

## Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

ESA was introduced in October 2008, to replace all other "Sickness Benefits" for new claimants. Existing claimants of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Income Support granted on incapacity grounds, will all be re-assessed under ESA rules, between April 2011 & March 2014.

### There are 2 types of ESA:

1. Contribution-related ESA – you must have paid enough National Insurance (NI) contributions  
**OR** - you must be under 20 yrs (under 25 in certain circumstances) & satisfy special youth rules.
2. Income-related ESA – this is means tested so depends on your income & savings. If you have a partner, their income will be taken into account.

### To apply for ESA [Form ESA1] - you can make a claim in 3 ways:

([http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/WorkingAgeBenefits/Dev\\_015412.xml.html](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/WorkingAgeBenefits/Dev_015412.xml.html))

1. Telephone application: ring **0800 055 6688** (8am - 6pm Mon-Fri) / textphone: 0800 023 4888  
*The call will take about 40 minutes. Have all relevant details at hand when you call (rent/ mortgage; past/present employment; income; savings; National Insurance number)*
2. Online application: (register first on website) <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/eservice>
3. Postal Application: download a form – 2 options
  - i. *Print out/ complete by pen*: (from directgov website as option not given on jobcentreplus site) [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/esa/DG\\_172014](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/esa/DG_172014)
  - ii. *Complete on screen/ print out*: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/claimforms/esa1.pdf>

### ESA - Claim Process

- First 13 weeks (Assessment Phase) – after completing the application form:  
You will receive a basic flat rate of benefit, with a reduced rate for people under 25 yrs.
  - you must complete a "Limited Capability for Work" questionnaire (ESA50)
  - you will be probably be asked to attend a medical examination
- After 13 weeks - you will have either been refused or been accepted for ESA
  - If refused ESA - you must "sign-on" for work & claim Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA)
  - If accepted for ESA - you will have had a "limited capability for work-related activity" assessment and then been placed in one of 2 groups:
    - ▶ **either** the "***Work-Related Activity Group***" (WRA)  
... you must meet strict rules to get benefit or it will be reduced - you must have:
      - 5 further work-focused interviews (monthly) with a personal adviser to help you make an "*action plan*" (*activities to undertake to help you move towards work*)
      - an annual work-focused follow-up interview
    - ▶ **OR** the "***Support Group***"  
... there no conditions to fulfil in order to remain on benefit  
... you can still volunteer for work-related activities & access available support
- Rates of benefit - if you remain on ESA after 13 weeks
  - your ESA will increase - the Support group will get slightly more than the WRA group
  - you may also qualify for additional income-related premiums, to top up your ESA, depending on your circumstances (e.g. if you have DLA and live independently)

**NB: From April 2012, contribution-related ESA will only be paid for 1 year, to people placed in the WRA Group. They may still be entitled to means-tested ESA, depending on their income. This time limit will not apply to the Support Group who will still be able to get ESA based on NI contributions.**

### Employment and Support Allowance & Cystic Fibrosis

Our experience, at Heartlands, is that quite a few people are refused ESA & told they are fit for work. Most of those awarded ESA are assessed as having some capacity to work and placed in the WRA group. A year later, some have been reassessed & found fit for work so told they must now claim JSA. Only a minority have been assessed as having no capacity to work again and been placed in the Support Group, mostly people with very poor health who have had to stop working, on medical advice.