

Social Security Scottish Carer's Assistance Consultation

Scottish Government Response

Easy Read Version

April 2023

Social Security

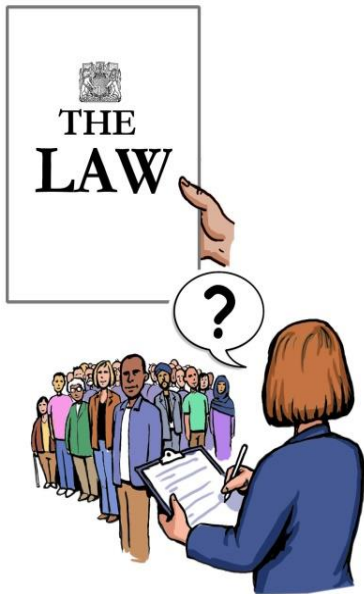
Scottish Carer's Assistance Consultation

Scottish Government Response



Easy Read Version

What is a Consultation?



The law says that the Scottish Government has to ask people their views before important changes are made. When the Scottish Government asks people for their views it is called a Consultation.

The Scottish Government asked for views on Scottish Carer's Assistance in 2022. This report sets out the Scottish Government's response to the results of the Consultation.

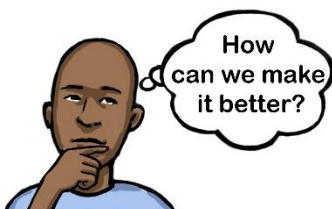
What was this Consultation about?

~~CARER'S ALLOWANCE~~
**CARER SUPPORT
PAYMENT**

Carer Support Payment will replace Carer's Allowance for unpaid carers in Scotland.



Unpaid carers are people who look after a family member or friend who needs help. This could be because of an illness or a disability. They are not paid for the care they give.



The reason for the consultation was to tell people about our new Scottish benefit for carers and ask how it could work better for carers.



We are also thinking about how our new benefit and any changes we make will fit in with other things we are doing to help carers, like the National Care Service and the Minimum Income Guarantee.



Almost 200 people and organisations gave their views. Nearly all the people who took part were unpaid carers or worked in an organisation which supports carers. You can read more about the [Scottish Carer's Assistance consultation results](#) here.

Naming our new benefit

~~CARER'S ALLOWANCE~~

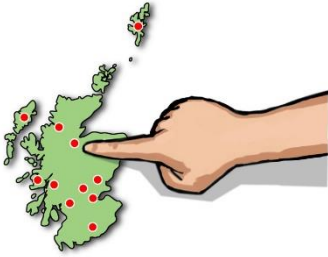
**CARER SUPPORT
PAYMENT**



We asked carers, carer organisations and our Experience Panel members to choose a name. The new name for the benefit replacing Carer's Allowance in Scotland will be Carer Support Payment. We will begin to test Carer Support Payment by the end of 2023. This is known as a 'pilot' and introduce the benefit in Spring 2024.

Section 1: Carer Support Payment

Rules about where carers are living: What people told us



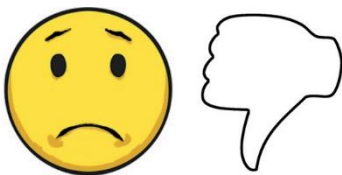
People were asked if they agreed with our suggestion that carers would need to be living in Scotland to get Carer Support Payment and that people need to be living here for 26 of the past 52 weeks.



Most people agreed with this. Some people said that both the carer and the person they care for should have to live in Scotland to get the benefit. They said it would be difficult to care for someone who did not live in the same country unless both lived close to the Scottish border.



Most people agreed that carers would need to have been living here for 26 of the past 52 weeks. They said this would mean Carer Support Payment rules would be the same as other Scottish benefits.

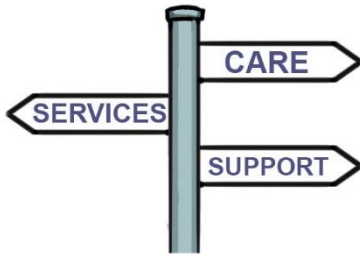


Some organisations thought that these rules might stop carers getting support quickly when they first move to Scotland.

