

What is a Short Term Benefit Advance?

1. A Short Term Benefit Advance (STBA) replaces an Interim Payment from 1st April 2013. Interim payments MUST NOT be made from this date. The Interim Payment functionality will still exist on the JSAPS system. This MUST NOT be used under any circumstances.
2. A Short Term Benefit Advance is processed via the STBA Template, which may be accessed via the Handover Telephony Tool (HOTT) icon available on your computer Desktop screen. All action taken is recorded on the various tabs of the template.
3. A Short Term Benefit Advance (STBA) is designed to provide financial support for claimants in the form of an advance of some or all of their benefit.
4. An STBA is an advance of JSA made to a claimant who declares a financial need which may result in a serious risk to their health and/or welfare of them or their family.
5. Advances will be limited to 60% of their personal allowance prior to their first benefit week ending date and 100% of their personal allowance from their first benefit week ending.
6. Any advance paid at the 60% rate will be expected to be repaid over a twelve week period, by deductions from ongoing benefit payments. Advances paid at the 100% rate will be recovered immediately from arrears.

Financial Need

7. STBA's are an important way of alleviating financial need which may result in a serious risk to our claimant's health and/or welfare of them or their family.
8. In the context of STBA's, our intervention means that the claimant or any family member in respect of whom the claim is made may avoid financial difficulties.
9. When considering an urgent need request, think especially about:
 - any physical or mental health issues that might increase the risk of their urgent need; and
 - establish the likely date a payment of normal benefit can be made and the claimant understands the knock on effect the interim payment will have on their next benefit payment.

Who can decide to make a Short Term Benefit Advance

10. The assessment will be made by:
 - a Benefit Processor for assessing the likelihood that the claimant satisfies the conditions of entitlement for benefit and can afford to repay the advance in the normal timescale
 - a Decision Maker for deciding on Financial need, the amount to advance and agreeing the repayments with the claimant.

Deciding whether to make a Short Term Benefit Advance or refer for local crisis support

11. If the only reason that the claimant is in urgent need is the time taken to action their JSA claim ensure the claim is processed as soon as possible.

12. If a decision to award benefit is about to be made, give this priority.

13. The case could be 'Live' but payment not due because they haven't reached their pay week.

14. In these cases a Short Term Benefit Advance may still be considered if the claimant has declared a financial need which may result in a serious risk to their health and/or welfare of them or their family.

15. You must be satisfied that the claimant is or may be entitled to JSA once all information has been gathered.

16. Do not wait until all the evidence to support the claim has been provided, [unless the claimant is refusing to provide information without good reason](#).

17. If it is likely the conditions for benefit entitlement will be met continue to process as in the [Short Term Benefit Advance Guidance \(link is external\)](#).

18. If the delay in deciding the claim is due to administrative delays in Jobcentre Plus, for example delays in arranging interviews, give the claimant the benefit of the doubt about any information they have not yet had the chance to provide.

19. An STBA may be considered if:

- a claimant has not had a New Jobseeker Interview; and/or
- documentary evidence of ID has not yet been produced and/or
- a specialist decision is outstanding.

20. Always consider if an immediate payment of JSA or a Short Term Benefit Advance can be made in addition to providing information about other support available locally from the [District Provision Tool](#).

Note: If during the course of a conversation the claimant enquires about the possibility of an urgent payment consider the possibility of an STBA. Their enquiry and plea for help may lead to an offer, depending on the circumstances, for an STBA, or information about other support.

Request made at First Contact

21. If the claimant makes contact through the service centre telephony, all emergency payment requests for new claims will result in the completion of the STBA Template via HOTT for referral to the service centre processing.

22. Service centre telephony are not able to advise whether the STBA request will succeed. The benefit centre processor must [establish if benefit entitlement is likely](#).

