

# Consultation on potential changes to delivery of Attendance Allowance in England: Questions & Answers

## What has the Government said about devolving Attendance Allowance?

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As part of the Business Rates Retention consultation<sup>1</sup>, published on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016, the Government is consulting on whether Attendance Allowance should be devolved to local government in England. This would mean potentially transferring the budget and responsibility for Attendance Allowance to local councils, giving them more responsibility to support older people with care needs.

The consultation says:

“As announced in December, the Government will also consider giving more responsibility to councils in England to support older people with care needs – including people who, under the current system, would be supported through Attendance Allowance. This will protect existing claimants, so there will be no cash losers, and new responsibilities will be matched by the transfer of equivalent spending power.”

The proposals in the consultation currently relate to England only. The Government have said they would issue another consultation on specific proposals, including new models of administering Attendance Allowance, if any changes are proposed<sup>2</sup>.

## What is Attendance Allowance?

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Attendance Allowance is a benefit paid to those over 65 years old to help with personal care because as a result of a physical or mental disability.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/self-sufficient-local-government-100-business-rates-retention>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-07-11/42365/>

Claiming Attendance Allowance can help you or the person you care for qualify for other benefits and/or Tax Credits. For example:

If a person gets Attendance Allowance then the person caring for them may be able to claim Carer's Allowance. Getting Attendance Allowance may also help get a Council Tax discount.

- Attendance Allowance is more flexible than most benefits. For example:
- It is not means-tested. It can be paid regardless of your income, savings or National Insurance contribution record.
- It is tax free.
- You can get Attendance Allowance even if you are working or studying.
- There are no restrictions on how you can spend your Attendance Allowance money.

More information on claiming Attendance Allowance can be found [here](#).

## How does Attendance Allowance relate to Carer's Allowance?

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In order to receive Carer's Allowance, you need to look after someone who gets a qualifying disability benefits. Attendance Allowance is one of these qualifying benefits and is sometimes referred to as a passporting benefit to Carer's Allowance

Carers who are disabled or ill can also claim Attendance Allowance in their own right, even if they already get, or qualify for, Carer's Allowance.

## Will this affect the older person I care for?

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No. The Government is looking at how the responsibility and budget for Attendance Allowance might work in the future. Government has said that those currently receiving Attendance Allowance **wouldn't be affected by any changes** the Government decides to make following the consultation.

## Will this affect my Carer's Allowance?

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No. The Government has said that those currently receiving Attendance Allowance wouldn't be affected by a future change and so nor would carers whose entitlement to

Carer's Allowance is linked.

## What does this mean for Carer's Allowance in the future?

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If the Government decides to go ahead with devolving control and delivery of the Attendance Allowance budget to local authorities, this could have significant repercussions for those who are looking to claim Carer's Allowance in the future. We will be responding to the consultation and highlighting the need to avoid any negative impact on future carers.

## What has Carers UK said about this announcement?

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We've expressed grave concern about how potential changes to Attendance Allowance could affect the support received by older people and their carers in the future.

The current national entitlement to Attendance Allowance is an important source of support for older people with care needs, helping them to remain independent for longer. Though not perfect, the present delivery of the benefit is comparatively quick and efficient for those who need it. We would like the Government to retain the current system.

Devolving the budgets for future Attendance Allowance claimants locally, so that local authorities have more flexibility over their own systems of support, threatens to create a lottery of support for older people and carers.

Given that Attendance Allowance is a gateway benefit to claiming Carer's Allowance, we are extremely concerned that, in the future, carers could find it more difficult to access Carer's Allowance – an absolutely vital source of income for those caring for older and disabled loved ones.

You can find our full statement in response to the consultation [here](#).

## Will Carers UK be responding to the Government's consultation?

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Yes, Carers UK will be gathering and setting out evidence on the impact that this change could have on older people in the future and on their carers.

## How can I tell the Government my views on this?

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Please email or write to your local MP to tell them why keeping Attendance Allowance as it is, is important for carers.

Carers UK has produced a draft email/ letter that you can personalise and send to your local MP raising concerns about the changes. You can find the draft email and more information [here](#).

You can also respond to the consultation directly [here](#).

## If this goes ahead, when might it happen?

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If the Government decides to go ahead with devolving responsibility for Attendance Allowance to local government it has said it will consult again on the new model for the benefit and on any impacts<sup>3</sup>.

There would also need to be a change in the law which would have to be debated and agreed by Parliament with local government given time to implement it. No changes would be made until April 2018 at the earliest.

## Will this affect people living in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland?

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No. The announcement and consultation only looks at devolving Attendance Allowance to local authorities in England. The Government had previously announced that they would also consult on changes to Attendance Allowance in Wales however no further information on this has been announced.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-07-11/42365/>