

Sent by email: 01 June 2022



Ben Macpherson  
Minister for Social Security and Local Government  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Dear Minister

**Re: Financial Support for Carers**

We are writing following the recent announcement by the Chancellor on support to help with the cost-of-living crisis. This includes several measures including £400 for all households, a boost of £650 for people in receipt of means-tested benefits, extra support for pensioners and an extra £150 for people in receipt of disability benefits.

This will bring some welcome relief to carers who are on means-tested benefits or who are pensioners. Carers have faced soaring costs, increasing the stress of caring for relatives and friends who are disabled, ill or older and need help. They have been struggling with decisions every day about whether to heat or eat and they've been terrified about what this will mean for them and their family.

However, across the UK, there are several hundred thousand carers who do not receive means-tested benefits, but who are in receipt of Carer's Allowance, the main carers benefit. These carers will be shocked and worried that they will not get any of the extra payments of £650 per year even though Carer's Allowance itself is the lowest benefit of its kind at only £69.70 per week and won't even get an extra £150 alongside people who are in receipt of disability benefits.

Despite the welcome additional Carer's Allowance Supplement delivered by the Scottish Government to top Carer's Allowance Supplement, it remains a very low income, claimed predominately by women.

Carers Scotland's research, "Under Pressure", found that many carers face additional costs because of caring. These carers will be left wondering how they will face these extra costs as prices continue to rise. It's not as simple as finding extra paid work to help meet extra costs when it's impossible to cut back any further. Many are providing significant amounts of care and many have given up work or reduced hours to provide care.

We have, as you know, for many months been raising the issues of the extreme challenges that carers are facing with their finances, as well as the significant impact the pandemic has had financially and to their health and wellbeing. Whilst the Scottish Government provided extra Coronavirus Carers Allowance Supplement, people in receipt of Carer's Allowance were overlooked for the £20 a week additional payment that Universal Credit recipients received from March 2020 until last Autumn, meaning carers lost out on over £1000 a year for two years in a row.

Carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance have been contacting carers organisations at their wits end in recent months, with many telling us they are having to get further into debt, use food banks and credit cards, or cut back on heating and energy bills to ensure they can remain solvent. The Chancellor's announcement for this overlooked group of carers is not enough to reduce the worry and financial stress in the weeks and months ahead and it makes them feel even less valued.

Carers continue to provide unpaid care worth £43m per day. Many of these people have had to make huge sacrifices to do so, including giving up their paid jobs.

Carers UK and other carer organisations continue to seek inclusion of Carer's Allowance as a qualifying benefit for this additional support. We hope that the decision will be reconsidered.

However, the National Carer Organisations now seek assurances from the Scottish Government that it will take action, particularly using consequential from the extension to the Household Support Fund in England. We believe in total, the Scottish Government will receive an additional £41M to help alleviate the cost of living crisis.

Whilst we recognise that there will be many calls on this support, the National Carer Organisations calls for an extra payment to be made with this December's Carer's Allowance Supplement. This would give carers on Carer's Allowance some additional funds to help with energy and other rising costs at the coldest time of the year.

But more is needed, the energy cap is rising again and costs for carers show no signs of reducing. We seek:

- Carer's Allowance itself being defined as a qualifying benefit for the Scottish Welfare Fund and for any funds provided by the Scottish Government for funds to help with fuel insecurity. The Scottish Government should also work with COSLA and local authorities to develop clear guidance that identifies carers as a group often facing exceptional pressures to ensure that those carers who do not qualify for Carer's Allowance or the carer elements have somewhere to turn.
- The Scottish Government to provide additional funds to every carers centre in Scotland to provide a hardship fund for carers. We know that centres that offered this, with additional funds from the Scottish Government, were hugely oversubscribed, showing the depth of need amongst carers in our communities.
- The Scottish Government should also seek to provide funds to young carers services to support young carers and young adult carers facing financial hardship.

Yours faithfully



**Richard Meade**  
**Director, Carers Scotland**

On behalf of the National Carer Organisations:

- Coalition of Carers in Scotland
- Carers Trust Scotland
- MECOPP
- Shared Care Scotland
- Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance
- Carers Scotland