Scottish Government reply



As most of the consultation responses agreed with the rules that carers need to be living in Scotland and that carers need to be living in Scotland for 26 of the past 52 weeks, we plan to introduce this from the start of the new benefit.



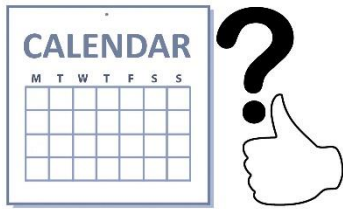
We also plan to remove the need for some refugees or people who are terminally ill to have been living here for 2 of the past 3 years. This means they could also get support more quickly.

When a carer is not happy with a decision:

What people told us



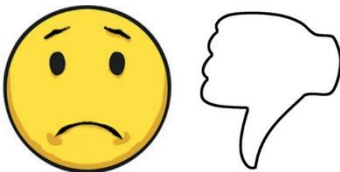
People were asked if they agreed with the timescales for re-determinations and appeals. A re-determination is when someone disagrees with a decision that Social Security Scotland have made and asks for it to be looked at again.



We suggested that carers would have 42 days to ask for a re-determination. We also suggested that Social Security Scotland would have 56 days to carry out the re-determination. Most people agreed with these timescales. They said that they were fair and would be better than the current rules.



Carers would have more time to ask for a re-determination which would help them to gather any information or time to contact organisations for support if needed.



Some organisations thought it was unfair that Social Security Scotland would have longer to carry out a re-determination than carers would have to ask for one.



They also thought that carers should be able to ask for extra time if they knew they would not be able to provide information within the timescales. They said that it was important for carers not be left financially worse off, if they are challenging a decision.

Scottish Government reply



As most people agreed with our suggested position on re-determinations and appeals, we will go ahead with this. This means that carers would have 42 days to ask for a re-determination and Social Security Scotland would have 56 days to carry this out.



We know that some people think that 56 days to complete a re-determination was too long, or that it would make things simpler if the timescales were the same as for both the carer and Social Security Scotland.



As with all our benefits we will keep checking to make sure the timescales are working well for carers, those who support carers and Social Security Scotland.

When payments need to stop for a short time:

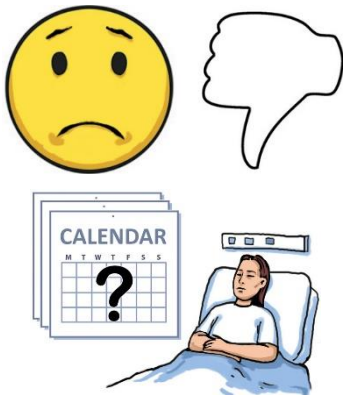
What people told us



People were asked if they agreed that Carer Support Payment could be stopped for a short time in some cases. For example, if we have asked someone for information to make sure they are still entitled to support and they have not given it.



Most people agreed with our suggestions. Some people 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 stopped for any reason, or only in very rare situations. They said payments should not stop when a cared for person goes into hospital because carers might keep doing things like laundry, and visiting the cared for person in hospital.



People also said that stopping carers' awards could cause stress for the carer and the cared for person as they would have less money.

Scottish Government reply



People had different views on stopping benefits for a short time. However most people agreed with our suggestions so we will go ahead with them. This means Carer Support Payment may be stopped in some situations.



Some people were worried about the impact on carers of stopping payments. We want to protect carers from overpayments which they might need to pay back later. We will also take a proper look at a carer's financial circumstances before we make any decisions.



Carers will have the right to challenge a decision and have it looked at again. We will work with carers and support organisations to look at how stopping benefits for a short time should work and make sure the process is fair.



We are also looking at what should happen to payments when the cared for person's disability benefit is suspended. Where the cared for person's entitlement to the disability benefit is not in question, Carer Support Payment would continue to be paid.

