



National Audit Office

DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS
Supporting Carers to Care

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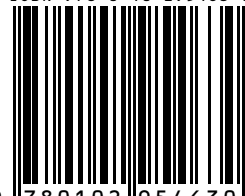
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SUMMARY

The Department for Work and Pensions' support for carers

1 There are six million unpaid carers in the UK who look after relatives, friends, children or older people who are sick or disabled. The number of carers is growing and the Department for Work and Pensions (the Department) estimates that the number of carers it supports will increase by about a quarter by 2014-15. The nature of care obligations varies. Care may be provided throughout life, during a chronic condition, over distinct periods, or towards the end of a person's life. Appendix One provides examples of caring responsibilities from our survey of carers.

2 The Department is responsible for providing two main forms of support to carers – payment of carers' benefits and provision of employment support, through Jobcentre Plus offices. The Department provides Carer's Allowance at £50.55 per week to 481,000 carers. To be paid this benefit, carers must earn no more than £95 per week after allowable expenses, care for at least 35 hours a week for a person receiving Disability Living Allowance Care Component at the middle or highest rate, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance, and not be in receipt of certain other benefits that overlap. Appendix Two gives further details about the eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance, and its interaction with other benefits. The Glossary gives a definition of selected terms.

3 Carers on low incomes who satisfy the Carer's Allowance entitlement rules, whether or not they are paid Carer's Allowance, can receive an additional payment of £27.75 a week, known as a 'Carer Premium' or 'Additional Amount', in their income-related benefits. The Department estimates the total number of people who receive these payments to be about 469,200. In this report we refer to all these payments as carers' benefits.

4 The Department is also responsible through Jobcentre Plus offices for providing employment services to carers who want to combine paid work and caring, or who want to return to work after a period of caring has ended.

5 We estimate the total cost to the Department of providing support to carers through benefits and employment services is up to £2 billion a year. This report assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which the Department discharges these responsibilities. The report examines the effectiveness of the Department's delivery of Carer's Allowance, and Jobcentre Plus employment support that carers receive. In addition, we have reviewed how well the Department works with others to make its policies as effective as possible. This report follows the launch of the Government's revised National Strategy for Carers in June 2008, to provide a review of value for money and make recommendations for improving services at a point when the Department is considering and starting to implement changes in carers' policy.

Carer's Allowance

6 Carer's Allowance is administered by the Carer's Allowance Unit, a part of the Department's Pension, Disability and Carers Service which itself was created by the recent merger of The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service. In May 2008, 883,000 carers satisfied the Carer's Allowance entitlement rules. People who are entitled to more than one non-means tested, 'income replacement' benefit are paid only the one that is worth the most to them (Appendix Two). For this reason, 402,000 people who are theoretically entitled to Carer's Allowance received another benefit instead, while the remaining 481,000 received Carer's Allowance, at a cost of around £1.3 billion in 2007-08. Carers who satisfy the entitlement rules, whether or not they are paid Carer's Allowance, can receive an addition to their income-related benefits. In May 2008, 469,200 received this amount, known as the Carer Premium or the Carer's Additional Amount at an estimated cost of no more than £677 million. As an indicative figure, those carers supported by the Department provide social care whose cost, if paid by the state, we estimate to be approximately £23 billion a year.

7 The Department does not have an estimate for the take-up of the Allowance. It is difficult to determine what proportion of the eligible population of carers applies for the Allowance because of limitations with the available data. We found that some carers who may be eligible do not apply because they do not see themselves as carers, or because the Department's publicity is not fully effective so they do not know the Allowance is available. Receipt of Carer's Allowance can affect the benefit entitlement of the person cared for. It is not known how many eligible carers do not apply because they want to avoid this impact.

8 Our survey of recipients showed that the large majority did not have problems with the service, but about a fifth found it difficult to apply for Carer's Allowance. Of this group:

- just over half of respondents with difficulties found it hard to understand the Allowance's eligibility criteria and to understand and complete the application form;
- half of those expressing difficulties were unhappy about the length of time it took to process their Carer's Allowance claim; and
- of the carers who reported changes of circumstances to the Carer's Allowance Unit ten per cent had difficulties, leaving them unsure of their financial position.

9 The interactions between Carer's Allowance and other benefits (for example, Pension Credit and Income Support) are complex, can delay payments and some customers find them confusing. The complexities result primarily from the way legislation is framed and also from the way it is implemented. For example, customers who do not qualify for the full payment of Carer's Allowance still have to apply for it in order to be 'passported' on to other premiums or additional payments.

10 The Department has given priority to improving the efficiency of the delivery of Carer's Allowance over the last few years. Performance targets for processing times for new claims have been met for each of the last three years. Whilst average processing times have increased by two working days since 2006-07, that is because claims are now dealt with on a more equitable, first come first served basis, rather than dealing first with the simpler claims, which tended to be the straightforward rejections.

11 Recent initiatives, carried out as part of the Department's wider Change Programme, and involving the use of 'Lean' management techniques, designed to improve performance at a reduced cost, have enabled the Carer's Allowance Unit to maintain performance while reducing staff numbers significantly. There may be scope for further efficiencies by reviewing the processes where Carer's Allowance interacts with other benefits.

Jobcentre Plus employment support for carers

12 The Department does not have specific employment support programmes for carers as a group, since carers are not required by law to be available for work. Within its limited resources overall, the Department has prioritised those benefit recipients who are obliged by law to be available for work or to meet other requirements as a condition of receipt of benefit. Carers who do wish to work can access all mainstream Jobcentre Plus services, but there is considerable variation across the country in the level of support provided by Jobcentre Plus offices. Some Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers, for example, are not aware that carers are exempt from mandatory Work Focused Interviews.

13 Jobcentre Plus staff we surveyed believe that services currently provided to carers are not well-suited to carers' needs. Only one third of Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers believe carers get the support they might reasonably expect to help them combine caring and paid employment. Personal Advisers identified ways in which the service to carers could be improved within their existing day-to-day responsibilities, and some Advisers provide these services already. For example, Jobcentre Plus does not have a consistent method of identifying and promoting flexible work opportunities that would be helpful for carers who wish to seek short hours or less conventional working patterns. But the Department's capacity for developing and sustaining enhanced services is constrained by the workload resulting from current labour market conditions.

14 Jobcentre Plus is carers' main source of employment support, but our findings show that the service is not accessed by all interested carers. Just over half of carers who used Jobcentre Plus services were satisfied with them. About a quarter of carers who access Jobcentre Plus services however are dissatisfied with the service they receive, primarily because they find staff are not sufficiently helpful, approachable or aware of carers' circumstances.

15 There are gaps in Jobcentre Plus management information about their support for carers, as they are not identified by Jobcentre Plus as a specific customer group. Jobcentre Plus does not know therefore how many carers use their employment support or the cost of providing this support to carers. Neither do they have accurate figures for the costs to Jobcentre Plus of providing additional payments to carers who have an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance, though they estimate the cost (excluding administration) of these payments to be no more than £330 million.

16 The Department has made some significant commitments, as part of the revised National Strategy for Carers, to improve employment services for carers. These include up to £38 million of existing departmental allocations to enable carers to combine paid employment and caring through provision of, for example: new Care Partnership Managers who will work with care providers and coordinate Jobcentre Plus programmes and strategies for carers; specialist training; and information about flexible job opportunities.

Working with partner organisations

17 Carers benefit from services provided by a range of bodies. The Department recognises that partnerships can help align the services provided and improve carers' experiences of support. It has a range of relationships with other organisations in national and local Government and with national charities which have helped in implementing its policies as effectively as possible. The recent work to produce the revised National Strategy for Carers benefited from the Department's successful relationships with others.

18 The Department of Health is the lead department for the National Strategy for Carers. It leads the new Carers Cross Government Programme Board which will oversee implementation of the commitments from the National Strategy. The Department for Work and Pensions has two representatives at this Board, covering their responsibilities regarding income and employment.

Conclusion on value for money

19 The Department currently provides support to approaching 900,000 carers through payment of carers' benefits and provision of employment support at an estimated cost of up to £2 billion a year. This support provides a means for society to share in the responsibility assumed by those who care for people who are sick or disabled. We found that in pursuing this objective the Department is largely successful in delivering carers' benefits efficiently and there have been cost-effective improvements in processing claims in the last few years. The majority of carers who receive support from the Department are positive about their experiences. Around a fifth of Carer's Allowance applicants however experience difficulties to do with understanding the information required and provided by the Department. Furthermore, not all eligible carers are accessing Carer's Allowance or Jobcentre Plus employment services.

20 The Department's help to carers who wish to support themselves through combining paid work with their caring responsibilities is not sufficiently effective for carers. The Department does not consistently identify which job opportunities are flexible and there is a potential disincentive to provide part-time work because it is not part of the Jobcentre Plus target regime. Most people receiving carers' benefits who seek employment support from the Department feel the services do not fully meet their needs as carers. The Department has generally worked well with others in designing and implementing its policies for carers.

Recommendations

21 The following recommendations are designed to help the Department improve its services to carers:

Improving the experience of carers

- I** **The Department does not know the take-up rate of Carer's Allowance.** There is currently no reliable estimate of the total population of potential recipients of Carer's Allowance. Estimating the take-up rate is complex because it is based on the take-up rate of other benefits, in particular Disability Living Allowance. The Department has however made some progress in estimating the take-up of Disability Living Allowance. It should extend that work to estimate the take-up rate of Carer's Allowance, in order to understand the reasons for lack of take-up, where it exists, and identify what action would most cost-effectively encourage those carers who are eligible to receive benefits to do so.
- II** **The majority of carers are positive about their experiences with the Carer's Allowance Unit, but a minority experience problems, mainly with understanding what the Department provides and what information it requests of carers.** Carers need clarity about what benefits are available and to whom. The Pension, Disability and Carers Service should consult further with their Advisory Forum to understand better how improvements could be made to information about the availability of and eligibility criteria for benefits for carers. The Pension, Disability and Carers Service should draw up a plan and timetable for improving communications with customers and their carer networks about the application process, eligibility criteria and interaction with other benefits, with the aim of reducing the number of manual checks that are necessary.

- III** **Having flexibility in their paid employment is key to enabling many carers to combine paid work with their caring responsibilities, but Jobcentre Plus does not have a consistent method for providing information about flexible work opportunities.** The Department is committed to improving information about flexible job vacancies in Jobcentre Plus job banks. In line with the revised National Strategy for Carers and as part of its aim to make it easier for carers to combine caring with paid work, the Department should assess the impact of this new facility on carers in terms of job outcomes and customer satisfaction.

Improving support for carers to have a life outside caring

- IV** **There is a lack of clarity amongst carers and Jobcentre Plus staff about the extent of employment support services available for carers and the scope to make referrals to other agencies. As a result, not all carers receive a service in line with national policy.** Jobcentre Plus should identify where services do not adhere to national policy, and make it clearer to staff and customers what support it does and does not provide to carers. Jobcentre Plus should assess the effectiveness of the new Care Partnership Managers in ensuring adherence to this policy amongst Jobcentre Plus offices across the country.
- V** **Jobcentre Plus is not consistent in its service to carers. For example, some but not all Jobcentre Plus offices aim to ensure that carers are always seen by Personal Advisers who have experience of assisting similar or related groups, such as lone parents or disabled customers, or who have personal experience of being a carer.** The differences may partly reflect the different size and capacity of individual offices. But for a given level of capacity, Jobcentre Plus offices should adopt best practice in the use of staff knowledge and experience and of the new Carers Portal (an intranet site about entitlements of and support for carers) to improve the service provided and customer satisfaction.
- VI** **About 70 per cent of carers and a third of Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers we surveyed believe services are not as well-suited to carers' circumstances as they could be.** Carers share some similarities with lone parents as a group and the Department should make it easier for carers to benefit from services more suited to their needs, such as those currently offered to lone parents, for example funding replacement care whilst attending interviews.

Improving efficiency of support for carers

- VII Carer's Allowance has complex interactions with other benefits, primarily because of the way legislation is framed, but also because of the way it is implemented. The Department has recognised that there are administrative inefficiencies in its interaction with Pension Credit, affecting up to nearly a quarter of a million carers.** As a part of an initiative to encourage staff suggestions for service improvement, the Pension, Disability and Carers Service is currently piloting a new service and procedures under the Carer's Addition State Pension Efficiency Review (CASPER) to improve the administrative efficiency of providing Carer's Additional Amounts to carers who receive Pension Credit. The Pension, Disability and Carers Service should also use the findings from the evaluation to draw up a plan for improving efficiency and customer experience of the process across the system as a whole.
- VIII There is a potential disincentive for Jobcentre Plus to provide employment support to carers because the Department's targets do not 'count' part-time work.** The Department and Jobcentre Plus should reinforce their communication about part-time work being a valuable and valued outcome and incorporate this message into objectives for Personal Advisers.
- IX The Department has generally worked well with partners to improve alignment of services to carers, but some organisations report they are not always able to make contributions as effectively as they might.** The Department should keep other organisations informed of progress by circulating material such as meeting minutes more widely and extending timescales for comment on proposals.



PART ONE

The Department's support for carers

1.1 In the UK there are about six million unpaid carers¹ who look after family members or friends who are sick or disabled. Demand for informal care is projected to rise as the population of the UK ages; there will be approximately 1.8 million more disabled adults aged 65 and over in England needing informal care by 2041.² Carers come from all demographic sections of the population, but tend to be concentrated in certain groups. For example, nearly two thirds are women³ and the most common age group for carers is 50 to 59 years of age.⁴ Care may be provided throughout a person's life, during a chronic condition, over distinct periods or towards the end of a person's life. Almost a third of carers care for their spouse, and similar percentages care for a parent or a child.⁵

1.2 The nature of care provided varies, but for many it is a highly demanding, round-the-clock job involving help with all aspects of daily life. Appendix One provides examples of caring responsibilities from our survey of carers. The extent of their caring responsibilities can mean that carers become socially isolated; for example, one in five carers has given up work to care.⁶ Poor health is also a problem for many carers, with about 80 per cent of carers suffering deterioration in their own health as a result of caring.⁷

Carer's Allowance

1.3 The main state benefit payable for caring is the Department for Work and Pensions' Carer's Allowance, comprising a weekly payment of £50.55. It is administered by the Carer's Allowance Unit within the Department's Pension, Disability and Carers Service. The Glossary gives a definition of selected terms.

