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# Social Security Experience Panels: Young Carer Grant Research



**EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY**



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## Background

The Scottish Government is becoming responsible for some of the benefits previously delivered by the UK Government through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the work to prepare for this change, the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels, which are made up of over 2,400 people who have recent experience of at least one of the benefits that are being devolved to Scotland. In addition, the Scottish Government have reached out to young carers across Scotland to help inform the design of a new grant for young carers which will be introduced in 2019. This was part of the Social Security Experience Panels programme of research.

The Young Carer Grant will be a grant of £300 which young carers can apply for each year when they are 16 and 17, and 18 if they are still at school. The Scottish Government is looking at what further support might be made available to young carers alongside this payment, including free bus travel and working with Young Scot to develop a discount card for young carers.

Between February 2018 and August 2018, Scottish Government researchers held 16 focus groups with more than 50 young carers, to hear about their experiences and views on the development of a new grant for young carers in Scotland. The initial findings from this research were published in November 2018 and are available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-experience-panels-initial-findings-development-young-carer-grant/>

Between 9 November and 10 December 2018 we also ran a survey which asked about young carers' experiences and views on what the new grant should be like. This survey ran alongside the Scottish Government consultation on the draft regulations for the grant and was designed to be an easier way for young carers to contribute their views on some of the issues addressed in this consultation. 61 young carers (up to the age of 25) responded to the survey. This report is on the findings from this survey.

## Summary

Respondents said that they would want to see information about the Young Carer Grant available at young carer groups, at school and on social media. Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram were the most frequently used social media channels.

Most respondents said that they would apply for the grant online, either on a computer or on their phone. Others said that they would prefer to do it in person with someone helping them. Respondents felt that the application could be made simple by including questions with answers that you can tick, keeping the form short, and by including clear instructions with the form.

Many respondents said that they would feel “ok” with the person that they care for confirming their application. Reasons for this included feeling that the person would understand and would be happy and able to support. Those who said that they would not feel ok with this requirement said that the person they care for might find this difficult because of their disability, or that they might not be willing to do so.

Many respondents said that they would find it “very easy” or “easy” to answer that they care for someone for at least 16 hours per week. Others suggested, however, that it can be hard to calculate or keep track of how much caring you do, or said that it can be very variable from week to week. Most felt that it should be possible to include the number of hours you spend caring for more than one person if combined they are more than 16 hours per week.

Many respondents said that they would find it “very easy” or “easy” to find out whether or not the person that they care for receives a qualifying benefit. This was because they felt able to ask, or because they were aware of or involved with helping to manage the household income. Some said that they would find it difficult to ask, or weren’t sure that the person that they care for would know either.

Respondents felt that the grant should be available to young carers who meet the criteria, even if someone else already receives Carer’s Allowance for caring for the same person. This was because the amount of care provided was still the same, and they felt that it would be unfair for only one of the carers to receive a payment when both contribute.

Most respondents said that it wouldn’t cause a problem for them for the Young Carer Grant to be paid into their bank account. About a quarter, however, said that this would cause them a problem, in particular if they didn’t have a bank account.

Many respondents said that they felt the grant would have a positive impact for young carers who met the eligibility criteria, and that it could open up opportunities for them that they wouldn’t otherwise have. Some expressed concern, however, that the age criteria would restrict those who would benefit from the grant and highlighted that there are those who fall outside of the criteria who also need support.

## About the research

This report details the key themes which emerged from a survey carried out with young carers in Scotland between 9 November and 10 December 2018. Respondents could complete this survey online, over the phone or on paper. Some respondents completed surveys when attending consultation events on the development of the Young Carer Grant regulations.

The survey included questions on:

- The respondent’s experience of caring including who they care for and the support they have as a young carer

- What the application form for the Young Carer Grant should be like
- How they would be likely to hear about the Young Carer Grant
- How the Young Carer Grant should work

## **About the participants**

62 people responded to this survey. Of these, 61 were young carers between the ages of 12 and 25. This report includes analysis of these 61 responses. The response from a carer over the age of 25 was out of scope for this research, which was for young carers only. This response has been summarised and provided to the Young Carer Grant policy team to be considered alongside wider feedback from the consultation on the draft regulations, but due to the small number will not be published.

In this report, we have included percentages to give a sense of proportion, but it should be borne in mind that these refer to a number below 100 and should not be taken to represent the views of all young carers. This section describes the participants to give context to the findings below. Half (51 per cent) of respondents were aged 12-15 years old. A third (33 per cent) were aged 16 or 17. One in six (16 per cent) were aged 18 to 25.

