



Supports and entitlements for carers

Disability Information Factsheet 3

Some people with disabilities may need full-time care and attention. If you are caring for someone with a disability, you may qualify for a carer's payment such as Carer's Benefit, which is based on PRSI (Pay-Related Social Insurance) contributions, or Carer's Allowance, which is means-tested. You may be entitled to a half-rate Carer's Allowance if you are receiving certain other social welfare payments and taking care of someone with a disability. A Domiciliary Care Allowance is paid to people who take care of a child with a disability.

Carers may also qualify for an annual Respite Care grant, which allows them to take a break from their caring duties. Carers can also take unpaid leave from work for up to two years to care for someone in need of care and attention.

Carer's Benefit

A short-term payment made to insured people who leave employment temporarily to care for someone who needs full-time care.

How do I qualify for Carer's Benefit?

You must have 156 PRSI paid contributions in Class A, B, C, D, E or H and:

- » 39 contributions paid in the relevant tax year, *or*
- » 39 contributions paid in the 12 months immediately before the start of Carer's Benefit, *or*
- » 26 contributions paid in the relevant tax year **and** 26 paid in the relevant tax year prior to that

The relevant tax year is the second last complete tax year before the year in which you make your claim. So, for claims made in 2009, the relevant tax year is 2007. You must leave employment (of at least 32 hours a fortnight) to look after someone with a disability in need of full-time care. You must have been employed for at least eight weeks in the six-month period prior to starting full-time caring duties. If you are self-employed and paying Class S PRSI contributions, you are not eligible for Carer's Benefit.

How long can I get Carer's Benefit?

Carer's Benefit is paid for up to 24 months and increases are paid for qualified children. An additional 50% is payable if you are caring for more than one person. You can do limited work while in receipt of Carer's Benefit and the conditions are basically the same as those for Carer's Allowance (see below). The maximum weekly earnings allowed for people who wish to engage in limited employment or self-employment is €332.50.

Carer's Allowance

This is a long-term means-tested payment for carers on low income who are looking after someone in need of full-time care because of age, physical or learning disability or illness, including mental illness.

How do I qualify for Carer's Allowance?

You must be aged 18 or over and satisfy both a means test and a habitual residence test. You must be living with the person you are looking after, or be providing full-time care and attention to a person who is not living with you. The person you are caring for must be aged 16 or over,

require full-time care and attention for at least 12 months (medical certification is required) and not normally be living in a hospital, home or similar institution. They can be under the age of 16 if a Domiciliary Care Allowance is being paid. An additional payment of up to 50% of the maximum personal rate is paid to carers who are providing full-time care to more than one person. You may still receive Carer's Allowance if you are over the age of 66 and satisfy the conditions. If you are aged over 80, you are entitled to an Over-80 Increase on top of your payment.

Income disregards

When your entitlement to Carer's Allowance is calculated, the first €332.50 per week of your income is disregarded (whether from employment or self-employment, occupational pension or capital). For a couple, the disregard is €665.

Other payments and half-rate Carer's Allowance

If you are getting certain social welfare payments in your own right, you may keep your main payment and get an extra half-rate Carer's Allowance. These payments include disability payments – although you must meet the criteria for caring and be fit to care. Half-rate Carer's Allowance is not payable with Jobseeker's Benefit and Allowance, Back to Work Allowance, or Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

If you are being claimed for as a qualified adult on your spouse or partner's social welfare payment (with the exception of Supplementary Welfare Allowance) and you are providing full-time care to another person, you may apply for half-rate Carer's Allowance and retain your current Increase for a Qualified Adult in full.

Working

While receiving Carer's Allowance, you can work outside the home for up to 15 hours a week or engage in limited self-employment in the home. You must get approval from the Department of Social and Family Affairs and your income is assessed as means (see disregards above). You can work part-time as a home help for the Health Service Executive (HSE) for up to 15 hours a week. This income is not assessed as means.

You can also attend an educational or training course or take up voluntary work for up to 15 hours per week. The person you care for may attend a non-residential course of rehabilitation training or an approved non-residential day-care centre without it affecting your Carer's Allowance.

Carer's payments	Caring for one, €		Caring for two or more, €	
	Under 66	66 or over	Under 66	66 or over
Carer's Allowance	220.50	239.00	330.75	358.50
Carer's Benefit	221.20		331.80	

Domiciliary Care Allowance

This is a monthly payment made to the parent or carer of a child with a severe disability.

Neither the child's nor the carer's means are taken into account for the payment.

The administration of the scheme transferred from the HSE to the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) from April 2009. All new applications are now made to the DSFA and existing claims will be transferred from 1 September 2009.

How long can I get Domiciliary Care Allowance?

