



## **Carers Scotland response to Housing (Scotland) Act 2006: Consultation on Draft Guidance and Regulations**

Carers Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on the above guidance and regulations.

Carers Scotland is the voice of carers. Carers provide unpaid care by looking after an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner.

Carers give so much to society, yet as a consequence of caring, they experience ill health, poverty and discrimination. Carers Scotland is an organisation of carers fighting to end this injustice.

We have focused our response primarily on the provisions to provide adaptations and facilities for disabled people.

Carers Scotland welcomes the strategic approach to planning for a national scheme of assistance and ensuring planning is linked with local housing strategic planning and other housing approaches.

Carers Scotland recognise the merit of the recommendation of the provision of lending options as one of a range of options available. However, we urge some caution to ensure that carers and those they care for do not face additional financial hardship.

Carers Scotland supports the development of a one-stop shop approach outlined in the guidance. We believe this approach would be particularly beneficial to carers and those they care for in negotiating the range of agencies involved in providing adaptations, essential equipment and community care services. We also support the development of a national public information website alongside a range of activities to raise awareness of the scheme. We would however suggest clearly defined activities to ensure that awareness of assistance for disabled people is high; in particular the key role of the voluntary sector can play in supporting such activities.

Carers Scotland supports the proposed increase of the minimum grant for the provision of standard amenities and adaptations to the homes of disabled people from 50% to 80% and welcomes the stated intention within the guidance that such grants should be assessed and provided “without due delay”. However, we would recommend that the guidance highlights the often-significant additional costs of disability faced by carers and those they care, for example, additional heating costs and charges for community care services, when undertaking a test of resources to assess contribution to the remaining 20% of costs.

Furthermore, Carers Scotland has significant concerns over the specific exclusion of “additional living accommodation”. Often living accommodation is subsumed by the limitations of the housing itself e.g. the living room is also used as a bedroom for an elderly or disabled person because they are immobile and unable to use stairs or a stair lift or, current bedroom accommodation is not suitable to meet the needs of both a child with autism and a sibling with whom they share a bedroom.

Moreover, carers have a significantly increased likelihood of poor health<sup>1</sup> and, often report high levels of back strain<sup>2</sup>. The limitations of housing may place further strain on their health and wellbeing, in particular in supporting the person they care for in reaching upstairs accommodation or negotiating the physical confines of unsuitable living accommodation. This guidance has the opportunity to use the provision of disabled amenities and adaptations to help address some of these issues

Carers Scotland believes that the provision of a “suitably located” living accommodation to meet the specific needs of that disabled person should be treated in the same way as “suitably located” bathroom facilities and the provision of other adaptations.

However, to address some of the concerns raised within the guidance of including all living accommodation, Carers Scotland suggests that the provision of a “suitably located” bedroom be specifically *included* within the provisions of eligibility for mandatory grant but, as the guidance suggests, the provision of grants towards adaptation of other living accommodation be subject to assessment of need through the single shared assessment process.

## **Carers Scotland**

**30 June 2008**

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<sup>1</sup> Carers are a third more likely to be in poor health than non-carers: Census 2001

<sup>2</sup> 50% of 5000 carers questioned reported backache: Carers Week Survey 2006, Carers UK, Princess Royal Trust for Carers, et al.

## About carers in Scotland

- There are 660,000 carers in Scotland saving the economy £7.6 billion each year.
- 110,000 carers provide 50 hours of care or more each week.
- 178,000 people become carers every year.
- 3 in 5 of the population will be carers at some point in their lives.
- 250,000 carers juggle their caring responsibilities with employment.
- Carers are a third more likely to be in poor health than non carers
- Carers often face significant poverty with a third in debt and a further third cutting back on food or heating. More than half of carers say that financial worries are affecting their health.
- By 2037 there will be an estimated 1 million carers in Scotland

## About Carers Scotland

Carers Scotland is an organisation of carers fighting to end the injustice of carer ill health, poverty and discrimination. We will not stop until people recognise the true value of carers' contribution to society and carers get the practical, financial and emotional support they need.

## Carers Scotland is here to improve carers' lives.

- **We fight for equality for carers.** We want carers to have the same rights as everyone to an ordinary life – a fair level of income, access to support to protect their health and wellbeing and access to the world of work, leisure and education.
- **We seek to empower carers.** We want carers to be actively involved in the design, development and delivery of services. We want carers to be recognised and involved as key partners in the provision of care.

## Carers Scotland achieves this by:

- campaigning for the changes that make a real difference for carers.
- providing information and advice to carers about their rights and how to get support
- mobilising carers and supporters to influence decision makers.
- gathering hard evidence about what needs to change.
- transforming the understanding of caring so that carers are valued and not discriminated against.
- providing carer awareness training for staff in health, social care and the voluntary sector
- promoting training for carers to maximise their skills and experience.

## **CARERS** Scotland

the voice of carers

Carers Scotland  
91 Mitchell Street  
Glasgow G1 3LN  
Tel: 0141 221 9141

Email: [fiona.collie@carerscotland.org](mailto:fiona.collie@carerscotland.org)

Web: [www.carerscotland.org](http://www.carerscotland.org)