it might be difficult and expensive to travel to work from where you live. You might feel that you're not qualified to do anything, or you couldn't earn enough.

Why not come and talk about your situation? It might be much easier than you think to make changes.

## **So how can Jobcentre Plus help?**

A Jobcentre Plus personal adviser can help, by talking through your situation with you. They can give advice, and help you to find the support you need.

**If you're not sure what you want to do** – personal advisers have lots of experience and knowledge about what work is around locally. They can suggest ideas and help you think about what would be right for you.

**When you need advice on your options and planning ahead** – they can help you come up with a complete 'action plan', so you know what you want to achieve and how you will get there. They can often arrange activities you've included in your plan, and support you while you are doing them.

**If you need childcare** – they can help you to find childcare that is good quality, flexible and affordable. If you're following an action plan you've agreed with us, we can often help with childcare costs while you do an agreed activity.

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**Sorting out what money you have coming in** – your personal adviser will know all about benefits, tax credits and earnings, and they can show you how taking a job affects the money you may get.

**When you want to get training for a job** – they can help you find out what training you need, and where and when you can do it.

**When you are looking for work** – there is a lot of help on offer, such as help with CVs and arranging job interviews with employers.

**After you start work, to help you keep your job** – your personal adviser will still be there if you need help and advice in dealing with the big changes of starting a job.

There may also be money you can claim for expenses – including travel and childcare costs – if you go to meetings, job interviews or training which are set up or agreed by your personal adviser.

You may also get an extra weekly payment called In Work Credit. This is spread over 52 weeks, which will help you settle into work.

## Joining the Work Programme

Instead of getting support from Jobcentre Plus, you may join the Work Programme. It aims to help you prepare for, find and stay in work. The Work Programme is delivered for Jobcentre Plus by specialist organisations we call ‘providers’, who will be able to offer you more flexible support.

The Work Programme may include activities such as work experience, training and extra support. We hope that with this support, you’ll get and stay in a job.

The Work Programme lasts for two years. Your provider will give you all the work-focused support you need during this time, even if you change benefits or get a job. This support will be tailored to your individual needs and circumstances.

If you get Jobseeker's Allowance, you may have to take part in the Work Programme after:

- nine months if you're aged 18 to 24, or
- 12 months if you're 25 or over.

If you get Employment and Support Allowance and are in the 'work-related activity group', you may have to take part if your youngest child is aged 5 or over.

If you live in England and get Income Support or Incapacity Benefit, you can volunteer to join the Work Programme. To find out more, speak to a Jobcentre Plus adviser.

## But what about my children?

Obviously, making sure your children are properly looked after is your main priority. So if a job would mean you are out of the house when your children are not at school, you might need to pay for childcare.

Lots of people worry about leaving their children with someone else, or that it will cost far too much, so it is important to put your mind at rest about this before you start.

We can give advice and help with finding local childcare that is affordable and that you can trust. You can also find good quality childcare such as registered childminders, playgroups and nurseries through the Family Information Service.



Go to:  
[www.direct.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.direct.gov.uk/childcare)

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**Did you know you could get free childcare before you start work?** If you're starting a job and will be working eight hours a week or more, and you have children, you can claim five days approved childcare – either with a childminder or at a nursery.

This gives you the chance to spend the time before you start work helping your child to settle into his or her new routine. Ask your personal adviser for more details.

## What if I am caring for someone?

If you are caring for someone and want to look for paid work, we may help with the cost of replacement care. This may be for when you're at a job interview, or on a training course that we've arranged for you.

To be eligible for replacement care costs, you must:

- be aged 18 or over,
- not working or working less than 16 hours per week, and
- spend a large part of your time giving unpaid support or care to a relative, partner or friend who is disabled, has poor physical or mental health, or has drugs or drink problems.

## What if I need training before I can work?

For lots of people, the job they want to do is not one they can just apply for with the experience, skills and qualifications they have. But that's no reason to give up. If your skills need updating, your personal adviser can help you find out about suitable training, and help you choose the ideal course.

For some courses, you may be able to get help towards the cost of course fees, travel and registered childcare while you are training. To get this money, you must agree the training with your personal adviser before starting.

Depending on what you want to do, a course at your local college may be the answer.

Some colleges provide a crèche and help with travel expenses. Your personal adviser can help you find out what is available in your area.

## **But will I lose all my benefits?**

Our aim is to make sure you and your children are better off. So your personal adviser will always look at how any job would affect other money you have coming in, and check for other benefits you could claim.

There are some kinds of benefit that you may keep getting after you start work. Depending on how much you earn, you may still get Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit, and help with NHS charges. And you may get extra tax credits, which can include money towards the cost of childcare.

If you get Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance, you may carry on getting the same amount of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, or any payments to cover mortgage interest, for a while after you take a job.

## **What if I'm ill or disabled?**

Your personal adviser can put you in touch with specialist help if you have a health condition or disability.

## **What if I get Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance?**

If you get Income Support, you must come in and see your personal adviser for regular meetings.

If you get Jobseeker's Allowance, you must sign on at the Jobcentre, and attend regular meetings with an adviser.

It is important to attend all meetings with Jobcentre Plus, or it could affect your benefit.

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# Useful information

## Jobcentre Plus

To arrange to meet a personal adviser, call Jobcentre Plus on **0845 604 3719** (textphone **0845 608 8551**).

Your personal adviser may give you their business card so that you can contact them directly.

## To look for work

If you are looking for work, you can search our list of jobs online at **[www.direct.gov.uk/jobsearch](http://www.direct.gov.uk/jobsearch)**

Or call Jobcentre Plus on **0845 606 0234** (textphone **0845 605 5255**) to find out what jobs are available.  
Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm.

## Tax credit helpline

Phone: **0345 300 3900**  
Textphone: **0345 300 3909**  
**[www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)**

## Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

Contact your local council. You can find their details in the phone book or at **[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)**

## Child Maintenance Options

For support in arranging child maintenance.  
Phone: **0800 988 0988**  
Textphone: **0800 988 9888**  
Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday 9am to 4pm.  
**[www.cmoptions.org](http://www.cmoptions.org)**





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## Call charges

Charges were correct as of the date on the back of this leaflet.

Calls to **0800** numbers are free from BT land lines but you may have to pay if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls to **0845** numbers from BT land lines should cost no more than 8p a minute with a 13p call set up charge. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company or a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls from mobile phones can cost up to 40p a minute, so check the cost of calls with your service provider.

You can ask us to call you back if you're concerned about the cost of the call.

## Textphones

If you have a textphone because you can't speak or hear clearly, there are different numbers for each service listed in this leaflet. These numbers don't accept voice calls or text messages from mobile phones.

We're always looking for ways to improve our leaflets. If you have any comments or suggestions about this leaflet, email us at: **[leaflet.feedback@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:leaflet.feedback@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)**

This email address is only used for leaflet comments. We cannot answer questions about your pension or benefit.

# Important information about this leaflet

This leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We have done our best to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct as of February 2012. It is possible that some of the information is oversimplified, or may become inaccurate over time, for example because of changes to the law.

You can find more information from DWP about benefits and pensions online.



For benefits information go to  
**[www.direct.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.direct.gov.uk/benefits)**



For pensions information go to  
**[www.direct.gov.uk/pensions](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pensions)**

This information is available in other formats on request.



Phone **0845 731 3233**  
Textphone **0845 604 0210**

DWP aims to provide a high quality of service to all its customers. You can find out more in our customer charter at  
**[www.direct.gov.uk/dwpcharter](http://www.direct.gov.uk/dwpcharter)**