Changing Carer Support Payment to £0: What people told us

£0

People were asked if they agreed with setting Carer Support Payment to £0 in some situations, rather than ending it completely. This sometimes happens with Carer's Allowance. This would be known as a 'nil award'.



Most people agreed with our suggestions. Some people thought that this was fair and would reduce the risk of overpayments. People thought it was better because setting to £0 would mean the benefit would not be stopped and carers would not need to apply again.



over 4 weeks

Some people disagreed with £0 payments in some situations, like when the cared for person is in the hospital for more than 4 weeks. People said they still provide care while the cared for person is in the hospital.



Some people disagreed that those who get State Pension are not entitled to Carer Support Payment. People cannot get State Pension and Carer Support Payment at the same time because they are 'overlapping benefits' and people felt they should get both.

Scottish Government reply



Since most people agreed with our plans for when an award of Carer Support Payment should be set to £0, we will go ahead with this.

£0

Carer Support Payment would be set to £0 when a cared for person's qualifying benefit award is set to £0 or when it is ended. This would also happen if a carer has earnings over the earnings limit, or where they have had more than the allowed number of breaks in care.



When a carer became entitled again, payments would restart. Where an award had been set to £0 for six months, it would end after this time.



Where a carer is receiving an overlapping benefit like the State Pension, they would still be entitled to other support which can be higher than carer benefits. This is why they cannot receive both.



We plan to look at how earnings and hospital stays will be considered as part of our future improvements plan.

Support for carers who disagree with a decision:

What people told us



Short-term assistance is a new payment in the Scottish benefits system. It will give support to carers when the cared for person's disability benefit has been changed or stopped and they are asking for this decision to be looked at again.



Most people agreed with this plan. They said carers will still be giving care while the decision is being looked at. The new benefit would be a 'safety net' of support for the carer and cared for person during this time.

Scottish Government reply

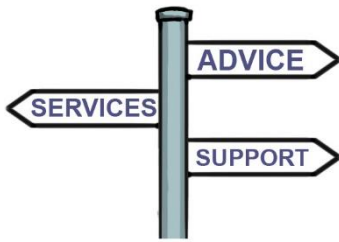


Since most people agreed with our plans for short-term assistance, we will go ahead with these.



There are complicated links with other benefits which will be delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). We are working with them to look at how this would work.

Links to wider services and support: What people told us



People were asked how Carer Support Payment could better support carers by linking them to wider services.



People said there should be different ways for carers to contact Social Security Scotland, by post or online. The process of getting support should be easy to use and understand.



People said that carers should also be told about other support they can get, particularly at key life moments, such as at the beginning or end of a caring role or when a cared for person passes away. 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.

Scottish Government reply



Most people supported our plans to link carers to wider services and support, so we will go along with this. We will look at what people have said about areas where they want wider support and we will work with carers to develop this.



We are also looking at how we can make claiming Carer Support Payment easier and thinking about options for how we make payments in future.

Section 2. Extra money for carers in Scotland

Carer's Support Supplement: What people told us

**CARER'S ALLOWANCE
SUPPLEMENT**
+
**CARER SUPPORT
PAYMENT**

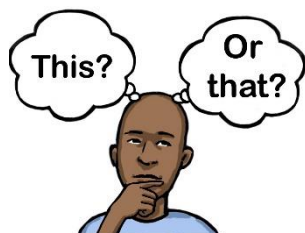
Carer's Allowance Supplement gives more money to carers in Scotland if they get Carer's Allowance now or Carer Support Payment in the future.



This section asked people if they would like to be paid Carer's Allowance Supplement at the same time as they get Carer Support Payment, or keep getting two payments every year as they do now.



Most people agreed that Carer's Allowance Supplement payments should be paid with regular payments of Carer Support Payment as more regular payments would help with budgeting.



Some people said that the carer should have a choice on how they get their payments, either twice a year or more regularly.



