



## **A New Future for Social Security: Consultation on Social Security in Scotland**

### **National Carers Organisation Briefings: Briefing Two: Carers Allowance**

The Scotland Act 2016 will devolve a number of social security powers to the Scottish Parliament. This includes powers over a number of benefits. These include:

- **Disability benefits for people of all ages.** These are: disability living allowance, personal independence payment, attendance allowance, industrial injuries disablement benefit and severe disablement allowance.
- **Carers Allowance**
- **The Regulated Social Fund** – this includes Cold Weather Payments, funeral payments, the Sure Start Maternity Grant and winter fuel payments.
- **Discretionary Housing Payments**
- Some flexibility over **Universal Credit**, for example, the ability to pay housing costs direct to landlords, payment frequency and split household payments.

The Scottish Government is consulting on a developing a new social security system for Scotland. This consultation looks at how we can best use these powers in the short, long and medium term, including in creating a developing support in the areas of social security that are being devolved. You can read the full consultation at <http://consult.scotland.gov.uk/social-security/social-security-in-scotland>

The national carer organisations are gathering carers' views directly and we have produced summary versions of relevant sections in the consultation to help you get involved. This is the third briefing which covers Carer's Allowance. The other briefings can be found on each of the national carer organisation websites and on the Carers Trust Scotland website at <http://carers.org/scotland>

We have also produced a survey of key questions which will help us inform our response to the Scottish Government. This can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SocSec16>

We are supporting events for carers to discuss the issues. A number of local carers' centres will be holding discussion sessions and we are also facilitating some national events. If you would like to find out more about attending an event, in the first instance please contact Claire Cairns at the Coalition of Carers in Scotland [coalition@carersnet.org](mailto:coalition@carersnet.org)

**This briefing focuses on Carers Allowance and the suggestions within the consultation paper for how this can be changed.**

The Scottish Government recognises that carers make an immense contribution to our society by caring for family, friends and neighbours who are disabled or in poor health. There

are around 759,000 unpaid adult carers in Scotland, but only a small proportion of them – 67,050 – receive Carers Allowance. The Scottish Government are in favour of recognising the essential contribution that carers make and how this can be recognised through the benefits system.

### **Operation of the existing benefit**

- The current eligibility requirements for Carers Allowance are that the recipient must:
- Be aged 16 or over
- Spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who qualifies for certain disability benefits (Personal Independence Payment daily living component; Disability Allowance middle or high care rate; Attendance Allowance; Constant Attendance Allowance at or above the normal maximum rate with an Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit; Constant Attendance Allowance at the basic rate with a war disablement pension; Armed Forces Independence Payment)
- Not earn more than £110 per week (after deductions)
- Not be in full-time education

40 per cent of carers who are eligible for Carers Allowance do not receive it because they also receive another income replacement benefit such as the State Pension, contributory Jobseekers Allowance or contributory Employment and Support Allowance. People receiving Universal Credit who are also caring for at least 35 hours a week may also qualify for extra money (the carer element).

Carers Allowance is exempt from the benefit cap as of November 2015.

### **Proposals for a future Scottish carer benefit**

The UK Government pays Carers Allowance at a rate of £62.10 per week. The Scottish Government has stated that it is unfair that Carers Allowance is the lowest of all working age benefits and have committed to increasing Carers Allowance so that it is paid at the same level as Jobseekers Allowance (£73.10 per week for jobseekers aged 25 and over). Eligible carers will get around £600 more per year.

The Scottish Government are committed to embedding financial support and recognition for carers into their wider strategy for supporting carers set out in the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.

### **Short to medium term proposals**

- The increase in Carers Allowance will be implemented 'as soon as practicable', taking into account financial, legal and delivery issues.
- The Scottish Government is also exploring the possibility of a Young Carers Allowance, and are currently mapping the financial and non-financial provision for young carers in order to gather evidence on the potential for this.
- In the short term, the Scottish Government would also like to focus on improving carers' experience of receiving benefits so that people are treated with dignity and respect, can easily access help and advice, and feel that the application process for benefits is quick and user-friendly. Services will also be joined up more effectively, so that carers can access a range of carer support and other services such as health and social care, employment support and reserved benefits.
- The Scottish Government also intend to look at the potential for alternatives to cash payments for carers to help reduce the costs of caring, such as reduced utility tariffs.

These would always be a choice, rather than being the only option, and would require exchange of some Carers Allowance in return for the in-kind benefit.

### **Longer term proposals**

- Proposals for devolving certain benefits to the Scottish Parliament provided flexibility to change the definition of a carer for the purposes of paying a benefit. The rules relating to the starting and stopping of Carers Allowance (including taking a break from caring, travelling abroad, if the person being cared for goes into hospital or residential care, or if the person being cared for dies) could be changed if the definition of a carer is changed. The current definition of a carer also limits a carers' capacity to study or work, and this could also be changed.

### **More information**

Full consultation: <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/social-security/social-security-in-scotland>

Additional briefings on disability benefits and general principles:

### **Contacts**

We are happy to provide further information on any of the above. If you have any questions or would like more details, please contact one of the following individuals:

Fiona Collie, Carers Scotland [Fiona.collie@carerscotland.org](mailto:Fiona.collie@carerscotland.org)

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