

Carer's Credit Care Certificate

Carer's Credit

Notes for Certifiers when completing a Care Certificate

Carer's Credit has been introduced from 6th April 2010 and will be available to people who provide care for one or more disabled person(s) for a total of 20 hours or more each week, where they do not currently receive Carer's Allowance.

The credit will help to protect an individual's National Insurance record to ensure there are no gaps from having to undertake caring responsibilities.

There are two qualifying routes to be able to get Carer's Credit, either through the disabled person being entitled to a qualifying benefit (the majority of applications) or through a certification route (Care Certificate).

When is certification required?

A Care Certificate is required when an application is made for Carer's Credit but the person(s) being cared for is not in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits. The qualifying benefits are the middle or highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance or any rate of Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance.

Where they are not entitled to one of these benefits the customer will be asked to provide a certificate signed by an appropriate healthcare professional as certifier in support of their application for Carer's Credit.

What does the certificate confirm?

The first page of the certificate will be completed by the customer and confirms their details, how many hours of care are provided at Part 1 and details about the disabled person at Part 2.

The second page requires the opinion of the healthcare professional as to whether the disabled person mentioned at Part 2 of the Care Certificate requires the amount of care the carer states they provide each week. It requires the certifier to confirm their details and job title as well as their professional relationship to the disabled person.

The Care Certificate does not, however, require the healthcare professional to confirm who is actually providing the care or how much time they spend caring as they may not know the carer and this information is self certified by the customer on their application form.

Who is an appropriate healthcare professional certifier?

The regulations define the healthcare professional as a person whom the Department considers appropriate to make a declaration as to the required level of care for a person. There is no definitive list of who such a person might be and each one will be considered individually on their own merits, if

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necessary by contacting the individual healthcare professional concerned to clarify the situation.

The Carer's Credit applicant is best placed to decide who could complete the certificate in support of their application. This is because they should know who regularly engages with or supports the disabled person and is, by definition, the most appropriate person to assess their needs and provide the certificate confirming that the disabled person requires the amount of care being provided.

Of course the individual healthcare professional needs to feel comfortable with what is required of them and that they know the disabled person sufficiently well to be able to undertake the certification.

The healthcare professional who completes the certificate would normally be employed within either the health or social care community possibly within the National Health Service (NHS), one of its contractors, or an associated organisation. However, a General Practitioner (GP) or someone employed directly by a GP should not be the first choice, because the certification responsibility is not captured within the GPs' Contract, and so the carer should be encouraged to consider an alternative certifier.

Similarly the healthcare professional might be employed by the DHSSPS or one of their contracted bodies.

Who else could provide the necessary certification?

Alternatively they might be employed by a voluntary (sometimes referred to as 3rd Sector) Organisation which works within and represents the caring community or which works closely with the disabled person being cared for. It is also possible that local religious leaders (such as a parish priest) may be sufficiently familiar with the disabled person's care needs to complete the certificate.

Whoever the Carer's Credit applicant decides is best placed to complete the certificate must be familiar with the circumstances of the individual disabled person. This could be either because they regularly see the individual during the course of their work or because they are able to make that assessment from official records that are available to them.

It is not anticipated that the certifier will need to undertake any formal assessment or test specifically to make a decision about the amount of care the disabled person requires. The healthcare professional should be able to make a judgement as to whether the disabled person requires care and if so whether the amount of care being provided is appropriate to their needs.

What is the definition of care?

Physical illness, mental illness or general frailty may all contribute towards someone needing care such as social or emotional support and comfort. Care needs vary considerably from person to person. In some cases help may be needed to perform physical tasks such as washing and dressing or

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cooking and cleaning. In other cases care may be needed to stop the person hurting themselves, to help them recognise dangerous situations or to enable them to live independently.

Therefore, because care may take many forms it is important that we recognise a wide range of caring responsibilities. However, it is equally important that we take a balanced view which does not reward somebody for performing duties that would normally be considered day-to-day housekeeping such as cooking meals for their partner; care needs should exceed what would be considered ordinary and will normally arise as a result of an illness or disability.

What the Care Certificate means and why it needs to be completed?

The certificate is potentially financially valuable to your customer (or their carer) because it supports an application for National Insurance credits through Carer's Credit. Whilst there is no immediate financial benefit, these credits may ultimately help them to improve any future entitlement to a basic State Pension, State Second Pension or any Bereavement Benefits based on their National Insurance record.

What do I do if, in my judgment, the amount of care being provided is not necessary?

Simply return the certificate back to the person who asked you to complete it with an explanation that you cannot provide the requested certification. Alternatively you can complete the certificate indicating at Part 3 that the care is not required and return it to the address shown for the Carer's Credit team. Either way we hope that you will understand that it is important not to sign certificates lightly, and without due reason, as they may give significant benefit or pension at public expense.

What are the consequences of filling in the certificate?

In your role as a healthcare professional or an appropriate person within a relevant organisation, we require your confirmation that the amount of care being given to the disabled person is appropriate to their current needs. It may be necessary for the Department to contact you to clarify your professional position and/or knowledge of the individual or your relationship to them.

What if the person being cared for does not sign Part 2 of the certificate?

Part 2 of the certificate asks the disabled person to provide consent for the health or social care professional to disclose details of the level of care required. Where authorisation is not provided it is for you as the certifier to decide whether there is a genuine reason why this has not been completed and, therefore, to consider whether you are still able to provide the necessary certification. We understand that some people may refuse or fail to sign the form because they do not or cannot recognise that they need care; in such cases you should use your knowledge of their circumstances to decide whether it is reasonable to complete the form without their signed consent.

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What if a person's circumstances change after the Care Certificate is signed?

We do not expect you to implement a system to check on whether a person's circumstances have changed. We will rely on our customer who is providing care to notify any relevant changes of circumstances directly to us. Regular reviews will be undertaken to remind our customer of their responsibilities; and it will be their responsibility to report changes not yours.

Can I charge a fee for signing the certificate?

We cannot prevent you from doing so, however, we hope that you will recognise the importance of these certificates to our joint customers and decide not to charge them a fee. We cannot reimburse you or our customer for any fee that you may choose to charge.

Further help and guidance

Further guidance is available in the help section of the notes included with the Carer's Credit application pack or the help pages on the DSD's internet site **www.nidirect.gov.uk**

Alternatively you can call 028 90906186 or write to:

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