



## Going abroad and getting your benefits

# What happens if I go abroad?

This leaflet gives you a general guide to how your benefits are affected if you are going abroad for a short time (a temporary stay), or if you are not planning to return (going abroad permanently).

With many benefits it will make a difference whether your stay abroad is temporary or permanent. Some benefits can continue while you are abroad, some can continue for a short time as long as your stay abroad is temporary, and some will stop straight away.

If you are a serving member of HM Armed Forces abroad, the rules for some benefits are different. If you want more information, contact Jobcentre Plus.



# Which countries are covered?

Although this leaflet covers going abroad to every country in the world, different rules apply depending on which country you go to.

There are special co-ordinating rules that apply to the countries that make up the European Economic Area (EEA). Different rules apply to other countries that we have a special arrangement with (a social-security agreement). If you want to know more about these arrangements, contact The International Pension Centre. You can find their contact details at the end of this leaflet.

If you are going to a country in the EEA, Switzerland or a country which we have a special arrangement with, you may be able to get a benefit which you would not normally get abroad.

For more details, ask us for a leaflet about the country you are going to.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Leaflet</b>
Countries in the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland	SA29
Barbados	SA43
Bermuda	SA23
Canada	SA20
Israel	SA14
Jamaica	SA27
Jersey and Guernsey	SA4
Mauritius	SA38
New Zealand	SA8
Philippines	SA42
Turkey	SA22
USA	SA33
Yugoslavia	SA17

The European Economic Area (EEA) is made up of all the countries in the European Union (EU) and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Here is a full list of all countries in the EEA.

Austria	Hungary	Norway
Belgium	Iceland	Poland
Cyprus	Ireland	Portugal
Czech Republic	Italy	Slovakia
Denmark	Latvia	Slovenia
Estonia	Liechtenstein	Spain
Finland	Lithuania	Sweden
France	Luxembourg	United Kingdom (UK)
Germany	Malta	
Greece	Netherlands	

Switzerland is not a member of the EEA, but the European rules on benefits also apply to Switzerland.

In this leaflet, Great Britain (GB) means England, Scotland and Wales, and the United Kingdom (UK) means England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

# What happens to my benefits?

## Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance

You cannot usually get contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance if you go to a country outside the EEA or Switzerland.

You may be able to get contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance in the EEA or Switzerland for up to 3 months if you:

- are going abroad to look for work
- are entitled to this benefit on the day you go abroad, and
- have registered as a jobseeker for normally at least 4 weeks before you leave.

The rules are different if you get a training allowance.

For more information, contact Jobcentre Plus.

In EEA countries, contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance is paid by the equivalent of Jobcentre Plus. There may be a delay in paying you.

## Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance

If you are going abroad permanently, you cannot get income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. If you are abroad for a temporary stay (that is, you are planning to return to the UK), this benefit can only be paid in special circumstances. For more information, contact Jobcentre Plus.

## Income Support

If you are getting income support, you must let Jobcentre Plus or your pension centre know you are planning to go abroad. If you are going abroad permanently, you cannot get Income Support.

If you are likely to be abroad for a year or less, you may be able to get Income Support for the first 4 weeks you are abroad.

You can only do this if you would still qualify for Income Support if you had stayed in the UK, and one or more of the following applies to you.

- You are a lone parent (a person raising a child on their own, regardless of whether they are married or in a civil partnership), a carer or are pregnant.
- You cannot work because of sickness or a disability and you have gone abroad only to get treatment for that sickness or disability.
- On the day you go abroad, you have not been able to work for a year because of sickness or a disability (or 28 weeks if you are terminally ill).
- You get a pensioner premium or disability premium for a partner who is going abroad with you. (Contact us for more information on pensioner premiums and disability premiums.)

You may be able to get Income Support for the first 8 weeks if:

- you, or you and a member of your family, are going abroad only to help a dependant child who is going abroad for medical treatment from a qualified person
- you are likely to be abroad for a year or less, and
- you would still qualify for Income Support if you had stayed in the UK.

If you are going abroad for medical treatment paid for by the NHS, you may continue to get Income Support for the length of your treatment.

If you qualify for Income Support, you will usually get the money when you return, unless you arrange for the payment to be sent to someone who has stayed in Great Britain, usually your partner. We will not send payments of Income Support to you while you are abroad.

## **Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit**

If you go abroad for a temporary stay, you may be able to continue to get Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for up to 13 weeks.

You can only do this if all of the following apply to you.

- You plan to come back and live in the same home.
- You will not be away for more than 13 weeks.
- You do not let or sublet your home to anyone else while you are away.

If you are going to be away from home for more than 2 or 3 weeks, always let your local council Housing Benefit section know.

In certain circumstances you may be able to continue getting Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for up to a year while you are abroad. For example, this could be if you are going abroad to receive approved medical care. Check with your local council's Housing Benefit section. Your Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit can only continue while you are abroad if you still qualify under the general rules.

## **Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance**

You must tell HM Revenue & Customs straight away if you, your child, children or all of you leave the UK permanently or for an absence that is likely to last for more than a year when you leave. If you are going abroad permanently but your child is staying in the UK and living with someone else, the person they are staying with should get in touch with HM Revenue & Customs and claim Child Benefit.

You will be treated as being abroad temporarily if your absence is unlikely to last for more than a year when you leave. If you go abroad temporarily, you can continue to get child benefit:

- for up to 8 weeks, whatever the reason for your absence
- for the first 12 weeks you are abroad if you go or stay abroad because you are, or a member of your family is, receiving treatment for an illness or disability or because a member of you family has died.

You must tell HM Revenue & Customs if you are going abroad longer than this.

If your child goes abroad for up to 12 weeks, you can continue to get Child Benefit for them for those 12 weeks. You must tell HM Revenue & Customs if your child is leaving the UK for more than 12 weeks. If your child is abroad for more than 12 weeks (but not permanently), you may still get Child Benefit if they are abroad only for one of the following reasons.

- To receive full-time education in an EEA country or Switzerland.
- For an educational visit that their school approves in writing.
- To get medical treatment for an illness that began before the child left the UK.

Special rules may apply if you are:

- leaving the UK to live or work in another EEA Country or Switzerland, or
- a UK Crown Servant posted overseas or their partner.

Please see the leaflet '**CH 5 notes**' (available from HM Revenue & Customs) for more information about leaving and arriving in the UK, or contact the Child Benefit Office for further information.



## Pension Credit

**You must let The Pension Service know if you intend to go abroad. You can do this by contacting your local pension centre.**

If you are going abroad permanently, you cannot get Pension Credit.

If your stay abroad is temporary, and you would still qualify for Pension Credit if you had stayed in Great Britain, you can continue to get Pension Credit for the first 4 weeks you are abroad. You can only do this if you are likely to be abroad for less than a year.

If you are going abroad for medical treatment paid for by the NHS, you can continue to get Pension Credit for the length of your treatment.

If you are taking a child abroad so they can have medical treatment from a qualified person, you may be able to get Pension Credit for up to 8 weeks if the child normally lives with you. (A child is someone who Child Benefit could be paid for). You can only do this if you are unlikely to be abroad for less than a year and you would still qualify for Pension Credit if you had stayed in Great Britain.

If you have your Pension Credit paid into an account, this can continue. If you do not have it paid into an account, you will usually get the money when you return to Great Britain, unless you arrange for your Pension Credit to be sent to someone who has stayed in Great Britain (usually your partner). We cannot send payments to you while you are abroad.

## **State Pension, Bereavement Allowance, Widowed Parent's Allowance, Widowed Mother's Allowance and Widow's Pension**

You can get these benefits if you go anywhere in the world. If you get WPA or WMA with an increase for a child, and go abroad permanently, you may only get the increase for your child if you are in an EEA country, or certain other countries which have a special agreement with the UK.

- If you go abroad permanently, you may only get yearly increases in your benefit if you are in an EEA country or some of the other countries which have a special agreement with the UK. Contact Jobcentre Plus and ask for a leaflet about the country you want to visit.

