

CAS Response to the Coronavirus Carer's Allowance Supplement Consultation

July 2021

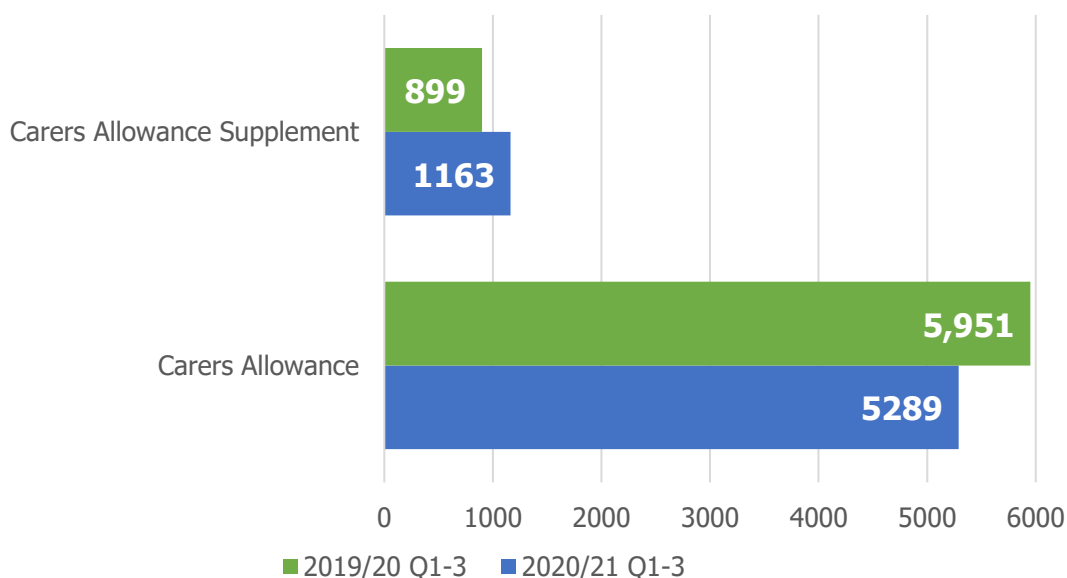
1. What are your views on the increased payment of the Carer's Allowance Supplement?

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) warmly welcomes the increased payment of the Carer's Allowance Supplement. CAS recommended that the Carer's Allowance Supplement be doubled again, to provide additional financial support to carers, in our October 2020 response to the Social Security Committee's COVID-19 inquiry and are pleased to see this recommendation taken forward by the Scottish Government.

CAS believes the main purpose of carer's social security payments should be to equally to compensate carers for income that would have been earned through employment, recognising the equal value of the work that is caring. Whilst there is more to be done to ensure that carers have the financial support they need and social security system they deserve, this further additional payment is a welcome step in the right direction.

Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) provide over 10,000 pieces of advice a year on social security for carers to people across Scotland. Advice statistics from Scotland's Citizens Advice network show that during the first quarter of the financial year 2020/21, there was an increase the number of pieces of advice provided to people on Carer's Allowance Supplement – this correlates with the announcement of the double payment for June 2020. The number of pieces of advice provided on Carer's Allowance Supplement across the first three quarters of 2020/21 **increased by a third (29%)** compared to 2019/20. Further statistics are provided below.

Number of pieces of advice on CA and CAS between Q1-Q3, 19/20 - 20/21 comparison



	Number of pieces of advice provided by CAB	
	2019/20 Q1-3	2020/21 Q1-3
Carer's Allowance	5,951	5289
Carer's Allowance Supplement	899	1163

The value of unpaid care work in Scotland is estimated at a staggering £36 billion a year.ⁱ Research has shown that 7 in 10 (72%) people in Scotland support government spending more money on social security for carers with four in five people believing that unpaid care is not valued enough.ⁱⁱ

CAS recognises the increased payment is designed to relieve the extra burden the pandemic has placed on carers, due to the loss of income and increased costs many have faced as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. However, evidence from clients and advisers on the struggles carers face to meet essential costs, suggests that increased financial support for unpaid carers was required prior to COVID-19 and will continue to be essential beyond the pandemic.

CAS recommend that the Scottish Government double the Carer's Allowance Supplement payment permanently.

Longer term, CAS as part of the Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security has **recommended that the depth of support available to unpaid carers is enhanced through the introduction of the new Scottish Carer's Assistance.**ⁱⁱⁱ The new payment should be a tool that contributes to protecting unpaid carers from poverty. Whilst Scottish Carer's Assistance is still in development and before more fundamental changes can be implemented to the benefit, Carer's Allowance Supplement should be harnessed as a vital tool to get additional funds to carers.

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

CAS supports the increased December payment of the Carer's Allowance Supplement.

There is a need to look beyond the increased payment as a purely 'Coronavirus-only' Carer's Allowance Supplement and recognise that carers required this additional financial support prior to COVID-19 and will continue to beyond the pandemic.

Statistics show that people living in more deprived areas are more likely to be caring for over 35 hours per week¹.

The below Citizens Alerts are from Citizens Advice Bureaux who have reported the financial hardship of unpaid carers in Scotland.

! **Citizens Alert:** An East of Scotland CAB reports of a client who contacted the bureau for advice on additional financial support as they are struggling financially in their caring role. The client felt their hard work and dedication to their unpaid caring role for an elderly family member with a disability is not respected or properly valued by lawmakers. The client had to leave a health profession role to fulfil their caring duties.

! **Citizens Alert:** A South of Scotland CAB reports of a client who is currently claiming Universal Credit and Carer's Allowance. The client has been experiencing financial hardship and had no funds for gas and electricity when seeking advice from the bureau. The CAB supported the client to make an application to the Scottish Welfare Fund for emergency assistance through a Crisis Grant. The client was also informed that as they are in receipt of Carer's Allowance they would also receive Carer's Allowance Supplement when this is paid in June and on this occasion, it would be a double payment. The client was grateful for the advice provided and for the additional money that would help the client who is currently living in poverty.

CAS recommend that the doubling of the Carers Allowance Supplement is made permanent.

If the payment was doubled permanently this would equate to approximately a £20 a week top up payment to Carer's Allowance. This would still only mean a total weekly payment to carers (from Carer's Allowance and Carer's Allowance Supplement) of £85.40 for over 35 hours of care a week, or just £2.44 an hour.

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

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?

CAS recognise the best way to combat the financial hardship and poverty being experienced by some carers is to provide direct extra financial support – such as through the double Carer's Allowance Supplement – and support this additional funding.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-carers/pages/2/>

Alongside the financial pressure and constraints of caring, worsened by Covid-19, carers face a variety of other challenges such as difficulties in accessing respite and negative impacts on their own mental health. Ensuring carers receive holistic support is also essential, but must be in addition to financial support, not instead of.

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

6. Do you have any other views on the Bill?

CAS recommend that the Scottish Government commit to paying at least one double payment of the Carer's Allowance Supplement in each term of the parliament.

Longer term the overall adequacy of carers social security and the future reforms required to Carer's Assistance to ensure this must be considered.

ⁱ Oxfam, Time to Care <https://oxfamapps.org/scotland/2020/01/20/unpaid-care-worth-36bn/>

ⁱⁱ Oxfam, Time to Care <https://oxfamapps.org/scotland/2020/01/20/unpaid-care-worth-36bn/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security, [Manifesto 2021](#)