

Press release: Immediate access to hardship payments extended to help mental health and homelessness

Extra protections are being put in place for people receiving Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) who have a mental health condition or are homeless and had their benefits reduced because of a sanction, Minister for Employment Damian Hinds has announced.

Hardship payments act as a safety net to cover day-to-day living costs. The changes, detailed in new regulations being laid today, extend the number of people who can access this help immediately, rather than waiting for 2 weeks.

The regulations will come into effect from October, and are expected to help around 10,000 jobseekers over the next 4 years.

Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds, said:

We want people to do everything expected of them to look for work in return for their benefits. But when they don't, sanctions play a key part in the welfare system, and encourage jobseekers to stick to the rules.

However, we know how particularly hard it can be for some people to get back on their feet in difficult circumstances. That's why we're extending immediate access to hardship payments to cover jobseekers who are homeless or have a mental health condition so they can focus on accessing available support and getting back into employment.

In the last year on average less than 2% of JSA recipients were sanctioned each month.

Other vulnerable groups, including people who are pregnant, lone parents, and people with long term physical health conditions can already access hardship payments immediately.

A number of additional protections are already in place for eligible jobseekers who are homeless. For example, work coaches can temporarily put jobseeking requirements on hold while a homeless person finds accommodation. Also, targeted specialised support can be made available to someone who might be at risk of homelessness.

Immediate access to hardship payments is already available to people receiving Universal Credit who have received a sanction.

Sanctions are only used in a very small percentage of cases. In the last year

on average less than 2% of JSA recipients were sanctioned each month.

Immediate access to hardship payments is available for vulnerable groups following a successful application.

The new regulations will cover eligible claimants who are homeless, suffering from a mental impairment, including a mental health condition, and their partners.

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