Two thirds (67 per cent) of respondents said that they regularly care for one person. A third (33 per cent) said that they regularly care for more than one person – most of these care for two people, but some care for more than two people. Almost a third (31 per cent) of respondents said that they regularly care for someone who is under the age of 18 years old.

We asked respondents about the person or people that they regularly care for. Almost all (98 per cent) of respondents said that they live with the person or people they care for all or some of the time.

Two thirds (67 per cent) of respondents said that they care for a parent. More than a third (36 per cent) said that they care for a brother or sister. One in ten (10 per cent) said they care for a grandparent. Five per cent said they care for a step parent and three per cent said someone else.

55 respondents told us how many people help look after the person that they care for. More than one in five (22 per cent) of these respondents said that they are the only person who regularly looks after the person or people they care for. More than a third (36 per cent) said that one other person helps to look after the person or people they care for, and more than two in five (42 per cent) said that more than one person help. Among those who said that more than one person help, this ranged from 2 people to 5 people who help look after the person or people that they care for.

## Finding out about the Young Carer Grant

Respondents were asked about where they would want to see information about the grant. More than three quarters of respondents (79 per cent) said that they would want to see information about the grant through young carer groups. It is worth bearing in mind that that the young carer groups were one of the routes through which this survey was advertised, so we cannot assume that this figure is reflective of young carers as a whole.

Almost three in five (57 per cent) said they would want to see information at school, and half (49 per cent) said they would want to see information on social media.

**Table 1 (n=61)**

Where would you want to see information about the grant?	
Young carer groups	79%
Schools	57%
Social media	49%
Colleges/universities	30%
Newspapers	5%
Somewhere else	5%

Among those who said “something else”, responses included suggestions of other public spaces like doctors’ surgeries, hospitals, libraries, cafes and bus stops; email information; and the suggestion that all of these routes should be used.

Among those who said that they would want to see social media (30 respondents), more than four in five (83 per cent) said that they use Facebook. Almost three quarters (73 per cent) said that they use Snapchat and two thirds (67 per cent) said that they use Instagram.

**Table 2 (n=30)**

<b>Which social media site do you use the most?</b>	
Facebook	83%
Snapchat	73%
Instagram	67%
Twitter	27%
Gaming sites	17%

## How to apply

Respondents were asked how they would apply for the Young Carer Grant. Almost a third (31 per cent) said that they would apply online using a computer, and a quarter (25 per cent) said that they would apply online using their phone. One in six (16 per cent) said that they would apply in person with someone helping them, and one in eight (13 per cent) said that they would apply by post using a paper form.

**Table 3 (n=61)**

<b>How would you apply?</b>	
Online on a computer	31%
Online on my phone	25%
In person with someone helping me	16%
By post using a paper form	13%
Using an app	5%
All of the above	5%
Another way	3%
By phone	2%

Respondents were asked how Social Security Scotland could make the application for Young Carer Grant simple. More than half (54 per cent) said that it would help to ask questions with answers that you can tick. Almost half (48 per cent) said that it would help to make the application short.

**Table 4 (n=61)**

<b>How could we make the application simple?</b>	
Ask questions with answers you can tick	54%
Make it short	48%
Include clear instructions about how to fill in the form	41%
Ask questions where you can give more information about your situation	16%
Something else	3%

Those who said “something else” suggested having assistance in completing the form and offering copies of the form on different colours of paper.

## **Proving that you are a young carer**

Respondents were told that Social Security Scotland wants to make it easy for people to prove that they are a young carer. It was explained that the person they care for (or a parent if you care for someone who is under 16) would need to confirm this in the application form. Respondents were asked how they would feel about that; 60 respondents answered this question.

More than three quarters (77 per cent) of respondents said that they would feel “ok” about that. More than one in seven (15 per cent) said they had no opinion or were not sure how they would feel and one in twelve (8 per cent) said they would not feel ok about this.

Among those who said that they would feel ok about the person they care for confirming their application, reasons given included that the person they care for is aware that they are a young carer, that they felt that the person they care for would understand why they were applying and wouldn’t have a problem confirming this or would even be happy doing so.

“I feel that the person I care for would understand why the grant exists so wouldn’t have a problem confirming my caring role if it benefits me.”

“Because it is something they would want for me.”

Others said that it would be easy and “reasonable”, and would help make sure that the grant goes to the right people



“I feel that this is okay as the grant will definitely go to young carers who need the grant. Not someone who is trying to fake being a young carer just to receive the money.”

“I feel like if you need proof then it is reasonable to ask us for proof.”

Other positive reasons included feeling that the person they care for could help them with the application and deciding how to use it.

“Because they can help me and show me how to make the right choices.”

