

CARER'S ALLOWANCE INFORMATION SHEET

What is Carer's Allowance?

Carer's Allowance is a state benefit, which is paid to people who spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who is ill or has a disability. The minimum of 35 hours cannot be 'spread' across several people. Carer's Allowance is not a means-tested benefit and is not based on your National Insurance contributions.

How much is Carer's Allowance?

For the current tax year (2021/2022, ending 5th April 2022) Carer's Allowance is £67.60 per week. In addition, a National Insurance Credit is paid for each week that Carer's Allowance is paid, which can help to fill gaps in your National Insurance Record, to make sure you qualify for certain benefits including the State Pension. Carer's Allowance is a taxable benefit if the threshold for paying tax is exceeded.

Carer's Allowance does count as income when means-tested benefits are calculated. However, your means tested benefit calculations will include a carer premium, carer addition or carer element.

How do I qualify for Carer's Allowance?

To qualify to receive Carer's Allowance, you must:

- Spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone (whether you live with them or not).
- Care for someone who receives either Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance care component (at either the higher or middle rate), Personal Independence Payment daily living component (at either rate), Armed Forces Independence Payment or Constant Attendance Allowance.
- Not be earning more than £128, net after certain deductions, a week from gainful employment (for the current tax year 2021/2022, ending 5th April 2022). Allowable deductions are Income Tax, National Insurance contributions, half of any work or personal pension contributions you make and certain business expenses. Money received from private or occupational pensions and income from investments is not recognised as earnings
- Be aged 16 or over.
- Not be in full-time education. Full time education is normally defined as having more than 21 hours of supervised study a week.
- Satisfy UK presence and residence conditions. You must have been physically present in Great Britain for 104 out of the 156 weeks immediately prior to the date of your claim.

What does 35 hours of care include?

The minimum of 35 hours care a week can include:

- Physically helping the person.
- Doing practical tasks for them, for example cooking.
- Generally keeping an eye on them, for example making sure they take the correct medication.

For Carer's Allowance, a week runs from Sunday to Saturday.

You cannot average out your caring hours over a number of weeks.

I already receive State Pension, can I claim Carer's Allowance?

If your State Pension is less than £67.60 a week, you can claim Carer's Allowance to top your State Pension up to £67.60

If your State Pension is more than £67.60 a week, you will not be paid Carer's Allowance. This is because the State Pension and Carer's Allowance are classed as 'overlapping' benefits, which cannot be paid at the same time.

Even if your State Pension is more than £67.60 a week, it is still important to make a claim for Carer's Allowance. Making a claim could mean you are awarded an 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance. This 'underlying entitlement' may mean that you could be entitled to a carer premium. This is extra money with any means-tested benefits that you claim, for example Pension Credit and Housing Benefit.

Carer's Allowance and other overlapping benefits

You cannot usually be paid Carer's Allowance if you are receiving one or more of the following overlapping benefits:

- Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Maternity Allowance
- Bereavement or widow's benefits
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance

If you are getting more than the amount of Carer's Allowance from one of the benefits above, you cannot be paid Carer's Allowance but you can still claim an 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance, providing you meet the other entitlement conditions. This 'underlying entitlement' may mean that you could be entitled to a carer premium. This is extra money with any means-tested benefits that you claim.

If any of the benefits above are paid at less than the amount of Carer's Allowance, you could get paid a small amount of Carer's Allowance on top of the other benefit.

Carer's Allowance and means-tested benefits

Carer's Allowance is counted as income when means-tested benefits are calculated. However, any means-tested benefits will include a carer premium, carer addition or carer element.

- Carer premium is additional money included in the calculation of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, and Council Tax Reduction.
- Carer addition is an equivalent amount paid with Pension Credit.
- Carer element is an equivalent amount paid with Universal Credit.

Carer premium and carer addition are paid at £37.70 a week. Carer element is paid at £163.73 a month.

In practice, if you are paid Carer's Allowance and are already getting a means-tested benefit, your means-tested benefit will decrease slightly, but overall you are likely to be better off as the amount of carer premium, carer addition or carer element will compensate you.

When awarded Carer's Allowance or an 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance let the relevant means-tested benefit department know to ensure that the carer premium, carer addition or carer element is included in your benefit calculation. Ensure that the carer premium, carer addition or carer element is backdated to the date your Carer's Allowance was backdated to.

Will my claim affect the benefits of the person I care for?

Yes, it could. If the person you care for receives a Severe Disability Premium (or addition) added to their benefits, that extra money would stop if you receive Carer's Allowance. Severe Disability Premium will also stop if you already receive the Carers Element of Universal Credit.

However, if you only have an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance, that will not affect their benefits.

How to make a claim

There are several ways to make a claim for Carer's Allowance.

- Online: Visit www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim to download a claim form or make a claim online.
- Phone: Contact the Carer's Allowance Unit on 0800 731 0297 and ask for a claim form to be sent to you.

What happens if my application is turned down?

If your application for Carer's Allowance is turned down, contact Swindon Carers Centre for advice.

It is important to do this as soon as possible, as you only have one month to challenge a decision.

What happens if my circumstances change?

If your circumstances change, report this to the Carer's Allowance Unit on 0800 731 0297 or online at www.gov.uk/carers-allowance-report-change or by post by writing to Carers Allowance Unit, Mail Handling Site A, Wolverhampton, WV98 2AB.

If you take a break from caring

You can take a break from caring for up to 4 weeks in any 26-week period without your Carer's Allowance being affected.

If you go into hospital as an inpatient

Your Carer's Allowance is still paid for up to 12 weeks.

If the person you care for goes into hospital

Your Carer's Allowance will continue for up to 12 weeks or until the person's disability benefit stops. Their disability benefit will stop after 4 weeks if they are in an NHS hospital.

If the person you care for goes into a care home

You will only be able to keep claiming Carer's Allowance if the person you care for continues to receive a disability benefit and you still care for them for at least 35 hours a week. The disability benefit the person you care for will stop after four weeks, unless they are paying their own care home fees.

If the person you care for dies

Your Carer's Allowance will continue for up to 8 weeks from the date of death of the person you care for.