Some people said that getting the Carer's Allowance Supplement in two payments works better for them, because it helps with unexpected bills and Christmas shopping.



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

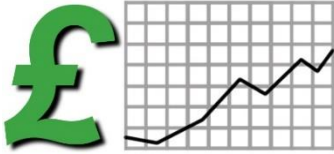
Scottish Government reply



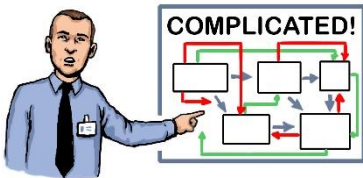
Since most people agreed with our plans to pay Carer Allowance Supplement more regularly along with regular Carer Support Payments, we will go ahead with this.



Some people said that they preferred the Supplement twice a year as a lump sum but most people did not agree with this. We would need to use a complicated system to check who should get it and when. This could mean some carers would miss out on the payment.



We think more regular payments would be fairer for carers and make sure that they get the right amount of support. This would help carers on lower incomes by giving them a higher regular income and help with budgeting.



Having a system where some carers get lump sums and others get regular payments would be too complicated and cause problems for the system and for carers.



When we change how payments are made for Carer's Allowance Supplement, we will make sure that carers know about it before it happens.



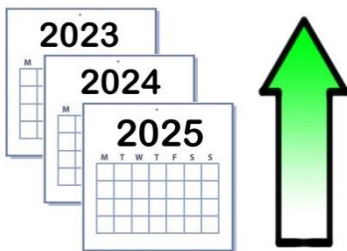
We will confirm when the changes to Carer's Allowance Supplement are happening at a later stage. This is because the Supplement is being looked at as part of wider changes to Carer Support Payment and Carer's Additional Person Payment.

Carer's Additional Person Payment – Who can get it:

What people told us



Carer's Additional Person Payment 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.



This payment would be increased – or 'up-rated' – each year in the same way as other Scottish benefits.



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 than £10 per week. People thought that the payment would not make up for the extra care being given to more than one person.

Scottish Government reply

~~CARER'S ALLOWANCE~~

**CARER SUPPORT
PAYMENT**

We will bring in Carer's Additional Person Payment after all carers in Scotland have moved from Carer's Allowance to Carer Support Payment. We call this 'case transfer'.



Carer's Additional Person Payment is not a payment for care – it is an extra amount to support those with more than one caring role and recognises the extra impact this can have on a carer's wellbeing.



~~35 hours~~

20 hours

We will lower the number of hours a carer needs to care each week to get Carer's Additional Person Payment from 35 hours to 20 hours. This is an important role and a carer may experience negative impacts on their health when they have more than one caring role.



We are also thinking about ways to allow carers to add hours of care together for two people who get disability benefit. More information on this can be found in Section 3.

Carer's Additional Person Payment – How often it is paid:

What people told us



People were asked if Carer's Additional Person Payment of £10 per week should be paid at the same time as Carer Support Payment. This could be every week or every four weeks.



Most people agreed with the proposal. They said paying it this way would be less confusing and avoid overpayments. Some organisations also said that paying this way would be good for budgeting and people would know the amount of money they would be getting regularly.



Some organisations said that there should be a choice for when to get these payments. Each carer has their own circumstances and their own needs.



Like the last question, some people thought that the amount should be more than £10, because everyone being cared for should be getting the same level of care.

Scottish Government reply



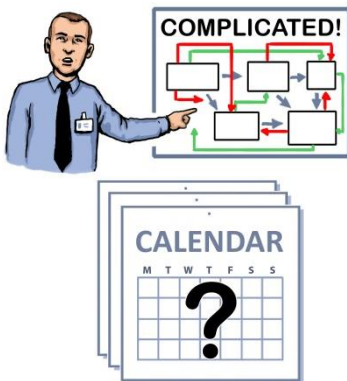
We will go ahead with our plans for Carer's Additional Person's Payment. This would be paid at the same time as Carer Support Payment and will go up every year.



We have worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to see if we can bring in this support before case transfer.