Eligibility, 'underlying entitlement' and complexity in Carer's Allowance

1.4 To qualify for Carer's Allowance, carers must:

- earn no more than £95 a week after allowable expenses;
- care for at least 35 hours a week; and
- care for a person receiving Disability Living Allowance Care Component at the middle or highest rate, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance.

Appendix Two gives further details about the eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance, and its interaction with other benefits.

1 *Census of Population and Housing in the United Kingdom 2001*. The definition of providing unpaid care for the purposes of the 2001 Census was "looking after, giving help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability or problems relating to old age". However, there is no one clear definition of a 'carer', so accurately estimating numbers in the population can be difficult.

2 Wittenberg et al. 2008, *Future Demand for Social Care, 2005 to 2041: Projections of Demand for Social Care for Older People in England*. Discussion Paper 2514, Personal Social Services Research Unit.

3 *Census of Population and Housing in England and Wales 2001*.

4 *ibid.*

5 Yeandle et al. 2007, *Diversity in Caring: towards equality for carers*. Carers, Employment and Services Report Series, 3.

6 Based on a survey of 2,950 carers across the United Kingdom; Carers UK 2007, *Real Change not Short Change: Time to deliver for carers*.

7 Based on a survey of 1,997 carers across the United Kingdom; Carers Week Partnership, *Carers Week Survey, 2008*.

1.5 In May 2008, 883,000 people satisfied the entitlement rules for Carer's Allowance. Of these, 481,000 were paid Carer's Allowance. The remaining 402,000 people were theoretically entitled to Carer's Allowance but were deemed to have only an 'underlying entitlement' because they were entitled to more than one non-means tested, income replacement benefit, such as State Pension. In these cases, people are paid only the one which is worth most to them (Appendix Two). For example, those carers who are entitled to State Pension at the same rate or higher than Carer's Allowance receive their State Pension, not Carer's Allowance.

1.6 Furthermore, carers who satisfy the Carer's Allowance entitlement rules, whether or not they are paid Carer's Allowance, can receive an addition with their means-tested benefits. In May 2008, 469,200 people received this addition, known as the Carer Premium or Additional Amount. The underlying entitlement rule means that, in order to receive the Carer Premium or Additional Amount, carers have to apply for Carer's Allowance even though they may not receive the Allowance.

1.7 A further complexity is created by the interaction between carers' benefits and the benefits received by the cared-for person. A disabled person whose carer receives Carer's Allowance is no longer entitled to a Severe Disability Premium (paid at £50.35 for a single person or couple at the lower rate, or £100.70 for a couple who both qualify at the higher rate). It is not known how many carers choose not to apply for Carer's Allowance because they want to avoid this impact on the benefits of the person for whom they care. Although the eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance are clear, the underlying entitlement policy creates administrative complexity and, for the carer, complicates the decision about whether it is in their best interests to apply for it.

Take-up of Carer's Allowance

1.8 A minority of carers in the UK are eligible for Carer's Allowance under the various conditions. Others who may be eligible do not apply because they do not know about it, do not see themselves as carers, or may choose not to apply because they do not wish to affect the benefit entitlement of the person they care for.

1.9 The Department does not have a figure for the take-up rate. It is difficult to determine what proportion of the eligible population of carers applies for the Allowance because of limitations with the available data. An estimate would enable the Department to assess whether it is reaching its target group of carers (recognising that some carers may choose not to apply even though they are eligible).

Fraud and error and Carer's Allowance

1.10 The Department does not have an up to date estimate of the monetary value of fraud and error (MVFE) for Carer's Allowance. The most recent estimate, based on a periodic review undertaken by the Department from April 1996 to March 1997, is that the MVFE was £70 million in 2007-08. This is equivalent to 5.5 per cent of total expenditure on Carer's Allowance. The Department does not regularly measure the MVFE for Carer's Allowance because it considers the benefit to be relatively low value compared to those that are subject to regular periodic review and modelling, and when viewed in the context of overall estimates of the costs of benefit fraud and error of £2.7 billion.

1.11 The Department considers that it is managing the risks of fraud and error by implementing a series of measures to IT processes, quality checks, data matching scans and communication with customers. We have recently reported on the Department's overall performance in managing fraud in 2007-08 and are proposing to review Official and Customer Error in 2009-10 and 2010-11 respectively.

Employment support

1.12 A minority of carers, about a quarter of those we surveyed, wish to combine caring with paid work. When a period of caring ends, carers may wish to return to work or extend their working hours. Services such as job search and advice from Personal Advisers are provided by Jobcentre Plus, although there are no specific employment programmes for this group, in the way there are for lone parents, for example. Although Personal Advisers are available to assist carers with job searches, there is no consistent method for identifying vacancies with short working hours or flexible work patterns, which impacts on carers who wish to balance paid employment with their caring responsibilities. Jobcentre Plus does not know how many carers it supports within its overall case load, because it does not record caring status, but carers comprise a small section of their customer base.

1.13 In 2008 the Government launched a new and wide ranging strategy for carers. It did not include changes to Carer's Allowance, but did commit to review carers' benefits in the context of its plans for longer-term welfare reform, and the Department of Health's review of care and support. To this end the White Paper, published in December 2008, outlines the Department's commitment to explore whether, over the longer-term, a single working age benefit is the right approach. The White Paper states that the needs of carers will be central to the Department's exploration of the future reform of the benefits system.

1.14 On the provision of employment support, the 2008 National Strategy announced a commitment of up to £38 million from existing Departmental allocations, to better enable carers to combine paid employment and their caring role. No further details of the support or timetable for implementation were available at the time of our work. To measure the effectiveness of this new support, the Department will need to record caring status as part of its management information and analyse the information it collects.

The cost of the Department's support for carers

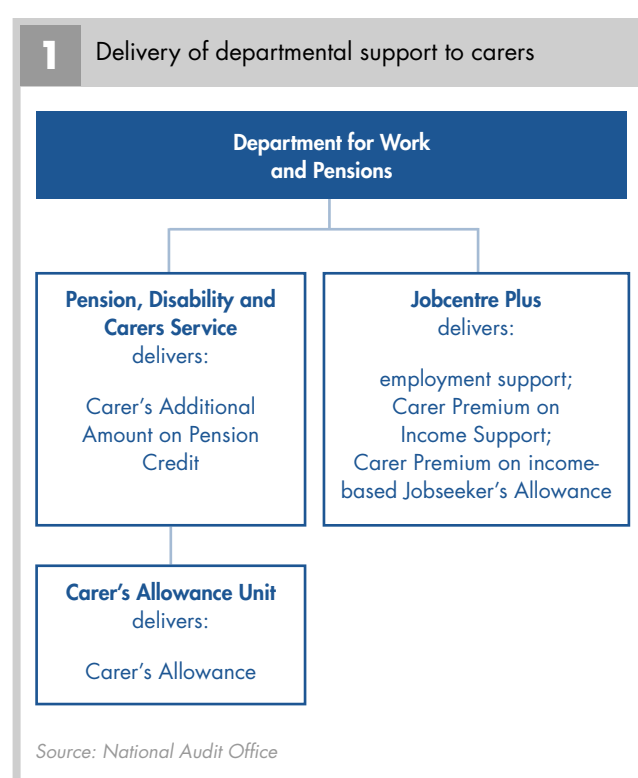
1.15 **Figure 1** sets out the delivery chain of departmental support for carers. **Figure 2 overleaf** sets out the estimated costs of the Department's support for carers through Carer's Allowance, Additional Amounts to Pension Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support. It is not possible to calculate the cost of paying Carer Premiums and Additional Amounts, because these are calculated alongside entitlement for other benefits. From indicative costs provided by the Department, however, we estimate that the cost of providing Carer Premiums and Additional Amounts can be no more than £677 million a year.⁸ The Department does not know how much it spends on providing Jobcentre Plus employment support to carers. Nor does it account separately for the cost of Carer Premium on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. The overall cost to the Department is up to £2 billion a year.⁹

1.16 There is no Public Service Agreement for carers and there are no departmental strategic objectives that relate specifically to Carer's Allowance. The policy objective of Carer's Allowance is to provide a measure of income maintenance for unpaid carers who have given up the opportunity of full-time work to care. As an indicative figure, those carers supported by the Department provide social care whose cost, if paid by the state, we estimate to be approximately £23 billion a year.¹⁰

Scope of this report

1.17 We looked at each component of the Department's support for carers, examining:

- the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of Carer's Allowance;
- the effectiveness, from the carer's perspective, of Jobcentre Plus provision of employment support; and in addition we looked at
- how effectively the Department liaises with those it needs to influence within other Government departments and in the voluntary and community sector.



⁸ This figure is derived from the amount it would cost to pay each recipient of the Carer's Additional Amount or Carer Premium £27.75 per week for a year. In reality, the amount paid can differ, dependent on what other benefits the carer is receiving, and cannot be distinguished from the overall benefit payment.

⁹ This figure includes the cost to the Department of providing and administering Carer's Allowance, Carer's Additional Amount on Pension Credit, and the Carer Premium on income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support; see Figure 2.

¹⁰ National Audit Office analysis of the 2001 Census and Carer's Allowance Unit data. This estimate is based on each carer in receipt of Carer's Allowance caring for 35 hours per week. An hour's alternative care is valued at £14.50 (NHS unit cost for adults and older people receiving home care).

1.18 The current payment levels of Carer's Allowance and whether it should be a flat rate or means-tested benefit are policy issues which are beyond the scope of this report. They are however covered in the Work and Pensions Select Committee report, published in August 2008.

1.19 Our methodology (see Appendix Three for details), comprised a representative survey of 3,097 carers who receive financial support via Carer's Allowance, followed up by in-depth interviews with twenty carers who responded to the survey. We also conducted a representative survey of 226 Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers to gather their views about the services and the services' applicability to carers and reviewed the Department's work with partners. Together, this work provides a significant new set of data on the impact and effectiveness of the Department's support for carers.

2 Departmental spending on support to carers¹

Benefits and support provided	Pension, Disability and Carers Service <i>Expenditure figures are estimates</i> Carer's Allowance Unit		Jobcentre Plus <i>Expenditure figures are estimates</i>			Total
	Carer's Allowance	Carer's Additional Amount on Pension Credit	Carer Premium on Income Support	Carer Premium on income-based Jobseeker's Allowance	Employment support	
No. of recipients, May 2008 ²	481,000	240,400	225,900	2,900	Not available	Up to 883,000
Total benefit payments	£1.3bn ⁴	Up to £347m ³	Up to £326m ³	Up to £4m ³	Not applicable	Up to £1.9bn³
Administration costs	£18.9m	Not available ⁵	Not available ⁶			At least £18.9m
Total costs (figures are rounded)	£1.3bn	Up to £347m	Up to £330m			Up to £2bn

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Department for Work and Pensions data

NOTES

- 1 Number of recipients refers to May 2008 data; financial figures refer to 2007-08 data.
- 2 These categories are not mutually exclusive so do not sum to the total number of carers who satisfy the entitlement rules. 883,000 people satisfied the entitlement rules for Carer's Allowance in May 2008, and of these, 481,000 were paid Carer's Allowance. 469,200 were paid a Carer Premium or Additional Amount, either together with Carer's Allowance or with other benefits.
- 3 These figures represent the maximum possible costs to the Department. It is not possible to provide precise costs of paying Additional Amounts and Premiums because they are calculated alongside entitlement for other benefits.
- 4 This figure refers to the value, in 2008-09 prices, of the payments made in 2007-08.
- 5 These costs cannot be distinguished from Pension Credit administration costs.
- 6 These costs cannot be distinguished from Income Support/Jobseeker's Allowance administration costs.



PART TWO

The delivery of Carer's Allowance

Difficulties in applying for Carer's Allowance

2.1 Just over half the carers responding to our survey found it easy to apply for Carer's Allowance, but about a fifth had difficulties and half of these had more than one difficulty. The Department's customer satisfaction surveys show high overall satisfaction (85 per cent) with the service provided by the Pension, Disability and Carers Service for claimants of Carer's Allowance. There is scope for the Department to further enhance satisfaction levels, as set out below.

Carers' awareness of Carer's Allowance

2.2 The absence of a reliable estimate of the take-up rate means there is no direct measure of awareness of Carer's Allowance among potential recipients. The evidence from our interviews with carers indicates that they may not see themselves as entitled to financial support from the state (**Box 1**). Some regard their caring responsibilities as an extension of their familial responsibilities and either do not recognise themselves as carers at all, or do so only after a considerable period of caring.

The Department's publicity about Carer's Allowance

2.3 Some carers are unaware that a benefit specifically for carers exists, despite information regarding Carer's Allowance being available widely via carers' organisations, Jobcentre Plus, Pension, Disability and Carers Service outreach work, the Internet, and with Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance claim forms. The Department is currently revising its leaflets with a view to distributing them more widely.

2.4 The Pension, Disability and Carers Service has extended its efforts to publicise benefits to potential applicants, including employing a national network of local outreach officers and organising a programme of national events, but only one in six carers in the Pension, Disability and Carers Service 2007 survey of those who had applied for Carer's Allowance said that the Department's publicity material was the main source of information about the benefit. The survey also showed that information more frequently comes from informal sources such as family or friends. Some carers find out about Carer's Allowance by chance (**Box 2 overleaf**).

BOX 1

Many carers do not see themselves as people entitled to financial support

Val: I'd never felt strongly that I should have Carer's Allowance because if you've got a member of your family who's in need of your help, you give it, and it would go without saying that whether it was paid or unpaid, one would do it, provided you were financially able to do it and physically able yourself to do it.

Sandeep: It's taken years for me to come to terms with the fact I was L's carer because I didn't know what I was doing, even though it stares you in the face, because when you love somebody, and I'm sure this is the case with most carers, you do it. You do it. So anything is a benefit and to be recognised as a carer after all these years.

George: It was only a few years ago I learned there was such a thing as a carer... We just assumed husbands helped wives care for them or the wives helped husbands.

