



Social Security  
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

# Annual Client Panels Survey 2024



## Exploring this research

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For key findings in a more visual format, a separate [Summary report](#) has also been published.

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## 1. Findings at a glance

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

The Client Panels are made up of people who have applied for or received a benefit from Social Security Scotland. Members of the Client Panels were invited to take part in the Annual Client Panels Survey in November 2024. The survey 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 parts of client experience are working well and what could be improved.

More than eight in ten (82%) respondents had a positive overall experience with Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months. For most benefits, respondents gave similar ratings for their overall experience in 2023 and 2024. However, Child Disability Payment and Child Winter Heating Payment respondents were less positive in 2024 compared to 2023.

A vast majority of respondents were positive about their experience of receiving payments (93%), using the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme (94%) and having their award reviewed (80-83%). Similarly, a large majority were positive about the level, usefulness and format of the communication they received from Social Security Scotland (79-85%) and their interactions with Social Security Scotland staff (78%). A smaller majority were positive about their experience of contacting Social Security Scotland (60-68%).

A majority of respondents who had reported a change of circumstances said the process for telling Social Security Scotland about it was clear (69%). However, more than half said reporting a change made them feel anxious (56%).

Some respondents commented that processing times (for applications, reviews and change of circumstances) were too long and there was a lack of communication during the wait. Others said they were concerned about Social Security Scotland's decision-making process for disability benefit awards.

For some parts of the client experience (such as receiving communication from Social Security Scotland) satisfaction among Adult Disability Payment respondents has

increased since 2023. Whereas Child Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment respondents were less positive about several aspects of their experience compared to 2023.

## 2. Executive Summary

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

As set out in [Our Charter](#), Social Security Scotland is committed to carrying out regular research with clients to hear about their experiences and work with them to make improvements to our services. The Client Panels are key to this.

People are invited to join the Client Panels when they take part in Social Security Scotland's Client Survey. The Client Survey goes to everyone who has applied for or received a benefit from Social Security Scotland. It asks about experiences up to receiving a decision or first payment from Social Security Scotland. Client Panels research is used to explore panel members' ongoing experiences with Social Security Scotland and its service. The research provides evidence to keep improving Social Security Scotland's service and processes.

Members of the Client Panels were invited to take part in the Annual Client Panels Survey in November 2024. The survey received 1,583 responses. This is a response rate of approximately 13% (compared to a 14% response rate for 2023's Annual Client Panels Survey). The survey asked Client Panel members about parts of their experience which typically happen after receiving a decision or a payment (and are therefore not part of the Client Survey). The aim of this research is to understand what parts of client experience are working well and what could be improved.

The Annual Client Panels Survey 2024 was the second round of the Annual Client Panels Survey. The survey will be repeated yearly to keep informing improvements. Repeating the survey annually will allow us to look at change over time. This report includes comparisons between the results for different benefits and across years, where relevant.

Key findings are summarised below.

### **Impact of payments**

Respondents said the payments they received from Social Security Scotland had a positive impact on their lives. When asked how much the payments helped them to pay for what they needed, helped them control their finances, and had a positive

impact on health and wellbeing, respondents gave an average of eight out of ten for each measure. Similarly, most respondents who received Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods said that the payments had a positive impact.

### **Receiving payments**

Around nine in ten respondents (91%) had not experienced problems with receiving payments in the last 12 months. A minority (6%) did experience problems. Among those who had contact with Social Security Scotland about the problem (48 respondents), most were dissatisfied with how the problem was handled.

### **Overall experience of receiving payments**

More than nine in ten (93%) respondents were positive about their experience of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland over the last 12 months. Satisfied respondents said they received the right amount of money and payments arrived on time. Some wanted more communication from Social Security Scotland about their benefits.

### **Accessing extra support as a result of receiving Adult or Child Disability Payment**

Among those who applied for extra support (such as a bus pass or council tax reduction) as a result of receiving Adult or Child Disability Payment, around half (51%) said it was easy to do so. This decreased (by around 20 percentage points) for both Adult and Child Disability Payment compared to 2023's survey. Some respondents described how the extra support had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing and quality of life. Others found the process slow and bureaucratic and said the documents they provided were not accepted by agencies who provide extra support.

### **Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme**

A vast majority of respondents who used the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment (AVE) scheme in the last year were positive about their experience. More than nine in ten (94%) rated their overall experience of the scheme good or very good. In comments, many described how their vehicles gave them more independence and improved their quality of life. Some respondents were dissatisfied with the affordability and choice of vehicles. A few commented that the scheme grants 'push' towards electric vehicles which some respondents said were unsuitable for their needs.

## **Process of reporting a change of circumstances**

Clients who have applied for or receive certain benefits need to tell Social Security Scotland if their circumstances change. A majority of respondents with experience of reporting a change of circumstances said the process for reporting the change was clear (69%) and they could report the change the way they wanted to (67%).

## **How respondents felt about reporting a change**

A majority of respondents with experience of reporting 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%).

Respondents who were anxious, worried or unsure about reporting a change described being fearful that their payments would be reduced or stopped. Others had negative past experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which made them apprehensive. A few described the process of reporting a change as challenging, practically and emotionally.

## **Providing supporting information**

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%). A third (33%) said they were asked for information they had already provided.

## **Outcome of a change of circumstances**

Most respondents (60%) said their change of circumstances was processed in a reasonable timeframe. Respondents whose payments were impacted by the change they reported were more likely to say it was clearly explained why their payments would be affected and more likely to agree with Social Security Scotland's decision, compared to the group whose payments were not affected.

## **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. A slightly smaller proportion



(61%) rated their overall experience of reporting a change of circumstances as good or very good. Respondents who reported simple changes (such as change of bank details) were more likely to rate their experience good or very good than those who reported substantial changes (such as a change in health condition).

### **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 and more likely to say they were anxious, worried or unsure about reporting a change. However, Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer were more likely to say Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with their change than those who did not experience case transfer.

### **Not telling Social Security Scotland about a change**

Respondents who had considered telling Social Security Scotland about a change in the last 12 months were asked why they decided not to. A common response was fear of losing some or all of their payments as a result of reporting the change. A variety of other reasons were given. For example, fluctuating health conditions which meant changes in symptoms might be temporary.

### **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). A large majority of respondents (80-83%) who had experienced a review said that they were treated with fairness and respect, the process was clear, and they trusted Social Security Scotland to make a decision about their award.

Adult Disability Payment respondents were less likely than Child Disability Payment respondents to say it was clear what the review process involved but more likely to say they were treated with fairness and respect.

## **Receiving communication from Social Security Scotland**

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

## **Contacting Social Security Scotland**

Among those who made contact with Social Security Scotland in the last year, a large majority (75%) had called the helpline. The most common reason for getting in touch was to get an update on an application, followed by reporting a change of circumstances.

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%). Some of those who found it difficult to get in touch commented on long wait times to get through to an advisor on the helpline or webchat.

## **Contact with Social Security Scotland staff**

Most respondents who had had interactions with Social Security Scotland staff were positive about them. More than seven in ten (72-81%) responded positively to statements about interactions with staff, including 'staff treated me with kindness' and 'staff listened to me'. More than three quarters (78%) of respondents rated their overall experience with Social Security Scotland staff good or very good. One in ten (10%) rated it poor or very poor.

## **Overall experience with Social Security Scotland**

More than eight in ten (82%) respondents said their overall experience with Social Security Scotland in the last year was good or very good. For most benefits, respondents gave similar ratings for their overall experience in 2023 and 2024. However, Child Disability Payment and Child Winter Heating Payment respondents were less positive in 2024 compared to 2023.

One theme which came up in written responses across the survey was long processing times and a lack of updates during the wait (for applications, change of circumstances, reviews and re-determinations). Respondents suggested more

communication from Social Security Scotland, including updates during processing times.

Another theme was respondents' concerns about Social Security Scotland's decision-making for disability benefits (for applications, change of circumstances and reviews). Some had concerns about their circumstances being misunderstood or supporting information not being properly taken into account.

### **Being a Client Panels member**

A vast majority of respondents said the communications they read from the Client Panels team were easy to understand and interesting. A majority (70%) agreed or strongly agreed that being a member of the Client Panels was worthwhile for them. Respondents said being a Client Panel member allowed them to feel heard and they hoped it would improve Social Security Scotland's service for its clients.

### **Trends in satisfaction for different benefits**

We compared findings from the Annual Client Panels Survey 2023 and 2024.

Satisfaction among Adult Disability Payment respondents increased for some parts of client experience covered by the survey, including communication from and making contact with Social Security Scotland. Whereas, Child Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment respondents were less positive about several aspects of their experience compared to 2023, including their overall experience of change of circumstances.

## 3. Background and research methods

### 3.1. Background and research aims

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

People are invited to join the Client Panels when they take part in Social Security Scotland's Client Survey. The Client Survey goes to everyone who has received a decision on an application for a Social Security Scotland benefit or has received a payment where an application is not required.<sup>1</sup> Client Panels research is used to explore panel members' experiences with Social Security Scotland and its service. The research provides evidence to keep improving Social Security Scotland's service and processes.

The Annual Client Panels Survey 2024 is the second time that an overall experience survey has been carried out with the Client Panels. The survey asked Client Panel members about parts of their experience which typically happen after receiving a decision or a payment, and therefore are not covered in the Client Survey. For example, the experience of receiving payments and telling Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances. The aim of this research is to understand what parts of client experience are working well and what could be improved.

The survey will be repeated every year to keep informing improvements. Repeating the survey annually will allow us to look at change over time. This report includes comparisons between the results for different benefits and across years, where relevant.

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<sup>1</sup> Carer's Allowance Supplement, Winter Heating Payment and Child Winter Heating Assistance / Payment do not require an application. Clients who are transferring from DWP benefits to Child Disability Payment or Adult Disability Payment are also not required to submit an application.

## 3.2. Who took part?

The Client Panels were established in 2020. There are now more than 12,000 members. Information on the members of the Client Panels can be found in [Annex A](#).

A total of 12,387 invitations<sup>2</sup> were sent to Client Panel members to take part in the Annual Client Panels Survey. The survey was open between 20 November and 18 December 2024. A total of 1,583 responses<sup>3</sup> were received. This is a response rate of approximately 13% (compared to a 14% response rate for 2023's Annual Client Panels Survey).

### Characteristics

Information on the survey respondents is set out in [Annex B](#). This information is summarised below:

- More than six in ten (62%) respondents were aged 45-64 (25% aged 45-54 and 37% aged 55-64). Almost one fifth (18%) were aged 35-44 and a slightly smaller proportion (16%) were over 65 years old. A small proportion (4%) were under 35.
- More than nine in ten respondents (92%) were white. 7% were minority ethnic and 1% selected 'prefer not to say'.
- More than six in ten (62%) were women and over a third (35%) were men. 2% described their gender in another way and 1% preferred not to say.
- 1% of respondents identified as trans.
- Almost nine in ten (89%) respondents described themselves as heterosexual/straight. 5% of respondents were gay/lesbian and 5% preferred not to say. 1% were bisexual and a small number described their sexual orientation in another way.

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<sup>2</sup> Everyone who had been part of the Client Panels for over three months was invited to the survey. Newer members were not invited because their decision from Social Security Scotland was like more recent and so they were unlikely to have experience of the post-decision issues covered in the survey.

<sup>3</sup> This does not include nine responses which were received but not included in analysis. Five responses were received after data analysis had begun so they are not included in the analysis. Four respondents were identified as having completed the survey twice so duplicates were removed before analysis began.

- Around three quarters (76%) of respondents said they had a lasting physical or mental health condition. Around one fifth (21%) said they did not have a lasting condition and a small percentage (4%) preferred not to say.
- 3% of respondents had been granted refugee status to live in the UK.
- More than one third (34%) of respondents said they were carers for disabled or older people. Around six in ten (62%) were not carers and 4% preferred not to say.
- 5% of respondents were care experienced.

### **Benefit experience**

The survey asked respondents which benefits they had received in the last 12 months. As shown in Table 1, more than two thirds of survey respondents (69%) had received Adult Disability Payment. Around one fifth (21%) had received Scottish Child Payment. Around one tenth had received Carer's Allowance Supplement (11%), and a similar proportion had received Child Disability Payment (10%) and Winter Heating Payment (9%). A smaller number of respondents said they had received Carer Support Payment (4%), Child Winter Heating Payment (3%), Best Start Foods (2%) and Best Start Grant (2%). 1% or less had received Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, and Job Start Payment.

**Table 1: Which benefit(s) respondents received in the last 12 months\***  
(number of respondents=1,570)

| Response options   |     |
|--|-----|
| Adult Disability Payment                                       | 69% |
| Scottish Child Payment   | 21% |
| Carer's Allowance Supplement                                   | 11% |
| Child Disability Payment                                       | 10% |
| Winter Heating Payment   | 9%  |
| Carer Support Payment  | 4%  |
| Child Winter Heating Payment / Child Winter Heating Assistance | 3%  |
| Best Start Foods   | 2%  |
| Best Start Grant   | 2%  |
| Funeral Support Payment  | 1%  |
| Young Carer Grant  | <1% |
| Job Start Payment  | <1% |
| None of these <sup>4</sup>                                     | 7%  |

\*Respondents could choose more than one answer

The proportions shown in Table 1 are different to the group of respondents who took 2023's Annual Client Panels Survey (Supplementary Table 1). For example, in this year's survey, more than two thirds (69%) of respondents had received Adult Disability Payment in the last 12 months compared to two fifths (40%) of respondents for 2023's

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<sup>4</sup> Members can join the Client Panels after receiving a decision from Social Security Scotland even if their application is unsuccessful. Members can remain on the Client Panels after they stop receiving benefits.

survey. This reflects the increase in the number of people receiving Adult Disability Payment since it launched in August 2022.

Because of the different make-up of the respondent groups in 2023 and 2024's surveys, this report does not compare overall results between the two years. However, we have compared the results for each benefit across the two years where relevant.

It is important to remember that some respondents have experience of receiving multiple Social Security Scotland benefits in the same year. Around two thirds (67%) of respondents had received one benefit in the last year (Supplementary Table 2). However, more than 400 respondents received more than one benefit. 17% of respondents received two benefits and 5% received three benefits. 4% received four or more benefits in the last year.

Supplementary Tables 3.1-3.5 show some common overlaps in benefit experience, including:

- Almost one third of those who received one or more of the Five Family Payments (a group of benefits including Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods) also received Adult and/or Child Disability Payment (28% and 29% respectively)
- Among Child Disability Payment respondents, 40% also received Adult Disability Payment and 58% received Scottish Child Payment
- Around three quarters (74%) of Winter Heating Payment respondents received Adult Disability Payment
- Among Carer's Allowance Supplement and Carer Support Payment respondents, around one third received Scottish Child Payment (32% and 38% respectively) and a higher proportion received Adult Disability Payment (49% and 62% respectively)

It's also important to be aware that respondents who received certain benefits were more likely to have certain characteristics (Supplementary Tables 4.1-4.2). For example, Five Family Payment respondents were more likely to:

- be minority ethnic (19% compared to 4-9% minority ethnic respondents for other benefits)



- have been granted refugee status in the UK (10% compared to 0-5% of other benefits)

This was taken into account when analysing the survey results for any meaningful difference between the experiences of people with different characteristics.

### **Case transfer**

Some benefits given by Social Security Scotland are replacing benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in Scotland. When a person's benefit is moved from the DWP to Social Security Scotland, this is sometimes called a case transfer.

Survey respondents who said they received Adult Disability Payment, Child Disability Payment or Carer Support Payment were asked whether any of their awards had been case transferred from the DWP to Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months. As shown in Table 2, almost two fifths (38%) said their Personal Independence Payment (PIP) had been moved to Adult Disability Payment. Less than one in ten had a different type of benefit moved: 6% had their Carer's Allowance moved to Carer Support Payment, 5% had Disability Living Allowance moved to Adult Disability Payment, and 4% had their Disability Living Allowance for children moved to Child Disability Payment.

**Table 2: Case transfer from DWP to Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months\***

(number of respondents=1,205)

| Response options   |     |
|--|-----|
| No case transfer   | 45% |
| Personal Independence Payment (PIP) moved to Adult Disability Payment      | 38% |
| Disability Living Allowance moved to Adult Disability Payment              | 5%  |
| Disability Living Allowance for children moved to Child Disability Payment | 4%  |
| Carer's Allowance moved to Carer Support Payment                           | 6%  |
| Can't remember / Don't know  | 9%  |

\*Respondents could choose more than one option

### Benefit applications

The survey asked whether respondents had applied for any benefits in the last 12 months. Table 3 shows that just over half (54%) of respondents said they had not made an application in the last year. One third (33%) had applied for Adult Disability Payment and one tenth (10%) had applied for Scottish Child Payment. Less than 4% had applied for any of the other benefits listed<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Some benefits – Carer's Allowance Supplement, Winter Heating Payment and Child Winter Heating Assistance / Payment - do not require an application. Also, clients whose benefits are transferred from DWP to Social Security Scotland are not required to submit an application.

**Table 3: Which benefit(s) respondents applied for in the last 12 months\***  
(number of respondents=1,172)

| Response options                    |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Adult Disability Payment            | 33% |
| Scottish Child Payment              | 10% |
| Child Disability Payment            | 4%  |
| Carer Support Payment               | 3%  |
| Best Start Grant / Best Start Foods | 2%  |
| Funeral Support Payment             | 1%  |
| Young Carer Grant                   | <1% |
| Job Start Payment                   | <1% |
| None                                | 54% |

\*Respondents could choose more than one answer

### 3.3. Analysing and understanding findings

The findings in this report represent the views of survey respondents. We cannot assume that the results represent the views of Social Security Scotland's clients as a whole.

Quotes are used to illustrate the findings discussed in this report. In some cases, minor edits were made to quotes to make them easier to read. Quotes have been chosen to best reflect themes in the findings. The number of quotes used to illustrate each theme does not always match the total number of responses which spoke about that theme.

We have avoided acronyms throughout this report to make it easier to read.

Results presented in tables use percentages to show proportions of respondents choosing different answer options. Results are rounded to the nearest whole number.

This means results included in tables may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Some percentages quoted in the report relate to questions that allowed respondents to choose more than one response. Again, these percentages will not sum to 100%. Where a result was less than 0.5%, this is shown as <1%. Where no respondents selected a particular answer, this is shown as '-' in tables.

Results for small groups of respondents are not published (shown as '#' in results tables) to make sure respondents are not identifiable. Where fewer than 100 respondents answered a question, results are discussed but results tables are not included.

Where a group has fewer than 25 respondents, it is not included in results tables or comparisons. In breakdowns by benefit, Funeral Support Payment, Job Start Payment and Young Carer Grant often fall below this threshold and so are excluded from results tables. Where a group has fewer than 100 respondents this is highlighted (\*) in tables to caution the reader.

This report includes breakdowns by benefit where there are notable differences and numbers allow. Where the report refers to 'Adult Disability Payment respondents' or 'Scottish Child Payment respondents', this means respondents who said they received this benefit in the last 12 months.

Differences in how demographic subgroups responded to a question are included where meaningful and where there was a percentage point difference of five or more between the response and the average response.

As discussed above (see 'Case Transfer'), the survey asked respondents whether their benefit was moved from the DWP to Social Security Scotland in the last year. Where relevant, the report separates responses from those who experienced case transfer in the last year and those who did not. This comparison is only made for Adult Disability Payment respondents. Numbers of Child Disability Payment and Carer Support Payment respondents who experienced case transfer in the last year were too small to allow for comparison. Results tables use the categories 'Adult Disability Payment – case transfer' and 'Adult Disability Payment – no case transfer'. However,

some of the respondents in a 'no case transfer' group might have had a benefit moved from the DWP before, but it was more than 12 months ago.

A small number of written responses suggest that some respondents mix up their experiences with the DWP and Social Security Scotland when answering some survey questions. For example, a small number of respondents mentioned using their online journal in contacting Social Security Scotland. However, this is a DWP tool. Similarly, some comments combine respondents' experiences with Social Security Scotland and with other organisations providing support, for example, council tax reduction or blue badges. The survey questions aim to make clear the focus of the research. However, respondents are free to reflect on what they feel is relevant in written responses.

## 4. Receiving payments

### 4.1. Impact of payments

#### Impact of payments: all benefits

On a scale of zero to ten (where 0 is ‘not at all’ and 10 is ‘a lot’) respondents were asked how much the payments they received 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

Scores were grouped into low (zero to three), medium (four to seven) and high (eight to ten) for analysis.

Responses were similar across all three of these statements and each statement received an average score of eight out of ten. Table 4 shows that, for each statement, more than two thirds (67%-71%) of respondents gave a high score.

**Table 4:** Impact of payments received in the last 12 months  
(number of respondents=1,391-1,398)

| Score        | Helped you to pay for what you needed | Helped you to control your finances | Had a positive impact on health and wellbeing |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Low (0-3)    | 6%                                    | 8%                                  | 9%  |
| Medium (4-7) | 23%                                   | 25%                                 | 22%   |
| High (8-10)  | 71%                                   | 67%                                 | 69%   |

Across all benefits, more than six in ten (62-79%) gave high scores for each statement (Supplementary Tables 5.1-5.3)

In 2024, Carer’s Allowance Supplement respondents gave higher scores for statements about payments helping to pay for what they needed (70% compared to

60% in 2023) and controlling their finances (67% compared to 61% in 2023) (Supplementary Tables 5.1-6.2).

In 2024, Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment<sup>1</sup> respondents gave higher scores for all impact statements. (For Adult Disability Payment, scores increased from 62-63% to 68-72% and for Winter Heating Payment, scores increased from 51-57% to 66-72% (Supplementary Tables 5.1-5.3).

### **Impact of payments: Five Family Payments**

Respondents who said they had received Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant, or Best Start Foods payments in the last year were asked about the impact of these payments. On a scale of zero to ten, respondents were asked how much the payments had:

- Helped their child take part in social or educational opportunities
- Had a positive impact on their child's health and wellbeing
- Helped them to purchase milk and/or healthy food for their child
- Helped them financially at key stages of their child's life (for example, when they were born).

The average score for each of these statements was eight out of ten. Table 5 shows that, for each statement, more than two thirds (67%-76%) of respondents gave a high score. A particularly large proportion (76%) of respondents gave high scores for the statement that payments positively impacted their child's health and wellbeing.

**Table 5: Impact of Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payments received in the last 12 months**  
(number of respondents=1,256-1,285)

| Score        | Helped your child take part in social or educational opportunities | Had a positive impact on your child's health and wellbeing | Helped you to purchase milk and/or healthy food for your child | Helped you financially at key stages of your child's life |
|--------------|--|--|--|---|
| Low (0-3)    | 8%   | 7%   | 9%   | 13%   |
| Medium (4-7) | 25%  | 17%  | 18%  | 20%   |
| High (8-10)  | 67%  | 76%  | 72%  | 67%   |

For each benefit, more than two thirds (67%-82%) of respondents gave high scores for all statements about the impact of the Five Family Payments (Supplementary Tables 6.1-6.4).

For the statement 'payments had a positive impact on your child's health and wellbeing' responses were similar across benefits. For the other three statements, Best Start Foods respondents were more likely to give high scores (82-85%) and Scottish Child Payment respondents were less likely to give high scores (67-73%) (Supplementary Tables 6.1-6.4).

### **Impact of payments: characteristic differences**

Some groups of respondents were less likely to give high scores for all of the impact statements shown in Tables 4 and 5, including:

- Care experienced respondents (55-68% compared to 68-79% of those who had not been in care) (Supplementary Table 7).
- Respondents who had been granted refugee status to live in the UK (46-71% compared to 68-79% of those who had not been granted refugee status in the UK) (Supplementary Table 8).



## 4.2. Receiving payments

The survey asked respondents whether they had experienced any problems with receiving payments from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months.

The vast majority (91%) of respondents said they had not had any problems. A small proportion (6%) said they had experienced problems with payments (80 respondents) (Supplementary Table 9).

Respondents who had experienced a problem were asked about the kind of problems they had experienced.<sup>6</sup> Respondents were more likely to say they received less money than Social Security Scotland told them they would, rather than more money. Respondents were slightly more likely to receive payments later than they were told, rather than earlier<sup>7</sup>.

More than half of those who answered this question said they experienced a different kind of problem with their payment. These respondents were invited to describe the problem. The most common issue was long waiting times to receive a decision from Social Security Scotland (most referred to an initial application and one mentioned waiting to hear about an appeal). Another theme was respondents saying their payment had been stopped or they had been denied payments they felt they were due. A small number described being overpaid and anxiety about repayment arrangements.

Respondents were asked which benefit(s) they had this problem(s) with. Around two thirds said the problem(s) were with receiving Adult Disability Payment. This is similar to the proportion of survey respondents who received Adult Disability Payment (just over two thirds or 69%). One in ten said they had a problem with receiving Scottish Child Payment. This is half the proportion of all respondents who received Scottish Child Payment (21%).

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<sup>6</sup> If respondents had experienced a problem with their payment(s) on more than one occasion, they were asked about what happened the most recent time something went wrong.

<sup>7</sup> Fewer than 100 respondents answered this question and the following questions about problems with receiving payments. Given the small numbers, results tables are not included for these questions.

Minority ethnic respondents were more likely to have experienced problems with receiving payment(s) compared to white respondents (Supplementary Table 10)<sup>8</sup>.

### **4.3. Contacting Social Security Scotland about problems with payments**

Survey respondents who experienced problems with payments in the last 12 months were asked whether they had any contact with Social Security Scotland about it<sup>9</sup>.

A large majority of those who had problems with their payments said they contacted Social Security Scotland to report it. Respondents were less likely to say they did not have any contact with Social Security Scotland about the problem. A small number said Social Security Scotland contacted them about the problem.

Those who did not tell Social Security Scotland about the problem were invited to say why. Respondents who received their payment early said it was not a problem for them so they did not feel the need to get in touch. A couple of respondents said contacting Social Security Scotland about the problem could be stressful or involve long call wait times. One said they had not yet had time to contact Social Security Scotland and another had not realised there had been a problem until completing this survey. One respondent said the letter they received about an overpayment was 'intimidating' and they borrowed money from a family member to deal with the issue quickly.

"I've been paid days before I was told. I didn't contact [Social Security Scotland because] my memory sometimes is not good, and also because I thought that [having] been paid early Social Security Scotland had reasons to do it, and also that they had everything under control." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

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<sup>8</sup> Fewer than 100 minority ethnic respondents answered this question.

<sup>9</sup> Fewer than 100 respondents answered this question so a results table is not included.

“Takes too long to get through and due to previous experience with them it's not worth the heightened stress.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Funeral Support Payment](#)

### **Respondents' experience of how Social Security Scotland handled the problem**

Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements (see Table 6) about how Social Security Scotland handled the problem with their payments<sup>10</sup>.

Of the 48 respondents, around two thirds (67%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that Social Security Scotland clearly explained what had caused the problem.

Four in ten (40%) agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland clearly explained what would happen next but a similar proportion (38%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

One third (33%) said Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when handling the problem but a similar proportion (31%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

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<sup>10</sup> Note that fewer than 100 respondents answered this question but percentages are used to explain the results and to allow for comparison across the statements.

**Table 6: Respondents' experience of how Social Security Scotland handled the problem with their payments**  
(number of respondents=48)\*

| How much do you agree or disagree that...   | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Not applicable |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Social Security Scotland clearly explained what had caused the problem                  | 15%                     | 15%                        | 67%                           | 4%             |
| Social Security Scotland clearly explained what would happen next                       | 40%                     | 21%                        | 38%                           | 2%             |
| Social Security Scotland treated me with fairness and respect when handling the problem | 33%                     | 29%                        | 31%                           | 6%             |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution.

Of the (48) respondents who had contact with Social Security Scotland about a problem with their payments, 10 respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with how the problem was handled. 30 respondents were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

### **Respondents' comments on how Social Security Scotland handled the problem with their payment(s)**

Respondents were invited to explain why they were or were not satisfied with how Social Security Scotland handled their problem. While a couple of satisfied respondents said their problem was fixed quickly, almost all responses to this question were from dissatisfied respondents.

Several respondents described frustration that it was them who identified the problem and made contact rather than Social Security Scotland noticing the issue and reaching out to the client. Others described not hearing back or waiting a long time for a response when they made contact about the problem. Some found it hard to get in

touch with Social Security Scotland. Similarly, several respondents spoke about needing to contact Social Security Scotland repeatedly before the issue was resolved. Another theme in the comments was respondents waiting too long for the problem to be resolved.

Some respondents described negative experiences with Social Security Scotland staff, such as receiving ‘conflicting information’ or staff not seeming knowledgeable about their benefits. Some said they did not feel listened to or felt they were treated unfairly.

“Despite completing the appropriate paperwork there was a long delay in confirming the continuation of the payment. It took 6 months of constant communication from me to speed this process up. If I had not been so persistent I think it would have taken longer!” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

#### 4.4. Overall experience of receiving payments

Respondents were asked to rate their overall experience of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months.

Table 7 shows that the vast majority (93%) rated their experience as good or very good. A small proportion (3%) said their experience of receiving payments was poor or very poor.

**Table 7: Overall experience of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months**  
(number of respondents=1,406)

| Response options      |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Good or very good     | 93% |
| Neither poor nor good | 4%  |
| Poor or very poor     | 3%  |

Across benefits, more than eight in ten respondents (89-98%) rated their overall experience of receiving payments good or very good (see Table 8). Table 8 shows that respondents' ratings of their overall experience of receiving payments were similar across 2023 and 2024, for all benefits.

**Table 8: Overall experience of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months, by benefit**

% respondents who responded good or very good (number of respondents=33-1,051)

| Benefit                      | 2023  | 2024 |
|------------------------------|-------|------|
| Carer's Allowance Supplement | 96%   | 93%  |
| Best Start Grant*            | 93%   | 97%  |
| Best Start Foods*            | 94%   | 94%  |
| Scottish Child Payment       | 96%   | 94%  |
| Child Winter Heating Payment | 98%   | 98%* |
| Child Disability Payment     | 97%   | 94%  |
| Adult Disability Payment     | 91%   | 93%  |
| Winter Heating Payment       | 92%   | 88%  |
| Carer Support Payment*       | n/a** | 91%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

\*\*Carer Support Payment was rolled out nationally after the 2023 Annual Client Panels Survey

## **Respondents' comments on their experience of receiving payments**

Respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to tell us about their experience of receiving payments from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months.