If you qualify, we will usually pay your benefit straight into your bank or building society account in the UK or your bank account abroad, if you have one. If this is not possible, we can pay your benefit by payable orders in pounds sterling direct to your address at the end of every 4 or 13 weeks.

If you are away for less than 2 years, we can pay your benefit as a lump sum when you return to the UK.

If your benefit is £5 a week or less and is paid once a year, we will continue to pay it in this way while you are abroad.

Your first payment after you leave the UK may be delayed, but we will make every effort to keep any delay as short as possible.

## Bereavement Payment

If you are entitled to a Bereavement Payment, you can get it anywhere in the world. If your partner dies while you are both abroad, you may only get a Bereavement Payment if:

- you qualify for Bereavement Allowance or Widowed Parent's Allowance, or
- you return to Great Britain permanently within 4 weeks of your partner's death.

Special rules may apply if you are in a country which has a special agreement with the UK, or one of the EEA countries.

If you qualify for a Bereavement Payment, this is a lump-sum, one-off payment. You can ask us to pay it into a bank or building society account or send it to your address. If you prefer, you can ask us to send it to someone else for you.

## Winter Fuel Payments

In some circumstances, we can pay Winter Fuel Payments to people living in the EEA or Switzerland. To qualify you must:

- have been entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment when you were living in the UK before moving to another EEA country or Switzerland, and
- be aged 60 or over during the relevant qualifying week for the winter you are claiming for. The qualifying week is the week beginning on the third Monday in September.

If you think you are eligible to continue to receive your payment outside the UK, you should contact the **Winter Fuel Payment Centre**. This will help us to pay you correctly. We may ask you to complete a claim form or ask you for further information.

The final deadline for returning the completed claim forms is **30 March** for that winter, for example, a claim for winter 2005/06 had to be made by 30 March 2006.

If you go abroad permanently to a country outside the EEA or Switzerland, you can receive a Winter Fuel Payment only if you were living in the UK during the relevant qualifying week for that winter. But you should tell us when you do leave the UK to make sure that we know where to send your payment.

For information on payments, contact the Winter Fuel Payment Centre.

## **Maternity Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance**

If you are going abroad permanently, you cannot usually get Maternity Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance. However, you may be able to get these benefits if you go to an EEA country or some other countries. To check which EEA countries you can receive benefits in, contact Jobcentre Plus and ask for a leaflet about the country you want to visit.

If your stay abroad is temporary, you can get Maternity Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance paid abroad for the first 26 weeks, as long as:

- you go abroad only for treatment of an illness or disability which begins before you go abroad (pregnancy is not counted as an illness), or
- you cannot work because of sickness or a disability for at least 6 months before you leave the UK, and you continue not to be able to work since then.

You may be able to get Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance paid abroad for more than 26 weeks if your stay abroad is temporary and you also get Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance.

If you usually have your benefit paid into a UK account, this can continue. If you usually collect your benefit at a post office from a post office bank account, the money that you receive will be held in that account until you return to the UK. You can only draw money out of this account from a post office in this country. If this is not possible, we can send a cheque (in sterling) to an address abroad at the end of every 4 weeks. For permanent absences, we can also make payments by Direct payment into a bank account in some countries outside the UK.

## Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)

If you work for a UK employer in the EEA, you will usually be able to get SMP as long as you qualify under the general rules. If you want information on the general rules, contact Jobcentre Plus and ask for leaflet **BC2** 'Expecting a baby?'. If you work outside the EEA, you may be able to get SMP if your employer pays National Insurance contributions for you.

If you qualify, your employer will arrange to pay your SMP.

## Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

If you work for a UK employer in the EEA, you will usually be able to get SSP as long as you qualify under the general rules. If you want information on the general rules, contact Jobcentre Plus and ask for leaflet **SD2**, 'Sick and unable to work?'

If you work outside the EEA, you may be able to get SSP if your employer pays National Insurance contributions for you.

Your employer will arrange to pay your SSP.

## Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance

If you are going abroad permanently, you cannot usually get Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance. However, if you started to get Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance before 1 June 1992, you may be able to carry on getting it if you live in the EEA or Switzerland.

