Replacing therapeutic work with new permitted work rules

From 8 April 2002, there are new more flexible rules for people who want to try paid work while they are getting any of the following because of illness or disability:
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- National Insurance credits
- Income Support.

The work you are allowed to do is called permitted work. The new rules mean it will be much easier for you to try paid work without it affecting your benefit entitlement.

Do not worry if you are already doing therapeutic work when the rules change. You may be able to carry on doing it until April 2003. After that you can consider doing permitted work straight away. We will send you an application form nearer the time.

We use therapeutic work to mean work that we have agreed you can do while you are getting benefit because your doctor thinks that it will help your medical condition. This can also include work as part of a hospital treatment programme or in a sheltered workshop.
About permitted work

You can

- work for less than 16 hours a week, on average, and earn up to £66 a week for 26 weeks, and

- extend this for another 26 weeks if you are working with a person who works for, or provides a service to, the Department for Work and Pensions (formerly the Department of Social Security) or the Social Security Agency in Northern Ireland, and they agree that an extension will help you towards work of 16 hours or more a week. This person could be a Job Broker, a Disability Employment Adviser or a Personal Adviser, or

- work and earn up to £20 a week, at any time, for as long as you are on the benefit, or

- do supported permitted work and earn up to £66 a week for as long as you are on the benefit.

We use supported permitted work to mean work that is supervised by someone who is employed by a public or local authority, or a voluntary organisation, whose job it is to arrange work for people with disabilities. This could be work done in the community or in a sheltered workshop. It also includes work as part of a hospital treatment programme.

How does permitted work affect my benefit?

- Permitted work will not affect your Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or your right to National Insurance credits.

- Permitted work will only affect your Income Support, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit if your earnings are more than a set amount a week.

- You can continue to get Disability Living Allowance while you are doing permitted work.

- You will no longer need to get a doctor to agree that the work will help your medical condition, but you should tell the office that deals with your benefit before you start work. You should fill in an application form before you do any permitted work.

What if I am doing therapeutic work now or have recently stopped?

If you are doing therapeutic work on 7 April 2002, you may be able to carry on until 6 April 2003. After that you may be able to do permitted work straight away, under the new rules. We will send you a reminder and an application form nearer the time.

If you stop doing therapeutic work on or after 10 February 2002 and start again within 8 weeks, you may also be able to keep doing it until April 2003. For more information, ask at the office that deals with your benefit.

To make sure that we have the latest information about the work that we have agreed you can do, we would like to update our information about the work you are doing now or have recently stopped doing. Please fill in the enclosed form within 21 days of receiving this letter.
Replacing therapeutic work with new permitted work rules – continued

Send it back to the office that deals with your benefit. You can get a reply envelope from your local post office.

If you have any questions or worries about filling in this form, contact the office that deals with your benefit or speak to your support worker or benefits adviser.

If you live abroad, some of the permitted work rules may be different. If you want to know more about permitted work for people living abroad, write to

Pensions and Overseas Directorate
Incapacity Benefit Section
Room TC013
Tyneview Park
Whitley Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE98 1BA.

More help and advice

If you are thinking about trying some work we can put you in touch with a specially approved Job Broker who will discuss the best job options to suit you. At the same time we can help you prepare for interviews and support you when you start work.

For more information about the Job Broker service in England, Scotland and Wales, you can contact New Deal for Disabled People on 0800 137 177. Lines are open from 7.00am to 11.00pm. People with speech or hearing problems using a textphone can dial 0800 435 550. Or visit our website. The address is www.newdeal.gov.uk

If you want more information about permitted work or an application form, get in touch with the Incapacity Benefit section at the office that deals with your benefit.

For your nearest social security office, look for the Benefits Agency display advert in the business number section of the phone book.

You can also get in touch with an advice centre like the Citizens Advice Bureau. You will find their phone number and address in the phone book.

If you are in Northern Ireland and you want more information about permitted work, get in touch with the Incapacity Benefits Branch of the Social Security Agency. For more information about the Job Broker or Personal Adviser services contact New Deal for Disabled People. Their phone number is 028 90 257 501.

If you are overseas, get in touch with the Pensions and Overseas Directorate at the address shown above.