

Annual Client Panels Survey 2024

Summary report

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

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A total of
1,583
panel members took
part in the survey

Background

This report summarises findings from the 2024 Annual Client Panels Survey.

The Client Panels are made up of people who have applied for or received a benefit from Social Security Scotland. Client Panels research is used to find out about panel members' experiences with Social Security Scotland. The research gives evidence to help make Social Security Scotland's service better.

The Annual Client Panels Survey 2024 asked Client Panel members about parts of their experience which typically happen after receiving a decision or a payment. The aim of this research is to understand what is working well and what could be improved.

The results only represent the views of panel members who took part in the survey. Results shouldn't be interpreted as being representative of all Social Security Scotland clients.

The Annual Client Panels Survey is in its second year. The survey will be repeated yearly to keep informing improvements. Repeating the survey annually will allow us to look at change over time.

Using research with clients to improve the service is one of the commitments in **Social Security Scotland's Charter**.

About the survey respondents

- The report is based on a total of 1,583 responses.
 - Most (80%) were aged between 35-64
 - Most described their ethnicity as 'white' (92% compared to 7% ethnic minority)
 - More than six in ten (62%) were women, over one third (35%) were men and 2% described their gender another way
 - Around three quarters (76%) had a lasting physical or mental health condition
 - More than one third (34%) were carers

Which benefits did our survey respondents receive in the last year?



69%
Adult Disability
Payment



21%
Scottish Child
Payment



11%
Carer's Allowance
Supplement



10%
Child Disability
Payment



9%
Winter Heating
Payment



4%
Carer Support
Payment



3%
Child Winter Heating
Payment



2%
Best Start
Foods



2%
Best Start
Grant



1%
Funeral Support
Payment



<1%
Young Carer
Grant



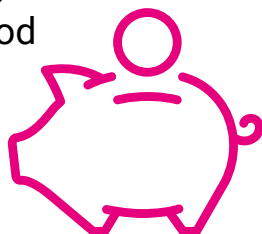
<1%
Job Start
Payment

- Around one quarter (26%) of respondents had received more than one benefit in the last year.

Impact of payments

- Respondents were asked how much the payments they received from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months had:
 - helped them to pay for what they needed
 - helped them to control their finances
 - had a positive impact on health and wellbeing
- Respondents gave an average score of 8 out of 10 for each of these measures.
- Most respondents who received Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods said the payments had a positive impact on their child's health and wellbeing and helped to purchase milk and/or healthy food for their child.

These payments make such a huge difference. Helps with bills and food for the kids. It's such a blessing.



Receiving payments

- Around nine in ten respondents (91%) had not experienced problems with receiving payments from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months.
- More than nine in ten (93%) respondents were positive about their experience of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland over the last 12 months.

I never worry about my Adult Disability Payment. I always receive the correct amount on the correct date every 4 weeks with no issues. This takes all stress and confusion away from benefit payments and makes my life easier.

If not for the payments of Carers Allowance and Child Disability payments my daughter wouldn't have received half the help and assistance she needs. We had to get a taxi to and from nursery 4 days a week and [her] disability payments were crucial to get her to and from nursery comfortably and without judgement to us walking home if she was having autistic meltdowns and having to carry her. Thank you.

Getting extra support because of receiving disability payments

- Around half (51%) of those who used their disability payment award to get extra support (such as a bus pass) said it was easy or very easy to do. Around one fifth (19%) found it quite difficult or very difficult.
- Both Adult and Child Disability Payment respondents were less likely to say it was easy or very easy in 2024 (50-55%) compared to 2023 (72-76%).
- Respondents described the positive impact of the extra support they received. Others said it should be clearer what extra support clients are eligible for.

No one tells you what you can apply for extra support. I am on my own and struggle physically and mentally but find I could use more support, I do not know who I can talk to about this.

[...] The “Blue Badge” ensures I park outside my work place which is at best, very difficult without one. The bus pass ensures that I can fall back on public transport if need be, though having a car, is invaluable. My dual hip replacements will in time diminish as I get older. The supplement helps me plan for the future and helps keep me in shape now. I want to work for as long as I can and able.

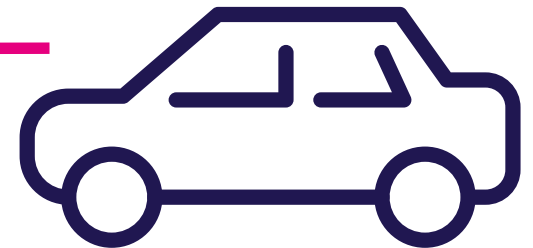


Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme (AVE scheme)

- Clients who receive the higher rate mobility component of Adult or Child Disability Payment can use the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment (AVE) scheme.
- Among respondents who used the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme in the last year, a vast majority said it helps them to live independently (92%) and provides good customer service (92%).
- 94% rated their overall experience of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme as good or very good.
- Some respondents described the positive impact of the scheme on their lives and were pleased with the customer service. Others were negative about the affordability and choice of vehicles.

This system is exceptionally good. The service is a life changer for me. My car is reliable and well looked after. This helps alleviate stress and panic for me, making life somewhat easier. Any dealings I have had with AVE have been excellent.

I need a passenger-WAV, but the selection is poor, and the cost is much higher than that of non-adapted cars. Luckily, this year, I managed to extend my lease because otherwise, I would've needed to find around £3000 to rent the vehicle. I find it discriminates against those who need assistance. The car isn't fancy, but it is, unfortunately, necessary.



Change of circumstances

Clients who have applied for or receive certain benefits need to tell Social Security Scotland if their circumstances change.

Some changes (like level of care need) can lead to a review of the benefit award. We will call these **'substantial changes'**. Whereas, **'simple changes'** (like updating bank details) don't affect payments.

Process of reporting a change

- More than two thirds of respondents who reported a change of circumstances said the process was clear (69%) and they could report the change the way they wanted to (67%).

I find it difficult to explain on paper how my condition impacts me daily. I also find it difficult to explain to others as some people don't understand Fibromyalgia and can be very judgemental.

How respondents felt about reporting a change

- A majority of respondents who reported a change of circumstances said telling Social Security Scotland about it made them feel anxious (56%).
- A larger majority said they were worried that the process of reporting the change would be difficult or long (62%).



As it was new - and my experience with Personal Independence Payment was one of constant fear of losing my benefit, providing proof after proof etc - I was scared that reporting a change would trigger a whole new application; I feared I'd lose everything.

Providing supporting information for a change of circumstances

- Around three quarters of those who had provided supporting information for the change of circumstances said it was clear what information was needed (74%) and why (78%).
- Most said it was easy to get the documents (60%) and easy to provide them to Social Security Scotland (67%).

Outcome of a change of circumstances

- Respondents whose payments were impacted by the change they reported were more likely to say it was clearly explained than the group whose payments were not affected. They were also more likely to agree with Social Security Scotland's decision.



60%

Six in ten respondents whose change had been confirmed said it was processed in a reasonable timeframe.

Overall experience of reporting a change

- More than two thirds (68%) felt Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with their change of circumstances.
- Around six in ten (61%) rated their overall experience of reporting a change of circumstances as good or very good.
- Respondents who reported simple changes were more likely to rate their experience very good or good than those who reported substantial changes (78% compared to 54%).

Case transfer and change of circumstances

Adult Disability Payment respondents whose case was transferred from DWP in the last year were...

- less likely to be positive about the process of reporting a change of circumstances
 - more likely to say they were anxious, worried or unsure about reporting a change
 - more likely to say Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with their change
- ...compared to those who did not experience case transfer**

Reviews

Adult and Child Disability Payment awards are reviewed after a set time to check that the correct amount is being paid (unless the client has an 'indefinite' award).

Among the survey respondents who had completed a review form, around eight in ten agreed or strongly agreed that:

81%

they were treated with fairness and respect

83%

it was clear what the review process involved

80%

it was easy to provide the necessary information

81%

they trusted Social Security Scotland to make a fair decision about their award

Respondents who experienced a review of Adult Disability Payment were...

- less likely to say it was clear what the review process involved
- less likely to say it was easy to provide information
- more likely to say they were treated with fairness and respect

...compared to those who experienced a review of Child Disability Payment.



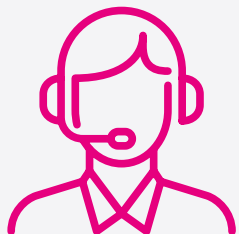
Communications with Social Security Scotland

Receiving contact from Social Security Scotland

- Of the respondents who received contact from Social Security Scotland in the last year, a large majority (79-85%) were positive about the level, format and usefulness of the communication they received.

Contacting Social Security Scotland

- Of the respondents who contacted Social Security Scotland in the last year, a large majority (78%) said they were able to contact Social Security Scotland in the way they wanted to.
- More than two thirds said they got the support they needed (67%) and that it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland (68%).



78%

More than three quarters of respondents rated their overall experience with Social Security Scotland staff good or very good.

Contact with Social Security Scotland staff

Of the respondents who had contact with Social Security Scotland staff, a majority agreed or strongly agreed that...

I was treated with kindness

81%

Staff listened to me

79%

Staff made me feel comfortable

75%

Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits and services

73%

The three members of staff I have dealt with have genuinely been amazing and I highly commend them. Your staff are a credit to you and really live the values.

Overall experience with Social Security Scotland



82%

of respondents rated their overall experience with Social Security Scotland in the last year good or very good.

- Some themes in the written responses across the survey included:
 - Long processing times and lack of communication
 - Decision-making for disability benefits - including concerns about their circumstances being misunderstood or supporting information not being properly taken into account

It took nearly 9 months to get a decision on my son's review despite there being no change in his condition/needs. Every time I rang to find out what was happening I was given different or contradictory information. Thankfully payments continue to be paid during the review process but there was a financial impact. My son was left without his [bus pass] for the entire time as we didn't have the relevant proof to renew it. Due to this my son was unable to attend any of his autism friendly activities or social clubs as I couldn't afford the additional expense of bus fares (nearly £8 for day tickets).

[I was] worried that any changes would reduce my payment even though my health conditions have worsened. I felt there is a lack of empathy when looking at changes. I thought (as did my doctor and occupational therapist) that I would be awarded the enhanced disability rate due to my health issues.



Trends in satisfaction across 2023 to 2024

- Findings from the Annual Client Panels Survey 2024 were compared to 2023's survey findings.
- Satisfaction among Adult Disability Payment respondents increased for some parts of client experiences covered by the survey. This included receiving communication from Social Security Scotland and some aspects of contacting Social Security Scotland.
- Child Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment respondents were less positive about some parts of their experience compared to 2023, including their overall experience of change of circumstances.
- Child Disability Payment respondents' ratings also decreased in 2024 for their experience of recent interactions with Social Security Scotland staff and their overall experience with Social Security Scotland in the last year.



Experience of being a Client Panel member

- A vast majority of respondents said the communications they read from the Client Panels team were easy to understand (87-94%) and interesting (83-86%).
- Respondents said being a Client Panel member allowed them to express their views and experiences, and to feel heard. They hoped being on the Client Panels would help other clients and improve Social Security Scotland's services. Respondents said they want to see the results of Client Panels research and how the research impacts change.



70%

of respondents said being a member of the Client Panels was worthwhile for them.

I found being a member of this has allowed me to raise issues and have them considered for how day to day things affect people like myself. I've encountered various problems when claiming various benefits and knowing they're now being considered is a relief to me.



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