When to consider a Short Term Benefit Advance

23 An STBA may be appropriate when:

- the claimant declares a financial need which may result in a serious risk to their health and/or welfare of them or their family; and
- a claim for benefit has been made but it cannot be determined immediately, for example further information is needed; or

- a decision to award benefit has been made but benefit cannot be paid immediately, for example a breakdown in the computer payment system.
24. A STBA payment may be considered where the claimant has made a new claim or reported a change of circumstances at any point in the claim process.
25. This may be;
- when a claimant writes into or attends the local office to make a claim for benefit rather than telephoning the service centre telephony
 - if the claimant expresses urgent need during the FA/PA interview.
26. A claimant does not need to make an application for an STBA in writing but as soon as it is evident an STBA may be applicable, the STBA template, accessed via HOTT should be completed.
27. If a claimant states they will be in urgent need if they do not receive an immediate payment consider making an STBA, unless it is clear that there would be no entitlement to benefit.
28. When considering an STBA, treat each case on its own merits. Take an objective common sense approach when deciding whether benefit is likely to be awarded.
29. For an STBA to succeed you must also [assess the affordability](#) of the claimant to make repayments within the required timescale.
30. This action is important to both your own and the Decision Makers assessment of whether an STBA may be allowed or not. If you decide from information gathered that an award cannot be made continue action to make [Initial contact with the claimant](#) to update them.

When may a Short Term Benefit Advance be payable

31. When it is established that the conditions of entitlement and the affordability of repayments is likely arrange the [handover to the DM](#) for processing.
32. The [DM will make a decision whether to approve an advance](#). The decision makers will be based at four sites around the country. They will not have access to the HBS systems.
33. Once their decision is made the case will be referred back to the benefit processor to make any due payment and update HBS. See [making an STBA payment](#) and [action to record STBA](#).
- Note:** The minimum amount of money which should be paid via CPS Local Payment is £10, unless both the Decision Maker and the approver are satisfied that failing to make this payment will lead to the claimant being in a crisis situation. Advances for amounts under £10 may therefore be considered.

Setting a reminder to enter recovery action.

34. Set a “user set case control” in [JA530 Maintain Case Control](#) on JSAPS or a clerical control in a separate run for clerical cases to ensure the STBA template is retrieved after payment.
35. The control needs to record when the recovery action should commence.
36. This should be the second full benefit week following the STBA, set the case control in advance, if possible, to give time for recovery action to be implemented.

When may a Short Term Benefit Advance not be payable

37. When considering a Short Term Benefit Advance the following must be considered which may show that an advance could not be paid ;

- if conditions are satisfied for the actual benefit award to be made and benefit can be paid which would resolve the crisis situation (if the first payday has not been reached but an award has been made – consider an STBA if appropriate)
- where it is unlikely that the claimant will be entitled to JSA. To decide that benefit is not likely to be awarded there would need to be a significant level of doubt.
- if the claimant cannot afford to pay back the advance in the repayment period
- an STBA will not be appropriate if the claimant has been asked for information to support the claim but has not provided that information and there is nothing to prevent it being provided.
- if a claimant has been suspended, sanctioned or has appealed against a decision to disallow JSA, an STBA should not, in any circumstances, be considered. The purpose of an STBA is not to avoid the effects of the normal decision-making and appeals process. In this event consider the possibility of a [JSA Hardship Award](#).

Note: Benefit processors have discretion when completing the STBA template. Always consider each case on its individual merits and provide all relevant information on the template to aid the decision makers' determination.

38. Where a claimant is not eligible for an STBA or no contact could be made with the claimant or the claimant has refused the STBA offered, print the STBA request template and store it in line with [JSA document retention guidance](#).

Appeal Rights

39. There is no right of appeal against:

- the amount of an STBA payment; or
- refusal to pay an STBA payment.

40. However, the claimant can ask for the decision to be reconsidered and ultimately the decision can be challenged through the courts by judicial review.

Effect on accuracy targets

41. Short Term Benefit Advances are not payments of benefit and are not subject to the accuracy rules relating to individual benefits.

42. Once a benefit claim is fully processed any accuracy check will examine whether the STBA payment has been correctly assessed and recovered.

43. The dates and repayment periods of STBAs themselves are not part of the benefit specific accuracy checks.

44. Checks will be made on the quality of decision making and telephony.