The allowance is paid until the child reaches 16 (at 16, children may qualify for Disability Allowance in their own right). The allowance is not payable for a child living in institutional care. A reduced payment in respect of time spent at home (holidays, for example) is paid for children who normally live in special schools or institutions.

You may get a half-rate payment if your child is in residential care and goes home for two or more days a week, for example, if he/she attends a residential service from Monday to Friday and goes home at weekends.

If you are getting a Domiciliary Care Allowance while caring for a child, you may also be eligible for Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit and a Respite Care Grant.

Respite care

Respite care is provided at a number of locations around Ireland. The purpose of respite care is to give carers a break from their caring duties. Respite care can cover very short-term respite such as a few hours, or a much longer arrangement such as for a holiday. The person being cared for may be admitted to a public nursing home or public acute hospital for a period of up to two weeks.

Respite care is organised through your public health nurse or your GP. It is advisable to book as far in advance as possible as demand exceeds the supply of beds. For further details about how to apply for respite care and a list of respite care facilities, contact your Local Health Office, public health nurse or your GP.

Respite Care Grant

A Respite Care Grant of €1,700 is paid automatically by the Department of Social and Family Affairs in June each year to all carers getting Carer's Benefit, Carer's Allowance (or Prescribed Relative's Allowance which predated it) or caring for someone who gets Constant Attendance Allowance. It is also payable to those who are providing full-time care to an older person or a person with a disability, regardless of the carer's means. The carer must not be working outside the home for more than 15 hours per week or getting an unemployment payment. A grant is paid for each person being cared for.

You will not get a grant if you are on a reduced Domiciliary Care Allowance unless the child has spent at least six months, in total, of the previous 12 months at home.

If you are automatically entitled to receive the Respite Care Grant, you do not need to apply for it. (See the list of qualifying payments above.) If you applied for and received the grant in the last year, you do not need to fill out a new form. The Department will write to you to verify that you still qualify for payment. You can apply for the grant retrospectively in some cases.

Homemaker's years/credits

You may be able to avail of the Homemaker's Scheme if you gave up work to care full-time for a child or children up to 12 years of age or an incapacitated child (12 years or over) or an adult who needs full-time care or attention. This means that the years spent working in the home (since April 1994 when this provision was introduced) are disregarded when calculating your average yearly PRSI contributions for pension purposes.

Tax relief

You may be able to claim a tax allowance if you employ a carer. A tax credit is also available for a spouse who works in the home caring for a person with a permanent disability. See Factsheet 7: *Income tax*.

Carer's Leave

You may be able to take temporary unpaid leave from employment to care for someone who needs full-time care. This is called Carer's Leave.

How do I qualify for Carer's Leave?

The Carer's Leave Act provides for employees to take leave to care for an incapacitated person while preserving their employment rights. In order to get the leave, you must have worked for your employer for a continuous period of at least a year. The leave is unpaid but many of the employees concerned are likely to qualify for Carer's Benefit. If you take Carer's Leave but do not get Carer's Benefit or Allowance, you are entitled to Carer's Leave credits (credited PRSI contributions) for each week taken.

How long does Carer's Leave last?

You are entitled to a maximum of 104 weeks of leave to enable you to give full-time care and attention to an incapacitated person who needs such care. You may take the leave in one block or broken up into shorter periods. The minimum period that you can take is 13 weeks, unless your employer agrees otherwise. If two people live together and both require full-time care, you can take leave for both people. In such a case, the total leave cannot exceed 208 weeks.

Useful addresses

Department of Social and Family Affairs

Information Services
College Road
Co. Sligo
Lo-call: 1890 66 22 44
(for general information)
www.welfare.ie

Carer's Allowance/ Carer's Benefit Section

Social Welfare Services
Ballinalee Road
Longford
Tel: (043) 334 0000
or (01) 704 3000
Lo-call: 1890 92 77 70

Respite Care Grant Section

PO Box 10085
Dublin 2
Tel: (01) 673 2222

Carers Association

Market Square
Tullamore
Co. Offaly
Tel: (057) 932 2920
Email: info@carersireland.com
www.carersireland.com

National Employment Rights Authority

Employment Rights
Information Unit
Government Buildings
O'Brien Road
Carlow
Lo-call: 1890 80 80 90
www.employmentrights.ie

Caring For Carers

Carmody Street Business Park
Ennis
Co. Clare
Tel: (065) 686 6515
Email: support@caringforcarers.org

The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on the broad range of social and civil services to the public. It provides the Citizens Information website and supports the voluntary network of Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service.

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You can find more information on all the entitlements covered in this factsheet in the booklet *Entitlements for people with disabilities* (available from your local Citizens Information Centre) or on www.citizensinformation.ie

Citizens Information 

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