

Scottish Carer's Assistance: Independent Analysis of Responses to Consultation Easy Read

November 2022

Scottish Carer's Assistance

Consultation Results



Easy Read Version

Introduction

~~CARER'S ALLOWANCE~~
SCOTTISH CARER'S ASSISTANCE

Scottish Carer's Assistance will replace Carer's Allowance for unpaid carers in Scotland.



The Scottish Government asked people what they thought about plans for Scottish Carer's Assistance. This is called a consultation.



The consultation was open from February until May 2022. Almost 200 people and organisations gave their opinions. Nearly all of the people who took part were unpaid carers or worked in an organisation which supports carers.



The reason for the consultation was to tell people about a new Scottish benefit called Scottish Carer's Assistance and ask how it could work better for carers. The consultation asked 48 questions. Questions were split into three sections.

Section 1. Scottish Carer's Assistance from the start

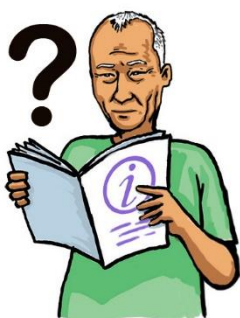


This section asked for views on the ways that Scottish Carer's Assistance could be improved from the start to suit carer's needs.

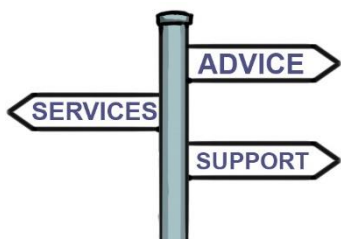
People were asked how Scottish Carer's Assistance can work better for carers.



People said there should be different ways for carers to speak to Social Security Scotland when they first apply. It should be possible to ask questions or pass on information by telephone or online.



The process of getting the benefit should be simple to use and understand. Some Carer's Allowance rules are complicated, and these should be easier for Scottish Carer's Assistance.



Carers should be told about other support they can get. There should be more choices and different ways to get payments. People said these should be monthly or weekly payments.

People were asked what support Scottish Carer's Assistance could link to.

People said there could be better links to:



- carer centres for information and support



- social work and social services

- mental health support and services



- local authorities

- welfare and advice services like the Citizens Advice Bureaux



- GP practices and hospitals.

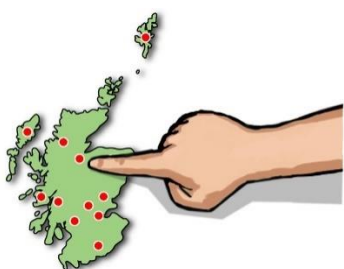


People said it should be easy for carers to find useful information on computer systems.

People were asked about the rules on where someone should live to get Scottish Carer's Assistance.



Most people agreed with the rule that people would need to be living in Scotland.



Some people said that both the carer and the person they care for should have to live in Scotland to get the benefit. This is because it would be difficult to care for someone who did not live in the same country, unless they both lived near the Scottish border.

People were asked about the amount of time people should have been living here to get Scottish Carer's Assistance.

Most people agreed with this rule as it would mean Scottish Carer's Assistance rules would be the same as other Scottish benefits.

People were asked if they agreed with the timescales for re-determinations and appeals.



A re-determination is when someone disagrees with a decision that Social Security Scotland have made and asks for it to be looked at again.



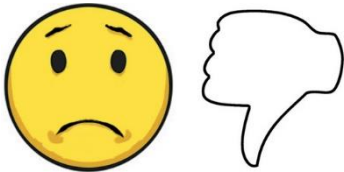
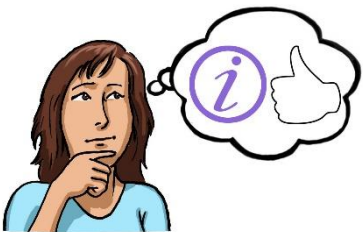
A carer would have 42 days to ask for a re-determination after a decision was made on their application.

Social Security Scotland would then have 56 days to look at the application again and decide.



At the moment there is no set time limit for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to carry out re-determination requests for Carer's Allowance.

Most people agreed that clear timescales were fair. Some people said the timescales would give carers time to gather information and seek advice if they needed to.



Some people said it was unfair that Social Security Scotland would have a longer time to decide on a re-determination than carers would have to request one.

People were asked if they agreed with Scottish Carer's Assistance being stopped in some situations.



This could happen when Scottish Security Scotland have asked a carer for more information and this has not been given on time. This is called a suspension.



Mostly people agreed that Scottish Carer's Assistance should be stopped. Some said that this would help to protect carers from overpayments which might need to be paid back.



Some people disagreed and said payments should not be suspended for any reason or only in rare situations.

