

Carers

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Introduction

Carers provide invaluable support for relatives, partners and friends who may be ill, elderly or disabled. In recognition of this, Universal Credit provides an additional amount for carers on a low income who provide care for at least 35 hours per week for a severely disabled person.

Many carers who want to combine caring with work feel that the risk of losing their benefits is too great. The simplified structure of Universal Credit, together with the generous Work Allowances and single Earnings Taper, will financially support carers to take steps into employment.

Eligibility

Carers on low income who provide care for at least 35 hours per week for a severely disabled person can get an additional amount for carers as part of their Universal Credit award.

A severely disabled person is defined as someone receiving one or more of the following:

- Disability Living Allowance or in Scotland Child Disability Payment – middle or highest rate care
- Constant Attendance Allowance – at or above the normal maximum rate with an Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit or basic (full day) rate with War Disablement Pension
- Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment - either rate of the Daily Living Component
- Armed Forces Independence Payment

Carer's Allowance

Carers do not need to be claiming Carer's Allowance to be eligible for the additional amount for carers.

If a claimant is in receipt of Carer's Allowance they can still be eligible for the additional amount for carers as part of their Universal Credit. However, the amount they receive from Carer's Allowance will be deducted from their Universal Credit entitlement.

Where possible, carers must be advised that they can claim Carer's Allowance. Although they would not be better off financially, there are some advantages to making a claim because people who receive Carer's Allowance:

- are entitled to a Class 1 National Insurance credit whereas Universal Credit claimants are entitled to a Class 3 National Insurance credit
- will receive the Christmas Bonus which is not available to Universal Credit claimants

Class 1 National Insurance credits count towards the State Pension, Bereavement Benefits and some other contributory benefits.

Class 3 National Insurance credits count towards the State Pension.

The Christmas Bonus is a one-off, tax-free payment made before Christmas. It is paid to people who get certain benefits in the qualifying week - which is normally the first full week of December.

Carer's Allowance will continue to exist as a separate benefit outside of Universal Credit.

Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland)

In October 2018 the Scottish Government introduced a new Carer's Allowance Supplement (CAS) in Scotland. This will be paid every 6 months to people in receipt of Carer's Allowance.

The CAS is paid regularly and therefore treated as income but is not taken into account as unearned income in Universal Credit. Arrears of, or compensation for late payment of the CAS will not be treated as capital in Universal Credit for 12 months after it is received.

For further information, see the following guide and website:

Carers Allowance Supplement (Scotland)

Carer's Allowance Supplement

Labour Market regimes

Claimants who provide regular and substantial care for at least 35 hours per week for a severely disabled person will be placed in the No Work Related Requirements regime.

They will not be expected to look for or be available for work. This includes claimants who are entitled to the additional amount for carers and those people who care for a severely disabled person for at least 35 hours per week - but do not receive the additional amount for carers.

Claimants who have part-time caring responsibilities (fewer than 35 hours per week) will be expected to look for work, but will have a tailored Claimant Commitment to reflect this. See Labour Market regimes.

When the additional amount for carers is not payable

There are cases when eligible carers are not entitled to the additional amount for carers, for example where:

- the carer already receives the additional amount for carers because they care for more than one disabled person
- someone else receives the additional amount for carers in respect of the person they care for
- another person receives Carer's Allowance for the same person that the additional amount for carers is being paid for

- the carer is in full time education or is classed as a full time student
- the carer receives the additional amount of Universal Credit for limited capability for work and work-related activity – see the table below

Multiple carers

Only one claimant can be paid a carer-related benefit for caring for a severely disabled person.

If the disabled person has two or more carers, each providing care for at least 35 hours a week and each is eligible for Universal Credit or Carer's Allowance, only one of them would be entitled to payment of:

- the additional amount for carers, or
- Carer's Allowance only, or
- both the additional amount for carers and Carer's Allowance depending on the claimant's circumstances

The carers must decide between them who will receive either the additional amount for carers or Carer's Allowance. If they cannot decide, a decision will be made on their behalf by the decision maker.

In couple claims where both members of the couple are caring for different severely disabled people and each of them satisfy the eligibility criteria, both claimants can be awarded the additional amount for carers.

The severely disabled person does not have to be living with the claimant for them to qualify for the additional amount for carers.

Combining caring responsibilities with work

Universal Credit provides support for carers and improves their opportunities to maintain their links with work.

