

Support for carers

Q: What are you doing for carers?

Carers were the first group to benefit from the transfer of powers for social security from the UK to the Scottish Parliament, through the Carer's Allowance Supplement (CAS) delivered last summer. This is an increase in financial support paid by the Scottish Government to carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance. Whilst Carer's Allowance is administered by the DWP on our behalf through an Agency Agreement between the Scottish and UK Government, it is fully funded by the Scottish Government.

In 2018/19 CAS put an extra £442 a year in people's pockets, an investment in carers of over £33 million and an increase of 13%. In 2019/20 this will rise to by a further 2.4%, so that carers in Scotland will get an extra £452.40 compared with their counterparts in the rest of the UK – an annual investment of £37 million.

From autumn this year, we will also start paying our Young Carer Grant. This £300 payment is for young carers with significant caring responsibilities who do not qualify for Carer's Allowance.

From the end of 2020, families with children who receive the highest care component of Disability Assistance will also get Winter Heating Assistance. This means that from next year 16,000 children and their families will get a £200 lump sum to help towards their winter heating costs.

Q: What are you doing with Carers Allowance?

Carer's Allowance is arguably the most complex of the benefits being devolved to Scotland. As an income replacement benefit, it has a high number of interactions with UK Government tax and low income benefits, upon which tens of thousands of Scotland's carers rely for help with housing and other basic living costs. This could be Housing Benefit, Income Support, Pension Credit, and Universal Credit, in the form of a Carer's Premium. Carer's Allowance also entitles carers to type 1 National Insurance contributions, which can help, for example, to build up their State Pension.

This requires us to agree particularly complex data sharing arrangements with HMRC and DWP to ensure carers are protected in receiving all the support they are entitled to, and can still access "passported" support when they claim Scottish Carer's Assistance.

We will open new applications for all parts of Carer's Assistance by the end of 2021. To begin with, new claims for Carer's Assistance will be on broadly the same terms as the existing DWP benefit, and will entitle people to the other support we have made available to carers, that is, the Supplement and our plans to offer increased support to people caring for more than one disabled child.

A few months after this, from spring 2022, we will also begin the transfer of existing Carer's Allowance claims from DWP to Social Security Scotland. We will not make substantial changes to Carer's Assistance eligibility until we have completed that transfer fully.

We will consult in 2021 on the changes we expect to make to support for carers in the longer term. Changes to eligibility criteria for benefits can take many years, and we want to be ready to respond to what carers tell us will support them when it is safe and practical to do so. However, due to complexities with other benefits, and our principle of protecting people and their payments, we will only make those changes when we are sure there will not be an adverse impact on carers in Scotland.

For more information on Support for Carer's go to:

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-security/benefits-for-carers/>