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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
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26 September 2023

Dear Sir George,

As you may know, your email of 14 September to the Secretary of State to the Treasury on behalf of a number of constituents, about a petition 'Fairness for Carers: Reform the Carer's Allowance Process' has been forwarded to this department. I am replying as the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work.

This Government recognises the very important role that unpaid and family carers make in providing significant care, and continuity of support, to family and friends on a daily basis. It is, however, important to emphasise that Carer's Allowance is not intended to be a replacement for a wage, nor a payment for the services of caring and is, therefore, not comparable with either the National Minimum Wage or the National Living Wage.

The principal purpose of Carer's Allowance is to provide a measure of financial support and recognition for people who give up the opportunity of full-time work to provide regular care for a severely disabled person. That being the case, only one payment is made even if a carer is providing care for more than one severely disabled person.

It has never been the role of the Government to pay people for the tasks they undertake, voluntarily, in the way that an employer would, and this Government has no plans to change that principle. Instead, successive governments have supported carers through allowances and benefits, as well as wider cross-government actions.

A National Insurance Class 1 credit is generally awarded for each week that Carer's Allowance is paid to a working age carer. Class 1 credits can help towards the conditions of entitlement to all contributory benefits, as well as the new State Pension. Credits are not awarded after a person has reached pension age, as they would not be of any benefit to the contributor.

Carer's Allowance has an earnings limit that encourages carers to undertake some part-time work if they can do so, without this affecting their entitlement.

The current earnings limit for those in receipt of Carer's Allowance who are able to maintain some contact with the employment market is £139 a week, net of allowable expenses. That means that the earnings limit has increased by nearly 40 per cent since 2010.

In addition to Carer's Allowance, carers on low incomes can claim income-related benefits, such as Universal Credit and Pension Credit. These benefits can be paid to carers at a higher rate than those without caring responsibilities through the carer element and the additional amount for carers respectively. Currently, the Universal Credit carer element is £185.86 per monthly assessment period. The additional amount for carers in Pension Credit is £42.75 a week.

Receiving a means-tested benefit can act as a "passport" to other support, including help with fuel costs through schemes such as the Warm Home Discount. Therefore, carers who are not receiving a means-tested benefit already are encouraged to check whether they might be entitled. Full details of all Department for Work and Pensions benefits are available on Gov.UK. Help and advice can also be sought from bodies such as Carers UK, Carers Trust, and Citizens' Advice, through their 'Help to Claim' support.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to write and I hope your constituents will find this reply helpful.

With best wishes,

Yours ever,



Tom Pursglove MP
Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work