Carers who combine caring with paid work will continue to get the additional amount for carers as part of their overall award as long as they provide care for at least 35 hours per week for a severely disabled person.

Claimant is in receipt of an additional amount of Universal Credit for limited capability for work or limited capability for work and work-related activity

If the claimant is in receipt of an additional amount of Universal Credit for either limited capability for work (LCW) or limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA), they cannot receive the additional amount for carers as well. They will receive the additional amount that has the highest monetary value.

The claimant will retain underlying entitlement to the non-payable additional amount providing they continue to meet the entitlement conditions.

The monetary value, highest to lowest is:

- LCWRA additional amount
- Carer additional amount
- LCW additional amount

The table below gives details of additional amount or amounts which can be paid in situations where there are combinations of the additional amounts as listed above. This includes single claims (claimant 1) or joint claims (claimants 1 and 2):

Additional amount awarded to Claimant 1	and	Additional amount awarded to Claimant 2	and	Additional amount to be paid to Claimant 1	Additional amount to be paid to Claimant 2
LCW				LCW	
Carer				Carer	
LCWRA				LCWRA	
LCW	Carer			Carer	
Carer	LCWRA			LCWRA	
LCW		LCW		LCW	
Carer		Carer		Carer	Carer
LCWRA		LCWRA		LCWRA	
LCW		Carer		LCW	Carer
Carer		LCWRA		Carer	LCWRA
LCW		LCWRA			LCWRA
LCW	Carer	LCW		Carer	LCW
LCW	Carer	Carer		Carer	Carer
LCW	Carer	LCWRA		Carer	LCWRA
Carer	LCWRA	LCW		LCWRA	
Carer	LCWRA	Carer		LCWRA	Carer
Carer	LCWRA	LCWRA		Carer	LCWRA
LCW	Carer	LCW	Carer	Carer	Carer
LCW	Carer	Carer	LCWRA	Carer	LCWRA
Carer	LCWRA	Carer	LCWRA	Carer	LCWRA

Those making a claim to Universal Credit on or after 3 April 2017 on the grounds of having a health condition or disability, will not get the additional amount of Universal Credit for having LCW. Existing claimants who are already receiving this additional amount or have begun the health condition-related journey prior to this date are protected from the effects of this change. See WCA outcomes.

Carer-related benefits where the severely disabled person receives the Severe Disability Premium or extra amount for severe disability

The Severe Disability Premium (with Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Housing Benefit) and the extra amount for severe disability (with Pension Credit) are payable to eligible severely disabled claimants:

- who are not receiving care of 35 hours or more per week, and
- whose carer does not receive Carer's Allowance or the Universal Credit additional amount for being a carer

If the additional amount for carers is awarded to a Universal Credit claimant, the Severe Disability Premium and extra amount for severe disability will be removed from the disabled person's entitlement for whom they are caring.

Temporary breaks in caring

Claimants must report when they take a temporary break from their caring responsibilities. Short breaks from caring may not affect the claimant's Universal Credit. A temporary break could be:

- a holiday for the claimant or the disabled person
- the claimant or disabled person spending time in hospital
- respite care for the disabled person

A carer is allowed 12 weeks off from caring in a 26 week rolling period of which only 4 weeks can be for the carer to take a holiday or for respite care for the disabled person.

The additional amount for carers will stop if either of the following applies:

- hospital breaks and other temporary breaks add up to more than 12 weeks
- other temporary breaks add up to more than 4 weeks

Hospital breaks

The additional amount for carers can be paid to a person providing care for someone in hospital if the person being cared for is in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits:

- Attendance Allowance (AA)
- Constant Attendance Allowance (CAA)
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Armed Forces Independence Payments (AFIP)

Attendance Allowance and Constant Attendance Allowance stop after 28 days in hospital.

DLA and PIP also stop after 28 days in hospital unless the person being cared for is under 18 at the time of admission - in which case DLA and PIP are paid throughout the hospital stay.

The additional amount for caring remains in payment for as long as the qualifying benefit for an adult is in payment. The criteria to provide care for at least 35 hours a week does not apply for those 28 days, except if the person being cared for is in receipt of AFIP.

When a disabled child goes into hospital there is no end date for the payment of child DLA or in Scotland Child Disability Payment. In these cases, the carer is asked if they are continuing to provide care for at least 35 hours a week even though the child is in hospital. The parent carer is usually part of the NHS care plan and is involved in caring activities, for example feeding or changing the child.

