

Factsheet B11: Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and the Support Group

Anyone who successfully claims Employment and Support Allowance will get a decision letter, stating if they have been placed in the Work Related Activity Group or the Support Group.

For an outline of how the Support Group is assessed see pages 25-28:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/535942/esa214-july-2016.pdf

It is possible to be in the Support Group if you have a terminal illness, are receiving, about to receive, or recovering from chemotherapy/radiotherapy, or if you have medical evidence to show it would cause a substantial risk to your physical or mental health if you were to participate in Work Related Activity.

There are three reasons why being in the Support Group may be good:

- If your letter says you are in the Support Group, you will have no requirements placed on you to attend any meetings. Your benefit will continue in payment for as long as you meet the rules.
- If you are in the Support Group you get more money (nearly £38 per week more) than if you are in the Work Related Activity Group (apart from some people who have been in the Work Related Activity Group for a while, who may also receive some (but not as much) additional money).
- If you are in the Work Related Activity Group, you can only receive Contribution-Based Employment and Support Allowance for 365 days. If



you are in the Support Group you can receive Contribution-Based Employment and Support Allowance for as long as you remain entitled.

If someone is placed in the Work Related Activity Group they have to attend a variety of interviews both at the Jobcentre and/or possibly with Shaw Trust (who run the Work and Health Programme for the Department of Work and Pensions), to develop an Action Plan for eventually getting back to work.

Anyone in the Support Group does not have to do this, but you may want to join the Work and Health Programme as a volunteer. In other words, you can take advantage of any help that might be on offer, but you can drop out at any time. Your benefit cannot be cut because you do not attend.

At any appointments, whether they are at the Jobcentre or with Shaw Trust, they will look at anything you need to do to make getting a job more likely in the future, such as short training courses, or looking at self-employment possibilities. You may need to tell them about your qualifications, your work history, your child-caring responsibilities, and be willing to talk about what work you hope to do in the future. They need to know about any paid or unpaid work that you are already doing.

If you join the Work and Health Programme as a volunteer and anyone tries to encourage you to take steps that you are not comfortable with, or that may endanger your physical or mental health, you can make a complaint.

Anyone in the Support Group will still have to be reassessed occasionally to make sure they remain entitled.



If you require further information or would like this factsheet in an alternative format you can contact us by calling: 01508 491210, by emailing: info@equallives.org.uk, or by writing to: Equal Lives, 15 Manor Farm Barns, Fox Road, Framingham Pigot, Norfolk, NR14 7PZ.