### **'Straightforward'**

Many respondents spoke positively about the process of receiving payments, describing it as 'straightforward' with 'no issues'. Several said the experience of case transfer was 'seamless'. A large number of respondents said that they received their payments on time and received the correct amounts. These commenters were grateful for the regularity and accuracy of payments.

"My experience was seamless, so there was no difference with payments. Social Security Scotland communication was much better than DWP was." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

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. [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Positive impact of payments**

Another theme was respondents' gratitude for the positive impact of Social Security Scotland payments on their lives. These comments described how the payments helped to relieve financial pressure and money worries for clients and their families. Many mentioned that the payments allowed them to provide for their children.

"These payments make such a huge difference. Helps with bills and food for the kids. It's such a blessing." [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant](#)

“My son has been receiving Child Disability Payment for the last few years and has to switch to Adult Disability Payment because he's turned 19. The money has been a real life saver and helped towards so many things my son needs. It's one less thing to worry about as my son is totally housebound with Autism/mental health difficulties and is still a long way off from being able to apply for college or take on a job, therefore, it will be a great relief and help if he receives Adult Disability Payment as we're still waiting for a decision.” Respondent with experience of Child Disability Payment, Child Winter Heating Payment, Carers Support Payment

“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.” Respondent with experience of Carers Allowance Supplement Payment, Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Payment, Child Disability Payment and Carer Support Payment

### **Suggestions for improvement**

Some responses included suggestions for improving Social Security Scotland's service. These included the need for Social Security Scotland and DWP systems to be more joined up. A few of these respondents described issues with case transfer. Others described situations where they claim benefits from both Social Security Scotland and DWP and one was impacting the other. A few respondents were dissatisfied that their Carer's Allowance payments stopped when they reached State Pension age<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Carers cannot receive the full amount of Carer's Allowance or Carer Support Payment and the State Pension at the same time because they are provided for the same purpose (replacing income lost from employment). These clients do not receive Carer's Allowance or Carer Support Payment payments but have “underlying entitlement” to the benefit. Having underlying entitlement means pension-age carers can be eligible for extra support, such as Pension Credit.



“When child moved from DWP to Child Disability Payment, my Carer’s Allowance stopped as they couldn’t see the Child Disability Payment and took 4 months to fix as the departments refused to communicate with each other.” Respondent with experience of Carers Allowance Supplement, Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment

Another theme in the suggestions for improvement was communication. Some asked for clearer information on their benefit entitlement. Others wanted clearer information on the benefits they receive and advanced notice about changes to their payments.

“If payments change, it would be helpful to be notified about this beforehand instead of only finding out when the payment is in the bank.” Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment

## 5. Accessing extra support as a result of receiving Disability Payments

Respondents who received Adult or Child Disability Payment were asked if they applied for any extra support in the last year as a result of receiving disability payments (see Table 9).

Of those, around four in ten (43%) said they had applied for extra support. The most common type of extra support applied for was a bus pass (22%) followed by council tax reduction (14%).

Of those who selected 'other' and gave a written answer, more than half (42 respondents) said they had applied for a blue badge. Some respondents said they had applied for a rail card. A small number described applying for Carer's Allowance. Others mentioned accessing cinema passes, adaptations to their home and support with utilities and bills.

**Table 9: Types of extra support respondents applied for in the last 12 months\***  
(number of respondents=1,116)

| Response options                        |     |
|---|-----|
| No                                      | 53% |
| Bus pass                                | 22% |
| Council tax reduction                   | 14% |
| Accessible Vehicle and Equipment Scheme | 9%  |
| Road tax reduction                      | 7%  |
| My carer applied for Carer's Allowance  | 5%  |
| Higher rate of housing benefit          | 2%  |
| Other                                   | 7%  |
| Can't remember / Don't know             | 4%  |

\*Respondents could choose more than one answer

Respondents who had used their Social Security Scotland disability payment award to access extra support were asked how easy or difficult this was (see Table 10). Around half (51%) of respondents described this as very easy or quite easy. Around one quarter (23%) said it was neither easy nor difficult and a smaller proportion (19%) found it quite difficult or very difficult.

**Table 10: How easy or difficult it was for respondents to use their Social Security Scotland disability payment award to access extra support**  
(number of respondents=268)

| Response options                  |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Very easy or quite easy           | 51% |
| Neither easy nor difficult        | 23% |
| Quite difficult or very difficult | 19% |
| Can't remember / Don't know       | 7%  |

Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer in the last year were more likely to find it very easy or quite easy (54%) compared to Adult Disability Payment respondents who did not experience case transfer (47%) (see Table 11).

**Table 11: How easy or difficult it was for respondents to use their Social Security Scotland disability payment award to access extra support**  
(number of respondents=103-125)

|   | Very easy or quite easy | Neither easy nor difficult | Quite difficult or very difficult | Can't remember / Don't know |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Adult Disability Payment-<br>no case transfer | 47%                     | 24%                        | 24%                               | 5%                          |
| Adult Disability Payment<br>- case transfer   | 54%                     | 23%                        | 15%                               | 7%                          |

Some respondents were more likely to say it was very easy or easy to use their disability payment award to access extra support, including:

- Women (57% compared to 40% of men) (Supplementary Table 11)
- Respondents aged 35-44 (63% compared to 45-50% of older groups) (Supplementary Table 12)

Table 12 shows that both Adult and Child Disability Payment respondents were less likely to say it was easy or very easy in 2024 compared to 2023 (from 72-76% in 2023 to 50-55% in 2024).

**Table 12: How easy or difficult it was for respondents to use their Social Security Scotland disability payment award to access extra support**  
% respondents who answered very easy or quite easy, (number of respondents=33-252)

| Benefit type             | 2023 | 2024 |
|--------------------------|------|------|
| Child Disability Payment | 76%* | 55%* |
| Adult Disability Payment | 72%  | 50%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents

### Respondents' comments on their experience of applying for extra support

Respondents were invited to tell us about their experience of applying for extra support as a result of receiving Adult or Child Disability Payment.

#### Straightforward experience

Many of the responses said it was straightforward using their award to apply for extra support. Many said it was a positive experience and they faced no problems with it. Several respondents described their award letter as easy to understand and containing all the necessary information to support their application.

“Applied for a Young Scot Card with the disability add on to get free bus travel, it was quick and simple to provide proof. Having the Social Security Scotland package of documents helped a lot as it kept everything I needed in one place, making the whole process a lot smoother.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“The award letter was sufficient and the information is very clear on the front page.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Positive impact of extra support**

Many respondents said they were grateful for their award and for the extra support they received. These respondents described positive impacts on their mental wellbeing and quality of life. For example, some said that mobility aids or discounted transport meant they were able to get out of the house and travel more easily, supporting their independence and preventing isolation. Some described how they had been ‘struggling’ and the extra support had ‘taken a weight of [their] shoulders’.

“The quick processing of the Motability part of my allowance has helped to secure my employment where I have to commute to work. Going onto an automatic car has enabled me to reduce the pain and discomfort felt with manual clutch control where vibration travelled up my leg. I now feel a safer driver as I can reduce the pain medication. The car is also easier to get in and out of and the boot capacity can take my walking frame. Financially I would not be able to buy such a car. Living alone, I now feel more comfortable in driving to visit friends which has improved my mental health due to isolation. Previously the whole aspect of journey and risk assessment put me off leaving the house unless for work.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“[...] 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.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Difficult process**

On the other hand, some respondents described the process of applying for extra support as slow or difficult. Some said it was difficult to gather the documents or complete the forms needed to access support. Some of these respondents said the process was bureaucratic and there was too much paperwork. Others described how the documents they provided when applying for extra support were rejected.

“I’m in the process of applying for a Council Tax discount. The amount of supporting documentation required for this is huge. I don’t have access to a printer or scanner so I need to be accompanied to town to get all the copies needed. This is not an easy task with limited mobility. It would be extremely beneficial if this process could be streamlined in some way.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I have found that some places will not accept the letter and indeed to qualify for a companion bus pass I had three applications rejected, for extremely stupid reasons.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Awareness of eligibility**

Another theme in the responses to this question was about respondents’ awareness of the extra support they are eligible to receive. Most of these comments described respondents not knowing what support is available and suggested that information about eligibility needed to be improved. Some described being unaware until they got their benefit award and received letters or spoke to staff who informed them of the supports available. Others are receiving their award but still don’t know what extra support they are eligible for.

“No one tells you what you can apply for 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.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Social Security Scotland sent me my award letter which also included a list of the extra support I could receive. This made it very easy for me when applying for the road tax reduction where all I had to do was take my award letter to the post office where I then received the deduction. I was advised I only needed to do this the first time and after this it should all go through easily.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## Experiences with organisations providing extra support

Another theme in the responses was respondents describing their experiences with organisations who provide extra support. A few described straightforward applications but most of these comments described problems they faced accessing support from, for example, their local council or the Driver and Vehicles Licensing Agency (DVLA). A few respondents felt that Social Security Scotland and the various support organisations should be more joined up to make accessing extra support more streamlined.

“Perhaps the system could talk to the concession travel card and the blue badge application teams. It would be quicker and easier.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I've recently applied to [Local Authority] for more info on extra support and I'm still waiting to hear back. It would be preferable if Social Security Scotland or local councils employed people whose job it was to make sure applicants were aware of extra support and were automatically entitled to any extra benefits.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## Award decision affected access to extra support

Some respondents disagreed with Social Security Scotland's decision on their disability benefit award, particularly for the mobility component. Several also said it took too long to receive the decision. (These themes came up in responses to other survey questions.) As a result, some respondents were told they were ineligible for extra support which they felt they should be entitled to. Others said waiting too long to receive the decision meant a delay in accessing extra supports.

“Getting a bus pass was easy however, I can't walk to the bus stop currently. I am needing a car on mobility as my current car is not suitable for my disability but I have not been awarded the higher rate due to Social Security Scotland's poor understanding of disabled people's needs.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment, Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Payment, Child Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment](#)

“It's very easy with letter stating that I had it as proof. But due to the delay in processing I did not have proof of award for months and due to that, local authority would not issue my blue badge. This impacted greatly as it prevented being able to go out much.” Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment

## 5.1. Accessible Vehicles and Equipment (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. Through the scheme they can lease a vehicle or other equipment, such as a scooter or powered wheelchair using all or part of their higher or enhanced component of their disability payment.

The survey asked whether, in the last 12 months, respondents had leased a vehicle or equipment through the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme - sometimes known as the ‘motability’ scheme. This question was only put to respondents who said they had received Adult or Child Disability Payments in the last year.

108 respondents had started a new lease in the last year and 88 respondents had continued a lease which started more than 12 months ago (Supplementary Table 13).

Those who said they had used Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme in the last 12 months were asked to consider some statements about their experience.

Table 13 shows that the vast majority said the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme helps them to live independently (92%) and the same proportion said the scheme provides good customer service (92%). More than eight in ten said the scheme offers good value for money (86%) and a good choice of vehicles/equipment (82%).

One tenth (10%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme offers good choice of vehicles/equipment. A smaller proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed with the other statements (1-6%).



**Table 13: Respondents' experience of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme**  
(number of respondents=190-194)

| How much do you agree or disagree that the scheme... | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Can't remember / Don't know |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Offers good value for money                          | 86%                     | 7%                         | 6%                            | 1%                          |
| Offers good choice of vehicles / equipment           | 82%                     | 7%                         | 10%                           | 1%                          |
| Helps me to live independently                       | 92%                     | 6%                         | 1%                            | 1%                          |
| Provides good customer service                       | 92%                     | 5%                         | 3%                            | 1%                          |

When asked to rate their overall experience of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme in the last 12 months, a vast majority (94%) rated it good or very good (see Table 14).

Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer in the last 12 months were less likely to say the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme (Supplementary Table 14):

- offers good value for money (84% compared to 91% of those who did not experience recent case transfer)
- offers good choice of vehicles/equipment (78% compared to 89% of those who did not experience recent case transfer)

However, whether or not they experienced case transfer in the last year, a vast majority of Adult Disability Payment respondents (93-95%) rated their experience good or very good (Supplementary Table 15)<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Results for Child Disability Payment are not reported separately because fewer than 25 Child Disability Payment respondents answered these questions.

Women were more likely to agree or strongly agree that the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme offers good value for money (89% compared to 80% of men) and good customer service (95% compared to 84% of men). Women were also more likely to say their overall experience with the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme was good or very good (96% compared to 89% of men) (Supplementary Table 16).

**Table 14: How would you rate your experience of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme in the last 12 months?**  
(number of respondents=195)

| Response options      |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Good or very good     | 94% |
| Neither good nor poor | 5%  |
| Poor or very poor     | 1%  |

### **Respondents' comments on their experience with the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme**

Respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to say about their experience with the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme.

#### **Positive impact and good customer service**

Many respondents described the positive impacts of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme, saying their vehicles allowed them greater independence and quality of life. A few said they were grateful that the scheme deals with insurance, servicing, MOTs etc. on their behalf, reducing the burden on them. Several respondents said the scheme offered good customer service and described Motability staff as helpful.

“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.”  
Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment

“It’s a fantastic scheme. I wouldn’t have a car if it wasn’t for this scheme. Having a few invisible illnesses I have appointments, surgeries, tests, or meds and rest it makes it hard to focus on other things like cars - they need tyres, MOTs, Service, insurance, breakdown cover etc. so it’s a much easier and safer thing for people like me. I depend on it.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment](#)

“Motability offer a great service. Staff answer calls quickly, are very knowledgeable and could not be more helpful/empathetic.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Affordability and choice of vehicles**

Affordability and choice of vehicle were also key themes in the responses and most of these comments were negative. Several respondents said that advance payments for vehicles which meet their requirements have increased and are too expensive. Some described it as unfair that price was a barrier to accessing a vehicle which met their needs. Some said that the choice of suitable vehicles on offer was limited.

“I need a pasanger-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.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment](#)

“That have limited choice of estate cars which can accommodate a wheelchair and an assistance dog. It is difficult to test drive a specific car and limited knowledge of the vehicles.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Electric vehicles**

A notable theme in the responses to this question was what one respondent named ‘the electric vehicle dilemma’. These respondents were dissatisfied with the scheme’s ‘push’ towards electric vehicles. They felt that the grant schemes and vehicle prices are biased towards electric vehicles. However, some said electric vehicles are

unsuitable because of difficulty accessing chargers or making disability adaptations to these cars. Others felt electric cars were 'unreliable'. Therefore, several respondents said this 'push' to electric serves a political agenda (net-zero targets) at the expense of addressing disabled' people's needs.

"The foundation's grant process seems increasingly aligned with the government's net-zero ambitions, often at the expense of addressing the actual needs of disabled individuals who surrender their benefits to participate in the scheme. [...] It feels like they're more concerned with ticking boxes for the government's green agenda than actually helping me get around. I need a reliable, adaptable vehicle, not a political statement." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Carer's Allowance Supplement](#)

## 6. Change of circumstances

Clients who have applied for or receive certain benefits need to tell Social Security Scotland if their circumstances change. This is so Social Security Scotland can make sure clients get the payments they are entitled to and keep in touch about payments.

The benefits this applies to are:

- Adult Disability Payment
- Child Disability Payment
- Scottish Child Payment
- Best Start Foods<sup>13</sup>

### Types of change of circumstances

Some types of change of circumstances involve updating personal details and won't affect payments. This includes changes to:

- address – within Scotland
- name, pronoun or contact information
- payment details

In this report, we will call these **'simple' changes**.