This would mean people already getting Carer's Allowance would get extra support at the same time as carers applying for the first time.



However the way that Carer's Allowance and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) systems work together is very complicated. A change like this would risk the transfer of carers' benefits to Scotland, so we will introduce this once case transfer is complete.

Carer's Additional Person Payment – Who it is targeted at:

What people told us



People were asked if Carer's Additional Person Payment should be targeted at carers who get Carer Support Payment.



Most people agreed with this proposal. People said that it was fair because caring for more than one person takes a lot of time and work and these carers may miss out on opportunities because of this.



Some people disagreed. They said it should also be paid to carers who have 'underlying entitlement' to Carer Support Payment.



People also said that it is important for the Scottish Government to work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to make sure carers do not lose out on other benefits. They should be told about any extra money they are entitled to as well.

Scottish Government reply



Most people agreed that Carer's Additional Person Payment should be targeted at carers who get Carer Support Payment and not those with 'underlying entitlement' or those who get the Universal Credit Carer Element only.



Some organisations thought that those with 'underlying entitlement' should also get the extra payment. However carers with 'underlying entitlement' will most likely get other support like the State Pension, which is paid at a higher rate than Carer Support Payment.



We will also make sure that we give clear information to carers who are getting Universal Credit or applying for it. This will let them know if they would be better off if they applied for Carer Support Payment.

Section 3: Future Changes to Carer Support Payment

CARER'S ALLOWANCE



**CARER SUPPORT
PAYMENT**

There will be no big changes until all carers who are getting Carer's Allowance now are transferred over to Carer Support Payment. This is to make sure everyone is treated fairly between the two systems.

Access to education and training: What people told us



People were asked if they agreed with our plan to change the rules on education so that more people can study and get Carer Support Payment.



Almost everyone who responded agreed with this. People said this would help carers in education to get Carers Support Payment and develop new skills.



People said this would help carers 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.

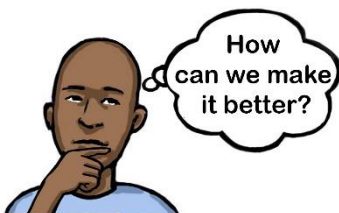
Scottish Government reply



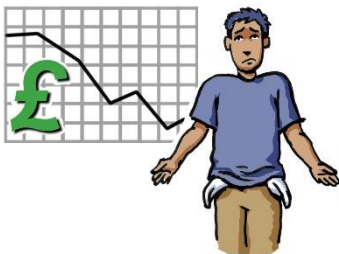
We will change the rules so that more student carers can apply to get Carer Support Payment compared to the current Carer's Allowance. This was part of our future plans, but we have listened to carers who said they wanted to see changes sooner. So, we are introducing this from the start of the new benefit.



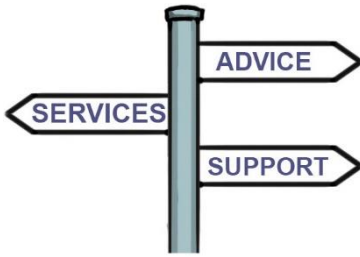
This will mean that many carers studying at college and carers studying at University will be able to receive the payment.



We are still thinking about those who are in school or taking school courses in college as they might be getting Education Maintenance Allowance and their parents or guardians may get other forms of support from the Department of Work and Pensions.



We are also working to make sure that student carers who get support from the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) are not worse off by getting the new benefit.



We will work with carer and other support organisations to make sure that student carers know what support they are entitled to.

Recognising different caring situations: What people told us



35 hours +

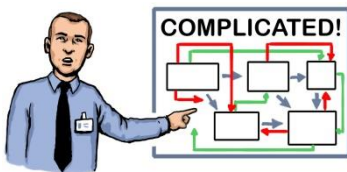
People were asked if they agreed with plans to let carers add together caring hours for two or more people to be able to get Carer Support Payment.



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



Some people said that people should be able to get Carers Support Payment based on the number of hours they spent caring, not the number of people they cared for.



