

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Response: Scottish Government consultation on Young Carers Grant regulations

10 December 2018

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. It brings together over 2,500 members including a large network of national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors and individuals. Many NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships and Primary/Community Care practices are associate members and many health and social care professionals are Professional Associates. Commercial organisations may also become Corporate Associates.

This response has been informed by both informal discussions with our members and an event on 23 November 2018 attended by Young Carers organisations and supported by the Scottish Government.

1) Do you think the draft regulations (Annex E) are likely to meet the policy aims set out in this document?

Yes.

The addition of a Young Carers Grant to the entitlements available through the existing social security system is both welcome and long overdue. There are 44,000 young carers across Scotland, many of whom provide significant levels of support to family members, friends and others who may require it. This can often result in educational, emotional and physical difficulties and social isolation¹.

We believe that the approach outlined in this consultation paper will provide support to some young carers at a crucial point in their transition into adulthood.

We would, however, encourage the Scottish Government to consider how the Young Carers Grant can be extended in future to acknowledge the role young carers under the age of 16 play.

¹ <https://www.fifeyoungcarers.co.uk/what-is-a-young-carer/>

2) Can you identify any potential unintended consequences of the regulations?

Yes.

Whilst we welcome the broad idea of a Young Carers Grant, we acknowledge that a narrow 16 to 18 age criteria could have unintended consequences of leaving the support of younger carers unacknowledged by the social security system.

In comparing the Young Carers Grant with the Carers Support Allowance, it is possible that some unfortunate comparisons could be read into the value of young carers support. Young Carers Grant will total £300 per annum whilst the Carers Support Allowance could total £4,000. Whilst we acknowledge that the Scottish Government is not keen to “encourage” a caring role for people under the age of 18, the value placed on that care must be considered.

We are also concerned that the regulations do not acknowledge the range of caring support that young carers will be providing to family members, friends or others. The regulations stipulate that young carers will only be eligible if they provide care for 16 hours per week (for a 13-week period) that relates directly to day to day physical tasks (for example, eating and washing) and mental processes (for example, the mental process of remembering to eat and wash). Many young carers provide support that does not fit easily into these criteria, particularly those young carers supporting people with mental health problems or who have drug and alcohol issues. We believe that this could have the unintended consequence of discouraging certain groups of young carers and would encourage the Scottish Government to consider redrafting these criteria to be more inclusive of a broader range of young carers.

3) We are aware of the changing role of carers and the needs of the cared-for person. Due to this, we are proposing that young carers would make a new application each year in order to receive payment. Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes, however any application process must be flexible enough to enable a young carer to repeat an application with little or no change on the previous year easily. The Scottish Government should consider how it can provide an application process for the second year of an application that mirrors the responses give in the first application and can be quickly, and easily, amended.

We would like to see an application process that does not place an unnecessary burden on young people. The application form should be concise, clear and easy to understand. We are mindful that these young people will most likely be engaging with the benefits system for the first time and may need advice and support.

Reapplication processes must be a light-touch, requiring just a brief check via email or telephone to establish whether circumstances have changed. All communications must be worded sensitively mindful that the cared-for person may have died since the last contact.

4) Should applicants be able to combine hours caring for more than one person to meet the required 16 hours average each week?

Yes.

Participants at our consultation event were unanimously supportive that young carers should be able to combine their hours caring for more than one person to meet the required 16 hours average requirement. They noted that the impact of caring may be more intense for those young people who have multiple caring responsibilities. Including that the young person is worrying about the welfare of multiple cared-for people and recognising that different cared-for people may require different types of care.

The group also noted, however, that it may be difficult for any young carer to quantify the number of hours of care that they provide – as they may be in a routine and no longer perceive some of their tasks as caring. They believed that caring hours should include replacement parental duties which should be provided by the cared-for person. For example, a young carer taking on parental responsibilities for a younger sibling – who doesn't have a disability – because their parent is their cared-for person and is unable to provide this support for their younger sibling. The ALLIANCE believes the criteria should be redrafted to reflect this.

5) Should young carers be eligible for the Young Carer Grant when another carer is in receipt of Carer's Allowance for providing care for the same person?

