



Lanarkshire
Carers

**Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill
Consultation Report and Organisational Response**

August 2021

Contents

Background	3
Question 1 - What are your views on the increased payment of the Carer's Allowance Supplement?	4
Question 2 - Do you agree with increasing the December payment of Carer's Allowance Supplement?	6
Question 3 - Do you have any views on the Bill's Financial Memorandum.....	7
Question 4 - Do you consider the increased payment the best way to support unpaid carers with the challenges faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?	9
Question 5 - What level of parliamentary scrutiny do you think there should be for any future increases to the amount of Carer's Allowance Supplement?	11
Question 6 - Do you have any other views on the Bill?	13

Background

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a serious impact on unpaid carers in Scotland. Last year the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020 provided a 'double payment' of Carer's Allowance Supplement in June 2020. This covered the period from 1 April to 30 September 2020.

The Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill was created to allow the Scottish Government to provide eligible unpaid carers; who receive the Carer's Allowance Supplement, with another 'double payment' in December 2021 of £462.80 through its proposed legislation for the period from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 set the initial amount that carers would receive for this period. The Bill will increase this amount by £231.40. It will also give the Scottish Government the ability to increase the amount of the Carer's Allowance Supplement in the future due to the delays in the introduction of the new Scottish Carer's Assistance benefit. This future benefit would support carers and replace Carer's Allowance and this supplement.

The Social Justice and Social Security Committee opened the Bill up to public consultation from 02 July 2021 – 12 August 2021. In order to submit an organisational response to the Bill, Lanarkshire Carers held an open consultation to seek the views, of the proposed double payment and the Bill, of carers living in Lanarkshire.

Lanarkshire Carers provide services to carers across North and South Lanarkshire local authority areas. Two focus groups for carers known to the organisation were held during the consultation period, which 25 carers attended. A survey was publicised through our social media channels and mailing list to anonymously gather carers' views on the Bill. Our survey ran from 14 July 2021 – 30 July 2021 and received 88 responses

What are your views on the increased payment of the Carer's Allowance Supplement?

Lanarkshire Carers supports the Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill and its intention to provide carers who receive the Carer's Allowance Supplement with extra financial support, because of the extra burden the pandemic may have placed on them and due to the loss of income and increased costs many have faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recipients of Carer's Allowance Supplement tend to be in the bottom half of income deciles and are more likely to be living below the poverty line, due to an income threshold which means that recipients cannot earn more than £128 per week (after deductions) through paid work (during 2020-21). Recipients are also unable to be in full-time education or studying for more than 21 hours per week at a College or University. During our consultation and focus groups, carers expressed their appreciation for the double payment:

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"The increased payment is always welcome as carers incur a lot of extra expenses from caring, and more so during the pandemic, as was my experience, as I'm sure the same for many others."

"It's an amazing scheme, without it during the pandemic we would have struggled with certain things."

"It is much appreciated in these difficult times."

"I agree with it there are so many expenses connected to being a carer this would really help. I make just over the threshold to receive carers allowance and therefore don't qualify for this supplement, but it would be such a help if I did."

However, since June 2020, it has been widely acknowledged that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that there has been an increase in the number of unpaid carers in Scotland by 53%, Carers Scotland estimates that there are now over 1 million unpaid carers in Scotland, a rise of 400,000 since 2015.

It has been estimated by the Scottish Government that 91,000 unpaid carers will receive the December 2021 double payment of Carer's Allowance Supplement; out of over 1 million unpaid carers in Scotland. This equates to 9.1% of unpaid carers in Scotland, and the Scottish Fiscal Commission estimates the cost of the double payment to all eligible recipients is forecast to be approximately £21 million of public funds.

During our consultation, many carers who are not eligible to receive the Carer's Allowance Supplement expressed the opinion that they feel that the additional strain placed on them during the pandemic has gone unnoticed by the Scottish Government.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"I'm disappointed that those that already receive carers allowance are getting even more money and support yet I have to work and struggle with my caring role and receive absolutely no income or support for it."

"As much as it's appreciated, it is also insulting. I pay care providers more in two hours than I get in carers allowance for a week."

"I think the Carer's supplement is an insult to people who provide care 24 hours a day to relatives who would otherwise be costing the taxpayer an arm and a leg, in Health and Social Care costs."

"I work and I earn £7 over the entitlement for Carer's Allowance."

"Well deserved, however for people like myself who work part-time and is over the threshold, I think it's a shame. We care 24/7 alongside juggling our caring responsibility."

"I think it should be open to every carer regardless of work status. ... Just because I already work doesn't mean I should not be entitled to it as I still provide 35+ hours of care per week on top of my full-time job, so why should I not get a payment for it?"

"Having a caring role disadvantages so many carers. Carers picked up the slack during the pandemic."

During our consultation and focus groups, many carers expressed the opinion that this one-off double payment, while appreciated was also a short-term fix when carers desperately needed a solution to support them in their caring roles in the long term.

Scottish Government's Caring Together: The Carers Strategy for Scotland 2010 – 2015

"With the ageing population, the number of carers is expected to grow to an estimated 1 million by 2037."

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that there are now over 1 million unpaid carers in Scotland, seventeen years earlier than expected.

Do you agree with increasing the December payment of Carer's Allowance Supplement?

Lanarkshire Carers agrees in principle with the double payment in December 2021 to eligible recipients. As already outlined, many are likely to be living below the poverty line and hit the hardest during the pandemic due to the loss of income and increased costs that many will have faced. During our consultation and focus groups, a majority of carers agreed with the double payment.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"Yes, it gives carer's a much-needed boost in those winter months."

"Yes, it can be a difficult time for carers who have sacrificed jobs and careers to care for loved ones."

"Yes, although it should have been earlier in the year."

"Yes, but many have given up well-paid jobs to care for their loved ones."

"Yes, I do. Without carers, those needing care and support would not be able to live as full a life, as they do. Life would be immeasurably tougher. Carers need some support and help themselves. This payment helps them either to have a break or obtain some support. To give them some time out."

However as this double payment is only targeting 9.1% of unpaid carers in Scotland, we believe that more needs to be done to provide support to those who are not eligible to receive this double payment. This was also a common theme during our consultation and focus groups.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"No - paying the supplement for the coronavirus element in December excludes the oldest carers who have shouldered the burden right through the pandemic. It should be backdated to June, a year after the first coronavirus payment, or to August when restrictions ease. I am one of the oldest cohorts, and I will reach state pension age and lose the Carer's Allowance before the October qualifying date for a December payment."

"The people who have kept going through the pandemic - who are even more exhausted and isolated in this second year - deserve the coronavirus supplement and should not lose out because of their age. I don't oppose the other supplement being paid in December, but it would be grossly unfair for the Scottish Government to delay paying a coronavirus supplement at such a late point that those who have done the carrying all this time are penalised."

"As a carer that works, I have absolutely no voice and no support at all. I am completely invisible."

"What is the point? No, I do not agree with it. It is not money we need, it is help and assistance."

"It's gesture politics, a one-off increase that is less than the £500 that the NHS, care workers and Personal Assistant's received as a bonus payment."

Do you have any views on the Bill's Financial Memorandum?

The Scottish Fiscal Commission estimates the cost of the double payment to all eligible recipients is forecast to be approximately £21 million of public funds to target 9.1% of unpaid carers in Scotland. As a Carers Centre providing direct information, advice and support to carers living in Lanarkshire, we welcomed the Scottish Government's continued investment to provide support remotely during the pandemic and an extra £750,000 invested in the 'Time to Live' scheme to allow carers to take virtual short breaks away from caring.

We are also aware that the provision of the Carer's Allowance Supplement of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 was originally intended as a short-term measure until Carer's Allowance for unpaid carers in Scotland was replaced by a new Carer's Assistance benefit, and that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that this has caused delays to the Scottish Government's plan to introduce the new Carer's Assistance benefit.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"I think the bill is a great way forward for the Scottish Government to create a form of financial support that truly works and supports carers in Scotland. I hope in the future the Scottish Government will change the rules of Carer's Allowance to allow carers to work or study and pursue other aspirations and goals aside from caring, without losing the financial support from Carer's Allowance."

"I believe people on low incomes especially deserve it but all unpaid carers should receive help."

"The document covers a lot of points that should open the policy of the Scottish Government to enable the support to continue to be paid and increased over time."

"I think it seems a fair assessment and also makes you as a carer feel more valued."

"I think it's great we are getting seen for what we do, as this virus has been a nightmare for everyone."

However, during our consultation and focus groups, the majority of carers whilst welcoming the double payment, also raised the important question of why the Scottish Government were only doing this as a one-off payment instead of looking at raising the overall amount going forward.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"I think carers deserve more money than this bill suggests. Most carers work more than a 40 hour week and should receive payment as a full-time employee."

"What about those that aren't entitled to carers allowance but still actually have a full-time caring role? Why are they still invisible?"

"I don't understand why only one of the 2 annual supplement payments is increased."

“There is no mention of Carers who work. You either are a carer or are not. Income should have no impact on whether you are rewarded for this very hard job! Why is my time and hard work and exhaustion and exclusion any less important than someone who does not work?”

“I would like all carers to get the supplement. I am an unpaid carer and don't receive carers allowance or this supplement, it would really help me.”

“It should be paid to all no matter their age or financial circumstances it's a payment to recognise what carers do.”

“Please look to amend qualifying limits as many are just missing out.”

“It's well-intentioned, but it doesn't reflect what's actually needed.”

Do you consider the increased payment the best way to support unpaid carers with the challenges faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Lanarkshire Carers believes that the one-off double payment is a short-term solution to provide only 9.1% of unpaid carers in Scotland with extra financial support. The majority of carers are now providing more care than ever before. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that there are now over 1 million unpaid carers in Scotland, seventeen years earlier than expected. We believe that more needs to be done to support carers who are not eligible to receive the Carer's Allowance Supplement payment.

The need for self-isolation or shielding, the closure of respite and day-care services and reduced support from social care providers have had a disproportionate effect on carers. Many of whom were already providing substantial hours of care every week.

During our consultation and focus groups, carers who are eligible for the Carer's Allowance Supplement welcomed the one-off double payment but thought that it was just a starting point.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"I believe it is one of the best ways to support carers but the government could use other powers to provide increases across other benefits that carers receive."

"Yes, I do. I strongly agree with this I can't go and get a job as I need to care for my son 24/7."

"Yes, the financial difficulties and challenges are overwhelming at times."

"I think it's a start. Being a carer is hard work every day for all carers and as most carers will tell you, every day is different. Some days you wonder how you have made it to the end of the day in one piece. It's harder still when you work and have other children to take care of or other family members."

"I think it's a start. It's been really hard throughout the pandemic my son hasn't had much support from CAMH's at all so life has been very hard going."

Carers raised the issue of needing to get respite and day-care services back up and running as part of the Scottish Government's COVID-19 recovery plan to ensure that they can take a much-needed break from caring. Due to the pandemic, many carers are taking on longer and more intense caring roles and this has had a hugely detrimental effect on their overall physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"I do think it gives us recognition of how hard it has been for us. I think money isn't the only solution as we need all of our other services up and running to help more with the physical side."

"Yes, although they need more emotional support and respite."

"For some people yes, for me, it would be more respite."

"I consider it one way to support unpaid carers, but more needs to be done in terms of respite and day centres."

"It is good but the best way in my opinion is to open up more services that are disappearing every day."

"No, I would rather see respite facilities to give exhausted carers the chance of a few days break. That would also help support the carers who do not receive Carer's Allowance."

Throughout our consultation and focus groups, carers who have been caring throughout the pandemic and have an underlying entitlement or are not eligible to receive the Carer's Allowance Supplement payment have said that they do not agree that this is the best way to support them.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"Definitely not! The carer role is difficult, isolating, and emotional, in my case not a lot of support."

"No, but it helps a bit. But not enough has been done for carers during the pandemic."

"I think a complete overhaul of how full-time carers are paid and are supported is needed. The system right now is simply just not good enough."

"Unpaid carers work so hard and we are underpaid for the work we do. We have carers allowance but then, on the other hand, we are penalised for it and have money deducted from other benefits. We didn't choose to be unpaid carers!"

"It's not relevant to me and thousands of other carers contributing to society and the tax system by working!"

"No, there can be more done in regards to helping unpaid carers with more help with benefits and having the carers allowance as a non-deductible payment as a source of income."

