

Benefit and pension changes

CHANGES TO BENEFITS,
PENSIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

Our three strategic aims are to:



Help older people to be as well as they can be



Promote a positive view of ageing and later life



Tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

For information, advice and friendship



Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222
(Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)



Visit agescotland.org.uk
to find out more.

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Introduction

This guide provides information for older people in Scotland about recent and future changes to benefits and social security. These include the gradual introduction of Universal Credit, and Social Security Scotland delivering more devolved benefits.

Benefit rates usually change in April at the start of the financial year.

This guide provides information on the changes most likely to affect older people. Age Scotland produces free benefits guides that are updated at least annually. Our current guides are:



Benefits Maze – an overview of benefits for older people

State Pension

Pension Credit

Attendance Allowance

Carer's Allowance

Council Tax and Council Tax Reduction

The Scottish Welfare Fund

Funeral Support Payment

Universal Credit

What is a benefit check?

Challenging benefit decisions

Adult Disability Payment

You can order copies through our website www.agescotland.org.uk or call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** for advice about benefits or copies of our guides.



State Pension age

You can claim State Pension when you reach State Pension age. This has increased over recent years and is now 66 for men and women.

From 6 May 2026, State Pension age will start increasing again and will reach 67 by 6 March 2028 (and so affect anyone born between 6 April 1960 and 5 April 1977).

The Government carries out regular reviews of State Pension age, it is due to next announce its findings in May 2023.

State Pension age is also the age when you can claim Pension Credit or Attendance Allowance.

If you have internet access you can check your State Pension age at **www.gov.uk/state-pension-age** or call the Age Scotland helpline and an adviser can check it for you.

State Pension

A new Single Tier State Pension was introduced for people who reached their State Pension age on or after 6 April 2016. The rules for this are not the same as the rules for people who qualified for their State Pension earlier. You usually need to have been paid or been credited with a minimum of 10 years' National Insurance contributions and you need 35 years of contributions to receive the full amount.

The full rate is set at £203.85 in 2023/24, although many people will receive more or less than this amount.

The full rate is higher than the standard rate of means-tested Pension Credit guarantee for a single person, £201.05 in 2023/24, so fewer people will need to claim Pension Credit to top up their State Pension, but fewer people will be passported to help with rent and health costs.

You may be entitled to more Pension Credit if you receive a benefit such as Attendance Allowance or you are a carer.

For a forecast of your State Pension see www.gov.uk/check-state-pension or call the **Future Pension Centre** on **0800 731 0175**.



For more information see our **State Pension** and **Pension Credit** guides.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is the main means-tested benefit for people under State Pension age who have a low income. It was introduced in 2013 and is being rolled out to replace most means-tested benefits for people who are working age.

If you are claiming Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit for working age people, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support or Working Tax Credit you will eventually be moved onto Universal Credit instead.

Like the benefits it replaces, Universal Credit includes some additional amounts for carers, people unable to work due to sickness or disability, rent payments and the costs of looking after children.

You can claim Universal Credit online at **www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit**. It is usually paid monthly in arrears calculated on your income the previous month, but people in Scotland can receive Universal Credit payments twice a month instead and can ask for the rent part of their Universal Credit to be paid directly to their landlord.

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can help you if you need support to claim Universal Credit. You can call one of their Help to Claim advisers on **0800 023 2581** or see their online information at **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/benefits/universal-credit/claiming/helptoclam**.



For advice about Universal Credit call the **Age Scotland helpline** or see our **Universal Credit** guide.

Universal Credit and mixed-age couples

Until **15th May 2019** a “mixed age” couple (where one is working age and the other is State Pension age) could claim Pension Credit when the oldest reached their State Pension age.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 included changes which came into force on **15th May 2019**. A couple can now only make a new claim for Pension Credit when they are both State Pension age; if they need means-tested help until they both reach that age they will need to claim Universal Credit instead. In a Universal Credit claim, the younger of the couple will be subject to “conditionality”, needing to prove (for example) that they are a carer, that they are seeking work for 35 hours a week, or that they are not well enough to work.

Both Pension Credit and Universal Credit top up your income to levels set by the Government.

The weekly rate of Universal Credit is significantly lower than the rate of Pension Credit.

Pension Credit basic rate for a couple is £306.85 in 2023/24.

Universal Credit normal basic rate for a couple is £133.57 in 2023/24.

Pension Credit basic rate for a single person is £201.05 in 2023/24.

Many couples will not receive either Universal Credit or Pension Credit because the older of the couple will have a pension income which is too high.

Couples claiming Pension Credit or pension-age Housing Benefit before 15th May 2019 will not be affected by this change if they continue to receive either of these benefits.



Help with rent

Housing Benefit is a means-tested benefit paid to council or housing association tenants. It is called Local Housing Allowance when paid to tenants of private landlords. If you are receiving Universal Credit you will normally receive help with housing costs through Universal Credit not Housing Benefit. There are some exceptions if you live in certain kinds of accommodation, such as accommodation where you receive care, support or supervision.

The room restriction that was introduced in April 2013, sometimes called the "Bedroom Tax", can restrict help with rent for working age council or housing association tenants if their home is considered to be too large for their needs.

Mixed-age couples affected by the changes in May 2019 are affected by the Bedroom Tax too. A Discretionary Housing Payment may be available if you are already receiving help with your rent, but still struggling to meet your housing costs. Contact your local council to find out what further help may be available. From around 2025 people claiming Pension Credit will receive help with rent as part of their Pension Credit, not by claiming Housing Benefit.

Personal Independence Payment and Adult Disability Payment

Personal Independence Payment was the main disability benefit for people of working age. It could be paid to people who

- needed help with care
- needed supervision to keep them safe, or
- had mobility problems.

In Scotland, Personal Independence Payment is being replaced by Adult Disability Payment which is paid by Social Security Scotland. Working age people living with disabilities who qualify for help now claim Adult Disability Payment, and people who currently claim Personal Independence Payment will move onto Adult Disability payment over the next couple of years. Age Scotland's **Adult Disability Payment** guide explains more.

Their payment will stay the same and they will not need to make a new claim. The first people to be transferred will be those whose Personal Independence Payment awards are due to be reviewed or ended.



Pension Credit

As Universal Credit is rolled out, and Child Tax Credit is phased out, Pension Credit can include elements for dependent children. The weekly amounts for dependent children are:

First child (if born before 6 April 2017)	£72.31 in 2023/2024
First child (if born on or after 6 April 2017) and subsequent children	£61.88 in 2023/24

Additional amounts are paid if a child is considered to be disabled.

If you receive payments for dependant children as part of your Pension Credit and they are under 16 you should also be entitled to Scottish Child Payment from Social Security Scotland. Call them on **0800 182 2222** to find out more.

If you receive Pension Credit you can receive help with **mortgage interest**. Since April 2018 this is available only as an interest-bearing loan secured on your home which will be repaid when your home is sold.

If you claim Pension Credit and need help to pay your mortgage, contact an independent advice agency for advice straight away.

Devolution of welfare powers to Scotland

Under the Smith Commission agreement in November 2014, which looked at further devolution of powers to Scotland, eleven benefits are being devolved to Scotland. The Scottish Government consulted widely about how best to use its new powers and passed the Social Security (Scotland) Act in April 2018.

Universal Credit, State Pension and Pension Credit remain reserved benefits delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions, but in Scotland Universal Credit claimants can receive payments twice monthly instead of monthly and can ask for the rent part of Universal Credit to be paid directly to their landlord.

Scottish welfare powers include responsibility for benefits for carers, disabled people and those who are ill:

- **Attendance Allowance**
- **Carer's Allowance**
- **Disability Living Allowance**
- **Personal Independence Payment**
- **Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit**
- **Severe Disablement Allowance**

The powers also include responsibility for:

- **Cold Weather Payments**
- **Funeral Payments**
- **Sure Start Maternity grants**
- **Winter Fuel Payments**
- **Discretionary Housing Payments (help with payment of rent)**



Social Security Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

The Scottish Government has set up **Social Security Scotland** to administer the new benefits and has said that devolved benefits are to be delivered with fairness, dignity and respect. The principles Social Security Scotland works to are:

- social security is an investment in the people of Scotland
- social security is itself a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights
- the delivery of social security is a public service
- respect for the dignity of individuals is to be at the heart of the Scottish social security system
- the Scottish social security system is to contribute to reducing poverty in Scotland
- the Scottish social security system is to be designed with the people of Scotland on the basis of evidence
- opportunities are to be sought to continuously improve the Scottish social security system in ways that:
 - (i) put the needs of those who require assistance first, and
 - (ii) advance equality and non-discrimination,

the Scottish social security system is to be efficient and deliver value for money.

The **Social Security Scotland Charter** explains how these principles will be delivered in practice. You can see the charter at www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about-us/our-charter or you can call Social Security Scotland on **0800 182 2222** and ask for a copy.

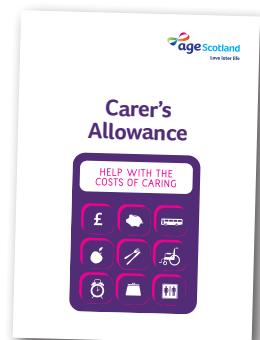


The Scottish Government set up **Social Security Experience Panels** of more than 2,400 people with recent experience of claiming benefits to advise about how Scottish benefits should work.

The Scottish Government is already using some of its new powers:

Since **summer 2018** people in Scotland who receive Carer's Allowance have received an automatic 6-monthly payment of **Carer's Allowance Supplement**.

Our **Carer's Allowance** guide provides more information.





From **September 2019** people who receive low income benefits such as Pension Credit guarantee can apply for a **Funeral Support Payment** if they are responsible for arranging a funeral.

For more information see Age Scotland's **Funeral Support Payment** guide or the **Scottish Government** website at www.mygov.scot/funeral-support-payment.

Adult Disability Payment is replacing Personal Independence Payment as the disability benefit for working age people.

For more information see Age Scotland's **Adult Disability Payment** guide or the Scottish Government website at www.mygov.scot/adult-disability-payment

The Scottish Government has also introduced a wide range of new benefits to support children and young people.

The other new benefits most likely to be claimed by older people are:

2022: Winter Heating Payment has replaced Cold Weather Payments, as a one-off annual payment of £50 to people receiving a benefit like Pension Credit

2023-2024: Carer Support Payment will start to replace Carer's Allowance

2024: Pension Age Winter Heating Assistance will replace the Winter Fuel Payment

2025: Pension Age Disability Payment will start to replace Attendance Allowance.



Useful organisations

Age Scotland helpline **0800 12 44 222**

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our publications list or download copies from our website at **www.agescotland.org.uk**.

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can offer you information and advice. You can get details of your local CAB by calling **0800 028 1456** or visiting the Citizens Advice Scotland website **www.cas.org.uk/bureaux**.

Social Security Scotland

You can find information about Social Security Scotland on their website **www.socialsecurity.gov.scot** or call their helpline **0800 182 2222**.

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.*



Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Let's keep in touch



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting age.scot/roundup



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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[@age_scotland](https://www.instagram.com/age_scotland)



[/AgeScotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AgeScotland)

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Contact us:

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Email

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We are grateful to the
Scottish Government for
part-funding this publication