Source: National Audit Office interviews with carers, 2008

NOTE

Names have been changed throughout to protect anonymity.

Carers' expectations of Carer's Allowance

2.5 Carer's Allowance provides a degree of financial support to those carers who are eligible and apply for it. For many carers, the Allowance at its current level has an important effect on their finances, and can cushion the impact of giving up paid work. But the circumstances and expectations of Carer's Allowance recipients vary widely and our interviews with carers and partners show that some carers have unmet expectations in terms of whether the Allowance is a wage for caring, a reward for caring, compensation for the costs of caring, or a reflection of the extent of care they provide (**Box 3**). At our suggestion, the Department plans to amend its information leaflets to state that the Allowance is not a 'wage for caring'.

Applying for Carer's Allowance

2.6 About a tenth of the carers we surveyed experienced problems when they applied for Carer's Allowance. The two main problems were understanding the Allowance's eligibility criteria and understanding and filling in the application form. Other problems related to the clarity of information provided by the Department and that required from the applicant. **Figure 3** sets out the range of problems experienced by carers who responded to our survey.

2.7 The Pension, Disability and Carers Service has already taken steps to improve the information it provides. In 2007 it produced a shortened version of the Carer's Allowance claim pack for carers in receipt of State Pension, in consultation with the Pension, Disability and Carers Service Advisory Forum (a group established by the Department to consult on how developments might affect disabled people and the people who care for them).

2.8 Survey respondents were also confused by the concept of 'underlying entitlement', where, on application for Carer's Allowance, a carer may be eligible for a Premium or Additional Amount with their other benefits. To qualify for these extra payments, carers have to apply for Carer's Allowance, even though they may not qualify for the Allowance itself. The standard letter issued by the Department to inform claimants who receive State Pension of their entitlements is long and complicated (Appendix Four) and many applicants need to speak to a member of departmental staff to clarify their position. Our interviews with carers (**Box 4**) and research¹¹ show that many carers are not aware that having an underlying entitlement permits them to claim extra payment on their other benefits, and hence some carers do not receive the financial support to which they are entitled.

11 Carers UK 2006, *In the know: the importance of information for carers*.

BOX 2

Carers find out about Carer's Allowance through various routes

Beth: We were very fortunate, I know that a lot of parents don't have that, but our consultant basically said, here's a load of information, go and read up on it. And it was either in there or, we also had a preschool teacher who would come in and support us and work with T and I think she might have mentioned Carer's Allowance as well. So we did find out about it quite quickly but it's the luck of the draw really, if somebody tells you about it. If they don't then I think I would have assumed that it was for people who cared for adults, not for carers of children.

Margaret: I didn't hear about it until a couple of months after my mum came home [from hospital, to be cared for by Margaret]. I was told by our social worker that I probably wouldn't be entitled to anything because he said that what I would get would automatically be taken off my mum's pension. So I thought, 'well that's my mum's pension, I'm not going to deprive her of anything' so I didn't claim. And it was only a visit from a girl from the older people's services at the council, she said, 'Did you have any problem claiming your Carer's Allowance?' And I said, 'Well I haven't claimed it because I was told I wasn't entitled to it' and she said, 'You are entitled'. And then within about two weeks she had instructed another lady from the council carer's association to come down. She sat with me, she filled out the whole form for me and then within two or three weeks I heard that I was getting it backdated to January.

Source: National Audit Office interviews with carers, 2008

BOX 3

Carers value the financial support but have differing views about the benefit's purpose

Val: I don't understand why, if my efforts were considered remunerating for a few months [before retirement], why what I'm doing now isn't considered care, that [I just get] my old age pension. I don't understand the logic of it. Because what I do hasn't gone away, what I do is getting more. The more my husband needs me as he gets less able, the more I'm doing, but I don't get, in return, any recognition for it. It's not even [about] financial recognition because we manage, we don't necessarily need the money, but I think we feel unrecognised and feel unappreciated somewhat.

Ernest: Personally, I would say from my own position, and I'm sure I'm like thousands and thousands of others, the monetary side of it is helpful, yes, but it doesn't compensate for the stress and the time, sleep deprivation, and the constant stress of being awake.

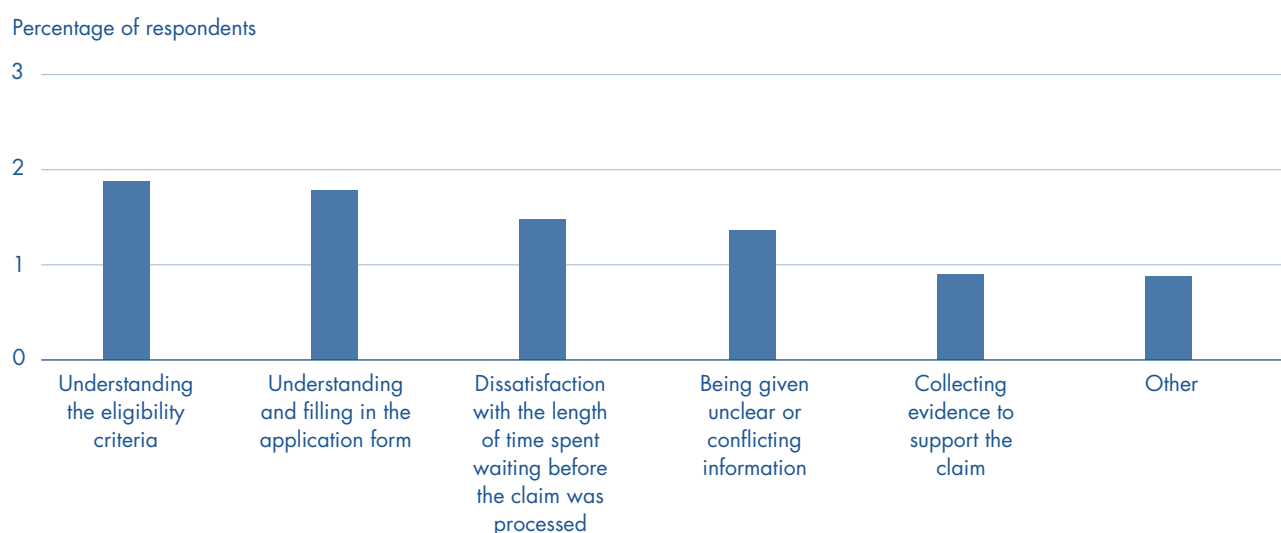
Megan: What I did find strange is I'm actually coping with two disabled children and I was only allowed to claim [Carer's Allowance] for one. I don't know, but maybe you should be able to claim for each person that you're actually looking after who meets the criteria.

Source: National Audit Office interviews with carers, 2008

2.9 Besides creating confusion for claimants, the current method of issuing underlying entitlement notifications causes duplication of work across different parts of the Department, providing an opportunity to improve administrative efficiency. For example, if a carer applies for Carer's Allowance and Pension Credit at the same time, the Pension Credit application will be processed twice – once on receipt of the application form, and again on notification from the Carer's Allowance Unit that underlying entitlement has been awarded. This may affect up to nearly a quarter of a million claimants.

2.10 The Pension, Disability and Carers Service has recognised these problems, and as part of an initiative to drive change from the 'frontline', is supporting efforts at local pension centres to simplify the process. The Carer's Addition State Pension Efficiency Review (CASPER) has been set up in a small number of local pension centres to trial a new, more efficient method of administering underlying entitlements for claimants in receipt of Pension Credit. It also provides a simplified letter to inform the customer of their underlying entitlement. CASPER is based on processing Pension Credit claims only once and the results indicate that the approach is having a positive impact on customer comprehension.

3 Difficulties applying for Carer's Allowance reported by carers



Source: National Audit Office survey of carers, 2008

BOX 4

The complexity of carers' benefits: some carers find the concept of 'underlying entitlement' confusing

Sandeep: I'm not a stupid person, [the respondent had worked as a benefits adviser in a voluntary organisation] but I found [applying for Carer's Allowance] incredibly complicated and I didn't just look at the DWP website with the online application but I looked in many different places and I could not work out what they were talking about and I'm someone that normally is very good with things like that... I have a degree in science and I could not understand how that letter [informing him of his underlying entitlement] was worded. I had to look at it about 20 times because it had all these figures 'from this date to this date you're entitled to this. Actually, you're not entitled to anything.' So why put all those figures on there? It's not really relevant and it's very confusing. So I had to ring them up and ask them what it actually did mean. And they said, 'well, no, there won't be any increase in your income.'

Source: National Audit Office interviews with carers, 2008

Claims processing times

2.11 The Carer's Allowance Unit is meeting its target to process new claims within 13.5 days¹² but about half the carers in our survey who reported having problems applying for Carer's Allowance were dissatisfied because of the length of time spent waiting before their claim was processed. Working age customers were more likely to be dissatisfied than pension age customers. Of those who had difficulties applying for Carer's Allowance, 54 per cent of working age customers were dissatisfied with the length of time taken to process their claim, compared with 32 per cent of people over 64 years of age. The 54 per cent may reflect the length of time taken for customers' other benefits, if any, to be adjusted or to collect information about the claimant's earnings. Some claims are more complex than others, for example, because of backdating. From a sample of claims we monitored, we found that two thirds required further contact with the claimant or another party to gather missing or additional information. The need for further information about a majority of claims suggests a lack of understanding about what information applicants are required to provide, and reinforces the importance of having clear and helpful literature for those wanting to apply. In our survey, nearly half of carers who reported difficulties applying for Carer's Allowance stated that they were given unclear or conflicting information.

Carers' change of circumstances

2.12 Where a carer's circumstances change in a way that might affect their benefit entitlement, the carer is responsible for informing the Carer's Allowance Unit. Examples of such changes include an increase in a carer's hours of work, or a reduction in the hours spent caring because, for instance, the cared-for person goes into residential care. Changing their details is straightforward for most carers, but in our survey about ten per cent of carers who had notified changes since their initial claim reported encountering problems. The time taken was an issue for half this group, who were anxious to know the impact on their financial entitlement as quickly as possible in order to organise their affairs. Processing a change in a carer's circumstances at the Carer's Allowance Unit takes an average of five days¹³, but a customer may have to wait longer if a change in entitlement necessitates a change in other benefit entitlements.

Performance of the Carer's Allowance Unit¹⁴

2.13 Management information from the Carer's Allowance Unit shows performance in clearing individual Carer's Allowance cases is improving. On average, 43 more cases per staff member per month are cleared now than in 2005-06, with 163 cases cleared on average in 2007-08, compared to 120 in 2005-06. Financial accuracy is high, at a steady 99 per cent over the last three years. Non-financial accuracy, which includes errors found on a case during the checking process that do not affect payment (such as telephone number of applicant, and whether the customer's wage slips have been returned within the specified time), although lower, has improved from 51 per cent in 2005-06 to 73 per cent in 2007-08.

2.14 Over the last two years, the average cost of processing a new Carer's Allowance claim has decreased by 40 per cent, from an average of £43.23 per claim in 2005-06 to an average of £25.74 per claim in 2007-08.

2.15 Performance targets for the time taken to process new claims have been met over the last three years. However recently there has been a shift in the pattern of case handling to a 'First In, First Out' system, whereby claims are processed in the order in which they are received rather than the simpler claims being processed first at the expense of more complex claims. This approach provides greater equity of service but average processing times have increased by two working days, from 10.6 to 12.7, since 2006-07. This increase means that, while those with more complex cases now have their claims processed more quickly than previously, some other claimants now wait longer for their initial claim to be cleared.

¹² Carer's Allowance Unit.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ All data in this section are from the Carer's Allowance Unit.

Improving efficiency at the Carer's Allowance Unit

2.16 Within recent years, the Carer's Allowance Unit has introduced a number of efficiency drives, and has reduced staff numbers. Staff numbers have fallen by 25 per cent, from 957 in March 2006 to 714 in March 2008. Over the same period staff costs have fallen by 19 per cent, from £1.55 million in March 2006 to £1.25 million in March 2008. Financial savings have been achieved more slowly than staff reductions because reductions have been made at the lower grades and have been phased in throughout the period. Total expenditure at the Carer's Allowance Unit has fallen by 19.5 per cent, from £1.68 million in March 2006 to £1.35 million in March 2008. These reductions have been achieved during a period when workloads have increased by a quarter.¹⁵

2.17 To assist with delivering reductions in staff numbers, Lean processes were rolled out across the Carer's Allowance Unit in May to November 2007. The initiative aimed to improve customer service, staff work experience and the experience of partner organisations, whilst improving efficiency. The Pension, Disability and Carers Service estimates the cost of the Lean intervention at £1.5 million over two years from 2007-08, and estimates that these costs will be recouped within a further two years. The success of the Lean initiative itself cannot readily be assessed, as it was delivered alongside a number of other efficiencies, such as the IT capacity to record a customer's history on their record and consolidating storage of customer files, but it appears to have enabled performance at the Carer's Allowance Unit to be maintained despite significant staff reductions.

¹⁵ All data in this section are from the Carer's Allowance Unit.



Jobcentre Plus employment support for carers

Combining caring with paid employment

3.1 Jobcentre Plus's stated aim is to help unemployed and economically inactive people of working age move closer to the labour market and to provide support, including benefits, for those without work. In particular it supports people who are required to look for work as a condition of their benefit. People who receive Carer's Allowance are not required to look for work although some wish to combine work with their caring responsibilities. Jobcentre Plus does not keep records of how many carers attend their offices but our survey of Jobcentre Plus staff found that only a quarter of Personal Advisers considered they saw more than five carers per month within a typical case load of 100 to 140, making carers a relatively small section of the Jobcentre Plus customer base.

3.2 Almost a quarter of carers responding to our survey would like to do more paid work, but do not want to lose their entitlement to Carer's Allowance. More than half of carers are estimated to give up paid employment when they take on caring responsibilities.¹⁶ Working age carers who receive Carer's Allowance provide care for at least 35 hours a week which limits opportunities to take on paid work (**Box 5**). Nevertheless, of the 883,000 people eligible for Carer's Allowance in May 2008, about one in ten combined paid work with the required hours of caring.¹⁷ When a person's caring responsibilities come to an end, for example, when the person being cared for moves into residential care or dies, then the carer may wish to resume full-time work.