Some people thought this could make claiming support more complicated. Some people asked for the number of hours spent caring each week to be reduced to less than 35 hours each week.

Scottish Government reply



We are looking at changing the rules so caring hours can be added together to meet the 35 hours of caring needed to get support.



Some people said that there should be an hourly payment for care. This would not be possible because Carer Support Payment is an income replacement benefit for people with intensive caring roles and not a payment for care.



We will also be giving extra support to those caring for more than one person through the Carer's Additional Person Payment as noted in Section 2.



We want to think about how adding together caring hours could work with a Minimum Income Guarantee. We need to think about this more and further details will be given at a later date.

Extending payments from 8 to 12 weeks when a cared for person dies: What people told us



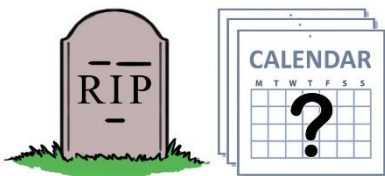
When a cared for person dies, Carer's Allowance payments stop after 8 weeks. People were asked if they agreed with our plans to extend this to 12 weeks for Carer Support Payment.



Almost everyone who responded agreed with this. People said this would give people more time to grieve and get used to this big change in their lives.



People also said this would mean less financial stress for carers at a very stressful time and it would give carers time to get the support they need.



Some people thought that the amount of time Carer Support Payment 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.

Extending payments from 4 to 12 weeks when a cared for adult enters hospital or residential care: What people told us



Carer's Allowance payments also stop after 4 weeks when a cared for person goes into hospital. People were asked if they agreed with plans to also extend this to 12 weeks for Carer Support Payment.



Most people agreed with this. Some people said that the caring role does not stop when the cared for person goes into hospital. It just changes and can also increase. Carers might also face extra costs like transport to and from the hospital. People said that carers need more support at this time to cover living expenses.



Some thought that 12 weeks was not long enough and that this should be longer in special cases. Some people told us that at the moment they have to re-apply for Carer's Allowance when someone goes into hospital which can take up to 12 weeks and they are still caring for their relatives/friends.

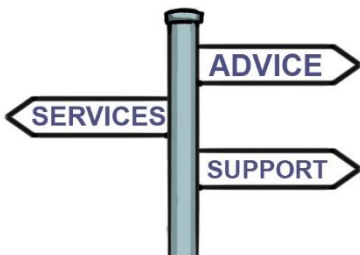
Scottish Government reply



Since so many people agree with extending Carer Support Payment in these situations, we will go ahead with our plans.



We will extend payments from 8 to 12 weeks when a cared for person passes away. We will do this as a priority after case transfer is complete. We will also extend payments from 4 to 12 weeks when a cared for person goes into hospital as part of our future plans.



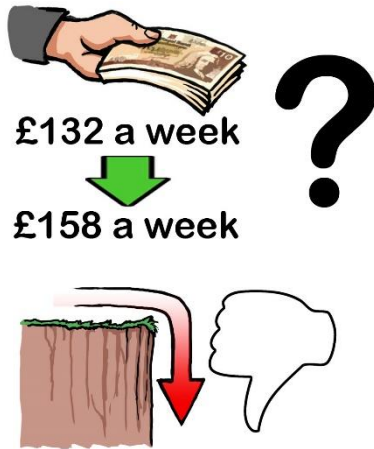
We are also looking at how we can better support carers by linking them with support services, especially after the person they cared for passes away or their caring role ends.

£0



We will look to set Carer Support Payments to £0 instead of ending an award when the person being cared for is in hospital. This would mean we could restart Carer Support Payments sooner and the carer would not need to reapply.

Access to Employment: What people told us



At the moment carers can earn £132 (2022/23 rate) a week through paid work and still get Carer's Allowance. If they earn £1 over this limit, they lose their whole Carer's Allowance award. This is sometimes known as the earnings 'cliff edge'. People were asked if they agreed with plans to raise the earnings limit for Carer Support Payment.



