Social Security changes

The Scottish Government will take over responsibility for 11 devolved benefits by 2020 including Carer's Allowance and disability benefits. It can also make changes to the way universal credit is paid. In this short factsheet we outline the main changes in 2017 and 2018 and a fuller factsheet will be provided in 2018.

Video Q & A

The Minister for Social Security, Jeanne Freeman, has recorded an update for carers on the plans for social security in Scotland. In it she sets out the plans and timescales for setting up a social security agency in Scotland and taking over the devolved benefits. She also answers questions which were raised by carers about the government's plans. You can watch this video on the Carers Scotland website at: https://goo.gl/pzLBo8

The Scottish Government also provided a Q&A which updates on the benefits that will be devolved and the legislation, agency that will support delivery, and timescales. You can view this on our website at: https://goo.gl/pzLBo8

Changes in 2017

Universal Credit Scottish Flexibilities

In Scotland, if you apply for Universal Credit (UC) on or after 4 October 2017 in a full service area, you can ask to change the way that your UC is paid. There are two options available. You can ask for your UC to be paid twice a month instead of monthly or for some of your UC to be paid directly to your landlord. These flexible payment options are available to anyone who is applying for UC in a full service area and are not restricted to certain groups of people in the way that the alternative payment arrangements are. You can make this request if you are applying as a single person or if you are making a joint claim with your partner. The Scottish Flexibilities are not yet available to people who claimed UC before 4 October 2017.

How the flexibilities will work

If you are eligible for a Scottish Flexibility, you will be made an offer of the two flexible payment options. This will be after your UC claim has been processed and you have had your first payment. The offer will appear in your online account. If you accept one or both of the flexible payment options, this will be confirmed in the journal in your online account.

If you don’t make a choice, then your UC will be paid once a month directly to you and the offer will be removed from your online account after 60 days. If you change your mind, you can ask to set up or to end a flexible payment option by using the journal in your online account.

Changes in 2018

Carer's Allowance Supplementary Payment

The Scottish Government is committed to increasing the rate of Carer's Allowance to the same level as Jobseeker's Allowance from April 2018. Until the proposed Scottish social security agency is operational, the Carer’s Allowance Supplement will be paid twice a year rather than weekly. The first payment will be in the summer of 2018, backdated to April 2018. The amount of the payment will be the difference between Jobseeker's Allowance and Carer’s Allowance, multiplied by 26 weeks (at this years rates: £270.40).

The Scottish Government has a formal agreement with the UK Government that additional benefit payments made by the Scottish Government will not be clawed back elsewhere, so benefits including Income Support, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit and Tax Credits, will not be affected by the Carer’s Allowance Supplement. Nor will Council Tax Reductions and passported benefits.
Changes in support for carers

**Carers (Scotland) Act 2016**

There will be changes to support for carers coming into effect on 1st April 2018 through the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. This will be introduced on 1 April 2018.

Carers Scotland will be producing factsheets on what this means for carers. This will include assessments, breaks and hospital discharge. However, guidance from the Scottish Government has not yet been published. This will inform our factsheets which will be published in early 2018.

However, in the interim, the following information provides a brief outline of the main provisions which include the introduction of:

- **A specific Adult Carer Support Plan and Young Carer Statement to identify carers’ needs and personal outcomes.** This will be available to all carers, no matter the level of care they provide. The need to provide substantial and regular care and for the person you care for to be receiving social care services will no longer apply. The plans must include the opportunity for a carer to develop an emergency plan. There will be specific timescales set for those carers who are caring for someone at the end of life.

- **A duty on local authorities to provide support to carers, based on the carer’s identified needs which meet the local eligibility criteria.** Local authorities will still have a power to meet other needs. The need for a short break must be considered as part of this. Each local authority is required to work with local organisations and carers to develop their criteria and to publish and review this. Carers cannot be charged for support they receive.

- **A requirement for each local authority to have its own information and advice service for carers which must provide information and advice on, amongst other things, emergency and future care planning, advocacy, income maximisation and carers’ rights.**

- **A duty on each local authority and health board to jointly prepare a local carer strategy.**

- **A duty on the NHS to inform carers about the hospital discharge of the person they care for.** There will be guidance on this which aims to ensure that carers are identified, informed and involved.

- **A duty to involve carers in the design and planning of services and care planning for the person they care for.**

- **A duty on Scottish Ministers to publish a Carers’ Charter which sets out carers’ rights under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.**

Keep an eye on our website at [www.carerscotland.org](http://www.carerscotland.org) for regular updates on progress towards implementation of the Act and what this means for carers.

**Further information**

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