"If all unpaid carers get the money that would be a better result, including the ones on universal credit."

What level of parliamentary scrutiny do you think there should be for any future increases to the amount of Carer's Allowance Supplement?

Lanarkshire Carers believes that there should be parliamentary scrutiny when spending public funds. However, we agree with carers, who throughout our consultation and focus groups agreed that the Scottish Government needed to listen to the voices of carers as experts by experience when making decisions and actively consult with them.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"There should always be parliamentary scrutiny to ensure that carers allowance supplement is working to give carers the maximum financial support and increases truly reflect the costs of living and the added costs of caring."

"The fullest that can be given. Maybe then, the voice of the invisible carer like myself as I am not entitled to carer's allowance may be heard and I may get some sort of support."

"Reasonable but positive scrutiny by those who know our contribution and value."

"It should be overseen by an independent agency. ... Possibly a Health and Social Care advisory committee or even additional Welfare/Human Rights organisation to make sure things are done fairly for everyone who provides unpaid care. The government should be accountable as they are for any other paid employment."

"It should be reviewed regularly so we are not forgotten about again."

"I think there should be an assessment of needs done more regularly and this should be reflected in the increases awarded."

Many carers during our consultation and focus groups expressed the opinion that the Scottish Government needed to appreciate the contribution that all unpaid carers make to our society and the challenges associated with this. They also felt that more needed to be done to support carers who cannot currently access Carer's Allowance.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"I think carer's voices should be heard."

"I think they need to look at what exactly carers do and the fact for most it's a 24/7 job with services reduced and it's difficult for them to get help when required. In addition, I think they should get financial recognition for jobs they have given up to do a caring role."

"The ordinary person has to be listened to. Regarding getting help financially or any other form of help, I feel that there never is that level of down to earth thoughts of how all this financial help is dealt with."

"Parliament should realise unpaid carers save them billions of pounds every year."

"I think that parliament needs to understand the challenges of being a carer."

"I don't know, but I think it's an important issue considering these carers are sometimes keeping the people they care for out of the care system, which is an even bigger financial burden on the Government and taxpayers."

Do you have any other views on the Bill?

Lanarkshire Carers believes that the Bill intends to provide carers who receive the Carer's Allowance Supplement with extra financial support, because of the extra burden the pandemic may have placed on them and due to the loss of income and increased costs many have faced, will be achieved.

However, we believe that this will only reach a small proportion of unpaid carers, and does not address nor plan to reach any additional carers out with those who receive the Carer's Allowance Supplement. We are aware that public consultation has begun for the new Scottish Carer's Assistance benefit and the National Care Service, and we plan to actively consult with carers on both to ensure that the Scottish Government include and listen to unpaid carers.

Throughout our consultation and focus groups, agreed with this.

Comments from Consultation Survey and Focus Groups

"Most carers are neglecting their own lives to do their job. More specialised support and maybe look at how the lack of financial help is detrimental to the carer's health."

"I hope the bill creates a form of Carer's Allowance that truly supports and works for carers and ensures that the increased payments continue and are not just for hardship times. Alternatively, that Carer's Allowance is increased to a greater amount to recognise that carers are already in hardship without the added impact of pandemics."

"I think that it should not matter what your income is, if you are working full-time and looking after a family member you should still be paid Carer's Allowance."

"Carers need to be supported financially, some respite for themselves. A body to listen and ask are you ok?"

"Carer's Allowance should not be means-tested. Either you care or you do not! I had to reduce my hours to job-share to meet the needs of my disabled child, significantly affecting my family's income. ... The government do not recognise my contribution unless I choose to give up my job and solely claim benefits."

"Carers have been invisible for years; we have been expected to look after relatives with no thought to ourselves. I had to give up a job that I loved through poor health, & now care for my husband. The isolation & mental strain is awful."

"Why does it always have to be the disabled and carers that have to fight for everything? The government give you things in one hand and take them away in another."

Lanarkshire Carers also believes that the Scottish Government should consider the current universal basic income scheme trial that the Welsh Government are currently piloting as a similar idea that could be enacted in Scotland. This would mean that the Scottish Government would ensure that every adult in Scotland would receive a universal basic income and seek to address the growing levels of poverty.