

## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT POSITION PAPER

### SUPPORT FOR CARERS

#### Introduction

This paper is one of a series providing an update on our position on various matters relating to the development of the devolved social security benefits in Scotland.

The purpose of this paper is to set out our approach to supporting carers using Scotland's social security powers. Building on our [October 2017 position paper](#), it provides an update on progress since the passing of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, and sets out the next steps for carer benefits in Scotland.

#### Support for carers

The Scottish Government recognises the immense contribution carers make to our society, caring for family, friends and neighbours. Caring can be a rewarding and positive experience for both the carer and the cared-for person. However, caring is also associated with a higher risk of poverty, poor mental wellbeing and physical health, and can restrict social, education and employment opportunities.

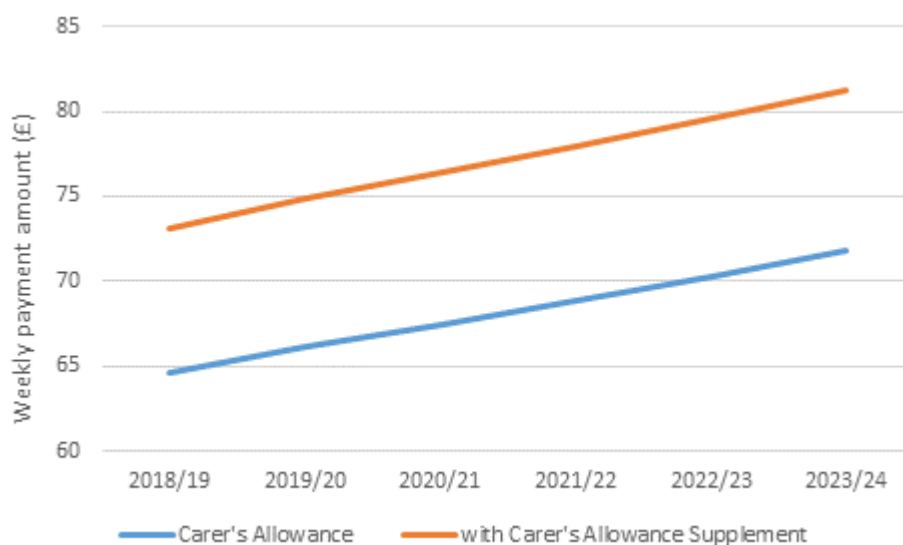
Our overall aim is to support carers to protect their health and wellbeing, so they can continue to care if they so wish, and have a life alongside caring. Our new social security powers, over carer and disability benefits in particular, provide us with new tools to achieve this.

#### Increasing financial support

We have prioritised support for carers in our new social security system. Our first change when the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 was passed was to introduce Carer's Allowance Supplement (CAS). This improved the incomes of over 77,000 Scottish carers, increasing Carer's Allowance by 13%. This transformed the existing Carer's Allowance from being the lowest income replacement benefit, to being in line with Job Seeker's Allowance through two additional payments a year. This increase, which is fully funded by the Scottish Government, put an extra £442 a year in people's pockets in 2018/19 - an investment in carers of over £33 million.

We have committed to increase CAS annually in line with inflation. This means that in 2019/20 CAS will increase by a further 2.4%. Carers in Scotland will receive an extra £452.40 compared with their counterparts south of the border, increasing our

annual investment to £37 million. The graph below shows the financial impact of these measures over the next five years.



Graph 1: Difference between weekly payments for Carer's Allowance only and Carer's Allowance with the Carer's Allowance Supplement over the next 5 years

Whilst Social Security Scotland deliver CAS, Carer's Allowance is delivered by the DWP through an Agency Agreement. This ensured we could pay CAS ahead of building the systems that Carer's Allowance will require. The Scottish Government now invests around £283m in carers through Carer's Allowance, and an additional £37m through CAS in 2019/20 – a total of £320m in payments to carers.

### *Young Carer Grant*

CAS will be followed later this year by the Young Carer Grant (YCG), providing an annual payment of £300 to young carers with significant caring responsibilities who do not qualify for Carer's Allowance. Like all parts of Carer's Assistance, this payment will be uprated annually. This is the first time the role of young carers has been recognised in this way by a government in the UK.

We estimate the YCG will help around 1,700 young carers each year get respite and access life opportunities which are the norm for many other young people, as they make the transition into adulthood. Recipients of the Young Carer Grant will also be provided with free bus travel from 2020/2021, subject to successful piloting.

### *Additional payment for carers of more than one disabled child*

We will start delivery of additional financial support to carers of more than one disabled child in spring 2021. This additional payment is in recognition of the particular circumstances of those caring for more than one disabled child.

Feedback from carers in this situation, and the organisations who work with them, has highlighted the impacts of a multiple caring role as a parent of disabled children. We will continue to work with stakeholders as we develop the detailed proposals for this payment.

### **Wider support for carers**

These financial improvements for carers take place against the backdrop of the Carers (Scotland) Act, implemented from April last year. Amongst other things, the Carers Act gives all carers the right to an adult carer support plan or young carer statement to identify their needs for support and personal outcomes. It also places a duty on local authorities to establish and maintain an information and advice service that covers income maximisation – with obvious connections to our new social security payments.

A vital part of our work will be in the effective joining up of social security payments for carers with work on the ground to support carers, delivered through a range of organisations, from carer centres and Citizens Advice Bureaux, to local authorities and the Social Security Scotland agency.

