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The Scottish Parliament
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20 November 2023

Dear Convener,

Launch of Carer Support Payment in Dundee City, Perth and Kinross and Na h'Eileanan Siar (Western Isles)

I am pleased to confirm that from today, 20 November, Carer Support Payment will open for new applications in the local authority areas of Dundee City, Perth and Kinross and Na h'Eileanan Siar (Western Isles).

Carer Support Payment will replace and improve Carer's Allowance in Scotland. Following this initial launch, it will be rolled out to further local authority areas from spring 2024 in a phased approach and will be available for new applications nationally by autumn 2024.

The launch of Carer Support Payment is an important milestone in our ongoing work to improve support for unpaid carers in Scotland. Since 2018, we have delivered Carer's Allowance Supplement and Young Carer Grant, both unique to Scotland. Carer Support Payment is the 14th benefit to be delivered by Social Security Scotland. Our efforts to improve support for carers will continue following pilot launch and beyond. As well as delivering continuous improvements to our services as part of the national roll out, once the benefit is available nationally and case transfer is complete, we are committed to further important changes, including providing new extra support for those caring for more than one person, and extended support for carers after the loss of the person they care for.

Carers already receiving Carer's Allowance will not need to re-apply for Carer Support Payment, as their award will transfer automatically. The process of transferring benefits for carers already receiving Carer's Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will begin from February 2024, and will happen across the country and not just the initial areas.

Carer's Allowance is the most complex benefit we have replaced to date in terms of the links that it has with wider support and benefits, including benefits provided by DWP. Our phased roll out approach for Carer Support Payment has been designed to ensure a safe and secure delivery that maintains these links with wider benefits and services so that carers can continue to get all of the support they are entitled to. We will confirm the details of the

phased roll out in due course and bring forward legislation to open up applications for the benefit to new local authority areas.

As with all of our devolved benefits, our services have been developed in line with our social security principles to ensure carers and the people they care for are treated with dignity, fairness and respect. Carer Support Payment has been designed with carers and support organisations to work better for them. We will make a number of improvements from launch, including:

- extending entitlement to many carers studying full-time, helping remove barriers to education,
- improving join up with wider support and services, initially using signposting information in Carer Support Payment to help carers find out about wider benefits they may be entitled to, as well as the incredibly valuable support provided by carers centres across the country, and
- reducing the 'past presence test' in line with other devolved benefits so some carers can receive support more quickly after moving to Scotland.

Carers can apply online at mygov.scot/benefits, by post and through a local face-to-face appointment. As with our earlier benefits, Social Security Scotland's local delivery teams will be available in these areas to provide people with one-to-one support. Our specially trained Client Support Advisers will be available to answer any queries about Carer Support Payment and all Social Security Scotland benefits, help to complete paper, telephone or online applications forms, and offer other support such as identity and document verification and help with submitting change of circumstances information. A range of materials to support the launch of Carer Support Payment and our Local Delivery service are now available on our website at <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/guidance-resources/resources>.

Lastly, I'd like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks once again to Committee members for their continued engagement and for scrutiny of the Carer Support Payment regulations. I hope this information has been helpful and that you will join me in welcoming this next step in improving support for unpaid carers in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE