



Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
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From the Chair

22 November 2018

Peter Schofield CB
Permanent Secretary
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
SW1H 9NA

Dear Peter,

Carer's Allowance: Overpayments

The Committee is holding a one-off evidence session on the overpayment of Carer's Allowance and the DWP's collection of this money. You will no doubt be aware that it was recently reported that up to 1,000 carers could face prosecution and up 10,000 could be required to pay fines as a result of such overpayments. In light of these concerning reports, I would be grateful if you could respond to the following questions.

- 1. How many cases of Carer's Allowance overpayment are currently being pursued for repayment by the DWP?**
- 2. How many of the cases being pursued will result in prosecution?**
- 3. What criteria are used to assess whether someone will:**
 - a. have to repay their overpayment;**
 - b. pay a fine in addition to, or instead of, any repayment; or**
 - c. face prosecution?**
- 4. What is:**
 - a. the range, and**
 - b. the average amount****of known overpayments of Carer's Allowance in the past five years?**
- 5. Could you please provide all information relating to any concerns or complaints raised with DWP management, by staff or claimants, regarding:**
 - a. the overpayment of Carer's Allowance;**
 - b. the DWP's approach to identifying such overpayments; and**
 - c. the DWP's approach to pursuing such overpayments.**

6. Your letter of 20 November states that the Verifying Earnings and Pensions initiative introduced in the last year “highlights claimants who have not reported that they are working or that their earnings have changed”; and:

This new approach will increasingly help reduce the requirement to detect payment errors after they have occurred. Preventing overpayments in this way is good for both the Department and claimants alike.

Please could you confirm:

- a. What method was used for identifying overpayments of Carer’s Allowance prior to the introduction of the Verifying Earnings and Pensions initiative?
 - b. How much resource was dedicated to identifying the overpayment of Carer’s Allowance in each year for the past five years?
 - c. How many cases of Carer’s Allowance overpayments were identified each year for the past five years?
 - d. Whether the new initiative will automatically identify and alert claimants to overpayments and, if not, how much resource is currently dedicated to this activity?
7. The rate of overpayments for Carer’s Allowance was last reviewed in 1996/97.
- a. Why do you not review overpayment rates for this benefit more regularly?
 - b. When do you next plan to review overpayment rates for Carer’s Allowance?

I would be grateful if you could respond by 10am on Tuesday 27 November.

Best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you,



Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee