

# CARER'S ALLOWANCE

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.



## What is Carer's Allowance?

Carer's Allowance is a benefit for people who care for someone for at least 35 hours a week and meet certain criteria. The current amount of benefit paid is £76.75 per week. It's not means-tested and therefore, is not based on you or your partner's income or capital. However, you can only claim if you earn less than £139 per week after deductions.

Carer's Allowance is considered a taxable income. (Tax is only payable if your earnings take you over the personal tax allowance – currently £12,570). It does therefore affect other means-tested benefits. However, getting Carer's Allowance entitles you to a carer premium, carer addition or carer element (in other benefits) and should mean you are not financially worse off if you claim Carer's Allowance whilst in receipt of any of those.

## How to claim Carer's Allowance

- Visit [www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim) to apply online or download a claim form to complete at home and post.
- Call the Carer's Allowance Unit on 0800 731 0297 (text phone 0800 731 0317, calls from typetalk are also welcome) and request claim pack DS700, or DS700(SP) if you receive State Pension.
- Carer's Allowance can normally be backdated for up to three months, as long as you are eligible for that period. Ask for backdating on the claim form.

## Who Can Claim Carer's Allowance?

You can make a claim if you are over the age of 16 and you meet ALL of the following criteria:

- 1. You look after someone who gets a qualifying disability benefit.** The person you care for must be in receipt of one of the following:
  - Either middle or high rate care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) – paid to children under 16 years of age.
  - Either rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) – paid to people over 16 years up to state pension age.
  - Either rate of Attendance Allowance – paid to people over state pension age.
  - Constant Attendance Allowance of £75 per week or more that is paid with the Industrial Injuries or War Pensions Scheme.
  - Armed Forces Independent Payment.
- 2. You look after that person for at least 35 hours a week.** These hours can be at any time of the day or night, and you must provide 35 hours care every week you claim Carer's Allowance for. Caring can include:
  - Time spent physically helping the person.
  - Time spent keeping an eye on the person, e.g. preventing them from coming to harm by leaving the house.
  - Time spent doing practical tasks for the person e.g. cooking.
  - Time spent doing practical tasks for the person even when they're not there may count e.g. preparation time or cleaning up for the person you care for to visit you.





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These hours can't be averaged out over several weeks, you can't add together time you spend caring for different people to total 35 hours and if you care for more than one person, you can only claim Carer's Allowance for one of them.

If you share the caring role with your partner only one of you can claim Carer's Allowance. But the other can claim Carer's Credit. If the person you care for also looks after someone else, you can both claim Carer's Allowance. This applies if you're caring for each other.

### 3. You are aged 16 or over

You must be 16 years old to claim Carer's Allowance, however, you can claim up to three months before your 16th birthday, but the benefit won't be paid until the day you turn 16.

### 4. You are NOT in full-time education

You cannot claim Carer's Allowance if you are in full-time education. Your course is likely to be considered full-time if the following apply:

- Your university, school or college describe the course as full-time even if your supervised study is less than 21 hours a week.
- You are required to study for 21 hours or more a week of study even where your university, school or college don't describe your course as full-time.

If you're in full-time education you cannot get Carer's Allowance during holidays or 'temporary absences' from your course. A temporary absence is where you've stopped attending your course but not abandoned it or been dismissed from it. If you have agreed with your place of study to have a break, a Carer's Allowance decision maker will have to decide whether this agreed break is sufficient enough to mean you're no longer actively taking part in your course and would then not be a 'temporary absence'.

If you are in part-time education you can apply for Carer's Allowance, but your place of study will need to provide written evidence that your course requires less than 21 hours of supervised study per week.

### 5. You don't earn more than £132 per week after deductions.

If you are in paid work, including self-employment, you cannot receive Carer's Allowance if you earn more than £132 a week. Certain deductions from your gross salary can be made in calculating your earnings in addition to income tax and national insurance. These include:

- 50% of any contributions towards an occupational/personal pension
- Alternative care costs that allow you to work. This covers costs for a disabled child of any age and childcare costs for other children under the age of 16. The maximum you can deduct half of your earnings
- Any expenses that are 'wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred' in carrying out your work such as tools or specialist equipment or travel expenses between work sites can also be deducted
- If your earnings after these deductions are £132 or less, you keep all of your Carer's Allowance. If you earn 1p more, you will lose all of your Carer's Allowance

#### How this is worked out:

- **Fixed monthly wage:** earnings are multiplied by 12 months for yearly figure, then divided by 52 weeks to get your weekly income.
- **Earnings fluctuate:** your earnings are likely to be averaged out over a recognisable cycle of work or over five weeks, or another period if this means a more accurate weekly amount can be calculated. This is discretionary and you should discuss your specific circumstances with the Carer's Allowance Unit.
- **Self-employed:** your average weekly earnings are calculated by looking at a specific trading period, normally a year.
- **Recently self-employed:** a different period more representative of your weekly earnings may be used.





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### 6. You satisfy UK residence and presence conditions.