Among those who said that they would not feel ok about the person they care for confirming their application, reasons given included the person they care for being unable to confirm this due to their disability or health condition, or a relationship where the person they care for or wider family might be unwilling to confirm this.

“The person I care for would be unable to confirm this due to profound disabilities. The majority of young carers are on the radar of connecting young carers so perhaps there is a way that can confirm this.”

Other concerns raised in relation to this approach included how to protect against a young carer being pressured to take on more caring responsibility to meet the criteria for the grant, or being pressured to give the grant to the family.

Some suggested that instead mechanisms such as young carer groups could be used to confirm a young carer’s role without involving the person that they care for in the application.

## Grant eligibility

### Time spent caring

Almost half (46 per cent) of respondents said that they would find it “very easy” or “easy” to answer a question on whether they care for someone on average at least 16 hours per week. Two in five (41 per cent) said they would find it neither easy nor difficult, and one in seven (15 per cent) said they would find it difficult or very difficult.

Those who said it would be “very easy” or “easy” to answer this question said that this was because it is “constant” or they care on a full time basis, or because they would find it easy to count.

“It is basically 24/7.”

“I know what I do and how long it takes, so I'm able to count it up easily.”

“I would find it easy as I spend most of my time with my younger brother who I care for.”

Others said that they are used to the role, or that they could ask someone to help them to calculate it.

“Because I've been living like that most of my life so it seems normal for me. Do it all the time when I am not at school.”

Among those who said that they would find it “neither easy nor difficult” reasons included that they hadn't previously thought about it, that the number of hours spent caring each week changes a lot, or that they don't know how many hours they spend caring.

“I've never really thought about this or added up the hours and it changes a lot. So I am not sure if I calculated it all, it would be fine I suppose”

“I don't time myself I just do it.”

“Sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's hard.”

Those who said it would be “difficult” or “very difficult” to answer this question said that this was because the time spent caring could be very variable, that they are too busy to figure it out, and that it can be difficult to know what counts as caring.

“Not all conditions have/need to have a specific hours one week you could do it a lot less and another could be 24/7.”

“I think it is difficult as it can be hard to keep track of how many hours you care for the person and sometimes it can be based on an estimation rather than an exact amount.”

“A lot of the care given by young people cannot be easily quantified – for example emotional support and the impact of caring. Young people don't count hours of caring they just do it and a lot of caring situations are very unpredictable and hours are different.”

## Cumulative caring hours

Respondents were asked whether it should be possible to add up the hours you care for more than one person to meet the 16 hours per week average; 60 respondents answered this question. More than seven in ten (72 per cent) respondents said that you should be able to add this up. A quarter (25 per cent) said they weren't sure. 3 per cent said you shouldn't be able to do this.

Among respondents who said that you should be able to add up the hours you care for more than one person, reasons included that it is still more than 16 hours per week spent on care, that caring for more than one person may be more difficult

“It is more challenging sometimes to look after more than one person as you have to split your time.”

“That person is still caring for people, it is even more work to care for two (or more) even if the hours individually don't add up but in total do. Caring for one person takes a lot from a person especially if the person they care for is a family member or friend. So having more people you love to look after deserves just as much if not more recognition.”

Others suggested that helping with looking after a sibling, for example, may be part of the caring role they have for a parent.

“I help look after my brother as this helps my mum.”

Among those who said they weren't sure if you should be able to add up the hours you care for more than one person, reasons included finding this difficult to calculate or feeling that the situation wouldn't apply to them. Respondents who said you shouldn't be able to add up the hours spent caring said that they were “not sure” why.

## Qualifying benefits

Respondents were given a list of the qualifying benefits – the person they care for would need to be in receipt of at least one on the list in order for them to be eligible for the grant. They were asked how easy or difficult it would be for them to find out whether the person they care for receives one of these benefits. Two thirds (67 per cent) of respondents said they would find it “very easy” or “easy” to find out if the person they care for gets one of those benefits. A quarter (25 per cent) said it would be “neither easy nor difficult” and one in twelve (8 per cent) said it would be difficult or very difficult. 2 people did not respond to this question.

Among those who said that they would find it “very easy” or “easy” to find this out, reasons included that they already know, that they help with managing the household finances or had helped with the benefit application.

“Because I helped my mum out in receiving PIP and getting that sorted. And I deal with most payment or most things in the house.”

“I think this is very easy as I know what benefits my mum claims.”

“My mum is capable of telling me these things and is very open with me. I also help with some of the other benefits so I am aware of them.”

Others said that they would be able to ask the person they care for.

Reason given by respondents who said it would be “neither easy nor difficult” to find this information out included not being sure what benefits the person they care for gets, and finding it difficult to ask.

“Because I’m sure if I ask one of my parents they’ll know.”