AFIP is paid for life regardless of any changes in the recipient's circumstances. The Ministry of Defence would, in the first instance, be expected to deal with care issues for those recipients. The additional amount for carers will only continue to be paid if the claimant is still providing care for 35 hours a week whilst the AFIP recipient is in hospital.

Payment of the additional amount for carers if breaks in care exceed the allowed limits

A claimant will not be paid the additional amount for carers in any assessment period if:

- there has been more than 12 weeks break from caring in the previous 26 weeks
- a break that lasted for more than 4 weeks ended in that assessment period

If the end date of the break is yet to be reported, the last day of the assessment period will be treated as the end date.

If the end of the assessment period is more than 4 weeks since the start date of the break - the additional amount for carers will not be paid for that assessment period.

If a claimant is not entitled to the additional amount for carers for any assessment period due to exceeding the limits on breaks, the additional amount for carers will automatically be paid in subsequent assessment periods only if the above no longer applies.

Claimant is no longer entitled to the additional amount for carers

There are a number of reasons why a claimant will no longer be entitled to the additional amount for carers. These are:

- the claimant is determined as having LCWRA and is paid the LCWRA additional amount instead
- either the claimant or the disabled person has moved away or gone abroad
- someone else now cares for the disabled person
- the disabled person no longer receives a qualifying benefit
- the number of hours for which the claimant is caring for the disabled person falls below 35 hours a week
- the disabled person dies

When a claimant's caring responsibilities end, the additional amount for carers will not be paid for the whole of that assessment period. This is due to a claimant's circumstances being taken into account at the end of the assessment period and applying to the whole assessment period.

Equally, if a claimant starts caring on the last day of the assessment period, the additional amount for carers will be paid for the whole of that assessment period.

Person being cared for dies

If the disabled person dies and the claimant is already in receipt of Universal Credit (past the first assessment period), they will continue to receive the additional amount for carers for the assessment period in which the bereavement occurred and the following two assessment periods.

The conditionality of the claimant must be reviewed. This is because they could be excused from work-related conditionality for 6 months if they are bereaved because the deceased person who they cared for was:

- their partner
- their child or the child of their partner
- a qualifying young person for whom they or their partner were responsible

The work coach must be sensitive to a claimant's circumstances when there has been a bereavement. Easements to conditionality must be considered subjectively and may be required for more or less than 6 months. This is within the work coaches' discretion.

When a new claim to Universal Credit is made by a carer (when the person they cared for has died) and Carers Allowance is still in payment (the Carer's Allowance run on lasts up to 8 weeks) - they are entitled to the additional amount for carers in any full assessment period where Carers Allowance continues to be in payment for the whole of and includes the last day of that assessment period.

Change in hours

If a claimant reports that they are caring for a disabled person for fewer than 35 hours per week, the following must be considered:

- the claimant has underlying entitlement to an additional amount of Universal Credit for LCW or LCWRA
- the claimant is part of a couple
- to review conditionality
- to remove the additional amount for carers

Young Carer Grant (Scottish Devolution)

The Young Carer Grant is a long-term Scottish Government benefit. There is no DWP equivalent.

It is designed to provide additional financial help for young people who have significant caring responsibilities and is to help improve their health and educational outcomes.

To be eligible for the Young Carer Grant, the young person must be aged 16, 17 or 18 and they must have been caring for 1, 2 or 3 people for an average of 16 hours per week for at least the last 3 months.

The claimant must make a claim for the Young Carer Grant. It is paid once a year as a one-off payment of £305.10 and the claimant must re-apply at the end of the year if they wish to claim a further payment.

To qualify for a Young Carer Grant:

- the applicant cannot be in receipt of Carers Allowance
- the person they are caring for must be in receipt of a qualifying benefit

It is disregarded for both income and capital purposes

The Scottish Government makes the decision regarding entitlement to the Young Carer Grant and not Universal Credit. However, payments are made through the DWP Central Payment System and DWP Payment Service teams manage recalled and returned payments.

Universal Credit agents may receive enquiries from Social Security Scotland staff wanting to clarify or confirm customer and/or cared for circumstances.

If a claimant contacts Universal Credit for information about the Young Carer Grant, they must be re-directed to Social Security Scotland.

No action needs to be taken to disregard the payment of Young Carer Grant and there is no requirement to record a decision to disregard it.

If a young person is receiving Universal Credit and they report receipt of a Young Carer Grant, the agent should thank them for reporting it and confirm it will have no effect on their benefit.