

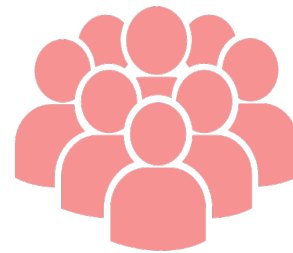
Social Security Experience Panels: Carer's Allowance Supplement Research Visual Summary

Background

The Scottish Government is becoming responsible for some of the benefits currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

As part of work to prepare for this change, the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels with people who have experience of the benefits that the Scottish Government is becoming responsible for, including Carer's Allowance. There are more than 2,400 people on the panels.

The Scottish Government is working with Experience Panel members to create Scotland's new social security system.



2,400+
**Experience Panel
members**

About the research

This report summarises the results of 24 interviews and 8 written responses on panel member's experiences of Carer's Allowance and the introduction of the Carer's Allowance Supplement. This included feedback on a draft letter telling people about the supplement.



24
Interviews
(face to face and phone)



8
Written responses

About Carer's Allowance and Carer's Allowance Supplement

Carer's Allowance

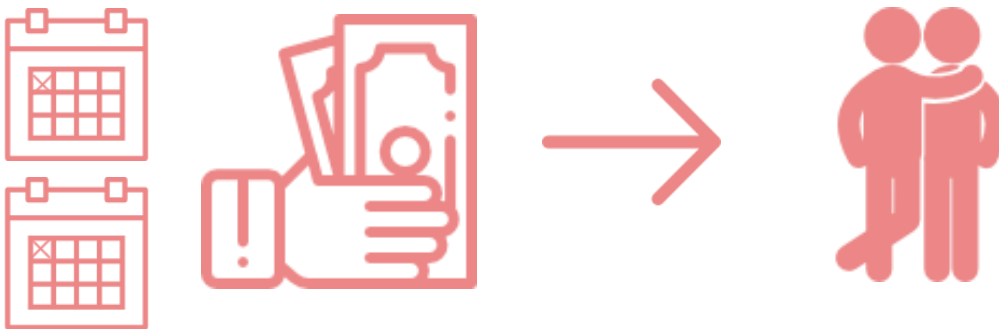
Carer's Allowance supports people who spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who is disabled and who gets one of a list of different disability benefits.



Carer's Allowance Supplement

Scottish Government have introduced a “supplement” for Carer's Allowance.

This is an extra payment which will be paid to people on Carer's Allowance twice a year. It will make the total amount of Carer's Allowance the same as Job Seeker's Allowance.



Helping design the letter about Carer's Allowance Supplement

People who took part were shown a draft of a letter about the introduction of the supplement that would go to recipients of the first payment.

Many felt that the letter was “clear” and “easy to understand”.



“It's self-explanatory - less jargon and more to the point.”

But there were some areas people thought could be improved or made clearer.

This included:

- how and when payments would be made in the future



- how the payment might impact on other benefits



- how to contact the agency



“It is a bit unclear – I got that it was 6 monthly payment. It sounds like an extra amount like your Christmas Bonus or a Winter payment but not clear why it’s being paid or why it’s being done in that way.”

These points were used to make sure that the letter and other information made available to recipients was as clear and straight forward as possible.

Wider support for carers

People who took part were also asked about the wider support they receive. This was to help Social Security Scotland to know how it can best communicate with carers.



People said that they got support from:

- health care providers
- friends and family
- organisations that support carers.

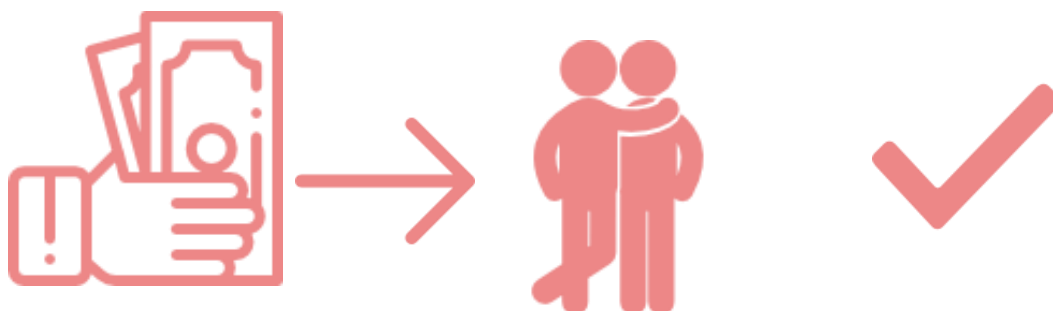


Some said they didn't get any support.

“It makes me feel quite isolated – there is stuff out there for carers, but it’s all “come to a meeting” but I have childcare, and meetings aren’t on a bus route... there is stuff out there for carers but I don’t have access.”

What you think about the Carer's Allowance Supplement

People thought it was good that Scottish Government is introducing the Carer's Allowance supplement



“I would be very happy (to get the supplement). For people who were not aware of this, this would bring a smile to their face. It recognises the work that carers do.”

But some people were worried about whether it would make a big enough difference.

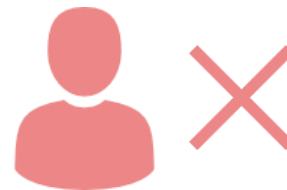


This was because:

- They felt it isn't enough



- It won't change who can get Carer's Allowance



- They were worried about how it would work with payments coming from both Social Security Scotland and DWP



- They were worried about if it would affect other benefits



“The supplement should be more than the rate of Job Seeker's Allowance. Carers are treated like slaves.”

Views on Carer's Allowance

People also told us about their experience of Carer's Allowance.

In particular, concerns were raised about who can get Carer's Allowance. This included:

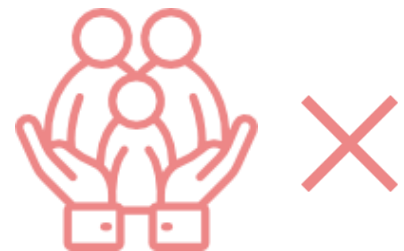
- the amount you can earn and still get Carer's Allowance is too low



- that you can't study full time



- you can only list 1 person that you care for



- due to the maximum amount of income you can get, many people stop getting Carer's Allowance when they get their pension



“Previously, when I worked, there was an earnings allowance and if you earned over a certain amount it wasn't worthwhile. It is also difficult to get work when you tell this (that you are a carer) to employers. Some of the rules are bizarre.”

“Being on Carer’s Allowance is fairly restrictive as I would like to attend a full time college course to develop work skills as I have been “out of the loop” for some time. But under the current rules this is not possible.”

People said that the application form for Carer’s Allowance was often quite simple.



But some people were worried that getting Carer’s Allowance relies on the person they care for receiving their disability benefit.

Some people worried that this could be changed or stopped at short notice. This would then have a huge impact on household income.



Next steps

We will keep asking the Experience Panels to help us develop Scotland’s new social security system. The feedback from this research shaped how people were told about Carer’s Allowance Supplement.



It will also help us to think about changes to Carer’s Allowance when Scottish Government starts to deliver this benefit. We will do more research on this before that happens.

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
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact socialsecurityexperience@gov.scot for further information.



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