3.3 Jobcentre Plus recognises its role in keeping carers in touch with the labour market, as do some staff we surveyed (**Box 6**). To assess the effectiveness of this work we carried out a representative survey of about a third (226) of Jobcentre Plus offices in England, and visited four offices for in-depth discussions with staff.

BOX 5

Combining caring with paid employment can be difficult

Beth: I'm working part-time now. I'm fairly fortunate in that I've managed to find a job in a school for children with special needs, so my headteacher is very understanding. I think if it was in another school, they wouldn't necessarily be as understanding. So when there are difficulties and I have to take time off, then she's quite happy for that to happen, although my husband and I try and work it so that if it's more than one day, he takes the other day off, so that I'm not losing money.

Joyce: I've not ever managed to find a job where I've actually had Carer's Allowance and work. I used to only work for six months and when I do I normally take on a job that's full days, maybe two, three days a week and it usually ends up that I just go over the top because you're allowed to earn up to £89 or something.

Source: National Audit Office interviews with carers, 2008

¹⁶ Based on a survey of 2,950 carers across the UK. Carers UK 2007, *Real Change not Short Change: Time to deliver for carers*.
¹⁷ Carer's Allowance Unit.

Jobcentre Plus services for carers

3.4 Jobcentre Plus does not have a specific package of employment support for carers, so the assistance they receive – including the frequency of contact with Jobcentre Plus – is mainly dependent on which other benefits, if any, they are claiming. For example, a carer who is also a lone parent claiming Income Support can take part in the New Deal for Lone Parents and benefit from the associated programmes and grants, including financial support for child care. Carers generally are not eligible for specific payments from Jobcentre Plus to fund alternative care provision when they work.

3.5 Carers who are not eligible for any particular New Deal package can, of course, use other Jobcentre Plus employment services, such as the job search facility, Personal Advisers, guidance and leaflets, or work trials. However, carers who secure paid work whilst claiming Carer's Allowance are very unlikely to contribute to meeting Jobcentre Plus targets as they can usually secure only part-time work which does not count as a 'job outcome'. This exclusion of part-time work (under 16 hours per week) from Jobcentre Plus targets creates a disincentive for Personal Advisers to support Carer's Allowance customers to find work, and the support is often not as comprehensive as that offered to other groups (**Box 7**).

Carers' use of Jobcentre Plus services

3.6 Our survey of carers showed that Jobcentre Plus was the most commonly used organisation for employment support. However, while about half of respondents said they would contact Jobcentre Plus if they needed assistance, there is an opportunity for Jobcentre Plus to help a wider group of carers. While almost half of younger carers would approach Jobcentre Plus for employment help, the proportion falls to about a third for carers aged 35 to 64. This difference may be a reflection of the employment status of carers in our survey. Those in the younger age group were more likely to be unemployed when they started caring, and were therefore more likely to already be in contact with Jobcentre Plus, and recognise it as an appropriate support service.

BOX 6

Personal Advisers recognise the importance of supporting carers

Janet, Personal Adviser: I enjoy interviewing carers and have always had a positive reaction from them. They are often grateful to talk and discuss other options, and especially when you talk about other part-time options that they may undertake. Carers are often very experienced people and feel that they have taken a side step because of caring. They welcome opportunities to still keep a link in the job market and coming to the Jobcentre is a strong link to one day perhaps returning to work.

Christine, Lone Parent Adviser: I see lots of customers with disabled children, many of whom would access extra support if they knew where to find it. Also I conduct Work Focused Interviews for carers at the initial stage and initially you find they are just wanting the benefit for the caring part of their existence, but it is vital that we give them information on the services Jobcentre Plus can access for them once they have adjusted to their role as a carer in whatever capacity that might be.

Source: National Audit Office survey of Jobcentre Plus staff, 2008

BOX 7

Personal Advisers report carers may not receive as much support as other customer groups

Tony, Personal Adviser: With targets for Jobcentre Plus Advisers so high, no one wants to take on a carer customer as they see it as a waste of time. We are not measured on how many carers we get into work or even the support we give them.

Ishan, Personal Adviser: The Adviser support is the same [as for other groups of customers], but there tend to be fewer programmes and training help – unless they fall into the eligibility for New Deal for Partners or Lone Parents.

Becca, Personal Adviser: The help available for carers, and carers on Carer's Allowance is so different. I believe I support lone parents or partners who are caring back into work very well. There are lots of incentives and help we are able to give them. I don't feel that the customers on Carer's Allowance alone get the same help.

Source: National Audit Office survey of Jobcentre Plus staff, 2008

Carers' views about Jobcentre Plus services

3.7 Almost a third of carers in our survey had contacted Jobcentre Plus in the last 12 months. Of these, about half (54 per cent) were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the services provided to them as a carer but a quarter were not satisfied (**Figure 4**).

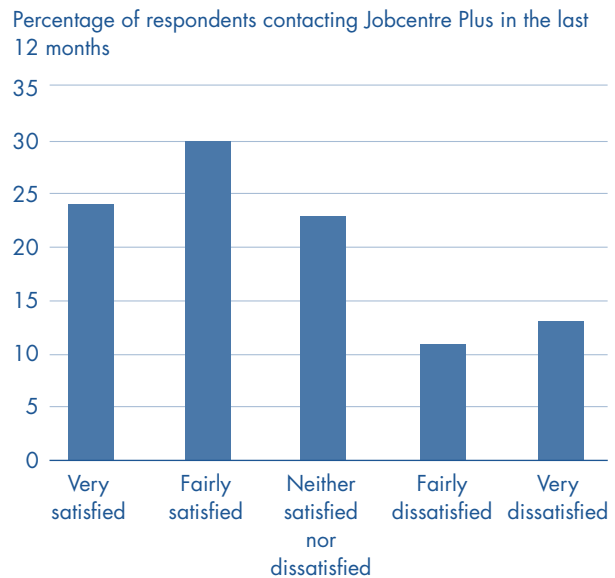
3.8 About a quarter of the carers responding to our survey who had contacted Jobcentre Plus offices in the past 12 months had a job-related query. These carers were more dissatisfied than those who sought advice about training and benefits (**Figure 5**). Reasons for dissatisfaction included finding Jobcentre Plus services insufficiently tailored to carers' circumstances.

3.9 Over 70 per cent of carers in our survey who had contacted Jobcentre Plus in the last 12 months for employment advice thought that the services provided by Jobcentre Plus were not well-suited to the needs of carers seeking work. As already indicated, there is no tailored package of support for carers, and some feel that the support that carers are offered does not take account of their personal circumstances, for example, the need for flexible working patterns (**Box 8**).

Carers' views of Jobcentre Plus staff

3.10 Only one third of our survey respondents who had contacted Jobcentre Plus for employment support in the last 12 months reported that staff were helpful, approachable and sufficiently aware of carers' circumstances. This low level of satisfaction may in part stem from a lack of understanding by carers of what services Jobcentre Plus can reasonably provide, together with a low level of knowledge amongst Jobcentre Plus staff about what support would be most appropriate for carers.

4 Carers' levels of satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services



Source: National Audit Office survey of carers, 2008

5 Carers' views of Jobcentre Plus services



Source: National Audit Office survey of carers, 2008

3.11 Our fieldwork shows that, for their part, Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers feel ill-prepared to meet carers' needs. Only about a fifth of those we surveyed thought that they had all the skills and knowledge they needed to support carers who want to do paid work, and almost nine in ten Advisers responding believed that more guidance and training would be helpful (**Box 9**). Greater clarity for carers about what support is provided, and enhanced staff awareness of carers' needs, would improve carers' experiences.

3.12 To address this lack of staff awareness and understanding, the Department has recently released the Carers Portal on the Department's intranet site. This provides information such as the employment and benefit support to which carers are entitled, how they can be best supported by Personal Advisers, and which other organisations can support carers. It also includes the Carers Ten Must Knows, providing detailed information developed in liaison with carers' organisations, to help raise Personal Advisers' awareness of carers' circumstances and to improve their services to carers (**Figure 6 overleaf**).

3.13 Ninety six per cent of Personal Advisers responding to our survey valued the suggestion of a comprehensive online reference guide for Personal Advisers about carer issues such as benefits, employment support and external sources of help. The Carers Portal is a welcome step which has potential to increase the effectiveness of Jobcentre Plus staff.

Variations across Jobcentre Plus offices in services provided for carers

3.14 Our survey of Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers found that there are substantial differences amongst Jobcentre Plus offices and Personal Advisers in their implementation of the Department's policy for carers and the support they provide (**Figure 7 overleaf**). Not all staff are aware of some aspects of Jobcentre Plus national policy. For example, two thirds of respondents were unaware that carers who claim only Carer's Allowance are exempt from attending Work Focused Interviews.

BOX 8

Some carers find services are not suitable for them, given their circumstances

Question: When you were seeking information or support from the Jobcentre, did you get what you needed?

Monir: Yeah, to a certain extent but it wasn't helpful, not because of them but because of my circumstances... it just underlined the fact that [work] wasn't going to be possible at this particular moment.

Beth: To be perfectly blunt, I've never found the Jobcentre to be helpful in anything if you're not looking for a job, they don't want to know. So I can't see that they would be helpful for anything apart from nagging you to go and find a job, to be honest, and that sort of pressure you don't need.

Source: National Audit Office interviews with carers, 2008

BOX 9

Personal Advisers are aware their support to carers could be improved

Tony, Personal Adviser: Carers are not encouraged to use Jobcentre Plus services as no one knows what to do with them, and we have received no training to deal with their issues.

Layla, Personal Adviser: [Jobcentre Plus staff do not always] understand the day-to-day strains that a carer may be dealing with, therefore are not able to provide any type of support or assist the carer with information to deal with the issues.

Catherine, Personal Adviser: We could offer carers a better service if the DWP provided training for the Advisers or made us aware of any training available.

Ishan, Personal Adviser: There is some help but I feel there could be more. A few of the carers I see would love to work but cannot see their way forward to do so and I feel my skills are insufficient to help them some of the time.

Source: National Audit Office survey of Jobcentre Plus staff, 2008

6 Enhancing Jobcentre Plus information with the Carers Ten Must Knows

The Carers Ten Must Knows

1. How to identify a carer
2. Making sure carers get the right entitlements
3. Carer's Allowance
4. Assessment of carers' needs
5. Carers making time for themselves
6. Employment options for carers to think about
7. Pensions implications
8. Support from Health Services
9. Helping disabled, ill or elderly people be more independent
10. Useful contacts, guides and support for carers

Source: Department for Work and Pensions

7 Jobcentre Plus staff awareness of national Jobcentre Plus policy for carers

Jobcentre Plus policy	Percentage of survey respondents unaware of national policy ¹
Carers who claim only Carer's Allowance are exempt from attending Work Focused Interviews (WFIs). Only carers who claim Carer's Allowance alongside other benefits are required to attend WFIs.	65
Jobcentre Plus offices should not help customers with completing Carer's Allowance application forms. Carers with difficulties should be signposted to the Benefit Enquiry Line for assistance.	35
Jobcentre Plus offices should provide Carer's Allowance forms to those who request them.	19
Where Jobcentre Plus cannot help a carer, they will try to direct them to the right place.	19

Source: National Audit Office survey of Jobcentre Plus staff, 2008; Department for Work and Pensions

NOTE

¹ The source of these data is our survey of Jobcentre Plus staff who were asked whether these points of national policy applied 'always', 'sometimes' or 'never' for their customers who are carers.

The Department's plans to improve employment support for carers

3.15 Only a third of Personal Advisers responding to our survey thought that carers visiting Jobcentre Plus are receiving the support they might reasonably expect to help them combine caring and paid employment. Forty per cent of respondents thought that carers get less help than other job seekers. **Box 10** illustrates the nature of comments made to us, though they need to be seen in the light of a focus on customer service and not necessarily on the strategic wider question about resource allocation to different groups of customers.

3.16 In answers to our survey, Personal Advisers did, however, identify changes that could reasonably be accommodated in their existing day-to-day duties to make the biggest improvement to the support provided to carers, most notably: a comprehensive online reference guide for Personal Advisers about carer issues such as benefits, employment support and external sources of help; specialised Personal Advisers to deal with carers; and flexible working opportunities that are easier to identify. The Department has already provided an online carers' reference guide for Personal Advisers, as above. The other two suggestions are being addressed by the Department as part of the Government's 2008 revised National Strategy for Carers, and the Department is assessing carers' employment needs through its research programme.

3.17 The Department's £38 million commitment in the Strategy includes a range of measures designed to improve the support provided to carers by Jobcentre Plus (**Figure 8**). These measures address the key weaknesses in the current support as identified by our surveys of carers and of Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers. The introduction of trained Care Partnership Managers in every Jobcentre Plus district is intended to help implement these measures consistently across Jobcentre Plus offices.

3.18 The Government has also committed £4.7 million a year for the Caring with Confidence Programme, due to commence August 2008, £2.8 million a year for the Carers' Information Service helpline, due to commence autumn 2008 and £25 million additional funding a year from October 2007 to local authorities to help them develop plans with carers for emergency care cover. These interventions are led by the Department of Health under the New Deal for Carers banner.

BOX 10

Some Personal Advisers think that carers are not getting the support they might reasonably expect

Barry, Personal Adviser: I feel that carers do not get enough help compared to other job seekers when they may have more barriers to work than other job seekers.

Abbie, Personal Adviser: I feel often they are forgotten about and as there are currently no targets about supporting or getting carers into work they are not a priority.

Alf, Personal Adviser: The service is dependent on the Adviser working with them. I am in a unique position in that I have been a carer for a number of years... most staff do not have this knowledge.