Whereas, reporting other types of change can impact payments, including changes to:

- personal and/or household circumstances (for example the number of children you look after)
- your or your partner's finances (only relevant to Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Foods)
- accommodation (for example moving into a care home)
- address – moving outside of Scotland
- your or your child's disability, health condition(s) or level of help or care needed (only relevant to Adult and/or Child Disability Payment)

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<sup>13</sup> 34 Best Start Foods respondents said they reported a change of circumstances in the last year and fewer answered the survey's follow up questions about their experience. Due to the small numbers, Best Start Foods was not included in most comparisons by benefit in this section of the report.

These changes can involve the client providing more supporting information and Social Security Scotland reviewing whether the benefit award should change. In this report, we will call these **‘substantial’ changes**.

For some of the survey questions in this section, the results for respondents who reported simple changes will be compared to those who reported substantial changes<sup>14</sup>.

### **Comparisons between benefits and across years**

For some questions, the analysis in this section compares the results of respondents who received different benefits. It is important to remember that some respondents received more than one benefit (see section 4.2 ‘Who took part’). Respondents were asked to answer the change of circumstances survey questions thinking about the most recent change they reported which might have been relevant to just one of the benefits they receive. For example, the survey found that more than two in five Scottish Child Payment respondents said they reported a change in their or their child’s health (Supplementary Table 17). But this is not a type of change Scottish Child Payment recipients are asked to report. The proportion of Scottish Child Payment respondents reporting this change reflects the overlap of respondents receiving both Scottish Child Payment and a disability payment.

Where there are notable differences, the analysis includes comparisons between 2023 and 2024’s survey results for simple changes and substantial changes. Due to small changes in the survey design for 2024<sup>15</sup>, this comparison is not exactly like-for-like.

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<sup>14</sup> 25% of those who reported a change selected ‘other’ to describe the change (see Table 16). These ‘other’ responses are not included in the categorisation of simple changes vs substantial changes.

<sup>15</sup> When the survey asked respondents which types of change they had reported, respondents were given a list of the possible response options to choose from. In 2024, ‘change of address’ was divided into two options: ‘a change of address - within Scotland’ and ‘a change of address – moving out of Scotland’. The latter can result in a review of payments while changing address within Scotland is an simple change. Also, in 2024, ‘change of accommodation’ was added as a new response option. These changes mean that the year-on-year comparison of results is not exactly like-for-like. However, only three respondents selected the new response options ‘change of address - moving outside Scotland’ and ‘change of accommodation’.

However, the changes affect a very small number of respondents so are not likely to affect the meaning of the results. When year on year comparisons are broken down by benefit, Adult Disability Payment is not included because 2023's survey did not breakdown results by case transfer experience.

### 6.1. Reporting a change of circumstances

Respondents who received relevant benefits (listed above) were asked whether they had reached out to report a change of circumstances in the last year. Table 15 shows that more than a quarter (27%) of survey respondents had told Social Security Scotland about a change in that time.

**Table 15:** Whether respondents had told Social Security Scotland about a change(s) of circumstances in the last 12 months  
(number of respondents=1,330)

| Response options |     |
|------------------|-----|
| No               | 70% |
| Yes              | 27% |
| Can't remember   | 4%  |

Of those who reported a change of circumstances, the most common type of change reported was a change in their or their child's disability, health condition(s) or level of help or care needed (47%) (see Table 16).

Among those who selected 'other' and gave a written response, the vast majority were about a change in health condition. These respondents described worsening symptoms and new diagnoses. Another theme in responses was a change in financial circumstances, including changes to employment or receiving different benefits. Other changes mentioned included the death of the benefit recipient, a confirmation of immigration status and a change of contact details.

As shown in Table 17, respondents who had reported a change had most commonly done so by completing an online form (41%), by phoning Social Security Scotland's helpline (22%), or by posting a form (21%).

**Table 16: Types of change of circumstances respondents told Social Security Scotland about in the last 12 months?\***  
(number of respondents=344)

| Response options   |     |
|--|-----|
| A change in your or your child's disability, health condition(s) or level of help or care needed   | 47% |
| A change of address – within Scotland  | 19% |
| A change in other personal or contact information (such as name), or payment details (such as a change in bank account)                                    | 6%  |
| A change in personal and/or household circumstances, for example the number of children you look after, or if you started or stopped living with a partner | 6%  |
| A change in your or your partner's finances, for example other benefits received (such as Universal Credit)  | 6%  |
| A change of accommodation (such as moving into or out of a care home, hospital, hospice, residential education, prison)                                    | 1%  |
| A change of address – moving outside of Scotland   | <1% |
| Other  | 25% |

\*Respondents could choose more than one answer



**Table 17: How respondents told Social Security Scotland about the change of circumstances**  
(number of respondents=343)

| Response options  |     |
|---|-----|
| By completing an online form  | 41% |
| By phoning Social Security Scotland's helpline  | 22% |
| By completing a form and posting it to Social Security Scotland                                   | 21% |
| By completing a form and sending it to Social Security Scotland using the document upload service | 7%  |
| By having a phone appointment with an adviser   | 6%  |
| In person - at an arranged venue or Social Security Scotland office                               | 2%  |
| In person - through a home visit  | 1%  |
| By having a video call appointment with an adviser  | 1%  |

Table 18 shows that respondents who received disability payments were more likely to report a change of circumstances. For both Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment respondents, those who experienced case transfer in the last year were more likely to have reported a change than those who did not experience case transfer (32% compared to 36% for Child Disability Payment, and 26% compared to 32% for Adult Disability Payment).

**Table 18: Respondents who told Social Security Scotland about a change(s) of circumstances in the last 12 months, by benefit**  
(number of respondents=34-477)

| Benefit                                      |     |
|--|-----|
| Best Start Foods*                            | 24% |
| Scottish Child Payment                       | 27% |
| Child Disability Payment - no case transfer* | 32% |
| Child Disability Payment – case transfer*    | 36% |
| Adult Disability Payment - no case transfer  | 26% |
| Adult Disability Payment - case transfer     | 32% |

\* Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Across benefits, it was more common for respondents to report substantial changes compared to simple changes (see Table 19). Among Child Disability Payment respondents who reported a change, nine in ten (90%) reported a substantial change. Around eight in ten (79%) Scottish Child Payment respondents who reported a change reported a substantial change. Among Adult Disability Payment respondents who reported a change, seven in ten (70%) reported substantial changes.

**Table 19: Type of change respondents reported to Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months**

(number of respondents=49-222)

|                           | Simple changes | Substantial changes |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Scottish Child Payment*   | 21%            | 79%                 |
| Child Disability Payment* | 10%            | 90%                 |
| Adult Disability Payment  | 30%            | 70%                 |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

## **6.2. Process of reporting change of circumstances**

Respondents who had told Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances in the last year were asked about that experience.

Table 20 shows that around seven in ten (70%) respondents who reported a change said they were only asked for relevant information when reporting the change and that the process for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was clear (69%).

Almost seven in ten (67%) said they could report the change in the way they wanted to, while two in ten (20%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

Six in ten (60%) respondents who reported a change said filling in or providing information about the change did not take too long while around two in ten (21%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

Similarly, around six in ten (59%) said the form for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was easy to complete. Fewer than two in ten (14%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. One in ten responded 'not applicable' for this statement. This could be because respondents used the phone helpline to tell Social Security Scotland about the change.

**Table 20: Respondents' experience of the process of reporting a change of circumstances**  
(number of respondents=341-348)

|  | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Not applicable | Can't remember / Don't know |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| The form for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was easy to complete and submit <sup>16</sup> | 59%                     | 16%                        | 14%                           | 10%            | 1%                          |
| The process for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was clear                                  | 69%                     | 13%                        | 15%                           | 1%             | 2%                          |
| I was able to tell Social Security Scotland about the change in the way I wanted to                          | 67%                     | 11%                        | 20%                           | 1%             | 2%                          |
| Filling in or providing information about the change did not take too long                                   | 60%                     | 14%                        | 21%                           | 4%             | 2%                          |
| I was only asked for relevant information when telling Social Security Scotland about the change             | 70%                     | 14%                        | 8%                            | 2%             | 5%                          |

As shown in Table 21, respondents who reported simple changes were more likely to agree or strongly agree with all but one of the statements about the process of reporting a change (65-78%), compared to respondents who reported substantial changes (60-69%). The exception was the statement about the form being easy to complete and submit. However, this is because around one quarter (23%) of

<sup>16</sup> This statement replaced a similar statement in the 2023 Annual Client Panels Survey.

respondents who reported simple changes said this statement was 'not applicable'. This might be because they reported the change over the phone.

**Table 21: Respondents' experience of the process of reporting a change of circumstances, by benefit**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=71-196)

|  | Simple changes* | Substantial changes |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| The form for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was easy to complete and submit   | 56%**           | 62%                 |
| The process for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was clear                      | 73%             | 69%                 |
| I was able to tell Social Security Scotland about the change in the way I wanted to              | 77%             | 63%                 |
| Filling in or providing information about the change did not take too long                       | 65%             | 60%                 |
| I was only asked for relevant information when telling Social Security Scotland about the change | 78%             | 67%                 |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

\*\*23% of those who reported simple changes responded 'not applicable' for this statement.

Among those who reported substantial changes, Adult Disability Payment respondents were less likely to agree or strongly agree that the form for reporting the change was easy to complete and submit (57-58% compared to 67-69% of other benefits) (see Table 22).

Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer in the last year were less likely to agree or strongly agree with all the statements about the process of reporting a change (51-60% compared to 57-77% of other respondents).

Scottish Child Payment respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree that:

- the process for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was clear (77% compared to 59-72% of other benefits)
- filling in or providing information about the change did not take too long (69% compared to 51-64% of other benefits)

**Table 22: Respondents' experience of reporting a substantial change, by benefit <sup>17</sup>**

% respondents who agree or strongly agree, (number of respondents=42-76)\*

|  | Scottish<br>Child<br>Payment | Child<br>Disability<br>Payment | Adult<br>Disability<br>Payment –<br>no case<br>transfer | Adult<br>Disability<br>Payment –<br>case<br>transfer |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| The form for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was easy to complete and submit   | 69%                          | 67%                            | 58%   | 57%  |
| The process for telling Social Security Scotland about the change was clear                      | 77%                          | 71%                            | 72%   | 59%  |
| I was able to tell Social Security Scotland about the change in the way I wanted to              | 66%                          | 61%                            | 63%   | 58%  |
| Filling in or providing information about the change did not take too long                       | 69%                          | 64%                            | 57%   | 51%  |
| I was only asked for relevant information when telling Social Security Scotland about the change | 69%                          | 67%                            | 68%   | 60%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Among those who reported a substantial change, 2024 saw a decrease in the proportion of Scottish Child Payment respondents (from 82-90% to 66-77%) and Child

<sup>17</sup> An equivalent table for simple changes only is not included due to the smaller numbers of respondents reporting these changes.

Disability Payment respondents (from 75-82% to 61-71%) who agreed or strongly agreed with all statements about reporting a change (Supplementary Table 18).

### **6.3. How respondents felt about reporting a change**

Respondents who had told Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances in the last year were asked how they felt about reporting the change.

Table 23 shows that more than half (56%) of these respondents said telling Social Security Scotland about the change made them feel anxious while over a quarter (28%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

Around four in ten (43%) of those who told Social Security Scotland about a change were worried it would mean they would lose some or all of their payments while around three in ten (33%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.

Around half (49%) of respondents who reported a change disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were unsure whether they were supposed to report it, while over one quarter (28%) agreed or strongly agreed.

Around six in ten (62%) respondents who told Social Security Scotland about a change were worried that the process of reporting a change would be difficult or long while around two in ten (22%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.



**Table 23: How respondents felt about reporting a change of circumstances**  
(number of respondents=348-350)

| How much do you agree or disagree...   | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Not applicable | Can't remember / Don't know |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Telling Social Security Scotland about the change made me feel anxious                       | 56%                     | 14%                        | 28%                           | 2%             | <1%                         |
| I was worried that reporting the change would mean I would lose some or all of my payment(s) | 43%                     | 17%                        | 33%                           | 6%             | 1%                          |
| I was unsure about whether I was supposed to report the change                               | 28%                     | 16%                        | 49%                           | 6%             | 1%                          |
| I was worried that the process would be difficult or long                                    | 62%                     | 13%                        | 22%                           | 3%             | 1%                          |

Table 24 shows that respondents who reported simple changes were less likely to agree or strongly agree with all statements about feeling anxious, worried or unsure about reporting a change (18-46% compared to 28-68% of those who reported substantial changes).

**Table 24: How respondents felt about reporting a change of circumstances, by type of change**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=72-196)

|  | Simple changes* | Substantial changes |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| Telling Social Security Scotland about the change made me feel anxious                       | 44%             | 58%                 |
| I was worried that reporting the change would mean I would lose some or all of my payment(s) | 29%             | 47%                 |
| I was unsure about whether I was supposed to report the change                               | 18%             | 28%                 |
| I was worried that the process would be difficult or long                                    | 46%             | 68%                 |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Table 25 shows that, among respondents who reported a substantial change, Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer were more likely to say reporting a change made them anxious (71% compared to 52-57% of other benefits). They were also more likely to say they were unsure whether to report the change (33% compared to 24-28% of other benefits).

Among those who reported a substantial change, Child Disability Payment respondents (82%) and Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer (75%) were more likely to be worried that the process of reporting a change would be difficult or long (compared to 63-66% of other benefits).

Among those who reported a substantial change, Adult Disability Payment respondents who did not experience case transfer were less likely to say they worried that reporting the change would mean losing some or all of their payments (43% compared to 49-53% of other benefits).

**Table 25: How respondents felt about reporting a substantial change, by benefit**

% respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=43-76)\*

|  | Scottish Child Payment | Child Disability Payment | Adult Disability Payment – no case transfer | Adult Disability Payment – case transfer |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| Telling Social Security Scotland about the change made me feel anxious                       | 52%                    | 56%                      | 57%   | 71%                                      |
| I was worried that reporting the change would mean I would lose some or all of my payment(s) | 50%                    | 49%                      | 43%   | 53%                                      |
| I was unsure about whether I was supposed to report the change                               | 24%                    | 28%                      | 26%   | 33%                                      |
| I was worried that the process would be difficult or long                                    | 63%                    | 82%                      | 66%   | 75%                                      |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Among respondents who reported simple changes, there was a year on year<sup>18</sup> increase in the proportion who were anxious about reporting the change (from 22% to 44%) and the proportion who worried that reporting the change would mean losing some or all of their payments (from 22% to 29%) (Supplementary table 19).

Among those who reported substantial changes, the proportion of Scottish Child Payment and Child Disability Payment respondents who said reporting a change made

<sup>18</sup> Due to changes in the survey design for 2024, only the statements 'Telling Social Security Scotland about the change made me feel anxious' and 'I was worried that reporting the change would mean I would lose some or all of my payment(s)' are directly comparable across the two years.

them anxious increased in 2024. (From 44% to 52% for Scottish Child Payment and from 44% to 56% for Child Disability Payment.) (Supplementary Table 20).

**Was it clear whether the change could impact your payment(s)?**

Respondents who had told Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances in the last year were asked if it was clear whether the change could impact their payment(s). Half (50%) agreed or strongly agreed. Almost a quarter (23%) disagreed or strongly disagreed and a similar proportion (21%) neither agreed nor disagreed (Supplementary Table 21).

As shown in Table 26, respondents who reported a simple change were more likely to agree or strongly agree (58%) that it was clear whether their payments could be impacted, compared to those who reported substantial changes (51%).

**Table 26: Respondents who agreed or strongly agreed it was clear whether payments could be impacted by the change of circumstances, by type of change<sup>19</sup>**  
% respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=73-196)

|  | Simple changes* | Substantial changes |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| It was clear whether the change of circumstances could impact my payment(s). | 58%             | 51%                 |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Table 27 shows results for respondents who reported substantial changes. Among that group, Adult Disability Payment respondents who did not experience case transfer were less likely to say it was clear whether their payments could be impacted (43% compared to 51-59% of other respondents).

<sup>19</sup> The breakdown of simple and substantial changes depends on how respondents answered the survey question about which changes they reported. If respondents did not answer that question or answered ‘another change’, they are not included in this breakdown.

**Table 27: Respondents who agreed or strongly agreed it was clear whether payments could be impacted by the substantial change they reported, by benefit**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=43-77)\*

|  | Scottish Child Payment | Child Disability Payment | Adult Disability Payment – no case transfer | Adult Disability Payment – case transfer |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| It was clear whether the change of circumstances could impact my payment(s). | 59%                    | 51%                      | 43%   | 56%                                      |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

The proportion of respondents who said it was clear whether their payments could be impacted increased in 2024 for simple changes (51% to 58%) (Supplementary Table 22).

Among those who reported a substantial change, the proportion of Scottish Child Payment respondents who said it was clear increased (53% to 59%) while the proportion of Child Disability Payment respondents remained similar (49% to 51%) year on year (Supplementary Table 23).

### **Respondents' comments on feeling anxious, worried or unsure about reporting a change**

If respondents agreed or strongly agreed with any of the statements about being anxious, worried or unsure about reporting a change (see Table 24) they were then invited to say more about why they felt that way. They were also asked whether there was anything Social Security Scotland could do to make it less worrying.

Some responses were positive. For example, several respondents described Social Security Scotland staff as helpful and respectful. Several said reporting a change of circumstances was seamless and straightforward.

However, this question focused on anxiety, worry and uncertainty, so the vast majority of comments were negative. Multiple themes emerged in these responses.

## Worried about losing payments

Many respondents feared their payments would be reduced or stopped as a result of reporting a change of circumstances. These respondents described how their payments are a 'lifeline' and losing them would leave them unable to afford basic costs of living.

"My mental health condition has worsened and I have provided a psychological report confirming this. Still, the fear is you draw attention to yourself and when reassessed someone considers your situation is not that bad and reduces the payments. Without my Adult Disability Payment, I would be unable to pay my bills or feed and clothe myself." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

"I think it's listening to others. However I provided all evidence as required. I suppose everyone would be anxious as if the support was taken away then what do you do?" [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## Processing times and lack of communication

Long processing times and lack of updates during the wait was a theme across responses to several survey questions.

Many said that it took too long to receive an outcome from their change of circumstances. This wait was stressful and anxiety provoking. Some disability payment respondents said that they were not told how long it would take to complete their review which added uncertainty to the wait. One respondent said the wait is stressful because, when you don't receive a prompt decision 'you assume there are issues with your application, otherwise it would have been dealt with'.

Many respondents described a lack of communication from Social Security Scotland. These respondents said that receiving updates during the change of circumstances process would be reassuring. A few asked for more communication in general. Some mentioned facing difficulties when they tried to get in touch with Social Security Scotland to ask for updates, such as long call wait times for the helpline

“Process was longwinded and felt some of questions asked were a little odd perhaps. There was no timescale indicated for how long a Adult Disability Payment benefits review will take therefore has been causing me some anxiety and concern about the outcome and delay has not been helpful particularly because expectations not set at outset.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“More contact would be helpful. I have not been contacted since I moved from Personal Independence Payment and I have advised you of change of circumstances twice and only spoke to someone when I called myself which took 40 minutes to speak to someone who just told me I have to wait until I hear from someone.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Negative past experiences**

Some respondents described negative past experiences which made them feel anxious about reporting a change of circumstances. Some of these responses described negative experiences with the DWP which left them worried about dealing with social security applications or afraid of losing payments.

“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.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“In the past I've had terrible experiences with universal credit that left me suicidal. That feeling of panic and fear never left me.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment](#)

Others described negative past experiences when they felt Social Security Scotland mishandled their case or errors were made. For example, one respondent described how they were not sent the forms they were promised and an error meant they had to complete the form more than once. A smaller number described negative interactions

with Social Security Scotland staff, described as, 'rude', 'rushed' or 'lacking understanding'.

"The first decision case manager did not even look at my changes or the supporting information I sent in. As the responses did not reflect what I had reported. I was told no supporting information suggested I couldn't walk a certain distance. What more supporting information is expected. I had submitted physio input, falls clinic and everything." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

"The person who contacted me after I filled the online form seemed uninterested in my worsening condition." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Lack of trust in Social Security Scotland's decision making in awarding disability benefits**

A theme in responses to this question was respondents' lack of trust in Social Security Scotland's decision making in awarding disability benefits. Some doubted that Social Security Scotland understood or were knowledgeable about their health condition. Others suspected that the information they provided was not properly taken into account during decision making. Some felt they were not awarded enough points when assessing their disability, leaving them with payments which were too low. These respondents felt they were not listened to or worried that they were not believed.

"I was worried that they weren't knowledgeable regarding my health changes." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

"My mobility needs changed greatly and I worried that my whole award would be stopped. I feel like they did not consider my disability properly and my award was not appropriate to my level of disability." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)



“[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.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **The process of reporting a change was difficult**

When describing the process of reporting a change of circumstances a small number of respondents said they were unsure about whether to report their change. For example, a few said they were not sure the change was ‘relevant’ or ‘sufficient’ enough to report. Others expressed general uncertainty about what kinds of changes are supposed to be reported.

“I was not sure whether the changes I was reporting were sufficient to be bothering telling you about.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

Another theme was respondents’ difficulties with completing the forms. Some said the forms were ‘confusing’ or ‘difficult’ and others said the questions were ‘repetitive’ or ‘misleading’. A small number of respondents mentioned problems with using the online system, including being unable to complete the online form or upload supporting documents.

“I found it difficult to find the form online to fill in a change of address as I felt it was very confusing.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment](#)

“I found that the questions were repeated over just worded different I felt anxious that they were trying to make it harder to fill in.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

A few respondents were worried about completing the change of circumstances form ‘incorrectly’. These respondents worried about not providing the necessary information

or not giving ‘the correct answers’. Others found it hard to explain themselves and it was difficult to communicate their circumstances through the form.

“You feel unsure and anxious because you are not sure you are writing or saying the correct answers. It would be better to have someone to help fill in the forms on a face to face basis.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“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.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment](#)

“Oh, when i filled in the online form, it is limited to 1000 characters, which was not enough to explain my symptoms in some areas. I spent a lot of time trying to edit certain answers, so filling in the paper form was preferable as I could write everything I wanted and print it out. More space would be much better.”  
[Respondent with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant, Best Start Goods, Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Reporting a change was emotionally challenging**

Some respondents said that having to explain their circumstances or disability is emotionally hard and exhausting. Some of these comments said reporting a change made them feel ‘embarrassed’ about their condition or ‘guilty for being ill’. Others felt ‘judged’ or fearful that they would be seen as a ‘fraud’.

“It's a lottery as to whom you speak to, some staff you have are lovely others tones and harsh responses leave you feeling anguished. Also it's exhausting having to prove your child's condition and care.” [Respondent with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement, Child Winter Heating Payment, Child Disability Payment](#)

“Trying to explain how illness impacts on my life on a form is difficult and when I called with further info I landed up crying trying to explain.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

Finally, some respondents explained that their worry or anxiety around the change of circumstances was part of a wider context of anxiety. Some said they were prone to anxiety and the change of circumstances process triggered it. Others highlighted that worsening physical or mental health in itself is emotionally challenging. Similar things were said about being in financial difficulty. So, reporting a change can take place at an already anxious time.

“I am normally an anxious person anyway, and I feel like an impostor, so asking for something makes me feel terrible. There was nothing you could have said or done that would have helped.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I was feeling low at the time because my disability was getting worse. I was afraid I wouldn’t be believed but very relieved when everything went well.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## **6.4. Providing supporting information for a change of circumstances**

### **When and how respondents provided supporting information**

Respondents who had told Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances were asked about their experience of providing relevant supporting information.

Of those who reported a change, around two in five (43%) submitted their supporting information online. Around one in five (22%) of those who reported a change sent supporting information through the post. Less than 5% said they provided it in person (4%) or another way (5%) (Supplementary Table 24).

Of those who provided supporting information, eight in ten (80%) respondents did so when they first told Social Security Scotland about their change of circumstances. One in ten (10%) of those who provided supporting information did so both when they reported the change and again after being contacted by Social Security Scotland (Supplementary Table 25).

### **Respondents' experience of providing supporting information**

Respondents who provided supporting information for the change of circumstances were asked to consider a set of statements (see Table 28).

Of those, around three quarters (74%) of respondents said it was clear what information they needed to provide, and a larger proportion (78%) said it was clear why that information was needed.

Around two thirds (67%) of those who provided supporting information said it was easy to provide and a smaller proportion (60%) felt it was easy to get the supporting documents they wanted.

One third (33%) of respondents who provided supporting information said that they were asked to provide supporting information that they had provided previously. A similar proportion (34%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

**Table 28: Respondents' experience of providing supporting information**  
(number of respondents=229-232)

| How much do you agree or disagree...  | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Can't remember / Don't know | Not applicable |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| It was clear what information I should provide  | 74%                     | 11%                        | 13%                           | 1%                          | <1             |
| It was clear why the supporting information or documents were needed  | 78%                     | 8%                         | 11%                           | 1%                          | 1%             |
| I was asked to provide supporting information that I had already provided Social Security Scotland previously | 33%                     | 17%                        | 34%                           | 5%                          | 10%            |
| It was easy to get the supporting information or documents I wanted   | 60%                     | 17%                        | 21%                           | -                           | 2%             |
| It was easy to provide the supporting information or documents to Social Security Scotland                    | 67%                     | 14%                        | 17%                           | 1%                          | 1%             |

Table 29 shows that respondents who had reported an simple change were more likely to agree or strongly agree with all the statements about supporting information, compared to those who reported substantial changes. This means those who reported simple changes were more likely to be positive about the clarity of what documents were needed and why, and the ease of getting and providing them. But they were also

more likely to say they were asked to provide supporting information they had already provided previously.

**Table 29: Respondents' experience of providing supporting information, by type of change**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=32-143)

|   | Simple changes* | Substantial changes |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|
| It was clear what information I should provide  | 91%             | 71%                 |
| It was clear why the supporting information or documents were needed  | 88%             | 77%                 |
| I was asked to provide supporting information that I had already provided Social Security Scotland previously | 39%             | 31%                 |
| It was easy to get the supporting information or documents I wanted   | 79%             | 56%                 |
| It was easy to provide the supporting information or documents to Social Security Scotland                    | 79%             | 63%                 |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Table 30 shows that, among those who reported a substantial change, Scottish Child Payment respondents were more likely to say it was clear what information they should provide (82% compared to 71-77% of other benefits).

Among those who reported substantial changes, Adult Disability Payment respondents (who did and did not experience recent case transfer) were less likely to say it was

easy to provide the supporting information (63% compared to 68-69% of other benefits).

Among those who reported substantial changes, Adult Disability Payment respondents who did not experience case transfer were less likely to say it was easy to get the supporting information they wanted (44% compared to 63-64% of other benefits).

Among those who reported substantial changes, Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer were less likely to say it was clear why the supporting information was needed (67% compared to 80-89% of other benefits).

Among those who reported substantial changes, Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer were most likely to say they were asked to provide supporting information they had provided previously (39%) while Child Disability Payment respondents were least likely to agree or strongly agree with this statement (14%).

**Table 30: Respondents' experience of providing supporting information related to a substantial change of circumstances, by benefit**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=33-58)\*

| How much do you agree or disagree...  | Scottish Child Payment | Child Disability Payment | Adult Disability Payment – case transfer | Adult Disability Payment – no case transfer |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| It was clear what information I should provide  | 82%                    | 77%                      | 71%                                      | 75%   |
| It was clear why the supporting information or documents were needed  | 89%                    | 80%                      | 67%                                      | 85%   |
| I was asked to provide supporting information that I had already provided Social Security Scotland previously | 24%                    | 14%                      | 39%                                      | 29%   |
| It was easy to get the supporting information or documents I wanted   | 64%                    | 64%                      | 63%                                      | 44%   |
| It was easy to provide the supporting information or documents to Social Security Scotland                    | 68%                    | 69%                      | 63%                                      | 63%   |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Among those who reported simple changes, the proportion who said it was easy to get the supporting information they wanted and it was easy to provide the supporting information increased from 2023 to 2024 (67-74% to 79%) (Supplementary Table 26).



For Scottish Child Payment and Child Disability Payment respondents who reported substantial changes, the proportion who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements about supporting information decreased (from 41-87% to 24-82%<sup>20</sup> for Scottish Child Payment and from 47-92% to 14-80% for Child Disability Payment) (Supplementary Table 27). This means a decrease in satisfaction with the clarity of what documents are needed and ease of providing them, but also a decrease in being asked to provide information they had already provided.

### **Asking Social Security Scotland to collect supporting information on your behalf**

Respondents who had reported a change in their or their child's disability, health condition(s) or level of help or care needed were asked about whether they requested Social Security Scotland to collect supporting information on their behalf (see Table 31).

More than half (54%) of these respondents did not ask Social Security Scotland to collect supporting information on their behalf. Of those who did, a large majority asked for this when they reported their change of circumstances. A small number asked for information to be collected on their behalf at another time.

Around half of respondents who had asked for supporting information to be collected on their behalf said they asked because they thought Social Security Scotland would know better what information to collect<sup>21</sup>. A slightly smaller proportion thought Social Security Scotland could collect information faster. Almost one third of respondents thought Social Security Scotland would be able to get information that they couldn't get themselves. A smaller proportion said they wanted to provide the supporting information but couldn't do it themselves.

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<sup>20</sup> The proportion of Scottish Child Payment respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'It was clear why the supporting information or documents were needed' remained similar across 2023 and 2024 (from 91% to 89%). For all other statements, the decrease was notable.

<sup>21</sup> A results table is not included here because fewer than 100 respondents answered the question.

Some respondents gave another reason for asking Social Security Scotland to collect information on their behalf. Several of these respondents wanted Social Security Scotland to speak to the recipient's doctor to support their case.

**Table 31: Whether, and when, respondents asked Social Security Scotland to collect supporting information on their behalf**  
(number of respondents=159)

| Response options  |     |
|---|-----|
| No  | 54% |
| Yes - when I first told Social Security Scotland about the change   | 26% |
| Yes - both when I first told Social Security Scotland about the change and when Social Security Scotland contacted me | 4%  |
| Yes - when Social Security Scotland contacted me to ask for further information                                       | 3%  |
| Can't remember / Don't know   | 13% |

### Promotional information

Respondents who had told Social Security Scotland about a change were asked whether they had had seen any information about reporting a change of circumstances or providing supporting information in the last 12 months. Table 32 shows that almost one third (31%) did not remember seeing any information. Around four in ten (42%) saw information on Social Security Scotland's website or on mygov.scot. One in ten (10%) got information from a health professional.

