

Long-term Carers Contributions SCHEME



In January 2024, the Department of Social Protection introduced a new Long Term Carer Contributions Scheme which gives long-term carers caring for 20 years or more access to the State Pension Contributory.

Who: The scheme benefits carers who have been caring full-time for more than 20 years.

Why: Seeks to address the long-standing pension disadvantage which has affected long-term carers, the majority of whom are women.

How: Carers who have been caring for more than 20 years will be given Long-Term Carer Contributions (LTCC) for those years. These LTCCs will be treated as equal to PRSI contributions paid through employment.

How do you Qualify:

While providing full-time care you must have:

- ✓ Lived in Ireland
- ✓ Been aged between 16 and 66 years
- ✓ Not have been in employment/engaged in voluntary work/education for more than 18.5hrs p/w
- ✓ Not in receipt of weekly social welfare payment except for Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit, Domiciliary Care Allowance or Carer's Support Grant
- ✓ Cared-for person must need full-time care.

- Normally, you need 520 employment contributions (= 10 years of work) to qualify for a State Pension (Contributory).

- However, if you have been a full-time carer for at least 20 years, you do not need to have worked for 10 years to qualify.

- In fact, even if you don't have any paid PRSI contributions you can still use your Long-Term Carer Contributions to help you qualify for a State Pension Contributory. Once LTCCs are awarded you can add them to any paid PRSI contributions you may have from employment.

Applying for LTCCs and Register Caring Periods:

In September 2023, the Department of Social Protection opened a Family Carer Register allowing full-time family carers to formally register their caring role. You do not have to be a long-term carer to register.

All full-time family carers are strongly encouraged to register, even if you are receiving a care-related social welfare payment, have cared for a relatively short period of time or continue to provide care. By registering your caring periods, they will be formally recorded and will potentially protect you from having gaps in your PRSI record when you do reach retirement age - even if that's many years from now.

Registering:

To register you need to have a verified MyWelfare account. If you do not have an account, you will need to create and verify your MyGovID account.

Log into MyWelfare.ie

1. Scroll down to 'Services' and click 'Pensions and Older People'
2. Click 'Find out more' under 'HomeCaring Periods' (This will allow you to apply for HomeCaring Periods, the Home Marker's Scheme and Long-Term Carer Contributions in one application)
3. Click 'Apply now'
4. You should receive a detailed Contributions Statement from the Department within a few weeks.

If you cannot apply online, contact Pension Caring Supports in the Department of Social Protection to ask for a paper application form.

T: 01 471 5898 / E: pensioncaringsupports@welfare.ie

Case Study: Meet Denise

- Denise worked for 8yrs in paid employment and has 416 paid PRSI contributions.
- She gave up work to care when her first child was born with a disability.
- She will reach 66yrs in 2024 having cared for 28 years.

Calculation for State Pension Contributory:

28 years of caring = 1,456 LTCCs + 416 PRSI = 1,872 contributions 1,872 / 2080 (40 years) = .9 (90%). Denise will get 90% of the max rate of the State Pension (Contributory)

Important Points!

- Caring periods do not have to be consecutive or for the same person - caring can be episodic and for different people.
- Anyone turning 66 after 1st January 2024 may defer their pension until age 70. This means carers who are just short of 20 years of caring when they reach 66 years can delay receiving their pension which will help make up the shortfall in caring years.
- The existing pension system has safety nets to protect carers caring for less than 20 years e.g. Home Caring Periods and the Homemakers Scheme.