Stopping carers' awards could cause stress. Some people said payments should continue while the carer's situation is sorted out because carers will still be caring.

People were asked what should happen to the payments of Scottish Carer's Assistance when the cared for person's disability benefit is stopped for a short time.



Some people disagreed with stopping Scottish Carer's Assistance when the cared for person goes into the hospital. Carers might continue doing tasks such as laundry, providing medicine and visiting the cared for person in the hospital.

People said that stopping benefits could be stressful for the carer and the cared for person because of less money.

People were asked if they agreed with the Scottish Governments reasons for setting Scottish Carer's Assistance to £0 in some situations, rather than ending it. This is also known as a 'nil award'.

£0

Most people agreed with setting awards to £0 in some situations. This would be instead of an award being stopped.



This would mean that carers would not have to reapply for the benefit if they would become entitled to it again soon after it stopped. People said that £0 payments would avoid overpayments and be less stressful.



over 4 weeks

Some people disagreed with £0 payments in some situations such as when the cared for person is in the hospital for more than 4 weeks. People said their caring role continues while the cared for person is in the hospital.

People were asked if they agreed with the Scottish Government's plans to pay Scottish Carer's Assistance when the cared for person is receiving short-term assistance.



Short-term assistance is new and will give people financial support when they are challenging a decision to reduce or stop some benefits.



Most people agreed with these plans. People said that carers will continue providing care when the cared for person's disability benefits has been stopped or challenged.



People said that short-term assistance would help to protect the carer's money and other benefits. It would be good for the carer and the cared for person.

Section 2. Extra money for carers in Scotland

**CARER'S ALLOWANCE
SUPPLEMENT**
+
**SCOTTISH CARER'S
ASSISTANCE**



Carer's Allowance Supplement helps to increase the money carers get if they receive Carer's Allowance now or Scottish Carer's Assistance in the future. It is paid twice a year to carers who are living in Scotland.

This section also asked people if they would like to be paid Carer's Allowance Supplement at the same time as Scottish Carer's Assistance or if they would like two payment every year, as it is now.

People were asked if they agree that Carer's Allowance Supplement should be paid with Scottish Carer's Assistance.



Most people agreed that Carer's Allowance Supplement payments should be paid with regular payments of Scottish Carer's Assistance and that regular payments would help with finances.

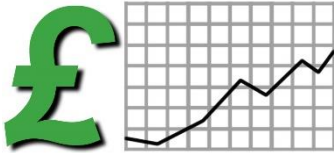


Some people said that the carer should have a choice on how they receive their payments either twice a year or all through the year.

Some people said that receiving the Carer's Allowance Supplement in two payments is good. The reason being that it helps with unexpected bills and Christmas shopping.



People liked that the Scottish Government had introduced the payment because it makes them feel valued as a carer.



Some people said that Carer's Allowance Supplement should be paid to all carers and the payments should be higher.

People were asked if they agree with the idea of Carer's Additional Person Payment.



This would be a new payment from the Scottish Government to give extra support to people who care for more than one person who get a disability benefit. It would be £10 per week.



Most people agreed with the plans on who should be able to get Carer's Additional Person Payment. They said the payment would help to recognise the extra work that carers do when caring for more than one person.



Some people thought the payment should be more. People thought that the payment would not make up for the extra work carers do.

People were asked if they agreed that Carer's Additional Person Payment would be paid with Scottish Carer's Assistance, either weekly or every four weeks.



Most people agreed with this idea. They said paying it this way would be less confusing and avoid overpayments.

People were asked if they agreed that Carer's Additional Person Payment should be targeted at carers who are getting payments of Scottish Carer's Assistance.



Most people agreed with this idea. People said that this was fair and that carers caring for more than one person should get extra support.



They also said that caring for more than one person takes a lot of time and work, so these carers should get even more support.



Some people disagreed with targeting Carer's Additional Person Payments to those who are getting Scottish Carer's Assistance payments. They said it should also be paid to carers who have 'underlying entitlement' to Scottish Carer's Assistance.



When carers have 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance, it usually means that they get another 'overlapping benefit' which is paid at a higher amount instead. Many of these carers get State Pension instead of Carer's Allowance.



People also said that it is important for the Scottish Government to work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to make sure that carers are supported and do not have other benefits reduced by getting extra money.

Section 3: Changes to Scottish Carer's Assistance

~~CARER'S ALLOWANCE~~

SCOTTISH CARER'S ASSISTANCE

This section asked about changes which could be made to Scottish Carer's Assistance in the future. The Scottish Government has said it won't make any big changes until all carers who are getting Carer's Allowance now are getting Scottish Carer's Assistance instead. This is to make sure everyone is treated fairly.

People were asked if they agreed that carers in full-time education should get Scottish Carer's Assistance.