Among those (11%) who said they had seen information elsewhere, many had seen it in letters from Social Security Scotland and several mentioned their award letters in particular. Others had received the information from Social Security Scotland while completing a review. Some respondents had seen information in communications from DWP. A few mentioned receiving information from other organisations such as their council, housing association or a support group. Several respondents described change of circumstances as 'common sense' and said they already knew the types of

change they needed to report. For some of these respondents this knowledge came from their experience of claiming benefits over the years. A small number were employees of Social Security Scotland or DWP so had knowledge through their job.

**Table 32: Where did you see information about change of circumstances or supporting information**  
(number of respondents=350)

| Response options  |     |
|---|-----|
| Social Security Scotland website or mygov.scot  | 42% |
| I don't remember seeing any information   | 31% |
| From a health professional (e.g. GP, health visitor)                                  | 10% |
| Advice through a council, school, charity, advice service, etc.                       | 7%  |
| Another organisation's website, social media, newsletter, or information stand        | 3%  |
| Social Security Scotland social media page (e.g. Facebook, X)                         | 3%  |
| Advert (e.g. TV, radio, online, newsletter)   | 2%  |
| On the news (on TV, online, newsletter, radio)  | 2%  |
| On a leaflet or poster I saw at, e.g. a library, GP surgery, school, community centre | 2%  |
| Somewhere else  | 11% |

## 6.5. Outcome of change of circumstances

### Receiving the outcome of a change of circumstances

Respondents who told Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances were asked about the outcome of reporting the change.

Of those who reported a change, two thirds (66%) said Social Security Scotland had confirmed that the change of circumstances reported had been processed. Around one third (35%) said it had not yet been confirmed (Supplementary Table 28)

Among respondents who had received confirmation, six in ten (60%) said Social Security Scotland had processed the change within a reasonable time frame. Over a quarter (27%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (Supplementary Table 29).

Table 33 shows that respondents who reported simple changes were more likely to say their change was processed within a reasonable timeframe (80% compared to 54% of those who reported substantial changes).

**Table 33:** How much respondents agree or disagree that Social Security Scotland processed the change within a reasonable time frame  
(number of respondents=51-110)

| Response options              | Simple change* | Substantial changes |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Agree or strongly agree       | 80%            | 54%                 |
| Disagree or strongly disagree | 10%            | 34%                 |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Among those who reported substantial changes, Scottish Child Payment respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree that their change was processed within a reasonable timeframe (see Table 34).

**Table 34: How much respondents agree or disagree that Social Security Scotland processed their substantial change within a reasonable time frame, by benefit**  
(number of respondents=19-45)\*

|   | Agree or strongly agree |
|---|-------------------------|
| Scottish Child Payment                      | 65%                     |
| Child Disability Payment                    | #                       |
| Adult Disability Payment – case transfer    | 49%                     |
| Adult Disability Payment – no case transfer | 42%                     |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

# Number of respondents is too small to report

Among respondents who reported simple changes, the proportion who said their change was processed in a reasonable timeframe increased in 2024 (65% to 80%) (Supplementary Table 30).

Among those who reported substantial changes, the proportion of Scottish Child Payment respondents who said it was processed within a reasonable timeframe decreased in 2024 (73% to 65%) (Supplementary Table 31).

### **Whether the change impacted respondents' payments**

Respondents whose change of circumstances had been processed were asked if the change had impacted their payments<sup>22</sup>. As shown in Table 35, of those whose change of circumstances had been processed, around two fifths (39%) said Social Security Scotland had confirmed that their payments would not change. A similar proportion (41%) said their payments had increased as a result of reporting a change of circumstances. Less than one in ten respondents said their payments had decreased (7%) or stopped (8%).

<sup>22</sup> Questions about whether and how the change of circumstances impacted payments were only given to respondents who said they had reported a type of change which can affect payments. These questions were not put to respondents who reported only simple changes.

**Table 35: Impact of change of circumstances on respondents' payment(s)\***  
(number of respondents=108)

| Responses  |     |
|--|-----|
| No - Social Security Scotland confirmed my payment(s) would not change | 39% |
| Yes - My payment(s) increased  | 41% |
| Yes - My payment(s) decreased  | 7%  |
| Yes - My payment(s) stopped  | 8%  |
| Yes - I received another payment or benefit                            | 4%  |
| Not applicable   | 5%  |
| Can't remember / don't know  | 1%  |

\*Respondents could choose more than one answer

Respondents whose change of circumstances had been processed were asked whether Social Security Scotland had clearly explained the way their payment(s) would or would not be affected and why their payments would or would not change<sup>23</sup>.

Among respondents whose payments were affected by reporting a change of circumstances, around eight in ten (82%) felt Social Security Scotland clearly explained the way their payments would be impacted. A similar proportion (80%) said it was clearly explained why payments would be affected (see Table 36).

Among respondents whose payments were not impacted after reporting a change of circumstances, almost three quarters (73%) said it was clearly explained that there would be no change to their payments while around one in ten (13%) disagreed or strongly disagreed (see Table 37). Almost six in ten (58%) respondents said it was clearly explained why their payments would not be affected while almost two in ten (19%) disagreed or strongly disagreed (see Table 37).

<sup>23</sup> Note that 60 respondents were in the group whose payments were affected by their change of circumstances and 40 respondents' were not affected. Despite low numbers, percentages are used to explain the results and allow comparison.

The results in Tables 36 and 37 show that respondents whose payments were not affected were less likely to say it was clearly explained how their payments would not be affected and why, compared to those whose payments were affected by the change.

**Table 36: Respondents' experience of reporting a change of circumstances impacting payments**  
(number of respondents=60)\*

| How much do you agree or disagree...   | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Can't remember / Don't know |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Social Security Scotland clearly explained the way your payment(s) would be impacted | 82%                     | 7%                         | 8%                            | 3%                          |
| It was clearly explained why your payment(s) would be affected                       | 80%                     | 3%                         | 13%                           | 3%                          |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

**Table 37: Respondents' experience of reporting a change of circumstances not impacting payments**  
(number of respondents=40)\*

| How much do you agree or disagree...  | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Can't remember / Don't know |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Social Security Scotland clearly explained that there would be no change to your payment(s) | 73%                     | 15%                        | 13%                           | -                           |
| It was clearly explained why your payment(s) would not be affected                          | 58%                     | 20%                        | 20%                           | 3%                          |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

## Whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the decision on their change of circumstances

Respondents whose change of circumstances had been processed were asked if they agreed with the decision about how their payments would or would not be affected (see Table 38). Among those whose payments were affected by the change of circumstances, almost nine in ten (87%) agreed with the decision and just over one in ten (13%) disagreed. Whereas, among those whose payments were not affected by the change, more than half (56%) agreed and more than two in five (44%) disagreed with the decision.

**Table 38:** Whether respondents agreed with the decision that their payment(s) would/would not change following the change of circumstances  
(number of respondents=41-61)\*

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| Respondents whose payments were affected     | 87%   | 13%      |
| Respondents whose payments were not affected | 56%   | 44%      |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Those who disagreed with the decision on their change of circumstances were invited to say why. Almost all of the responses said that the decision did not reflect the severity of the respondent's health condition. These respondents felt their payments were lower than they should be to match the level of care needed. Another theme was respondents saying that their supporting information was ignored or not properly taken into account by decision makers.

"As my condition deteriorated I expected to receive more points but stayed on the same." Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment

"My disability needs were greater than the level awarded." Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment



“I gave evidence online of new changes of circumstances but felt this was not looked into.” Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment

## 6.6. Overall experience of change of circumstances

All respondents who had reported a change were asked whether Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with their change of circumstances. More than two thirds (68%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had been treated with fairness and respect. Around one in five (19%) neither agreed nor disagreed and a smaller proportion (13%) disagreed or strongly disagreed (Supplementary Table 32).

As shown in Table 39, nine in ten (90%) respondents who reported a simple change said they were treated with fairness and respect compared to six in ten (60%) of those who reported substantial changes.

**Table 39:** How much respondents agree or disagree that Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with the change they reported  
% respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=72-194)

| Response options              | Simple changes* | Substantial changes |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Agree or strongly agree       | 90%             | 60%                 |
| Neither agree nor disagree    | 8%              | 23%                 |
| Disagree or strongly disagree | 1%              | 17%                 |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Among those who reported substantial changes, Child Disability Payment respondents were less likely to say Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with their change (43% compared to 58-63% of other benefits) (see Table 40).

Among respondents who reported substantial changes, there was a year-on-year decrease in the proportion of Scottish Child Payment respondents (82% to 63%) and Child Disability Payment respondents (76% to 43%) who felt treated with fairness and respect when dealing with their change (see Table 40).

**Table 40: How much respondents agree or disagree that Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with their substantial change**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=44-75)\*

| Benefit                                     | 2023  | 2024 |
|---|-------|------|
| Scottish Child Payment                      | 82%   | 63%  |
| Child Disability Payment                    | 76%   | 43%  |
| Adult Disability Payment – case transfer    | n/a** | 63%  |
| Adult Disability Payment – no case transfer | n/a** | 58%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

\*\*2023's survey did not breakdown result by case transfer experience

Respondents who reported a change were asked to rate their overall experience of telling Social Security Scotland about their change of circumstances and (where applicable) having it processed. Of those who reported a change of circumstances, around three in five (61%) respondents rated their overall experience good or very good. Around one in five (21%) rated it poor or very poor and a similar proportion (18%) said it was neither poor nor good (Supplementary Table 33).

Table 41 shows that respondents who reported simple changes were more likely to rate their experience good or very good than those who reported substantial changes (77% compared to 54%).

**Table 41: Overall experience of telling Social Security Scotland about the change in your circumstances by change type**  
(number of respondents=71-193)

| Response options      | Simple changes* | Substantial changes |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Good or very good     | 77%             | 54%                 |
| Neither good nor poor | 15%             | 18%                 |
| Poor or very poor     | 7%              | 27%                 |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

Table 42 shows that, among those who reported substantial changes, Child Disability Payment respondents were less likely to rate their overall experience of change of circumstances good or very good (41% compared to 55-62% of other benefits).

Among those who reported substantial changes, there was a decrease in the proportion of Scottish Child Payment (69% to 62%) and Child Disability Payment respondents (60% to 41%) who rated their overall experience of change of circumstances as good or very good (see Table 42).

**Table 42: Overall experience of telling Social Security Scotland about substantial changes by benefit**  
% respondents who rated their experience good or very good (number of respondents=44-75)\*

|   | 2023  | 2024 |
|---|-------|------|
| Scottish Child Payment                      | 69%   | 62%  |
| Child Disability Payment                    | 60%   | 41%  |
| Adult Disability Payment – no case transfer | n/a** | 55%  |
| Adult Disability Payment – case transfer    | n/a** | 57%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

\*\*2023's survey did not break down results by case transfer experience

## **Respondents' comments on their overall experience of change of circumstances**

Respondents who told Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances were asked if there was anything else they would like to tell us about their overall experience of reporting a change and (where applicable) having it processed.

### **Processing times**

The biggest theme in responses was long processing times (which was a theme in responses for several survey questions). Respondents described waiting several months for an outcome from their change of circumstances. Many said this wait was stressful. A couple of respondents would have liked an estimate of how long the wait would be.

“Still waiting on answers even though my health is deteriorating.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I found the time frame from reporting the change to getting a decision quite long. This led to further anxiety on my part.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Poor communication from Social Security Scotland**

Some respondents described poor communication from Social Security Scotland. Some said there was a lack of updates which made waiting for a decision more stressful. (This was a theme in responses to several survey questions). While some mentioned receiving automated messages, several respondents said they wanted to receive confirmation when they submitted forms or supporting information.

“It would be better to get a notification that you have received my information/review submission. It would stop me worrying that you’ve not received it?” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment](#)

“They did not reply to my letter and backup documents and it took several calls to get through to speak to someone also the monies did not change but the situation is worse and no one could tell me if I can get further assistance.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Process of reporting a change**

Another theme in responses was positive comments about the change of circumstances process. These respondents described the process as ‘easy’ and ‘respectful’ and had a positive experience. Several were grateful that they could apply online and found the online process straightforward. Some made comparisons with past experiences with DWP and said they were treated with more ‘humanity’ and ‘respect’ during the process with Social Security Scotland.

“Although I was disappointed that my points did not increase I still found the online process really easy.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Telephone team were great and did their best to get the answer I needed but like earlier mentioned the paperwork hasn't followed through [...] Other than that it has been an easier process with Social Security Scotland than DWP ever was. Your team seem to have it right, thank you.” [Respondent with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement, Adult Disability Payment and Carer Support Payment](#)

Negative responses described the process of submitting a change of circumstances as ‘overwhelming’ or ‘complicated’. Some mentioned that there were too many forms and they needed to be simplified. A few had issues with the online system, including the document upload service. A small number of respondents said Social Security Scotland had made errors or mishandled their case. For example, two respondents had been overpaid and one said their claim was lost.

“As mentioned previously the online process was quite complicated and lengthy and the response time was long.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Simplify the form. It puts you off applying.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Decision making for disability benefits**

Another theme was comments about Social Security Scotland’s decision-making, particularly for disability benefits. (This theme also came up in responses to other survey questions – see section 7.3 ‘How respondents felt about reporting a change’). Some felt they were not listened to when they tried to explain their circumstances. A couple said that a doctor’s account of their circumstances should not be superior to the respondent’s own explanation. Whereas others felt the views of medical professionals were not taken seriously enough. Similarly, a few comments said their supporting information was not properly taken into account when making a decision about their benefit award.

“I just don’t believe that Social Security Scotland takes in to account the person they are talking to just because they have details on the system from the doctors. Because they say you’re walking about and seem good when you go for an appointment. They don’t spend 24/7 with you so how can anyone say how you are after your appointment? No one apart from yourself can say how you feel. [...]”  
[Respondent with experience of Child Winter Heating Payment, Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment](#)

“You should listen to the professionals. When a surgeon recommends knee replacement it means the patient’s condition is worsening.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Please ensure telephone assessors have access and take into account the full background of health issues not just recent changes.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

A small number of respondents talked about disagreeing with Social Security Scotland’s decision following a change of circumstances. These respondents felt their award did not match their level of need. For example, some felt they should be eligible

to receive the mobility part of Adult Disability Payment but the decision did not award it to them.

“Some parts of the change I disagreed with, the mobility side never changed but circumstances I felt should have increased it.” [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment and Adult Disability Payment](#)

“The young gentleman phone assessor was good. He was empathetic and made me feel I was being treated fairly. However I did not agree with the mobility element side of things that i was rewarded, as I genuinely struggle and need my car.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Interactions with staff**

Comments about interacting with Social Security Scotland staff about a change of circumstances were largely positive. These respondents described staff as ‘helpful’, ‘polite’, and ‘respectful’. A smaller number described negative interactions with staff for example, receiving conflicting or incorrect information. Comments about interactions with staff are analysed in section 9.3 ‘Contact with Social Security Scotland Staff’.

## 6.7. Not telling Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances

Respondents who said they had not reported a change of circumstances in the last 12 months were asked whether they had considered reporting a change. Of this group, more than one in ten (12%) said they had considered telling Social Security Scotland about a change in the last year (see Table 43).