Source: National Audit Office survey of Jobcentre Plus staff, 2008

8 The Department's plans for improving Jobcentre Plus services for carers

Proposed measure	Cost ¹
Improve information about flexible job vacancies in Jobcentre Plus job banks	£3m one-off
Introduce Care Partnership Managers in every Jobcentre Plus district	£2.5m per annum
Introduce specialist training for Jobcentre Plus Advisers who work with carers	Not precisely costed; assessed at less than £5m
Fund replacement care for those who are participating in approved training	£7.5m per annum
Ensure carers have access to appropriate employment programmes	£0 ²
The Department and Jobcentre Plus to investigate the feasibility of providing return to work support through third sector organisations	Not costed

Source: 'Carers at the heart of 21st-century families and communities', HM Government, 2008; Department for Work and Pensions

NOTES

¹ Costs as reported by the Department for Work and Pensions, 'Impact Assessment of Carers Employment and Income Task Force Proposals', June 2008.

² Although the Department has valued this at no net cost, there are likely to be cost implications if the proposal is successful and more carers take up employment programmes.



PART FOUR

The Department's work with partners

The Department works with other organisations involved in caring

4.1 The needs of carers extend beyond the Department's responsibilities into health and social care and are addressed by a range of central and local Government agencies and voluntary sector organisations. For example the social care sector helps carers by providing replacement care or assisting with adaptations to the home. Charities and lobbying groups provide information and services to carers and campaign on behalf of carers to influence policy decisions. **Figure 9** gives an overview of the parties involved.

4.2 Partnership working by the Department is important for the effective delivery of services to carers because it can improve the alignment of services. For example at an operational level, liaison between a Jobcentre Plus office and social services can secure respite care at the most appropriate time. At a strategic level, for example, changes to the minimum wage rate can impact on carers' eligibility for Carer's Allowance if it takes them over the weekly earnings threshold; partnerships between Government departments can mitigate the impact on carers.

Assessing the effectiveness of relationships with partners

4.3 The effectiveness of partnerships can depend as much on the skills and personalities of those involved as on the formal links. Objective measurement of the extent to which partners work together successfully is therefore difficult, especially as assessment relies necessarily on gathering the opinions of those involved and these opinions may be affected by the extent to which they regard themselves as 'successful' in meeting their particular objectives.

4.4 We reviewed the Department's partnership working by drawing on Treasury and Audit Commission guidance¹⁸, summarising progress against the following three key themes for success: **identifying key partners**, **working to a common purpose to achieve results** and **maintaining an ongoing commitment to work with others**. Appendix Five explains how we assessed the effectiveness of partnerships. Interviews were conducted with a selection of the Department's partners using these themes as a basis for their work.

The Department's main partners

4.5 The Department maintains a number of long-term, informal contacts with key partners through which change has been effected. For example, the Department has worked with HM Revenue & Customs on Carer's Allowance policy, and with the Department for Children, Schools and Families to examine the impact of caring on young carers.

4.6 The Department has also established a joint Strategic Forum with the Local Government Association, because of the important role of this sector in providing support for carers, such as through local social services. The emphasis of the Forum is on improving service delivery by working in a joined up way through Local Strategic Partnerships. The Forum meets every six months, and includes senior officials and policy advisers from both organisations.

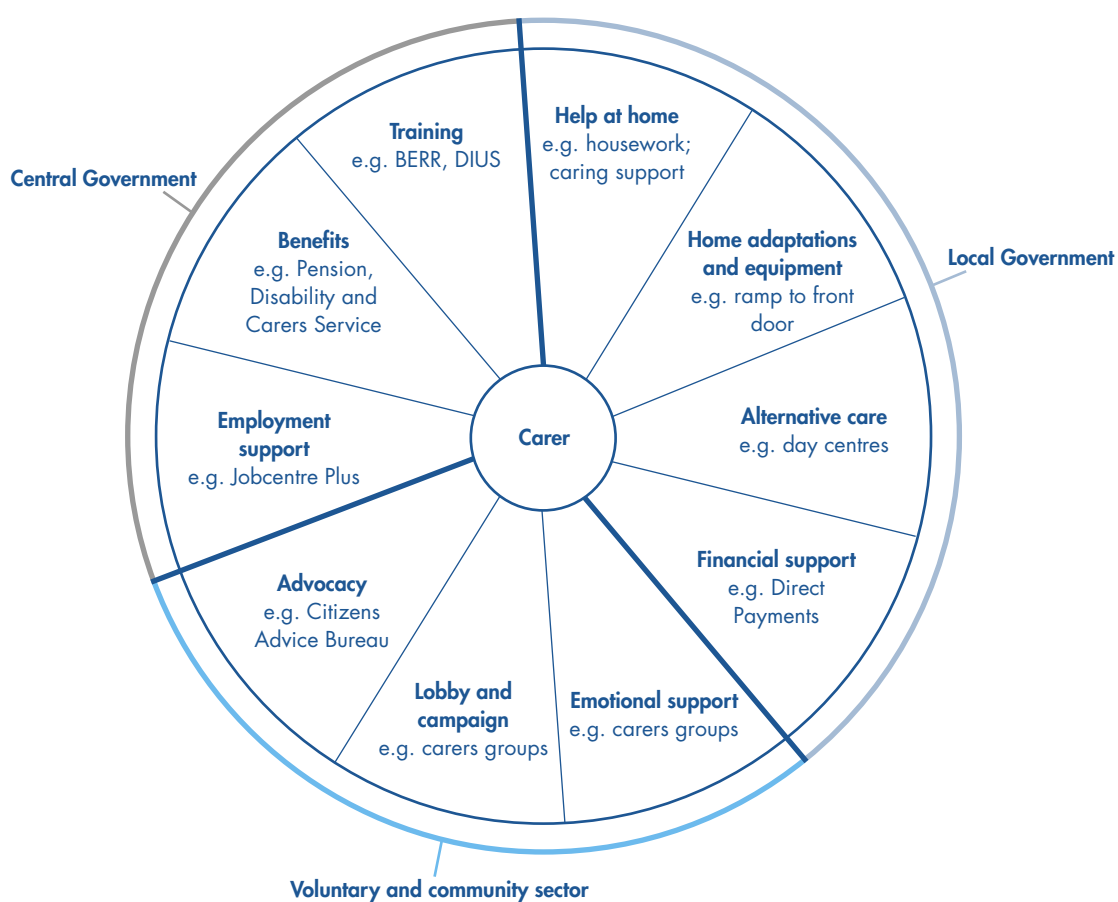
¹⁸ *Creating Successful Partnerships*, Public Services Productivity Panel, http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/Checklist_18_Mar.pdf, and *A Fruitful Partnership, Management Paper*, Audit Commission, <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/A190CA25-7A7E-47D1-BCAB-373A86B709C0/A%20Fruitful%20Partnership.pdf>.

4.7 At agency level, the Pension, Disability and Carers Service has run groups that take in carers' views. For example, the Pension, Disability and Carers Service Advisory Forum enables the Department to consult with carers' representatives on the impact of developments. Most recently, these groups have contributed to a revised Disability Living Allowance application form and training needs of departmental staff around disability awareness. Our interviews with voluntary organisations showed that they thought the fora had fostered successful informal contacts, which helped resolve individual issues about services to carers.

4.8 In February 2007, the Government announced a review of the 1999 Prime Minister's National Strategy for Carers. The review was based on the work of four time-limited Taskforces on Employment, Income, Health and Social Care, and Equalities. Each Taskforce comprised representatives from central and local Government, the voluntary sector, and in some cases, private organisations (Appendix Six). The Department led on the Employment and Income Taskforces and was represented on the Equalities Taskforce.

9

Government departments and other agencies who help meet carers' needs



Source: National Audit Office

NOTE

BERR: Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

DIUS: Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

4.9 Our interviewees reported that the Department had been effective in bringing representation from other Government departments onto the Taskforces it led, including the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

4.10 On the extent of partnership overall, our interviewees considered that the Department has involved a wide and balanced range of relevant organisations. Key partners were represented, and members felt able to make suggestions for additional participants, which were acted on.

The effectiveness of the Department's partnership work

4.11 Partners we consulted generally considered that the experiences of working with the Department were positive. There was a clear sense of purpose to partnership with the Department, ranging from the need to develop a specific set of high level recommendations or outcomes, such as for the National Strategy for Carers 2008, to the operational level (**Box 11**).

4.12 For the 2008 Strategy, the two Department-led Taskforces met regularly, and were well attended. Representatives from the central and local Government, private and voluntary sectors considered that partnerships had a clear, shared purpose and structure, and that they were effective in achieving their aims. The presence of non-governmental partners on the Taskforces was seen as a strength.

4.13 Most interviewees reported that their interactions are productive, not least in being able to shape the content of their discussions with the Department. The opportunity to contribute to agendas is a formal part of the terms of reference for the Pension, Disability and Carers Service Advisory Forum. One interviewee described, for example, how time to address children's issues was limited and so the Department established a separate Family Carers Group of the Forum.

4.14 The benefits of working with others could be increased further by keeping organisations such as charities that are not represented in partnership arrangements better informed of progress. For example, the Department could help mitigate the constraints faced by external organisations such as charities, which have limited resources to interface with a large government organisation, by circulating material such as meeting minutes more widely and extending the timescales for comment or feedback on proposals to allow organisations adequate time for consultations with their members.

Ongoing departmental commitments to successful partnership

4.15 When the four National Strategy Taskforces came to the end of their term in summer 2008 partners returned to liaising in a less formal and structured manner. The new Carers Cross Government Programme Board, led by the Department of Health, will oversee implementation of the commitments from the National Strategy. The Department has two representatives, covering their responsibilities regarding income and benefits, on this Board, which they will use to maintain joint working on shared agendas, keep up to date with developments in related policy areas and improve the alignment of services to carers.

BOX 11

Partnership working: the benefit to carers

Partner interviewee 1: Let's say, for example, we get a parent coming in on the helpline who's just at the end of her tether and can't seem to figure out what's going on with her claim. I can phone up the secretariat for the group and they will find out what's happening with the claim and sort it out for us. They are very good. One of our parents got an emergency giro when she hadn't had any money for about six weeks.

Partner interviewee 2: We can give a response from the families we're working with directly rather than national organisations [that] have to get reports; they are very far removed. They have valid points but they're not in contact with families on a day-to-day basis, which is where our contribution comes in.

Source: Interviews conducted for the National Audit Office, 2008

4.16 Other issues need to be pursued through partnership. The Department needs to coordinate services at a local level so that carers can access its services more effectively. For example, a carer supported by Jobcentre Plus to secure a job interview may need to find one-off replacement care for the person for whom they care, possibly at short notice. This task is easier to coordinate if Jobcentre Plus is linked with other service providers in local Government and the voluntary and community sector. Some Jobcentre Plus staff do this already (**Box 12**), and the introduction of Care Partnership Managers provides an opportunity to make such joint working practice more universal.

4.17 One particularly important partnership issue requiring resolution is the number of times that carers have to provide the same information (**Box 13**). The Pension, Disability and Carers Service Advisory Forum is addressing this issue but has not yet been able to improve data sharing between partner agencies, largely due to data protection issues and the concerns of some Government departments about data controls. While the need for such controls is paramount, the Department should continue to explore with other central Government departments what progress can be made.

BOX 12

Staff liaison can bring benefits to carers

Jackie, Disability Employment Adviser: I had a carer that was becoming overwhelmed by being a full-time carer and not having the chance to have time for herself. She dearly loved working especially in the school dinner lady position she worked in before becoming a carer. I helped her by liaising with social services to help get respite care for her husband for a day a week. I then got her a voluntary position at a local private school as a dinner lady, where she soon became a paid employee for one day a week. The freedom of getting her old life back a bit gave her a boost that I'm sure helped her at home with her stress and frustration, making her a happier carer.

Greg, Disability Employment Adviser: Jobcentre Plus treats everybody equally and they have an in-depth knowledge of the local labour market to help anybody find the right work and hours to suit their circumstances. Most Advisers network with outside organisations to provide support to customers if required.

Source: National Audit Office survey of Jobcentre Plus staff, 2008

BOX 13

A lack of effective partnership working impacts directly on carers

Beth: We've found that you have to jump through hoops with nearly everybody and it gets really exhausting jumping through so many different hoops with so many different people and having to repeat the same information to the same people all over again, because nobody will talk to each other. You have to give the same information to the consultant as you've just given to the social worker; you then have to give the same information again to the schools because nobody will talk to each other. And if you want them to know about something, then you might just as well get on and photocopy everything and take it with you and say, 'here you are, here's what you need,' because nobody else is going to do it for you. It takes up a lot of time. It takes up a lot of energy.

Megan: You seem to have to go through everything time and time again. I think you do find that it isn't joined up in that sense... I think if it was all more joined up and the people were more open and things moved a bit quicker it would be helpful.

Source: Interviews with carers conducted for National Audit Office, 2008

APPENDIX ONE

Case studies of carers

Case study 1

Five years ago Diane¹⁹ was in her early fifties, working full-time in a well-paid job, when her mother, Suzanne, had a stroke. Diane took seven months off work, unpaid, to care for her mum, who came to live with her. As Suzanne's condition improved, Diane went back to work. Her employer agreed that she could work part-time, and let her change her hours to accommodate her caring responsibilities.

Combining work and care was far from easy; Suzanne frequently needed care at night, which impacted greatly on Diane's sleep. In addition, Diane had to spend a significant amount of time liaising with nurses and social workers, and chasing them up; they rarely turned up as planned when Diane was at work. Finally, Diane greatly relied on a family friend, who used to take care of Suzanne in her absence.

Over the last year, Diane's own health started deteriorating, as a result of the stress and lack of sleep. Suzanne's condition also deteriorated seriously and she was diagnosed with cancer. Diane took three months unpaid leave to help her mum fight her cancer, and found out from a friend that she may be eligible for Carer's Allowance this time around. She has now resigned from her well-paid job, and is looking for flexible jobs in her local area, that could accommodate her caring responsibilities.

Case study 2

Joyce has cared for her husband, Dave, since he was diagnosed with dementia and osteoarthritis four years ago. When he became ill, a person from the pensions office talked them through their financial options. Joyce and Dave were told they were not eligible for Carer's Allowance, but Joyce could not recall being told the reason why.

Keen to find out why she was not eligible, Joyce enquired to the psychiatric nurse who provided support for her husband. The nurse thought Joyce was not eligible because she receives a pension. Joyce says that she was not aware "that your old age pension was classed as a benefit" and now believes that "once you're an old age pensioner you don't get Carer's Allowance, it's really for younger carers. All we get is the Attendance Allowance, on top of my husband's old age pension."