This includes supporting carers to maintain meaningful employment. This can be achieved by providing carers with the flexibility to adjust the balance of their paid employment and caring roles as their personal caring situations change. We have established the Carer Positive accreditation scheme, run by Carers Scotland, for employers with flexible employment policies for staff who are also unpaid carers. Over 330,000 employees in Scotland are now working in over 130 Carer Positive organisations. We will continue to work to increase employer awareness of the scheme and the number of employers signed up.

### **Next steps**

A key requirement for successful implementation of the Carers Act and other work to support carers will be to retain and communicate a strategic focus on the vital role played by carers. That is why we are developing a Carers Strategic Policy Statement which will provide a high-level articulation of the Scottish Government's approach across Ministerial portfolios of our overall ambitions on national policy to provide support to carers. Work on the Carers Strategic Policy Statement is ongoing and involves discussions with our stakeholders including carers and carer organisations. We intend to hold a public consultation from June to August 2019 and aim to publish our final Statement by early 2020.

Alongside the direct financial improvements we are making for carers through our commitments this parliamentary term through Carer's Assistance, we are determined to build a solid foundation for social security for carers in the long term. We are

doing this by investing the necessary time and resources now to build a reliable infrastructure to transfer delivery of all aspects of Carer's Allowance to Social Security Scotland.

### *Carer's Allowance and Disability Benefits*

A key consideration in developing our timetable for this is that receipt of Carer's Allowance depends upon caring for someone in receipt of a disability benefit. Responsibility for the majority of current DWP disability benefits, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance, is transferring to Scotland.

It is therefore vital to ensure that the delivery of new claims for disability benefits and the transfer of disability benefit claims from the DWP to Social Security Scotland is done safely and securely, and that people and their payments are protected. An Experience Panel survey about people's priorities as our agency takes over cases from DWP showed that 57% said they wanted the Scottish Government to strike a balance between transferring cases quickly, and making sure there are no mistakes. A further 29% would rather we took still more time to avoid errors.

We know that the recent changes in disability benefits have been stressful for recipients of disability benefits, particularly when in respect to face to face assessments – and we know that for the carer, they have also been distressed and anxious.

Our approach to delivery of disability benefits will be based on dignity and respect, creating a person-centred system. We will reduce the number of face to face assessments, conducting these only when there is no other practicable way to make a decision about a person's entitlement. Clients who attend a face to face assessment will be seen by an assessor who is appropriately qualified and experienced to conduct an assessment for that person.

We will move the burden of collecting information from the client to Social Security Scotland. We will provide multiple channels for application, in order to improve accessibility and remove barriers to benefit take-up. We are introducing rolling awards, with up to ten years between reviews for people whose condition is unlikely to change.

Further detail is provided in our [Position Papers](#) on disability benefits

By protecting people receiving disability benefits, we will further protect carers by ensuring that they continue to receive our replacement benefit for Carer's Allowance. And once the disability benefits are in place, we will be in a strong position to fully

deliver all parts of Carer's Assistance in Scotland, prioritising the safe and secure transition of cases and making sure that our carers are supported in receiving the benefits they are entitled to.

### *Carer's Allowance complexity*

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 to, for example, build up their State Pension.

Our priority is to protect carers as they are transferred and not risk their payments, therefore it is imperative that we get this development work right. Recipients of Carer's Allowance are more likely to live in households that are in the bottom half of the income distribution and as a result, more likely to be dependent on the DWP benefits which entitle them to Carer's Allowance passports.

People will therefore be dependent on both the UK and Scottish Government systems being joined up to meet their basic living costs.

This means that prior to introducing new claims for Carer's Assistance, and to transferring the current Carer's Allowance cases, we will need to develop complex data sharing arrangements with both the DWP and HMRC as well as needing to build a range of information feeds between ourselves and the UK Government to ensure carers are protected in receiving all the support they are entitled to.

Doing this ahead of delivery of disability benefits would be much more complex and involve numerous interactions with DWP and HMRC, requiring complex data sharing agreements. Our concern is that this could take even more time and increase our reliance on external partners to deliver.

The alternative safer option, and the one we have chosen, is to deliver all aspects of Carer's Assistance using a fully integrated system of disability and carer benefits which has been co-designed with carers and disabled people themselves. This will ensure we not only deliver benefits competently and efficiently, but with processes and support that embody our core principles of dignity, fairness and respect.

### *Timetable for 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. Because of the reasons set out above, it will take time to transfer all of the existing Carer's Allowance records fully but we still expect this to complete by 2024 as outlined in our timetable.

We know that there are other changes to eligibility that clients and stakeholders have asked us to consider. However as outlined above, 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.

If we attempted to make significant changes to eligibility before we have transferred all the existing cases, there could be a disparity between the support people are receiving from Social Security Scotland and the support others are receiving from DWP, even though their circumstances are the same. This could lead to people who are already in receipt of Carer's Allowance from DWP receiving less money for a period of time. We must avoid introducing a two-tier system where people whose circumstances are the same receive different levels of support.

We will therefore consult in 2021 on the proposals we expect to make to support for carers in the longer term and respond to what carers tell us will support them when it is safe and practical to do so.

Throughout all of this work, carer support organisations and vitally, carers themselves, will continue to be central to designing both the overarching and the detailed policy that will deliver our vision for carers.

**Scottish Government**

Social Security Directorate

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