**Table 43: Whether respondents considered telling Social Security Scotland about any changes in circumstances**  
(number of respondents=967)

| Response options |     |
|------------------|-----|
| No               | 82% |
| Yes              | 12% |
| Can't remember   | 6%  |

Adult Disability Payment respondents were more likely to say they had considered reporting a change (14% compared to 9% of Child Disability Payment and 9% of Scottish Child Payment respondents<sup>24</sup>) (Supplementary Table 34).

Among the Scottish Child Payment respondents who said they considered reporting a change, around one in five had also received Adult or Child Disability Payment. So, of those who considered reporting a change, almost all (nine in ten) had received a disability payment in the last year.

### Respondents' comments on deciding not to tell Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances

Respondents who decided not to tell Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances were asked what made them decide not to report it. A variety of reasons were given.



## **Fear of losing payments**

A common response was fear of losing some or all of their payments as a result of reporting the change. Some of these respondents said that even though their health had deteriorated, it was too big a risk to report it because a change of circumstances can result in a change in payments.

“I am afraid in case I lose my award I have, although my conditions have worsened the stress of this would have too big an impact on me. The waiting times for a reply are very long and this would also increase my anxiety.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I told the Social Security Scotland about a change in my circumstances last year and waited approx 6 months before i knew anything and nothing changed. I have difficulties doing most chores in the house, doing shopping and my breathing is bad now. However trying to tell someone on a form how bad my life has got is not easy the type of questions that are asked are general. I have had to go to Social Work departments for adaptations in my home as I cannot afford them. I also have the fear that my benefits can be stopped as i am reminded of that a lot when I call. This is very off putting.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## **‘It won’t make a difference’**

Another common reason was respondents believing that reporting the change would not affect their payments. Several of these respondents said it would be ‘futile’ or a ‘waste of time’ to report the change because it would not change their level of payment.

“My pain level in my back has gotten a lot worse and also now feeling that the osteoarthritis is affecting my hands. I didn’t inform as didn’t think it would make any change to my claim.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## **Awaiting confirmation**

Some respondents said they had not reported the change because they are waiting for test results, a diagnosis or some other confirmation of their circumstances. A few said their conditions fluctuate. They had not reported the change because they hoped or suspected it would not be a permanent one.

“I have a problem with my leg. I am hoping it will not last more than six months. I did not report it as I hope it won't become a long term issue.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I am losing my sight, but have am not yet registered as Sight impaired. I am waiting for this certification process to be completed before alerting Social Security Scotland.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I don't know if I would be wasting my time as I suffer from a few different illnesses and they all affect me in different ways. Every day is different for me and it is so hard to explain this. I don't think anyone will ever understand it.” [Respondent with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement, Adult Disability Payment and Carer Support Payment](#)

### **Worried and unsure about the process**

Several respondents had avoided reporting the change because they saw the process as too difficult or long. These respondents were put off by the stress and effort that would be involved in reporting the change. A few mentioned the challenge of finding time to report a change while they go through health changes.

“The fear of having to wait up to a year to find out if the change of circumstances would be a positive or negative impact on the award. It is a long time to wait and worry. A decline in health is stressful as it is without the possible year long worry.” [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Payment, Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Condition has worsened but have put off telling Social Security Scotland as the process is too stressful and would probably not lead to any change in benefit.” [Respondent with experience of Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment](#)

Some respondents were not sure of the kind of change they should report and others were not sure how to go about reporting a change. Others mentioned negative past experiences with DWP or Social Security Scotland which made them reluctant to report a change. These respondents were wary of how difficult the process would be or whether they could trust Social Security Scotland to make a fair decision about the change.

“I’m not sure if new health condition is relevant.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I did and each time it caused an IT bug. They kept changing dates I claimed for, last I heard I was awaiting my decision . Nothing since. I need to work now to eat. Pain still there zero dignity left. What's the point you’re clearly not capable of following your own procedures.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Review due**

A small number of respondents said they had not reported the change because they were due to have their benefit award reviewed soon<sup>25</sup>. Three respondents said Social Security Scotland staff had advised them not to report a change.

“I was advised by the handler dealing with my original application in 2023 that there was no need to contact Social Security Scotland before my review date in January 2025.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“My health issues have gotten worse since award. But due a review soon.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

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<sup>25</sup> Official guidance says clients must report change of circumstances straight away. Section 72 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 says it's an offence not to tell Social Security Scotland about relevant change of circumstances.

Respondents who had not submitted a change of circumstances were asked if they understood the type of changes they need to tell Social Security Scotland about (see Table 44). Almost nine in ten (88%) agreed or strongly agreed while 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. More than eight in ten (82%) said they would know how to tell Social Security Scotland about a change while 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 44:** How much respondents who had not reported a change agreed or disagreed with statements about changes in circumstances  
(number of respondents=946-952)

|  | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| I understand the type of changes I need to tell Social Security Scotland about       | 88%                     | 6%                         | 4%                            | 2%         |
| I would know how to tell Social Security Scotland about a change in my circumstances | 82%                     | 8%                         | 8%                            | 2%         |

## 7. 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<sup>26</sup>). When a client first receives their award decision letter, it tells them when their review is due. Social Security Scotland will contact clients to let them know when their review is coming up and will then send a review form to complete when the review is due. The review form is the same as the form for reporting substantial changes discussed in the previous 'Change of Circumstances' section.

The survey asked Adult and Child Disability Payment respondents whether Social Security Scotland had contacted them in the last year to say their review was due. Almost one quarter of respondents (23%) had been informed that their Adult Disability Payment was due for review. 5% had been contacted about their upcoming review for Child Disability Payment (Supplementary Table 35).

Among those who said they had been contacted about an upcoming review in the last 12 months, more than half (56%) said they had completed the review and received a new decision about their benefit award. More than a quarter (27%) had completed the review form and were awaiting a response from Social Security Scotland. Less than one in ten (8%) were awaiting the review form and a smaller proportion (2%) had received the form but not yet completed it (Supplementary Table 36).

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<sup>26</sup> If a client is given an indefinite award, their award is not reviewed unless they report a change of circumstances.

## Respondents' experience of the review process

Respondents who had completed the review form were asked to think about their experience of the review process and respond to a set of statements. As shown in Table 45, more than eight in ten (80-83%) of those respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:

- they were treated with fairness and respect
- it was clear what the review process involved
- it was easy to provide the necessary information
- they trusted Social Security Scotland to make a fair decision about their award

Less than one in ten (4-8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with these statements.

**Table 45: Experience of the review process**  
(number of respondents=230-235)

|   | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Not applicable | Can't remember / Don't know |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| I was treated with fairness and respect                                   | 81%                     | 10%                        | 4%                            | 5%             | -                           |
| It was clear what the review process involves                             | 83%                     | 11%                        | 5%                            | 2%             | -                           |
| It was easy to provide the necessary information                          | 80%                     | 12%                        | 8%                            | 1%             | -                           |
| I trusted Social Security Scotland to make a fair decision about my award | 81%                     | 13%                        | 5%                            | 0%             | 0%                          |

Table 46 shows that those who experienced a review of Adult Disability Payment were less likely to say it was clear what the review process involved (82%) and it was easy

to provide information (79%) compared to Child Disability Payment (88% and 88% respectively). However, respondents having their Adult Disability Payment reviewed were more likely to say they were treated with fairness and respect (83%) compared to Child Disability Payment (73%).

**Table 46: Experience of the review process**  
% respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=40-206)

|   | Adult Disability Payment | Child Disability Payment* |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| I was treated with fairness and respect                                   | 83%                      | 73%                       |
| It was clear what the review process involves                             | 82%                      | 88%                       |
| It was easy to provide the necessary information                          | 79%                      | 88%                       |
| I trusted Social Security Scotland to make a fair decision about my award | 81%                      | 78%                       |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

### Respondents' comments on their experience of completing a review

The survey asked respondents whether there was anything else they would like to say about their experience of completing a review.

### Overall positive

Some respondents had a positive experience, describing it as 'straightforward'. They described staff as 'helpful' and 'patient' and the forms were 'easy' to complete.

"Very easy and straightforward to complete." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

"At all times I was treated with kindness. Being hearing impaired my husband had to speak on my behalf on all occasions but we were never rushed as he relayed my queries." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## Negative past experiences with DWP

Some described negative past experiences with DWP which made them fearful and anxious about the review process. Most of these respondents said their experience with Social Security Scotland had been more positive.

“There is still a fear, stress and anxiety experienced during this process which spills over from the experiences of Personal Independence Payment.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“My son will always have autism and the Scottish government has treated him far better than the horrendous DWP.” [Respondent with experience of Carer’s Allowance Supplement and Adult Disability Payment](#)

## Long processing time and poor communication

A strong theme in the responses was comments about reviews taking too long. Respondents also mentioned that they had not received any updates or confirmation that their documents had been received. (These themes came up in responses to several survey questions). A small number of respondents faced difficulties trying to contact Social Security Scotland, including technical difficulties with uploading documents online.

“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).” [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Payment and Child Disability Payment](#)

“There is no email after to say it's been submitted or received so I have been worrying every day.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)



“I was unable to upload any proof of my new health condition and haven’t been asked for it.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Problems with the process: forms, supporting information, decision making**

Several respondents were critical of the review process, describing it as ‘long’ and ‘complicated’. These respondents said it was difficult to complete the forms. Some struggled with knowing what information to provide and how to get the relevant supporting information. Others said the information they gave was not considered. Some disagreed with Social Security Scotland’s decision making and felt they had not been properly assessed or listened to.

“The form was difficult to fill in and I had to ask for help as I have a mental health disorder so I found the form confusing in certain parts.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“My new evidence and changes were ignored.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Feel like my own words will be used against me and our son when doing the [review]. It’s difficult to write about your child and be able to highlight every single thing correctly with the correct wording. Wondering who looks at these forms. Are the assessors fair, trained and unbiased?” [Respondent with experience of Carer’s Allowance Supplement, Child Winter Heating Payment, Child Disability Payment](#)

### **Emotionally challenging**

Others explained that the review process was emotionally challenging. These respondents said they worried about being overpaid or having their payments reduced. Some described the process as stressful.

“It takes forever for review to be assessed and meanwhile constant worry in case being overpaid.” Respondent with experience of Carer’s Allowance Supplement, Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment, Winter Heating Payment and Carer Support Payment

“Review process upsets my son who has schizophrenia - he worries his payments will be taken away.” Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment

## 8. Communications with Social Security Scotland

### 8.1. Receiving communication from Social Security Scotland

All respondents were asked whether they had received communication from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months (excluding communication about research).

As shown in Table 47, around one third (32%) had not received any communication. Almost half of respondents (47%) said they had received communication via letter. This was the most common form of communication for all benefits (Supplementary Table 37). Less than one in ten (7%) had received email communication. A smaller proportion (2%) had received text messages or phone calls.

**Table 47: Whether respondents received any communication from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months**  
(number of respondents=1,442)

| Response options            |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| No                          | 32% |
| Yes – letter                | 47% |
| Yes – email                 | 7%  |
| Yes – text (SMS)            | 2%  |
| Yes – phone call            | 2%  |
| Can't remember / Don't know | 10% |

#### Expected communication

Respondents who did not receive any communication from Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months were asked whether they had expected to receive any. More than eight in ten (84%) did not expect any communication (Supplementary Table 38).

Those who expected to receive communication were asked what they expected. Many respondents expected to receive a decision letter. Several respondents were waiting to receive a copy of their award letter rather than getting the decision for the first time.

Some respondents expected information on their eligibility for other benefits or extra support. Some expected an update on the progress of their application, change of circumstances or review. Others expected information about starting a review of their award. Some respondents expected to receive information about their benefits, including routine updates or reminders about their benefits and notifications of any changes.

### **Respondents' satisfaction with the communication they received**

Those who had received communication in the last 12 months were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about the level, usefulness and format of the communication. A large majority of respondents were positive about all statements (see Table 48).

Almost eight in ten (79%) agreed or strongly agreed that they received the right level of communication. Around one in ten (11%) neither agreed nor disagreed and a similar proportion (9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

More than eight in ten said the communication they received was useful (84%) and that they had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with them (81%). For both of these statements, less than one in ten (5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

More than eight in ten (85%) said Social Security Scotland communicated with them in the format they asked for. Less than one in in ten (3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 48: Experience of receiving communication from Social Security Scotland**  
(number of respondents=828-831)

|   | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Not applicable | Can't remember / Don't know |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| I received the right level of communication from Social Security Scotland   | 79%                     | 10%                        | 10%                           | <1%            | 1%                          |
| The communication I received was useful                                     | 84%                     | 10%                        | 5%                            | <1%            | 1%                          |
| I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me | 81%                     | 10%                        | 5%                            | 0%             | 4%                          |
| Social Security Scotland communicated with me in the format I asked for     | 85%                     | 7%                         | 3%                            | 1%             | 3%                          |

The proportion of respondents who agreed with the statements about the level and usefulness of communication decreased in 2024 for some benefits, including Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Payment and Child Disability Payment (from 82-89% in 2023 to 74-82% in 2024) (Supplementary Tables 39.1-39.3).

The proportion of Adult Disability Payment respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements about level, usefulness and choice of communication increased in 2024 (from 68-77% in 2023 to 78-83% in 2024) (Supplementary Tables 39.1-39.3).

Respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'Social Security Scotland communicated with me in the format I asked for' were asked what format they would have preferred.

The most common responses were email (10 responses) and letter (6 responses). A small number said email or phone and one said SMS would be preferable. A couple of

respondents suggested they would like an online 'portal' or 'account' where they receive messages from Social Security Scotland.

## **8.2. Contacting Social Security Scotland**

Survey respondents were asked whether they had tried to contact Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months (excluding for research purposes). Around three in five (58%) said 'no' while around one third (34%) said 'yes' (Supplementary Table 40).

### **How and why respondents contacted Social Security Scotland**

Of those who had made contact, three quarters (75%) used Social Security Scotland's phone helpline (see Table 49). This was the most common method of contact for all benefits. Almost one third (31%) had used webchat and one in ten (10%) had sent a letter.

6% of respondents had tried to contact Social Security Scotland another way. Most of these respondents said they used email. Several said they tried to make contact 'online'. Others specifically mentioned using 'online forms' for example, an online application or a feedback box on a website. A couple said they had made contact via the complaint procedure.

**Table 49: Ways respondents have contacted or tried to contact Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months\***  
(number of respondents=531)

| Response options  |     |
|---|-----|
| By phoning Social Security Scotland's helpline                          | 75% |
| By webchat (through mygov.scot or the Social Security Scotland website) | 31% |
| Letter  | 10% |
| Phone appointment   | 7%  |
| In person - at an arranged venue or Social Security Scotland office     | 4%  |
| In person - home visit  | 2%  |
| Video call appointment  | 1%  |
| Another way   | 6%  |

\*Respondents could choose more than one answer

Among respondents who had contacted Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months, almost two in five (38%) had made contact to get an update or information about an application. Around one third (34%) got in touch to report a change of circumstances or update their information. A quarter (25%) made contact to get advice or general information and around one in five (18%) made contact to complete an application (see Table 50).

Around one in ten (11%) respondents said they made contact for another reason. Among these responses, the most common reason was requesting a copy of the benefit award letter. Some mentioned this was needed as evidence to support an application for extra support such as a bus pass renewal. Some respondents said they made contact to get support with completing an application and others were looking for advice or information about their payments. Others said they got in touch to follow up on contact they had received from Social Security Scotland, for example, responding to a letter they got about their benefit.

