

FACTSHEET

CLAIMING BENEFITS ON RETURN TO THE UK



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All British citizens who return to the UK after serving a prison sentence are entitled to claim Benefit. Welfare Benefits can be claimed by those who are looking for work or unable to work through illness or disability. They provide you with money to meet basic living expenses. They are paid every 2 weeks to you, usually by cheque, which is cashed at the Post Office. The amount may vary depending on your circumstances. You will need to claim either Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support. Current rates for people claiming benefits without dependents are £57.45 per week. Depending on your circumstances you may also need to claim a Crisis Loan and a Community Care Grant.

All claims should be made as soon as possible after arriving back in the UK. It is important to do this so that you do not lose entitlement to benefit.

In all claims, you will need to make it clear that you have been deported after serving a prison sentence, and you may be required to disclose the offence for which you were convicted. A refusal to disclose this information will delay payments, and may prevent you from being considered eligible for benefits.

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1 Jobseekers' Allowance

This is the primary benefit for anyone who is able to work. You need to be immediately available for work and will need to demonstrate, at some point, that you are actively seeking work. Application forms must be claimed in person by the applicant at a Job Centre. If you have secure accommodation you need to make a claim at the Job Centre that is linked to your address. Homeless applicants can claim at any Job Centre.

2 Income Support

You should claim this benefit if you are not able to work. This will usually be because of sickness. An Income Support claim on the basis of ill-health needs to be supported by a doctor's medical certificate. Application forms can be obtained from the nearest Department of Social Security (DSS) Office. As with Jobseekers' Allowance, you will need to make it clear on the form that you have been deported after serving a prison sentence.

The DSS will also give you an application form for Incapacity Benefit. Most claimants will not qualify for this because they will not have paid the necessary National Insurance contributions but the form needs to be completed and returned before an Income Support payment can be made.

3 Crisis Loans

Once benefit has been claimed, it may be some time before a payment is made. If you have no money at all to cover this period, it is possible to apply for a Crisis Loan. These must be claimed in person from the Social Fund section of the Department of Social Security Office. A Crisis loan can only be claimed if it is the only means by which a serious threat to the health and safety of the claimant can be prevented.

It is important to remember that a Crisis Loan can only be claimed once an application for Jobseekers' Allowance or Income Support has been submitted. It is a loan and it will be deducted from future payment of benefit at the rate of £8.43 per week.

4 Community Care Grants

This is a grant that can be applied for by people who are in need of money because a particular problem has caused them great difficulty. Coming out of prison is considered to be a situation where you may be eligible for a grant from the Social Fund. For example many people ask for a grant to replace clothes they may have lost as a result of their imprisonment. Application Forms can be obtained from your local Department of Social Security.

5 National Insurance Numbers and ID

If you left the UK before you were sixteen years old and have not worked here since, it is highly unlikely you will have a National Insurance (NI) number. (This is a social security number, which enables you to claim benefits and pay contributions to the welfare system.) If this is the case, this might delay the payment of benefit. It is important, under these circumstances, to make sure that the Department of Social Security is aware of the situation so that they can issue an NI number as soon as possible.

Benefit claims will not be processed unless you have suitable ID. A full passport is best, but try to bring with you whatever ID you have, a Birth Certificate, Driver's Licence or any other official document, especially if it has a picture.

6 How Can Prisoners Abroad Help?

The benefit system can be quite confusing and complicated, especially if you have not had previous experience of claiming benefits. Described above are only the very basics. The Prisoners Abroad Resettlement Team can help by:

- Explaining the system to you and what benefit will be most appropriate for you to claim.
- Assisting you fill in benefit forms
- Completing support letters to help you claim a Crisis Loan or Community Care Grant
- Liaising with the Benefit Agency if problems arise with your claim

If you require this leaflet in a large print format, please contact us. Our details are below.

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