“I find it hard to ask questions to my brother as he gets annoyed and violent.”

Those who said they would find it “difficult” or “very difficult” to find this information out said it was because they weren’t sure if the person they care for would know, or because they wouldn’t feel comfortable asking this question.

“Cared for person might not want to disclose information or feel comfortable letting people know they receive it - might feel shame, guilt etc.”

## **Other carers in the household**

Panel members were asked whether young carers should be able to get the grant when another carer gets Carer’s Allowance for the same person. 60 people responded to this question.

More than four in five (83 per cent) said they should, and one in six (17 per cent) said that they weren’t sure. No-one said that they should not get the grant.

Reasons given included that it is unfair that only one person receives a payment when more than one person is providing care.

“They are still caring for the person and should be allowed a benefit for it. It seems unfair to give only one carer help but not the other”

Other reasons included highlighting that “secondary” carers don’t necessarily do less work, and that they would still need help, or that different people might have different caring roles for the same person.

“They still do the same amount of work for the same amount of hours. It should be that they still get what they are working for as some young carers are physical carers others care for them emotionally and it’s different for every person e.g. One carer might look after that person’s physical need like cooking and cleaning and the other would be the person who has to support them through break downs and their mental health.”

Others commented that Carer’s Allowance is often used towards household funds, where they felt that the Young Carer Grant should be for the young carer.

“Carer’s Allowance is usually used to keep the family funds going. Young Carer Grant should be for young carers in their own right.”

## **Paying the grant**

Respondents were told that most payments would be made by transferring money to a bank account, and that it would only be paid another way if they asked for it to be. Seven in ten respondents (70 per cent) said that paying this way wouldn’t cause a problem for them. However, almost a quarter (23 per cent) said that it would cause a problem for them, and 7 per cent said that they weren’t sure if it would cause a problem.

Among those who said it would cause them a problem, reasons given included not having a bank account. These respondents said that they would prefer to receive the payment as cash, by cheque, in instalments, or through someone else such as a parent or young carer group.

## **The impact of the Young Carer Grant**

Respondents felt that there were a number of positive impacts that the grant would have. This including helping the financial situation of young carers and helping their families and cared for person.

“It’s going to help those who don’t have a lot of money.”

“I think the young carer grant will really help carers who haven’t had a chance for a break or who are living in poverty as this grant will benefit them a lot.”

Others said that it could help young carers to have opportunities that they might not otherwise have.

“There are many young carers that need this financial boost to be able to keep up with their peers for social events, driving lessons, laptops, school trips etc.”

“Everyone who is a young carer will really appreciate the grant. Being a carer often limits social flexibility so having money to have a life or even make sure you have the same workbooks as everyone will be very beneficial.”

Some felt that the age restrictions on the grant were too strict and that it should be more widely available. This included concerns about the support for people aged over 18 – particularly in relation to the challenges of staying in education when caring for someone.

“I think it should be up to people that aren’t at school especially because they may have had to leave school due to caring. Possibly open up to older bracket to provide more opportunities. Especially if you're pushing for education- open to college/uni at very least. I think helping people that don’t have people they care for on benefits because they are still a young carer regardless. Help actual young carers and not just young carers that tick all your little boxes.”

“It is unfair for a 17 Year old at College/Uni but not an 18 year old. It is still a full time learning environment and £300 could help with supplies, accommodation etc.”

Others expressed concern about the support available to those under 16.

“Maybe under 14s as the parents are able to fully support them and they already could get free help from other places where as when your 18 you would have to pay for they things”

“Young carers who do the same amount of caring at the same rate or even greater but don’t fit the age bracket to receive the grant - discrimination. Doesn’t make them any less of a young carer but to then they won’t feel like they care enough to get the money.”

## Next Steps

This report will be used to supplement the feedback from the consultation on the draft regulations for Young Carer Grant which closed in December 2018. The report offers a perspective from young carers on many of the issues addressed in the consultation. This survey additionally looked at a number of key policy issues which are important to the development and design of the Young Carer Grant and will be used to inform decisions in these areas, and how the new grant is communicated and advertised.

The Scottish Government will be running workshops with stakeholder organisations in early 2019 to consider issues around safeguarding and the definition of care in relation to the Young Carer Grant. The findings from this research will help to inform these discussions and next steps.

As part of the survey, all respondents were also invited to join the young carer panel, which is part of the Scottish Government Social Security Experience Panels. Those who choose to join the panels will be invited to participate in further research to help develop the new grant, including help with designing and testing new systems and approaches.

### How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route <specify or delete this text>
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [SocialSecurityExperience@gov.scot](mailto:SocialSecurityExperience@gov.scot) for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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