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



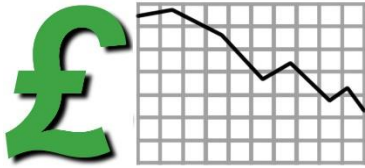
Many carers said that they are not able to get Carer's Allowance because they earn just above the limit. This means that many carers miss out on job opportunities because they fear it would stop the benefit.



People also said that the current system did not work for people whose earnings can change from week to week. Some people said the earnings limit should be removed completely.



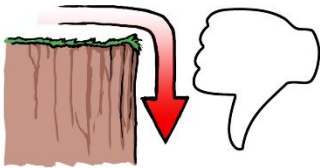
Many people said it was good for them to work as it gave them a life outside of caring and helped their mental health. Many people said the earnings limit should go up further.



People said that when carers earn above the limit their awards should go down slowly, rather than stop immediately.

Access to employment – the earnings ‘cliff edge’:

What people told us



People were asked if they agreed with the idea of a ‘run on’ of Carer Support Payment after a carer earns over the earnings limit. This would mean avoiding the ‘cliff edge’ and benefits being stopped right away.



Most people agreed with this idea. They said that it would help people whose income changes from week to week. Their award would not be stopped straight away and they would not need to reapply if their earnings went down again after this.



They also said that 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.



Some people said earnings limits should not apply to carers and some thought more work should be done to look at earnings in Carer Support Payment in the future.

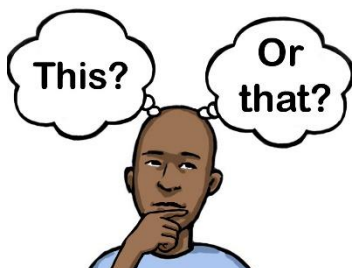
Scottish Government reply



Since most people agreed with our plans to make employment more accessible to carers, we will go ahead with these plans.



Some carers would like to remove the earnings threshold completely but this would change the purpose of Carer Support Payment being an 'income replacement' benefit.



There were different ideas on what hourly rate should be used and how this would work. We will keep looking at this before making any final decisions, as well as the run on when earnings go above the threshold.

Support for a wider group of unpaid carers



People were asked if they agreed that there should be a new payment to support more carers and recognise the care they provide. This could include those who cannot get Carer Support Payment because they get another benefit like the State Pension.



Most people said we need to think more about this. Some people said that carers who care for someone for a long time usually have to give up important life opportunities to care. They should get support to make up for this.

Scottish Government reply



This is a new policy idea and will be one of our future options for Carer Support Payment. We will keep working with carers, organisations, government and public services to understand how this would work, who should be able to get the payment, and how much it should be.

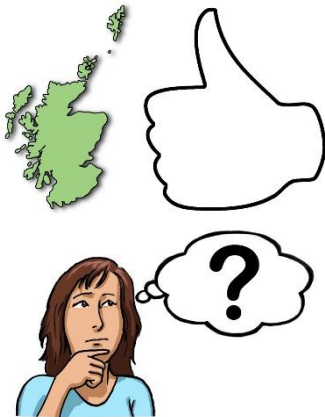


There are likely to be many carers who could get this support, which would help recognise a wider group of carers. But it would also cost a lot of money.



We need to look at it together with other work we are doing to support unpaid carers. These include the National Care Strategy and Minimum Income Guarantee. We will explore this future option further as a longer-term change.

Impact Assessments



It is important that our benefits work for all of Scotland's carers and the people and organisations that support them. In our work on Carer Support Payment, we have looked at how the decisions could affect people, businesses, and other groups. We do this through 'Impact Assessments'.



When we are looking at making changes to laws and rules, we need to think about things like disability, age, and sex. These are called protected characteristics.



We also need to think about how our new benefit will affect different people and communities, including children or those who live remotely or on islands, as well as businesses.



We will publish the Impact Assessments separately but will continue to use these to look at how well Carer Support Payment is working.



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