If your stay abroad is temporary, you can usually continue getting Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance for 26 weeks. You may be able to continue getting Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance for longer if you are going abroad only for medical treatment for your illness or disability. Your stay, however, must still be temporary.

If you qualify and you have your benefit paid into an account, this can continue. Otherwise, we will save your benefit and pay it to you when you return to the UK.

## Carer's Allowance

If you are going abroad permanently, you cannot usually get Carer's Allowance. If your stay abroad is temporary, you can usually continue getting Carer's Allowance for 4 weeks.

- You may be able to continue getting Carer's Allowance for longer if you are going abroad only to help the person you care for, and the person can still be paid Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance. Your stay must still be temporary.
- You may also be able to continue getting Carer's Allowance if you started getting it before 1 June 1992 and you move permanently to a country in the EEA or Switzerland and the person you are caring for is also getting Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance.

If you qualify and you have your benefit paid into an account, this can continue. Otherwise, we will save your benefit and pay it to you when you return to the UK.

## Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

You can continue to get Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit anywhere in the world.

- If you are going abroad permanently, you cannot usually get Constant Attendance Allowance. However, if you go to an EEA country or certain other countries this may not be the case. Contact Jobcentre Plus and ask for a leaflet about the country you want to visit.

If you get Constant Attendance Allowance, you can continue to get it for 6 months if your stay abroad is temporary. This can be paid for longer in special circumstances. For more information, contact the International Pension Centre.

## Industrial Death Benefit

You can continue to get Industrial Death Benefit anywhere in the world.

The payment arrangements are the same as for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

## Reduced Earnings Allowance

If you are going to a country in the EEA, or certain other countries which have a special agreement with the UK, you can continue to get Reduced Earnings Allowance provided you continue to satisfy the normal conditions of entitlement.

If you qualify, we will pay your benefit at the end of every 4 weeks or every 13 weeks.

We can pay your benefit direct to your bank account in the UK.

We can also make payments into a bank account in some countries outside the UK.

If we cannot pay the benefit direct to your account, we can send you or your bank a cheque (in sterling) or we can pay your benefit to someone else for you.

# What do I do next?

Once you have decided to go abroad, you should let Jobcentre Plus or your local pension centre know that you are going before you leave the UK. This will make sure we can work out the benefits you are entitled to and make the appropriate payments.

**Remember, going abroad might affect your benefit, so you must let us know that you are going abroad.**

# How do I find out more?

If you want to find out more, please contact Jobcentre Plus or your local pension centre. You can find the contact details in your local phone book or at [www.pensionservice.gov.uk](http://www.pensionservice.gov.uk) or [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk).

## Useful contacts

### **Child Benefit**

HM Revenue & Customs,  
Child Benefit Office,  
PO Box 1  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE88 1AA  
Phone: 0845 302 1444  
Textphone: 0845 302 1474

### **International Pension Centre**

International Pension Centre,  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Tyneview Park,  
Benton,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE98 1BA  
Phone: 0191 218 7777  
(or 44 191 218 7777 when calling from abroad)  
Fax: 0191 218 3836  
E-mail: TVP-IPC-Customer-Care@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk

### **Pension Credit**

The Pension Service  
0845 60 60 265

### **Winter Fuel**

Winter Fuel Payment Centre,  
Southgate House,  
Cardiff Central  
Royal Mail,  
Cardiff CF91 1ZH  
Phone: 029 2042 8635  
(8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)  
(or 44 29 2042 8635 when calling from abroad)  
Website: [www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel](http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel)

This leaflet is available in Welsh and other languages (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Punjabi, Somali, Urdu and Vietnamese), as well as in large print, in Braille and on audio cassette. Contact Jobcentre Plus for more details.

Remember that this leaflet is a guide only. It is not meant to say exactly what your legal rights are. While we have tried to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown on the cover, it is possible that there may be incorrect information or some items may be oversimplified. Also, please remember that the information in this leaflet is likely to become less accurate over time, for example because of changes to the law.

Go to **[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)** for the latest and widest range of information for the public.

