

# Payments for Carers

## DISABILITY ENTITLEMENTS

For many people who are in full-time support of a person with a disability the only compensation available to them is the Carer's Allowance. The Carer's Allowance is paid by the Department of Social and Family Affairs at a rate of €220.50 per week.

To qualify for Carer's Allowance the person being cared for must be over the age of 16, living at home, and require full-time care and attention. Full-time care is defined as "frequent assistance throughout the day with normal personal needs." These "needs" might include walking, personal hygiene, dressing, grooming, eating and drinking, communicating or general supervision.

The Carer's Allowance is a means-tested payment. The means test for the Carer's Allowance involves assessing your income (excluding your home). The amount of weekly income you can earn which is not counted as means is €332 or double that amount in the case of the combined income for married or cohabiting couples.

An additional payment of up to 50% of the Carer's Allowance is paid to carer's providing full-time care to more than one person. If you are sharing the caring responsibilities (eg week-on, week-off), arrangements can be made to share the allowance between carer's.

The person being cared for may attend a day-care centre or a rehabilitative training course without it affecting the carer's entitlement to the Carer's Allowance. Equally the carer may attend a training course and work inside or outside of the home for up to 15 hours a week without the Carer's Allowance being affected.

In 2007 the Carer's Allowance Scheme was amended to allow people in receipt of certain social welfare payments to retain those benefits and qualify for half-rate Carer's Allowance. The list of social welfare payments is extensive and includes Contributory State Pension, Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance, etc. A full list of the payments which the carer is allowed to retain and still qualify for half-rate Carer's Allowance is available on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

People caring for children with disabilities under the age of 16 are entitled to a monthly payment (The Domiciliary

Care Allowance) of €309.50 per month which has been administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) since 1st September 2009. According to the DSFA, "eligibility for Domiciliary Carer's Allowance is not based on the type of impairment, but on the resulting lack of function of body or mind which means the child needs extra care and attention." This payment was means-tested in the past, but this is no longer the case.

If children are living in full-time residential homes there is no entitlement to the payments, but if the child goes home for two or more days per week, carer's may receive a half-rate of payment.

Carer's Benefit is a payment made to insured persons who leave the workforce to provide full-time care to a disabled or sick person for a maximum period of two years. The payment rate is €221.20 per week per person being cared for.

To qualify for Carer's Benefit the person being cared for must require full-time care and you must be in a position to provide it. You must also have at least 156 PRSI contributions paid prior to making your claim for Carer's Benefit. Qualifying persons may continue to earn up to a maximum of €332.50 per week without affecting their entitlement.

Employees are entitled to take unpaid temporary Carer's Leave from work for a period of between 13 and 104 weeks provided that they have been with their employer for a period of 12 months. Employees are entitled to have their jobs kept open for them during that period.

In June of each year a grant (Respite Care Grant) of €1,700 is made by the DSFA to recipients of Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit. However, even if you are not getting either of these payments, you may still qualify for the Respite Grant if you are providing full-time care for a person with a disability. Carer's can use the grant in whatever way they wish. The Respite Carer's Grant is not a means-tested payment however the Carer must not be working outside the home for more than 15 hours a week. You do not qualify if you are in receipt of unemployment benefit or signing for unemployment credits.

## WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

You can get more information on Carer's Allowance, Domiciliary Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit, Carer's Leave and Carer's Respite Grant at [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) or by calling LoCall 1890 662244. Your local Citizens Information Service or Social Welfare Office will have information leaflets and application forms for all of the above allowances.

Citizens Information Services are provided at 268 locations throughout the country offering free, confidential and impartial information on all aspects of rights and entitlements. When necessary, staff can help access your entitlements and help with appeals.

If you do not feel confident about going through an appeal or appearing before an appeal board on your own you should ask your Citizens Information Service to put you in contact with your nearest Disability Advocate who may be in a position to assist.

The Citizens Information Phone Service operates Monday to Friday 9am – 9pm LoCall 1890 777 121 The Citizens Information Website is [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie)



### CARING FOR THE CARER

Claire Muldowney became a full-time carer two years ago when her husband Michael had a major stroke which left him paralysed down one side. "My whole life changed in December 2007," she said from her home in Kilkenny City. Michael requires constant help with walking and personal care in addition to which he is profoundly deaf."

Claire qualifies for weekly Carer's Allowance and the annual Respite Care Grant which she describes as "vitaly important as I get nothing else". Michael attends the Irish Wheelchair Association Resource Centre on two days per week which provides Claire with some personal space which she values highly. Michael also has a Personal Assistant for one hour from Monday to Friday which again is a very welcome service. Without this help "life would be a lot harder for me", says Claire.

Both Michael and Claire were delighted to be offered respite breaks on four or five occasions during the year. The breaks are organised by the IWA Claddagh Court Holiday Centre located on the outskirts of Kilkenny City. The breaks take place from Monday to Monday and provide a welcome break for both Claire and Michael. They are "absolutely brilliant", says Claire, "It's like a holiday for Michael and it gives us both a break – it's a life saver."

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[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)