To satisfy these residency and presence conditions you must meet both of the following criteria:

- Have been present in the UK (including Northern Ireland) for 104 out of the 156 weeks before making your claim. Present means being physically present in the UK. Refugees and their families are exempt from the past presence test. There are other exceptions. These rules are complicated and if you're unsure about meeting the eligibility of the presence test, please seek specialist help from your local Citizens Advice.
- You must satisfy the habitual residence test. This applies if you have been living abroad and is a test to see if you normally live in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Republic of Ireland or the Isle of Man.
- If you have immigration restrictions on your stay in the UK you cannot usually claim Carer's Allowance. If this is the case, please seek advice before making a claim as this might affect your future right to remain in the UK.

### Carer's Allowance and Other Benefits

The overlapping benefits rule means you CANNOT receive Carer's Allowance if you get one or more of these benefits:

- State Pension
- Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Incapacity Benefit
- Maternity Allowance
- Bereavement or widow's benefits
- Severe Disablement Benefit
- Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

If any of the benefits above pay less than Carer's Allowance you may receive a small amount of Carer's Allowance on top of your other benefit.

### Means Tested Benefits

Carer's Allowance counts as income for means-tested benefits, however, that benefit will include:

- Carer premium - extra money included in calculation of Income Support, income-based JSA, income-related ESA, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction worth £38.85 per week.
- Carer addition - equivalent amount paid with Pension Credit worth £38.85 per week.
- Carer element - equivalent amount paid with Universal Credit worth £168.81 per month.

This means if you're paid Carer's Allowance your means-tested benefit will decrease slightly, but you are likely to be better off financially by the amount of carer premium, carer addition or carer element. You must inform them when you're awarded Carer's Allowance to ensure you get these. Even if you're not paid Carer's Allowance because of a benefit overlap, you can still get carer premium or addition payments if you have an 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance.

If you receive Universal Credit and meet the criteria for Carer's Allowance but don't receive it because you earn too much or are a full-time student, you can still get the carer element of Universal Credit even if you don't claim for Carer's Allowance.

### The benefits of the person you are caring for

It is important to consider how your claim for Carer's Allowance might affect the benefits of the person you're caring for. If the person you're caring for receives any means-tested benefits, your claim for Carer's Allowance could affect what they get. If they are in receipt of the severe disability premium, (or severe disability addition in Pension Credit) they will lose this as you are paid Carer's Allowance.





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### Protecting your National Insurance contributions

Your National Insurance (NI) record contains all the NI contributions you've paid through work, or credits awarded when not in work. It's used to calculate your entitlement to some benefits including your State Pension and is, therefore, worth protecting:

- **Carer's Allowance** – you get a Class 1 NI credit for each week you claim Carer's Allowance. If you're not entitled to Carer's Allowance you might be able to claim Carer's Credit.
- **Carer's Credit** – protects your pension rights if you're caring for someone and not paying NI contributions through paid work and don't get Carer's Allowance.
- **Claiming Carer's Credit:**
  - You must be caring for someone for a total of 20 hours or more
  - The person typically must be in receipt of one of the following:
    - Middle or higher rate of the care component of DLA
    - Daily living component of PIP at either rate
    - Attendance Allowance, at either rate, or Constant Attendance Allowance
    - Armed Forces Independence Payment.

### Challenging a Carer's Allowance decision

If you are refused Carer's Allowance, you can ask the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for a mandatory reconsideration to look at the decision again. If, after this, you still disagree, you can appeal their decision by lodging it with the Tribunal Service within one month.

### Change of Circumstances

Inform the Carer's Allowance Unit as soon as possible to avoid any overpayment of benefit.

### Ask about

- **Reaching Families Benefits Advice Service** – 1-2-1 benefits advice on applications for Carers Allowance, DLA and PIP. Includes support with editing draft applications. For further information visit: [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/benefits-advice.html](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/benefits-advice.html).
- **Carers Support West Sussex Benefits Advice Service** – 1-2-1 advice on benefits, levels of entitlement and applications processes for carers registered with Carers Support West Sussex. For further information visit: [www.carerssupport.org.uk/carers-benefits-advice-service](http://www.carerssupport.org.uk/carers-benefits-advice-service).

### Further information and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All: From Birth to Adulthood** – Reaching Families' handbook for parent carers of children and young people with SEND in West Sussex. This provides essential information on money matters, including claiming DLA and PIP, as well as social care, health, leisure, travel, education and employment. Go to: [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html).
- **Fact Sheets** – further information on DLA and PIP are available in Reaching Families fact sheet series can be downloaded from: [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/factsheets.html](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/factsheets.html).
- **Benefit Enquiry Line** – for general benefit questions Tel: **0800 220 674** - Textphone: **028 9031 092**
- **Carer's Allowance Unit** – Tel: **0800 731 0297** - Textphone **0800 731 0317**.
- **Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman** – The government body responsible for dealing with complaints about state services – [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk) Tel: **0345 015 4033**, Textphone: **0300 061 4298**.
- **Turn2Us Benefits Calculator** – Use the Turn2Us Benefits Calculator to find out what other benefits you may be entitled to. Available at [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/benefits-calculator.html](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/benefits-calculator.html).
- **Welfare Changes Helpline** – for independent advice on benefit changes Tel: **0800 915 4604**.