Case study 3

A few months ago, Daniel gave up his full-time job as an HGV driver; combining long shifts with his caring responsibilities toward his six year old daughter was becoming increasingly difficult. He tried to work shorter hours through a temping agency, but realised that jobs as HGV drivers were not suitable for carers, whatever the employer. Jane, his daughter, is wheelchair bound, as a result of a condition which affects her breathing and causes her to choke.

Daniel would like to re-train in electrical engineering (a sector in which he has some experience). He thinks this would enable him to work flexibly and locally, be contactable in case of emergency, and be available for the school runs (which he needs to do as his wife cannot lift Jane from the wheelchair to the car). However, he has been advised by Jobcentre Plus that he will only be eligible for the training once he has been officially 'signing on' for six months. He cannot afford to fund the training himself. The family's income is much lower now that Daniel has quit his job. Daniel really wants to work to increase the family's income. He does not like to rely on benefits, such as Carer's Allowance, which he started receiving a few months ago.

¹⁹ Names have been changed throughout the case studies to protect anonymity.

Daniel feels that staff at Jobcentre Plus have not been sensitive to his needs. The reason why he resigned, the restrictions on his working hours and work location, and his need for retraining, were not properly recorded onto the system during his first visit. He would like Jobcentre Plus to have a specialist adviser for carers, and give carers access to training in the same way that disabled people have.

Case study 4

Beth works part-time while caring for her autistic son who is eleven years old. Beth believes that "on the whole there is little or no communication between various organisations... each of them seem to have their own agenda and are not willing to work with each other". She feels that organisations are defensive about their funding and specialist field.

Liaising between social services, the local education authority, the schools, the hospital, and voluntary organisations, takes up a lot of Beth's time and energy. She is currently busy chasing up her son's education and health reports. She needs to send these reports to the Local Education Authority so they can circulate them to local schools and help them decide if they can meet her son's needs. The time she spends calling, e-mailing, and chasing up different organisations adds to her caring and work responsibilities. As a result, Beth feels that she spends less time with her children, and is exhausted "jumping through so many different hoops with so many different people and having to repeat the same information to the same people all over again, because nobody will talk to each other".

Case study 5

Emma cares for her nine year old son, Paul, who has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Emma has been receiving Carer's Allowance for a few months, and her payments are being backdated to the start of the year.

Emma had heard of Carer's Allowance through friends at Paul's school. However, she did not realise that she would be entitled to it. Indeed, she believed that eligibility was based primarily on physical disabilities, rather than mental health issues. Being Paul's mum, she also felt that she "would have to care for him anyway." For years, she saw herself as a mother, not as a carer.

Emma has been in contact with a large number of professionals since Paul's birth, including schools, health workers, and counsellors, as well as voluntary organisations. However, none of them told her about Carer's Allowance; "no-one's ever said to me that you are entitled to this and this is how you go about claiming for it."

A few months ago, Emma went to a 'back to work' interview at the Jobcentre, accompanied by Paul. Noticing Paul's disruptive behaviour during the interview, Jobcentre Plus staff encouraged Emma to apply for Carer's Allowance.

APPENDIX TWO

Eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance

To be eligible for Carer's Allowance the claimant must:

- look after someone who receives the Disability Living Allowance Care Component at either the middle or highest rate; Attendance Allowance; or Constant Attendance Allowance at, or above, the normal maximum rate with an Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, or basic (full-day) rate with a War Disablement Pension; or an allowance under the Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Diseases Benefit Scheme;
- look after that person for at least 35 hours a week;
- be aged 16 or over;
- not be in full-time education; and
- earn no more than £95 a week (after deductions).

Carers receiving means-tested benefits, such as Income Support or Pension Credit, are also entitled to an additional payment of £27.75 per week, known as a Carer Premium or Additional Amount. For carers receiving £50.55 or more through income replacement (non-means tested) benefits, such as Incapacity Benefit or State Pension, Carer's Allowance is not paid. Instead, an 'underlying entitlement' to it is established, which results in the payment of a Carer Premium or Additional Amount if the carer or their partner is also in receipt of means-tested benefits.

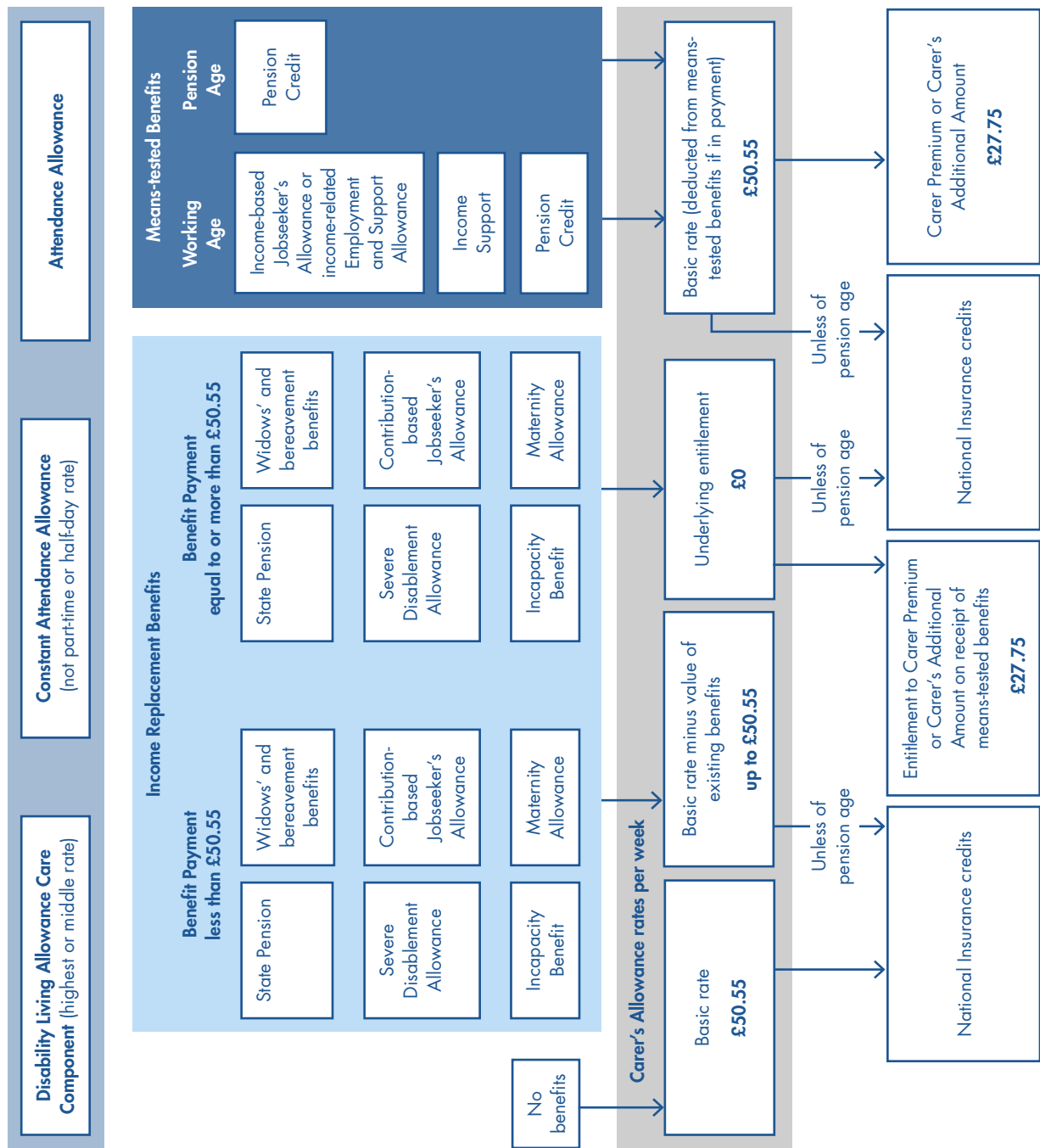
An 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance can give a carer access to:

- extra Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit through a Carer Premium at £27.75 a week; or
- the Carer's Additional Amount in Pension Credit, at £27.75 a week; extra money with their Pension Credit provides, or contributes to, a guaranteed income of £124.05 a week for a single person or £189.35 for a couple.

Payments of Carer's Allowance are taken into account when working out entitlement to Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Pension Credit, but a Carer Premium or Additional Amount is added to the assessment. Payments of Carer's Allowance are also taken into account in the assessment of Working Tax Credit.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions

10 The interaction between benefits for carers: receipt of Carer's Allowance can impact on other benefits received by the carer



Caring for someone in receipt of:

and personally in receipt of:

Source: National Audit Office analysis

APPENDIX THREE

Methodology

- 1 To assess the value for money of the support the Department provides to carers, we conducted:
 - semi-structured interviews with staff from the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS), including the Carer's Allowance Unit (CAU) (nine interviews), Jobcentre Plus (ten interviews), and third party partners (six interviews);
 - a survey of over 7,000 carers (3,097 responses received) supported by a series of in-depth interviews with 20 of the respondents (contracted out to Ipsos MORI);
 - a survey of 261 Jobcentre Plus offices (226 responses received), focusing on the views of Personal Advisers;
 - a survey of 15 representatives of partner organisations and a review of documentary evidence of the Department's partnership work about carers (contracted out to Inclusion);
 - analysis of financial and secondary data;
 - observation of procedures at the CAU and Jobcentre Plus offices; and
 - a data review of Carer's Allowance cases, Departmental files, and third party literature and perspectives.

Semi-structured interviews with Pension, Disability and Carers Service staff

- 2 We interviewed senior managers and operational staff during visits to the CAU in the summer of 2008. We included staff from all aspects of the business, including Business Support, Operations, Business Claims, the Carer's Allowance Contact Centre, Business Change, Lean Implementation, and Customer Service Delivery Teams.
- 3 Other staff from the PDCS were interviewed over the telephone. These included representatives from senior management, Customer and External Relations, and the PDCS Change Programme.

The interviews were used to investigate:

- the package of benefit support available to carers;
 - the processes for administering benefits to carers;
 - the CAU's objectives;
 - the effectiveness of CAU staff in working with carers and understanding their requirements;
 - the extent to which the CAU work in partnership with other agencies and organisations; and
 - measures used to tackle fraud and error in Carer's Allowance.
- 4 In order to assist our understanding of the internal processes used to administer Carer's Allowance, we spent time with staff in the Contact Centre and Customer Service Delivery Teams, observing them at work.

Semi-structured interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff

- 5 We interviewed senior managers (Jobcentre Managers, Customer Service Managers and Adviser Service Managers) and operational staff during visits to four Jobcentre Plus offices across England during June 2008. The following offices were chosen to cover a range of geographical areas, sizes of office, and number of customers:
 - **Coventry, West Midlands.** 50 Personal Adviser Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), 148 total site FTEs, and 3,906 recorded customer activities (such as Work Focused Interviews, Disability Employment Advice, or Jobseeker's Allowance New Client Advice) per month (as at May 2008).
 - **Croydon, South London.** 31 Personal Adviser FTEs, 88 total site FTEs, and 3,231 recorded customer activities per month (as at May 2008).
 - **Norwich, East Anglia.** 42 Personal Adviser FTEs, 114 total site FTEs, and 3,478 recorded customer activities per month (as at May 2008).

- **Widnes, North West England.** 13 Personal Adviser FTEs, 40 total site FTEs, and 1,082 recorded customer activities per month (as at May 2008).

6 Interviews included Jobcentre Managers, Adviser Service Managers, Customer Service Managers, Financial Assessors, and Personal Advisers. Where available, we interviewed Personal Advisers dedicated to working with lone parents, disabled people, and carers. The interviews were used to investigate:

- the package of employment support available to carers;
- Jobcentre Plus's objectives for supporting carers into paid employment;
- the extent to which Jobcentre Plus can assess the suitability and success of the support offered;
- the effectiveness of Jobcentre Plus staff in working with carers and understanding their circumstances; and
- the extent to which Jobcentre Plus works in partnership with other agencies and organisations to support carers.

7 In order to assist our understanding of the support available to carers from the Department, and the internal processes used to deliver this, we also observed some consultations with customers, with their permission.

Consultation with Department for Work and Pensions staff

8 We consulted staff from the Department throughout the duration of our research. Staff members we spoke to included policy leads on Carer's Allowance, Parents and Employment, and Disability and Carers' Benefits.

9 This consultation was used to gather information on the long-term priorities and plans for the Department for dealing with carers, in order to develop a strategic overview.

Semi-structured interviews with the Department's partners and other organisations

10 We commissioned Inclusion to interview 15 third party partners between March and June 2008. Eleven of these interviews took place over the telephone for the convenience of the interviewee; four were face-to-face. National Audit Office staff conducted a further seven interviews over the telephone. Representatives from the

following organisations were interviewed, representing the wide range of parties with which the Department liaises on a regular basis.

Government Departments, Agencies and consultation groups:

- Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR)
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)
- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
- Department of Health
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)
- HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)
- HM Treasury
- Jobcentre Plus Wales
- Jobcentre Plus national partnerships representative
- Pension, Disability and Carers Service Advisory Forum
- Pension, Disability and Carers Service Family Carers Group

Public and other bodies:

- Local Government Association
- Sue Yeandle, Professor of Sociology, University of Leeds and Co-Director, Centre for International Research on Care Labour and Equalities (CIRCLE)

Voluntary and community sector

- Age Concern
- Carers UK
- Centre 404
- Contact a Family
- Crossroads
- Counsel and Care
- Help the Aged
- Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)
- The Princess Royal Trust for Carers

11 We contracted Inclusion, as an independent social policy research organisation, to conduct 15 of these interviews, with the specific view of determining the extent to which the Department work well in partnership with other Government Departments, local authorities, public bodies, and voluntary and community sector organisations. This work took place during June 2008. The resulting report is available at www.nao.org.uk/publications/0809/supporting_carers_to_care.aspx

12 Interviews conducted by NAO staff were also used to determine:

- carers' and partners' views of the benefit and employment support offered to carers by the Department, and the quality of the service provided;
- reasons for low take-up of Carer's Allowance;
- the effectiveness of Departmental staff in working with carers and understanding their requirements and circumstances;
- the demographics of carers; and
- the reasons carers give for not combining their caring responsibilities with paid employment.