Yes.

There likely be a small number of instances where more than one young carer is between the age of 16 to 18 and providing care for the same person. We believe that the Young Carers Grant must be a recognition of all young carers support and their right to access the same services and leisure facilities as other young people.

It should also be possible for a young carer to get a grant when another carer gets Carer's Allowance for the same cared-for person. The young person may not know whether anyone else gets Carer's Allowance and inadvertently put themselves at risk of overpayment or even prosecution. There is an opportunity to design out this risk.

6a) Is 31 calendar days an acceptable time limit for requesting a re-determination?

Yes – however, we believe that a 31-day timeframe to request a re-determination should be monitored, with particular reference to the impact on different groups, identified as having “protected characteristics” in the Equality Act 2010. Young people with no prior engagement with the social security system may need more time and support with the process.

The Agency will be able to decide whether there is a good reason to process a redetermination after the 31-day time limit, and we would encourage the Scottish Government to use this power flexible and take an open and supportive approach. Such decisions could have a later impact on a young carers view of the social security system.

An unsuccessful application may be an opportunity to refer to support services, and Social Security Scotland local delivery staff should play a leading role in identifying and working with organisations across Scotland who can both provide support to young carers and help them identify support.

6b) Is 16 working days an acceptable time for a re-determination to be completed by Social Security Scotland?

Yes – there are no time limits in the existing social security system, so the introduction of a time limits for redetermination is welcome as this can avoid lengthy delays, which could cause stress for young carers.

7) We propose that Scottish claimants will be defined as those who are habitually resident in the European Economic Area (EEA) and ordinarily resident in Scotland. This approach reflects existing practice where periods of residence and presence in any EEA jurisdiction can count towards meeting the eligibility criteria for accessing social security in any other. Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to residency?

No.

8) Are you aware of any equality impacts on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation of the Young Carer Grant that we have not identified?

No.

9) Are you aware of any impacts of Young Carer Grant on children’s rights and wellbeing that we have not identified?

We believe that the needs and rights of young people must be paramount to any decision-making process. Young people should be able to make a real and unfettered choice to have a caring role or not. We consider it important to monitor Young Carer Grant to ensure it does not inadvertently lead to some young people continuing in unsuitable caring roles.

Participants at our consultation session called on the Scottish Government to clarify whether being in receipt of the Young Carer Grant will have any impact on a young people’s entitlement to other support – for example, the Education Maintenance Allowance.

They also felt that it was vitally important that the Scottish Government make the application form as simple and concise as possible and provide support to those that require support to complete it. At this station the participants universally agreed that the age criteria for the grant should be extended to all young carers who are aged 18, not just those who are still a pupil at school.

10) Can you identify any business related impacts of Young Carer Grant that we have not identified?

No.

11) Do you have any additional comments on the content and proposals of this document?

Please explain:

The Scottish Government will need to consider carefully targeted promotion, in order to reach young carers. Support networks and services to engage must include:

- Schools, colleges and universities
- Professionals working with young people (e.g. college bursary officers, skills development officers, additional needs assistants, social workers, family support workers)
- Youth centres and youth groups
- GP surgeries
- Local authority contact centres/Citizen’s Advice
- Religious centres/groups
- Sports groups
- Disabled people’s organisations and carers’ organisations

- Young carers organisations

Social Security Scotland should liaise with Scottish Government colleagues who are responsible for the implementation of Young Carers Statements (YCS) to ensure that eligibility for the young carer grant is discussed during consideration of the need for a YCS. Young people should be signposted to the young carer grant application process as appropriate by those responsible for assessing the YCS. Scottish Social Security colleagues should also provide young carers with information regarding the availability of a YCS.

Targeted promotion must also take into account young people who come from seldom heard groups including ethnic minorities, rural and island populations, people with learning disabilities and people with experience of homelessness.

For More Information

Contact:

Andrew Strong, Assistant Director (Policy and Communications)

E: andrew.strong@alliance-scotland.org.uk

Ronnie Hill, Associate Director

E: ronnie.hill@alliance-scotland.org.uk

T: 0141 404 0231

W: <http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/>