Almost everyone agreed with this. People said that this would help carers in education to get extra help and recognition for their caring role.



People said that this would give carers the chance to learn and would help with their mental and physical wellbeing. It would also give them a better chance of starting a career in the future when their caring role ends.

People were asked if they agreed with plans to allow carers to add together hours spent caring.



This would mean carers could add together the hours they spend caring for two people up to the 35 hours needed to get Scottish Carer's Assistance.



Most people agreed with this change. They said that this would help to better recognise that not all caring roles are the same.



Some said people should be able to get Scottish Carer's Assistance based on the number of hours they spent caring, not the number of people they care for.

Some thought this could make claiming more complicated and some asked for hours of care to be less than 35 hours per week.

People were asked if they agreed with plans to keep paying Scottish Carer's Assistance for 12 weeks after the death of a cared for person.



8 weeks

At the moment Carer's Allowance is paid for 8 weeks after the death of a cared for person and then it stops.



Most people agreed with the change to 12 weeks. This would give people more time to grieve and get used to this big change in their life.



People also said that this change would mean less financial stress for carers. It would give carers time to get the support they need after this big change.



Some people thought that the amount of time Scottish Carer's Assistance is paid after the death of a cared for person should be longer in special cases.



Some people disagreed with the change and thought 8 weeks of support was enough time.

People were asked if they agreed with plans to keep paying Scottish Carer's Assistance for 12 weeks when a cared for person goes into hospital.



over 4 weeks

At the moment and in most cases Carer's Allowance is paid for 4 weeks after the cared for person goes into hospital and then it stops.



Most people agreed with this change. Some people said that when the cared for person goes into hospital, the caring role does not stop and can sometimes increase.



Carers might also face extra costs like transport to and from the hospital. People said that more support for carers is needed at a time like this to cover general living expenses.



Some thought that 12 weeks was not long enough and that this should be longer, or this could be done in special cases.



12 weeks

Some people were worried that at the moment re-applying for Carer's Allowance can take up to 12 weeks. This can be difficult as the carers still have their caring roles. It could be difficult if this was the same for Scottish Carer's Assistance.

People were asked if they agreed with plans to raise the earnings limit for the Scottish Carer's Assistance, which would allow carers to work and earn more and still receive Scottish Carer's Assistance.



£132 a week

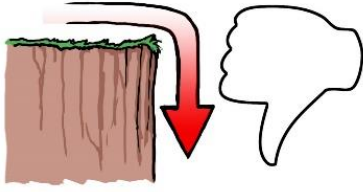
At the moment carers can earn £132 a week through paid work. If they earn £1 over this limit they lose their whole Carer's Allowance award. This is sometimes known as the earnings 'cliff edge'.



Most people agreed with this change. People said it was difficult for carers to live off Carer's Allowance alone and that working stopped them from falling into poverty.



Many people said it was good for them to work as it gave them a life outside of caring and helped their mental health. Many people said the earnings limit should go up.



People said that the current earnings limit was too low and that the cut off (or 'cliff edge') was not fair. People said that there could be a gradual process for when carers earn above the limit. Meaning their award would go down slowly, rather than stop completely.



Most people disagreed with the current earnings limit. Many carers said that they are not able to get Carer's Allowance as they earn just above the limit. This means that many carers miss out on job opportunities because they fear it would stop the benefit.

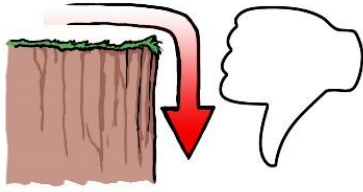


People also said that the current system also did not consider that some people's earnings can change from week to week. Some people said the earnings limit should be removed completely.

People were asked if they agreed with the idea of a 'run on' of Scottish Carer's Assistance after a carer earns over the earnings limit.



Most people agreed with this idea. They said that it would be helpful for people whose income changes from week to week. This would mean their award would not be stopped immediately and they would not need to reapply if their earnings go back down again soon after this.



They also said that this would help to reduce the earnings 'cliff edge' and this would make it easier for the carer to adapt to any changes in their award or employment as they would have more money and stability.

People were asked if they agreed that the Scottish Government should look at a new payment for long term carers.



This could help to recognise a wider group of carers for their caring roles. This includes those who could not get Scottish Carer's Assistance because they get another benefit which cannot be paid at the same time like State Pension.

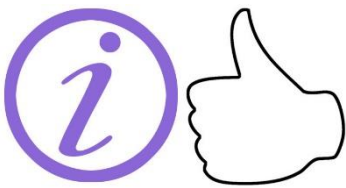


Most agreed with this idea. Some people said that carers who care for someone on a longer term basis usually have to give up important life opportunities to care, which means they should get something to make up for this.

People were asked if they had any other views about Scottish Carer's Assistance.



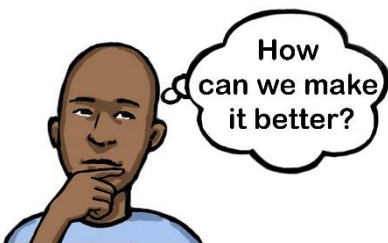
People made several comments and suggestions, including the following:



Work should be done to raise awareness of Scottish Carer's Assistance so that all carers in Scotland can apply.



Other benefits should be offered to unpaid carers, such as free dental care, TV licences and eye care.



Many people thought that the current rules for Carer's Allowance are too strict. People suggested ways to make the rules work better.



Some people were worried that Scottish Carer's Assistance could make changes to their other benefits and wanted to make sure that this did not happen.

Impact assessments



The last section of the consultation asked how Scottish Carer's Assistance could affect different groups of people and businesses. The Scottish Government want Scottish Carer's Assistance to work for everyone and need to think about how changes affect those with protected characteristics.



Protected characteristics include age, disability, race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, and religion or beliefs.

People were asked about the effects that Scottish Carer's Assistance may have on groups with protected characteristics.



Most people said that Social Security Scotland seemed to be a fairer system which cares more about people and equality.

Gender



People said that caring roles are usually taken on by women, with around two-thirds of people getting Carer's Allowance in Scotland being women.



One organisation said that single parents are most likely to be women and that they will be more likely to need benefits and also experience poverty.



People also said that women from other cultures may care for family members but would not think of themselves as carers and this means they do not apply for support.



It is also important to think about language barriers that stop some people from getting social security.

Age



A small number of people said that it is harder for an older person to care for someone. Some people said people receiving State Pension should be able to get Scottish Carer's Assistance. Some people also said that children under 16 should get Scottish Carer's Assistance.

Disability



People said that there are many overlapping benefits like Employment and Support Allowance which can mean that carers cannot get Carer's Allowance.

People should be made aware of this when applying for any support.



Those who suffer with health conditions may need more support and may rely on carers.

Race



People said that people from ethnic minorities should be encouraged to apply for support they are entitled to. Information and support on Scottish Carer's Assistance needs to be in different languages to help people whose first language is not English.

Sexual orientation



People said that those who are LGBT+ may not want to share their sexual identity or relationship with the cared for person and this should be thought of when planning the benefit.

Island communities



People were asked if they had any views on the impact of Scottish Carer's Assistance on Island communities. People said:

- There should be more support and services for carers.
- There is not as much support and it can be lonely.
- There is not as much help from social care so it can be harder to care for those living there.
- The cost of living is higher in Island communities.

Reducing inequality



People were asked if they had any views on the impact of Scottish Carer's Assistance on reducing inequality. People said:

People said:

- Carers need to be supported and recognised.
- Carers should have an equal quality of life with non-carers.
- Carers should get extra benefits like free travel, TV licences, or health checks to reduce some of the disadvantages they face.
- More information should be given on the services and support carers can access.

Children's rights and wellbeing



People were asked if they had any views on the impact of Scottish Carer's Assistance on children's rights and wellbeing.



People said that the safety of young carers and children comes first and should be considered in any decision-making so that they are protected.

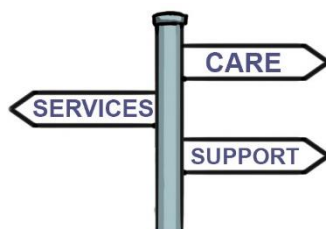


People also said:

- Young carers should get more recognition and help.

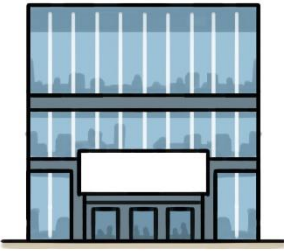


- Removing education barriers is very good for young carers and makes sure they do not have to make a choice between education and caring.



- The Scottish Government should work with young carer organisations to give more support.

Businesses



People were asked if they had any views on the impact of Scottish Carer's Assistance on businesses.



People said that it is important that all businesses understand what a caring role is and the impact it can have on someone and their ability to work. Businesses need to be more flexible with how they help carers.

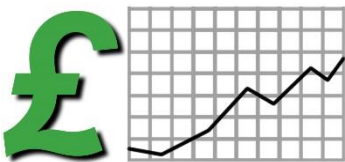


Some people said that ideas like increasing the earnings limit will help businesses because more people may be able to work.



This will help improve their own financial and mental wellbeing. They should be given this choice.

People said not all carers are able to work, but still want to have a life outside of caring.



Some said that businesses will benefit because carers will have more money and this will mean they can help the economy.



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The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80525-218-4 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, November 2022

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1149323 (11/22)

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