Survey of Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers

13 We conducted an electronic survey of Personal Advisers at 261 Jobcentre Plus offices across England. This represents 32 per cent of the population of 810 offices, which was a sample sufficient to provide results reliable with statistical significance at the 95 per cent level. Offices were selected at random from a list of all Jobcentre Plus offices, with all Jobcentre Plus districts represented. Selecting respondents from a sample frame of all Personal Advisers was not logistically possible so Jobcentre Managers selected the Advisers to respond to the questionnaire. The pattern of responses we received indicates there was no particular bias as there was a range of experiences reported.

14 The survey was completed via email response during June and July 2008. 226 responses were received from different offices (87 per cent response rate). This represents 28 per cent of the population of 810 offices, with a confidence level of 95 per cent. A copy of the questionnaire is available at www.nao.org.uk/publications/0809/supporting_carers_to_care.aspx

15 The survey examined:

- how many carers take up services offered by Jobcentre Plus;
- the extent to which Jobcentre Plus proactively identifies carers who may be eligible for their support;
- the package of employment support provided to carers, and the extent to which this varies across Jobcentre Plus offices;
- which aspects of the support provided by Jobcentre Plus are most regularly used by carers;
- the extent to which Jobcentre Plus supports carers in relation to their benefits, including those administered by other Departmental agencies;
- how confident Jobcentre Plus staff feel in working with carers and understanding their requirements and circumstances; and
- ways in which the services provided to carers by Jobcentre Plus could be improved.

16 The results were analysed using SPSS software.

Survey of carers

17 We commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a survey of 7,190 carers who had contacted the Department in relation to their caring situation. This sample represented 0.8 per cent of the population of carers who receive Carer's Allowance or have an underlying entitlement (0.12 per cent of the estimated total population of carers).

18 The survey was posted to carers identified at random from CAU records in May 2008, with responses received throughout June and early July 2008. A reminder was sent out half way through fieldwork to those who had not yet responded. 3,097 responses were received (response rate of 43 per cent). This represented 0.4 per cent of the estimated population of carers who receive Carer's Allowance or have an underlying entitlement (0.05 per cent of the estimated total population of carers) with a confidence level of 95 per cent. A copy of the questionnaire is available at www.nao.org.uk/publications/0809/supporting_carers_to_care.aspx

19 **Figure 11** illustrates that the survey sample, in terms of its demographic make-up, is representative of the wider sample from which it is drawn and there is no indication that the sample is unrepresentative of the wider population of carers receiving Carer's Allowance or having an underlying entitlement to it.

20 The survey examined carers' perceptions of the benefit and employment support offered to them by the Department, and how this support could be improved. The data were weighted by gender, age, and entitlement status (full entitlement versus underlying entitlement), and were analysed using SPSS software.

21 We also used the survey to identify carers who would be willing to take part in in-depth interviews.

Semi-structured interviews with carers

22 We commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct 20 semi-structured interviews with carers identified through our carers' survey. Over 40 per cent of our survey respondents agreed to be re-contacted, and to avoid selection bias, we chose 20 interviewees based on the following characteristics, to reflect the population: gender, age, ethnicity, length of Carer's Allowance claim, condition of cared-for person, employment status, attitudes to employment, and problems experienced with the Department and/or other organisations.

23 **Figure 12** illustrates the demographic profile of interviewees.

11 Demographic profile of National Audit Office survey respondents

		Percentage of respondents to NAO survey	Percentage of Carer's Allowance customer base
Gender	Male	32	32
	Female	68	68
Age	16–34	11	11
	35–64	53	53
	65+	36	36
Ethnicity	White	93	91
	Black and minority ethnic	7	9
Eligibility for benefits	Full entitlement to Carer's Allowance	55	55
	Entitlement to Carer Premium or Additional Amount only	45	45

Source: National Audit Office survey of carers, 2008; Department for Work and Pensions

12 Demographic profile of carers interviewed for the National Audit Office

		Percentage of respondents
Gender	Male	40
	Female	60
Age	16–34	15
	35–64	60
	65+	25
Ethnicity	White	85
	Black and minority ethnic	15
Eligibility for benefits	Full entitlement to Carer's Allowance	65
	Entitlement to Carer Premium or Additional Amount only	35

Source: National Audit Office interviews with carers, 2008

24 The participants were contacted over the telephone or in person in July 2008, to build on the findings of the carers' survey and, in particular, to ascertain:

- the flexibility of support to carers provided by the Department;
- to what extent different services for carers are aligned;
- the barriers to supporting carers effectively; and
- how the Department's support to carers varies according to the carer's circumstances.

25 We used the interviews to provide case examples and quotes throughout the report.

Financial, performance, and demographic analysis

26 We used data from a number of sources, listed below, to identify financial, performance, and demographic trends in the support for carers by the Department:

- 2001 Census
- Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Survey 2007
- Pension, Disability and Carers Service Customer Service Survey 2007
- Carer's Allowance Unit performance data and management information
- Department for Work and Pensions Forecasting Unit
- Department for Work and Pensions Management Information portals
- Department for Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study
- Pension, Disability and Carers Service Annual Report 2007-08
- Pension, Disability and Carers Service target information

Literature review

27 We reviewed relevant literature at the beginning of the study, in order to identify key areas for examination. The review consisted of a systematic analysis of documentation from the Department, the PDCS, the CAU, and Jobcentre Plus. We also reviewed documentation and research papers relevant to carers in the UK as published by leading academic experts in the caring field, and carers' organisations such as Carers UK and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers. The literature review also provided data for use in the report in substantiating evidence found elsewhere.

Reference Panel

28 We invited key partners and experts in the field to form an expert panel. The panel members were asked to give their views and advice throughout the study. The panel consisted of:

- Dr Hilary Arksey, Senior Research Fellow, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York;
- James Cornford, Principal Resident Associate, Newcastle University Business School;
- Alex Fox, Director of Policy and Communications, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers;
- Jean French, Advice and Information Manager, Carers UK; and
- Elizabeth Sutherland, Carer's Allowance Unit, Department for Work and Pensions.

APPENDIX FOUR

Letter about underlying entitlement sent to carers who receive State Pension¹



Carer's Allowance
www.direct.gov.uk/carers

Dear

PLEASE READ ALL OF THIS LETTER – IT MAY HELP YOU TO GET ADDITIONAL BENEFIT (see below)

A decision has been made on your claim to Carer's Allowance.

Payment of Carer's Allowance is affected by certain other social security benefits that are paid at an amount equal to or higher than Carer's Allowance. Payment of these other benefits will either reduce the amount of Carer's Allowance that can be paid, or will stop it being paid altogether. This applies to your claim.

The details of the decision are as follows:-

You are not entitled from 17/05/2007 to 20/05/2007. This is because entitlement must begin on a Monday.

You are entitled to £48.65 a week from 21/05/2007.

We cannot pay you from 21/05/2007. This is because the amount of State Pension you get is more than the amount of Carer's Allowance we could pay you.

Underlying entitlement

Where Carer's Allowance is not paid because you are receiving another benefit, you have what is called underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance. Underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance can help you to get extra benefit (see paragraph "if you receive Income Support, etc.." below).

If the other benefit stops, you should tell us straight away and we will look at your claim again.

If you want to know more about the decision or if you think it is wrong

Please contact us and we will explain the decision. If possible, please contact us by telephone to speed up this process. You must contact us within one month of the date of this letter, or we may not be able to consider any dispute. Further information about the disputes and appeals process can be found in leaflet GL24 (If you think our decision is wrong).

¹ This letter has been reproduced directly from the version provided by the Department.

What happens after the decision is looked at again

If the decision can be changed we will send you a new decision. If we cannot change the decision we will tell you why. You will still have the right to appeal against the decision.

How to Appeal

If you want to appeal you should write to us saying which decision you are appealing against and giving your reason, or you can fill in the GL24 form. Please send your appeal to the address at the top of this letter within one month of the date of this letter. In some circumstances longer is allowed. You can get leaflet GL24 from your local Jobcentre Plus, Social Security Office, Citizens Advice Bureau or by contacting the Carer's Allowance Unit.

Your Appeal will be heard by an independent appeal tribunal.

Help and Advice

The Citizens Advice Bureau or a local law centre can give you free advice. If you appeal they will sometimes go to the tribunal with you. You can find their address in the phone book or at the front of the Yellow Pages or at the library. It will help the advice centre if you take this letter to show them.

Further help and advice

If you want more advice about benefits or entitlements, you can find out more information online from the Government by using the Direct.gov website.

There is a section for carer's covering financial support, assessments and support services, carers' rights, employment and much more www.direct.gov.uk/disability.

Alternatively telephone your local Jobcentre Plus or Social Security office. You can find the number in the phonebook.

A telephone service giving general advice for disabled people, their representatives and carers is the Benefit Enquiry Line. The free phone number is 0800 88 22 00 (Textphone for customers with speech/hearing problems 0800 24 33 55).

Useful Information

You may find the following leaflet helpful:

DHC1JP – A guide for disabled people, those with health conditions and carers.

This leaflet is available at your local Jobcentre Plus or Social Security office.

If you receive Income Support/ Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax benefit

If you are getting Income Support / Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit, you may be able to get the Carer Premium or your appropriate amount may be increased for any period(s) that you are entitled, or have an underlying entitlement, to Carer's Allowance. We have notified your local Jobcentre Plus or Social Security office about the period(s) that you have entitlement or underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance.

Your Local Jobcentre Plus or Social Security office will use this information to work out if you can receive Carer Premium or the extra amount for Pension Credit. If you are getting Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit the carer Premium may be included when the local authority work out how much benefit you can get. You must tell the office that pays your Housing / Council Tax Benefit about the dates that you have entitlement or underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance in order to get extra help.

Even though a claim for Income Support / Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit may have been previously refused, it could be worthwhile claiming again.

About Christmas Bonus

If you are getting one of the shown below, and you continue to satisfy all the conditions for getting Carer's Allowance, we may be able to pay you a Christmas bonus. If you do get one of these benefits, we will write to you about this in November.

- Short term Incapacity Benefit
- Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Maternity Benefit
- Training Allowance

Information about Income Tax (only read about this if we have paid you any benefit)

Carer's Allowance is taxable. If the money that we owe you includes carer's Allowance for previous years, this will be taxed as income for the year that it relates to, rather than the current year. If you want any more information about income tax please contact HM Revenue & Customs office that deals with your own or your partner's tax affairs.

Changes we need to know about

Entitlement to Carer's Allowance could be affected if there is any change in your circumstances. **Even though we are not paying your Carer's Allowance, we need to know about any changes that will affect your underlying entitlement. If any changes happen, you must notify us immediately.** In particular, you must tell us if any of the following changes happen or have happened:

- You stop looking after the disabled person or you no longer normally spend at least 35 hours a week caring for them. You should also notify us if you temporarily stop looking after the disabled person. For example, this could be because either you or the disabled person go on holiday, or into hospital or respite care.
- You start work as an employed or self-employed person, either full-time or part-time, temporary or casual, whatever your earnings.
- You go into hospital or a similar situation, such as a nursing home or clinic for medical treatment.
- The person you are looking after goes into any institution where their needs are met by that institution. The places we mean by this are:
 - hospitals – residential training centre – nursing homes
 - boarding schools – residential care homes – hostels/group homes
- The person you are looking after stops getting Attendance Allowance, Constant Attendance Allowance, the care component of Disability Living Allowance, or if the rate of any of these benefits is reduced.
- You start a course of full-time education.
- You are detained in legal custody.
- You intend to leave Great Britain.
- Either you, or the person you are looking after change address.

How to get in touch with us

If you want more information about Carer's Allowance please get in touch with us. Our address and switchboard number are shown at the top of this letter. Our direct dial number is 01772 899062. If you would like to contact us by fax, our number is 01772 889420. You can claim Carer's Allowance or report a change of circumstances online at the following address, www.direct.gov.uk/carers.

Carer's Allowance and State Pension information.

Please read this carefully, it may help you to get more money.

How State Pension affects the amount you get

You are getting State Pension, Like Carer's Allowance, State Pension is intended to replace income. The law says that these two benefits cannot be paid at the full rate at the same time. This means that we could pay your Carer's Allowance if you are not getting State Pension.

In cases such as yours where you have entitlement to State Pension and Carer's Allowance, but can only be paid one we say you have what is called '**underlying entitlement**'. This means that, even though you are entitled to Carer's Allowance, we cannot pay you because your State Pension is more than the rate of Carer's Allowance.

Please read on because you may also be able to get extra money as you are now a recognised carer.

What underlying entitlement means for you

If you have a low income, you may be able to get more money.

- If you are not currently getting Pension Credit please phone **0800 99 12 34** – you may now be entitled, or
- If you are currently getting Pension Credit please phone **0845 60 60 265** – your benefit may be increased.

And tell them that, although you are entitled to Carer's Allowance, you cannot be paid it because you are getting State Pension. **Check it out. It may be worth it.**

Telephone Benefit Enquiry Line (BEL) **0800 88 22 00** for help and advice about other disability benefits you may be able to claim.

You may be able to get extra money to help you pay your rent (Housing Benefit) and/or Council Tax. Ring your local offices.

Example of what having underlying entitlement can mean

Arthur and Elsie are both retired and getting State Pension. Both get Attendance Allowance and look after one another. This means they are both able to claim Carer's Allowance. However as their State Pensions are more than Carer's Allowance they do not get paid it, but have underlying entitlement. They checked with the Pension Service and found they were both entitled to an extra amount included in their Pension Credit. This amount is over £50 per week between them. **Arthur and Elsie checked it out. It was worth it for them.**

APPENDIX FIVE

Assessment of partnership working

To assess the Department's work with partners, we used the following criteria:

Theme	Criterion
People Questions used to assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ inclusiveness of partnership;■ sufficiency of authority held by attendees;■ attitudes to effectiveness of partnership;■ clarity of roles and responsibilities;■ coverage of topics; and■ commitment from partners.	<p>What partners were identified, and what criteria were used to select them?</p> <p>Do all meeting attendees have the authority to make necessary decisions?</p> <p>Are meeting attendees consistently present, or are deputies being sent in absentia on a regular basis?</p> <p>Does each of the partners have an appropriate and well-defined role?</p> <p>What criteria were used for selecting these roles?</p> <p>Are any partners duplicating the work of other partners? Where roles overlap, what action has been put in place to manage or address this?</p> <p>Are there any gaps in delivery?</p> <p>Are all partners equal or are there dominant partners?</p> <p>Have joint post secondments been committed to the partnership?</p>
Strategy and planning Questions used to assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ clarity of vision and objectives;■ strength of commitment from partners;■ extent of robust planning;■ clarity of roles, responsibilities and ownership; and■ extent to which all partners work towards the same goals.	<p>Have all partners agreed to a shared vision and objectives for the partnership? What evidence is there for concrete and genuine agreement?</p> <p>Is a written strategy, supported by clear aims and objectives/actions, in place?</p> <p>Are objectives/actions achievable and measurable, with a clear timescale?</p> <p>Is the ownership of different parts of the strategy clear?</p> <p>Do any parts of the strategy cause conflict?</p>

Theme	Criterion
<p>Communication</p> <p>Questions used to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ regularity of meetings; ■ effectiveness of communication between partners on a formal and informal basis; ■ inclusiveness of partnership; ■ extent of information sharing; and ■ effectiveness of partnership in resolving conflicts and redefining objectives where appropriate. 	<p>Are the meetings appropriately frequent? Do partners feel that the meetings are frequent enough to be effective or vice versa?</p> <p>Outside of regular meetings, is there regular communication between partners?</p> <p>Are all partners included in these communications?</p> <p>Do partners effectively and securely share information?</p> <p>Are there any long-standing issues of contention? Is there any evidence of their resolution?</p> <p>Are partners able to successfully resolve conflicts and differences in opinion? What evidence is there of issue resolution? What changes were put in place subsequently?</p>
<p>Management</p> <p>Questions used to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ sufficiency of authority held by attendees; ■ sufficiency of independence of partnership co-ordinator; ■ use of robust programme, project and risk management methods where appropriate; and ■ extent of measurable action taken by partnership. 	<p>What level of seniority does the partnership co-ordinator have?</p> <p>Is the partnership co-ordinator independent, and/or able to be objective?</p> <p>Are robust programme, project and risk management methods being used?</p> <p>What risks have been identified? What plans are there to mitigate these risks?</p> <p>Are there regular progress reports?</p> <p>Are meeting minutes taken? Are actions regularly taken and completed?</p>
<p>Funding and accountability</p> <p>Questions used to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ strength of commitment from partners; ■ level to which partnership aims and objectives are shared; ■ level of accountability of and within the partnership; ■ impact of the partnership on attendee organisations' strategy and decision-making; and ■ inclusiveness of partnership. 	<p>Is a joint strategy for working with partners in place?</p> <p>Are there terms of reference for the partnership?</p> <p>Do all partners agree to these?</p> <p>Are partners held accountable to each other for their performance?</p> <p>Does the partnership report to a Management Board?</p> <p>Is the partnership discussed at Board level? Do the Board minutes support this?</p> <p>What funds have partners committed to the partnership?</p> <p>Were any resources identified and pooled?</p> <p>Given the restrictions on time and travel for voluntary organisations, have relevant resources been made available to ensure their inclusion?</p>
<p>Progress and outcomes</p> <p>Questions used to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ extent to which original objectives are being achieved; ■ reliability of risk management methods; ■ effectiveness of partnership in producing measurable outcomes; ■ inclusiveness of communication; and ■ attitudes to effectiveness of partnership. 	<p>Are there any areas where the strategy is falling short of the original objectives? Is there a contingency plan to address this?</p> <p>Has the partnership provided any measurable progress or outcomes? What concrete changes have occurred as a result of the partnership?</p> <p>What management information can be provided to show improvements caused by the partnership?</p> <p>What are partners' opinions of the effectiveness of the partnership?</p> <p>Were all partners given the opportunity to contribute their opinions and contribute to the delivery of the partnership work?</p>

APPENDIX SIX

The Department's partnerships

13 Examples of Department for Work and Pensions' partnerships

Group	Purpose	Examples of attendees
Department for Work and Pensions' Strategy and Policy Forum	A group for representatives of the Department's customer groups to discuss the Department's policy and strategic issues. Led by the Department for Work and Pensions.	Citizens Advice Bureau Disability Alliance Mind Refugee Council Age Concern Shelter
Pension, Disability and Carers Service Advisory Forum	A group of representatives from partnership organisations. Provides a forum for discussion about operational and policy issues. Led by the Pension, Disability and Carers Service.	Macmillan Cancer Support Royal National Institute of Blind People Disability Alliance Local Government Association Carers UK Citizens Advice Bureau Age Concern
Pension, Disability and Carers Service Family Carers Group	A group of representatives from partnership organisations. Provides a forum for discussion about operational and policy issues affecting carers of disabled children. Led by the Pension, Disability and Carers Service.	Council for Disabled Children National Children's Bureau Mencap The Association for All Speech Impaired Children Real Life Parenting Project
Jobcentre Plus Customer Representative Group Forum	A group for Jobcentre Plus and national customer representatives to discuss planned developments and current issues in the benefit delivery system. Led by Jobcentre Plus.	Child Poverty Action Group Legal Services Commission Local Government Association Mind National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers Social Security Advisory Committee Trades Union Congress

Source: Department for Work and Pensions

14 Membership of Taskforces chaired by the Department

Employment Taskforce

Chairs: representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions and British Telecom

Department for Work and Pensions – four further representatives including leads on Disability and Carers, State Pensions, and Strategy Division of Jobcentre Plus

Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

Department of Health – two representatives

Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

HM Treasury

ACE national programme: Action for Carers and Employment

Confederation of British Industry

Carers UK – two representatives

Counsel and Care

Crossroads

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers

Trades Union Congress

University of Leeds

Income Taskforce

Chairs: representative from the Department for Work and Pensions and Institute for Public Policy Reform

Department for Work and Pensions – four further representatives Pension, Disability and Carers Service

HM Treasury

HM Revenue & Customs

Carers UK – three representatives

Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

Age Concern

Disability Alliance

Hertfordshire County Council, representing the Local Government Association

Social Security Advisory Committee

Source: National Strategy for Carers Review Taskforce reports

GLOSSARY

Attendance Allowance	A benefit for people who claim when aged 65 or over and who need help with personal care because they are physically or mentally disabled. There are two rates: Higher and Lower (paid at £67 and £44.85 per week respectively in 2008-09).
Care Partnership Manager	New posts to be introduced at Jobcentre Plus. These staff, one in each district, will advise and work with care providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. They will co-ordinate Jobcentre Plus programmes and strategies for carers.
Carer	There is no standard definition of a carer, although the revised National Strategy for Carers 2008 recommends a cross-Government definition should be adopted; the proposed definition states that “a carer spends a significant proportion of their life providing unpaid support to family or potentially to friends. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems.”
Carer Premium	An addition to Income Support and ‘income-based’ Jobseeker’s Allowance and income-related Employment and Support Allowance available to carers who also satisfy the entitlement rules for Carer’s Allowance. In 2008-09, the full basic weekly rate is £27.75, but individual circumstances may affect the amount received.
Carer’s Additional Amount	An addition to Pension Credit available to carers who also satisfy the entitlement rules for Carer’s Allowance. In 2008-09, the full basic weekly rate is £27.75, but individual circumstances may affect the amount received.
Carer’s Allowance	A taxable benefit to help people who look after someone who is disabled. In order to be eligible, a carer must look after someone who receives Disability Living Allowance at either the middle or highest rate for personal care needs; Attendance Allowance; or Constant Attendance Allowance. They must look after that person for at least 35 hours a week, be aged 16 or over, not be in full-time education, and earn no more than £95 a week (after deductions). In 2008-09, the full basic weekly rate is £50.55, but individual circumstances may affect the amount received. Full details of the eligibility criteria are given at Appendix Two.
Carer’s Allowance Unit (CAU)	Part of the Pension, Disability and Carers Service, an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions. Responsible for administering Carer’s Allowance.
Carers Portal	Pages on the Department’s Intranet site, providing staff with information such as the employment and benefit support to which carers are entitled, how they can best be supported, and which other organisations can support carers.

Constant Attendance Allowance	A benefit for people who need daily care and attention because of a disability and who are claiming Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit or a War Disablement Pension. There are four weekly rates, quoted here at 2008-09 figures: Exceptional (£109.60); Intermediate (£82.20); Normal maximum (£54.80); and Part time (£27.40).
Council Tax Benefit	A benefit payable to people who are in or out of work and have low incomes, who are liable for Council Tax but whose capital (savings and investments) is below £16,000. The amount received varies according to individual circumstances; up to 100 per cent of an individual's Council Tax bill may be payable.
Disability Living Allowance	A benefit for children and adults who claim before the age of 65 and who need help with personal care or have walking difficulties because they are physically or mentally disabled. There are two components: the Care Component (for those who need personal care or supervision to keep them safe); and the Mobility Component (for those who have mobility difficulties). The amount received varies according to individual circumstances, and in 2008-09 ranges from £17.75 to £113.75 per week.
Housing Benefit	A benefit payable to people who are in or out of work and have low incomes, who are liable for rent but whose capital (savings and investments) is below £16,000. The amount received varies according to individual circumstances; up to 100 per cent of an individual's rent bill may be payable.
Income replacement benefit	A benefit designed to provide a measure of support for a person to whom a specified contingency applies and which commonly means that the mainstay of their income is no longer available. Examples of the kind of contingencies are unemployment, maternity, incapacity, bereavement and caring. The income replacement benefits are contributory Jobseeker's Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Maternity Benefit, widows' and bereavement benefits (but not a bereavement payment), State Pension, Severe Disablement Allowance and Carer's Allowance.
Income-related benefit	A benefit which varies in value depending on the circumstances and the income and savings of the recipient. Examples include Income Support and Pension Credit.
Income Support	An income-related benefit for people (including carers) who are not available for full-time work, whose income is low and whose capital (savings and investments) is below £16,000. The amount received varies according to individual circumstances. Benefit consists of a personal allowance in the range of £47.95 to £94.95 per week, with additional payments where appropriate (e.g. Carer Premium, Severe Disability Premium).
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	A benefit for those who are disabled because of an accident at work, or who are ill or disabled as a result of one of over 70 listed diseases caused by working for an employer on or after 5 July 1948. The amount received depends on the level of the individual circumstances.
Jobcentre Plus	Jobcentre Plus is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions. Its stated aim is to help unemployed and economically inactive people of working age move closer to the labour market and to provide support, including benefits, for those without work. In particular it supports people who are required to look for work as a condition of their benefit.

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)	A benefit for people of working age who are unemployed; they must also be capable of and actively seeking work. There are two types of JSA: 1) contribution-based, a personal benefit available for up to six months, where sufficient class 1 National Insurance (NI) contributions have been paid; 2) income-based, a means-tested benefit, without time limit and not dependent on NI contributions. It is also available as a top-up to contribution-based JSA. Rates of income-based JSA are the same as in Income Support. Contribution-based JSA is £47.95 or £60.50 a week depending on age.
Lean	A management approach that aims to improve performance and reduce costs, whilst increasing efficiency and improving customer experience.
Means-tested benefit	A benefit that varies in value depending on the income and savings of the recipient. Examples include Income Support and Pension Credit.
New Deal	A programme led by Jobcentre Plus to help unemployed people get into work. Programmes have been available for over 25s, over 50s, disabled people, lone parents, musicians, partners of some benefit claimants, and young people. The mandatory New Deals for job seekers will be replaced by a single, flexible New Deal programme from April 2009.
Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS)	The Pension, Disability and Carers Service is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions, comprising the former Pension Service and Disability and Carers Service. The service is responsible for administering State Pension, Pension Credit, Winter Fuel Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance and Vaccine Damage Payments.
Pension Credit	A non-contributory, non-taxable benefit made up of two elements. The guarantee credit is available to people aged over 60 and tops income up to £124.05 (£189.35 for couples). Higher amounts are available for those with a severe disability, caring responsibilities and/or certain housing costs. The savings credit is available to people aged over 65 and provides a weekly payment of up to £19.71 (£26.13 for couples) for those who have made modest provision for their retirement.
Personal Adviser	Staff employed by Jobcentre Plus to help unemployed and economically inactive people prepare for and find work and to ensure that customers comply with the requirements of the benefit(s) they receive.
Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Diseases Benefit Scheme	A benefit scheme for people whose husband, wife or civil partner died as a result of pneumoconiosis, byssinosis or certain other diseases which they contracted as a result of work before 5 July 1948.
State Pension	Government-administered pension based on the number of qualifying years for which an individual has paid National Insurance contributions. In 2008-09, the full basic State Pension is £90.70 a week for a single person and £145.05 a week for a couple, but individual circumstances may affect the amount received.
Underlying entitlement	If a carer receives certain other benefits, including the State Pension, which are paid at a rate that is the same as or more than Carer's Allowance, they may not receive payment of Carer's Allowance but may have what is called an 'underlying entitlement'. Payment of Carer's Allowance is taken into account in full in the calculation of income-related benefits and Pension Credit. However, if a carer receives Carer's Allowance or has an underlying entitlement to it, she or he will qualify for the Carer Premium in Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. The current rate is £27.75 per week. See Appendix Two for more information.

War Disablement Pension	A pension for those who are injured or disabled through serving in HM Armed Forces. The amount received varies according to claimants' circumstances, including the severity of the illness or disability.
Work Focused Interview (WFI)	An interview held by Jobcentre Plus to help economically inactive people prepare for or find work. Benefit claimants who are required to participate in these may face sanctions for non-compliance, but people who receive only Carer's Allowance are exempt.
Working Tax Credit	A payment intended to support working people by topping-up earnings. The amount depends on factors such as age and/or the number of hours worked. Additional support is available for eligible childcare costs or where a member of the household is disabled.