**Table 50: Reasons for contacting Social Security Scotland\***  
(number of respondents=523)

| Response options  |     |
|---|-----|
| To get an update or information about an application                                  | 38% |
| To report a change of circumstances or update your information                        | 34% |
| To get advice or general information (including about eligibility)                    | 25% |
| To complete an application  | 18% |
| To ask for or discuss a review, re-determination or appeal                            | 13% |
| To get an update or information about your payment(s) (for example, dates or amounts) | 11% |
| To make a complaint   | 6%  |
| To provide feedback or a suggestion   | 4%  |
| Other   | 11% |

\*Respondents could choose more than one answer

For Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment (Supplementary Table 41), there was an increase in the proportion of respondents who got in touch to discuss a review, re-determination or appeal (3-6% in 2023 compared to 12-16% in 2024).

For Scottish Child Payment and Child Disability Payment, there was also an increase in the proportion of respondents who got in touch to report a change of circumstances (25% and 31% in 2023 compared to 34% and 40% in 2024).

For most benefits, the proportion making contact to get advice or general information, to complete an application or to get an update on an application decreased from 2023 to 2024 (Supplementary Table 41).



## Respondents' experience of contacting Social Security Scotland

Respondents were asked to think about the most recent time they contacted Social Security Scotland. As shown in Table 51, more than three quarters (78%) said they were able to contact Social Security Scotland in the way they wanted to while 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

More than two thirds of respondents said they got the support they needed (67%) and that it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland (68%). One in five (20%) disagreed with these statements.

Three in five (60%) agreed or strongly agreed that their query was dealt with in a timely manner. More than one in ten (12%) neither agreed nor disagreed and more than one quarter (27%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 51: Respondents' experience of contacting Social Security Scotland**  
(number of respondents=527-532)

| How much do you agree or disagree...                            | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Can't remember / Don't know | Not applicable |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| I got the support (information or advice) I needed              | 67%                     | 12%                        | 20%                           | 1%                          | 1%             |
| My query or issue was dealt with in a timely manner             | 60%                     | 12%                        | 27%                           | <1%                         | 1%             |
| I could contact Social Security Scotland in the way I wanted to | 78%                     | 9%                         | 13%                           | 1%                          | <1%            |
| It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland                 | 68%                     | 11%                        | 20%                           | <1%                         | <1%            |

Table 52.3 shows that respondents who received Child Disability Payment were less likely to agree or strongly agree that:

- they got the support they needed (54% compared to 64%-71% of other benefits)
- their query was dealt with in a timely manner (52% compared to 60%-69% of other benefits)

The proportion of Child Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment respondents who agreed with these statements decreased in 2024 compared to 2023 (from 73-78% to 54-67% for 'I got the support I needed' and from 63-69% to 52-63% for 'My query was dealt with in a timely manner') (see Tables 52.2 and 52.3).

Whereas, Table 52.5 shows there was an increase in the proportion of Adult Disability Payment respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that:

- they got the support they needed (60% to 67%)
- their query was dealt with in a timely manner (54% to 60%)
- they could contact Social Security Scotland in the way they wanted to (72% to 78%)

Year on year, the proportion of respondents who agreed that 'It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland' increased for Child Disability Payment (54% to 64%), Adult Disability Payment (62% to 68%) and Winter Heating Payment (63% to 75%) (see Tables 52.3, 52.4 and 52.5).

**Table 52.1: Respondents' experience of contacting Social Security Scotland, by benefit – Carer's Allowance Supplement**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=64-65)\*

|   | Carer's Allowance Supplement |      |
|---|------------------------------|------|
|   | 2023                         | 2024 |
| I got the support (information or advice) I needed              | 73%                          | 71%  |
| My query or issue was dealt with in a timely manner             | 69%                          | 67%  |
| I could contact Social Security Scotland in the way I wanted to | 89%                          | 82%  |
| It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland                 | 70%                          | 74%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

**Table 52.2: Respondents' experience of contacting Social Security Scotland, by benefit – Scottish Child Payment**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=99-122)

|   | Scottish Child Payment |      |
|---|------------------------|------|
|   | 2023                   | 2024 |
| I got the support (information or advice) I needed              | 78%                    | 67%  |
| My query or issue was dealt with in a timely manner             | 69%                    | 63%  |
| I could contact Social Security Scotland in the way I wanted to | 85%                    | 81%  |
| It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland                 | 68%                    | 72%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

**Table 52.3: Respondents' experience of contacting Social Security Scotland, by benefit – Child Disability Payment**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=71-79)\*

|   | Child Disability Payment |      |
|---|--------------------------|------|
|   | 2023                     | 2024 |
| I got the support (information or advice) I needed              | 73%                      | 54%  |
| My query or issue was dealt with in a timely manner             | 63%                      | 52%  |
| I could contact Social Security Scotland in the way I wanted to | 80%                      | 78%  |
| It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland                 | 54%                      | 64%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

**Table 52.4: Respondents' experience of contacting Social Security Scotland, by benefit – Winter Heating Payment**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=30-51)\*

|   | Winter Heating Payment |      |
|---|------------------------|------|
|   | 2023                   | 2024 |
| I got the support (information or advice) I needed              | 70%                    | 68%  |
| My query or issue was dealt with in a timely manner             | 53%                    | 62%  |
| I could contact Social Security Scotland in the way I wanted to | 79%                    | 80%  |
| It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland                 | 63%                    | 75%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

**Table 52.5: Respondents' experience of contacting Social Security Scotland, by benefit – Adult Disability Payment**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=173-402)

|   | Adult Disability Payment |      |
|---|--------------------------|------|
|   | 2023                     | 2024 |
| I got the support (information or advice) I needed              | 60%                      | 67%  |
| My query or issue was dealt with in a timely manner             | 54%                      | 60%  |
| I could contact Social Security Scotland in the way I wanted to | 72%                      | 78%  |
| It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland                 | 62%                      | 68%  |

**Table 52.6: Respondents' experience of contacting Social Security Scotland, by benefit – Carer Support Payment**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=26-28\*)

|   | Carer Support Payment |
|---|-----------------------|
|   | 2024                  |
| I got the support (information or advice) I needed              | 64%                   |
| My query or issue was dealt with in a timely manner             | 69%                   |
| I could contact Social Security Scotland in the way I wanted to | 89%                   |
| It was easy to contact Social Security Scotland                 | 64%                   |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

### Respondents' comments on contacting Social Security Scotland

Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed with one of the statements about contacting Social Security Scotland (see Table 51) were asked to say more about what was difficult or disappointing about making contact. Respondents were also invited to say what, if anything, would make it easier.

## Webchat and call wait times

A large number of responses were about long call wait times when contacting Social Security Scotland by phone. Some said the waiting times to get through to an advisor via webchat were also too long. Some described their phone call or webchat being disconnected. A few said they were unable to get through to an advisor.

“I made 2 calls and waited almost an hour. Webchat I tried several times over 3 days to get into the queue.” Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment

“The length of time on hold and also had the phone cut off twice and had to call back.” Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment

## Query unresolved

Several respondents said that when they contacted Social Security Scotland, their query was not resolved. Some were frustrated that advisers did not give them the information they wanted, such as how long their review would take. Some disliked that, instead of resolving the query over the phone, helpline advisers redirected them to complete a form or told them to wait for contact from Social Security Scotland. A few said that Social Security Scotland did not follow up in the way they said they would, for example, some respondents did not get a call back as promised.

“Being on hold for extensive periods of time and being passed around many people then inadvertently being cut off and having to start the process all over again. When getting through then being told I will get a call back and the call back never happening.” Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment

“Extremely long waiting times and even though I explained the change in my medication increasing I was told I had to submit a form so I wasn’t given the option to speak to anyone and it meant I waited hours to just be diverted.” Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment

### **Can't contact Social Security Scotland in the way I want to**

Another theme in responses was respondents feeling unable to contact Social Security Scotland in the way they wanted to. Some mentioned they would prefer using email rather than phoning but could not find an email address. Others wanted to speak to someone but were directed to use the website or email. A few respondents were unsure how to make contact or struggled to find contact details they needed.

"They don't answer phone [and] when they do, I am put on hold. Restricted contact. There needs to be email please. It would help so much. Talking on phone is embarrassing if you are asked about personal hygiene email you are just writing it down its perfectly non personal." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

"I was referred to the website and I am not able to do this comfortably so it is offputting when you are forced to go online to see your information and logins and passwords are difficult to set up." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **8.3. Contact with Social Security Scotland staff**

Respondents were asked to think about the staff they had contact with the last time they were in touch with Social Security Scotland. They were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with a list of statements about that experience (see Table 53). A majority (70-81%) of respondents was positive about all statements.

A particularly large proportion (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated with kindness. A similar proportion (79%) of respondents said staff listened to them.

Three quarters (75%) of respondents said staff made them feel comfortable. A similar proportion (73%) said they trusted staff and that staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits and services (73%).

Seven in ten (70%) respondents said they felt trusted. This statement had the highest proportion of disagree or strongly disagree responses (11%).

**Table 53: Respondents' most recent experience of contact with Social Security Scotland staff**  
(number of respondents=530-532)

| How much do you agree or disagree...  | Agree or strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or strongly disagree | Can't remember / Don't know | Not applicable |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| I was treated with kindness   | 81%                     | 11%                        | 5%                            | 1%                          | 3%             |
| I felt trusted  | 70%                     | 15%                        | 11%                           | 1%                          | 3%             |
| I trusted staff   | 73%                     | 15%                        | 9%                            | 2%                          | 2%             |
| Staff listened to me  | 79%                     | 9%                         | 9%                            | 1%                          | 2%             |
| Staff made me feel comfortable  | 75%                     | 12%                        | 9%                            | 1%                          | 3%             |
| Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits and services | 73%                     | 12%                        | 8%                            | 2%                          | 5%             |

Table 54 shows that Adult Disability Payment respondents who had not experienced case transfer in the last year were more likely to agree or strongly agree with all statements compared to Adult Disability Payment respondents who did experience case transfer. For example, they were more likely to say:

- they trusted staff (76% compared to 68% of those who experienced case transfer)
- staff made them feel comfortable (78% compared to 72% of those who experienced case transfer)

Year on year, the proportion of Adult Disability Payment respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'staff were knowledgeable' increased (from 61% in 2023 to 72% in 2024) (Supplementary Table 42.6). For the other statements, results



were similar across the two years for Adult Disability Payment respondents (Supplementary Tables 42.1-42.5).

Table 54 also shows that Child Disability Payment respondents were less likely to agree or strongly agree that:

- they felt trusted (64% compared to 69%-82% of other respondents)
- staff made them feel comfortable (67% compared to 72%-86% of other respondents)

**Table 54: Respondents' experience of recent contact with Social Security Scotland staff, by benefit**  
 % respondents who agree or strongly agree (number of respondents=28-203)

| How much do you agree or disagree...  | Carer's Allowance Supplement* | Child Disability Payment* | Winter Heating Payment* | Carer Support Payment* | Adult Disability Payment – no case transfer | Adult Disability Payment – case transfer | Five family payments |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---|--|----------------------|
| I was treated with kindness   | 88%                           | 79%                       | 80%                     | 86%                    | 82%   | 79%                                      | 88%                  |
| I felt trusted  | 77%                           | 64%                       | 77%                     | 75%                    | 69%   | 69%                                      | 75%                  |
| I trusted staff   | 77%                           | 67%                       | 71%                     | 75%                    | 76%   | 68%                                      | 78%                  |
| Staff listened to me  | 83%                           | 71%                       | 74%                     | 79%                    | 79%   | 76%                                      | 83%                  |
| Staff made me feel comfortable  | 86%                           | 67%                       | 85%                     | 79%                    | 78%   | 72%                                      | 79%                  |
| Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits and services | 79%                           | 66%                       | 75%                     | 71%                    | 74%   | 70%                                      | 78%                  |

For several statements, the proportion of Child Disability Payment respondents who agreed or strongly agreed decreased from 2023 to 2024 (Supplementary Table 42.2, 39.4-39.6):

- I felt trusted (78% to 64%)
- Staff listened to me (80% to 71%)
- Staff made me feel comfortable (81% to 67%)
- Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits and services (75% to 66%)

For most statements, the proportion of Five Family Payments respondents who agreed or strongly agreed was similar year on year. But for two statements, the proportion decreased between 2023 and 2024 (Supplementary Table 42.2, 42.5):

- I felt trusted (81% to 75%)
- Staff made me comfortable (85% to 79%)

Respondents were asked to rate their overall experience with the Social Security Scotland staff they had contact with last time they were in touch. As shown in Table 55, more than three quarters (78%) rated their experience good or very good. One in ten (10%) rated it poor or very poor and a similar proportion (12%) said their experience was neither good nor poor.

**Table 55: Respondents’ overall experience of their most recent contact with Social Security Scotland staff**  
(number of respondents=530)

| Response options      |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Good or very good     | 78% |
| Neither good nor poor | 12% |
| Poor or very poor     | 10% |

For most benefits, around eight or nine in ten respondents (78%-89%) rated their recent experience with staff good or very good. A smaller proportion of respondents

who received Child Disability Payment (69%) gave a good or very good rating (Table 55).

As shown in Table 56, for most benefits, the responses to this question were similar across 2023 to 2024. However, the proportion of Child Disability Payment respondents who rated their experience good or very good decreased (83% to 69%) from 2023 to 2024.

**Table 56: Respondents' overall experience of their most recent contact with Social Security Scotland staff, by benefit**  
% respondents who said good or very good (number of respondents=28-401)

|                               | 2023  | 2024 |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|
| Carer's Allowance Supplement* | 86%   | 83%  |
| Scottish Child Payment        | 86%   | 81%  |
| Child Disability Payment*     | 83%   | 69%  |
| Adult Disability Payment      | 77%   | 78%  |
| Winter Heating Payment*       | 80%   | 78%  |
| Carer Support Payment*        | n/a** | 79%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

\*\*Carer Support Payment was rolled out nationally after the 2023 Annual Client Panels Survey

### Respondents' comments about Social Security Scotland staff

The survey asked respondents if there was anything else they would like to tell us about their most recent experience with Social Security Scotland staff.

### Positive comments about staff

A majority of the responses were positive about staff. Staff were described as 'helpful', 'understanding', 'patient' and 'kind'. Some were satisfied that their query had been resolved by staff.

“Anytime I have contacted Social Security Scotland I have been treated very well and found the experience to be very positive and helpful and have got a lot of information and felt a great deal of support.” [Survey respondent \(benefit experience unknown\)](#)

“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.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Staff didn’t help**

On the other hand, some respondents said that staff did not help them with their query. For example, some said staff were unable to tell them how long their application or review would take to be processed. Among these comments, a few respondents were still positive about staff manner even when their query was unresolved. However, others described the staff they spoke to as dismissive or lacking compassion.

“Staff would not provide help and support with regards to the criteria options so I could further explain my condition using their accepted terminology. I had to ask money matters to help me, which I think is a waste of resources having a helpline thats not helpful.” [Survey respondent \(benefit experience unknown\)](#)

“The advisor I spoke to on the phone was lovely and assured me my review was being dealt with as had been passed to decision maker. He couldn’t tell me how long it would take though that’s not his fault.” [Respondent with experience of Child Disability Payment](#)

“Some staff are patient and listen to you and are able to advise you on what to do or the next step, while some are not patient at all and just tell you to wait or call back even if it’s an issue needing you to talk to someone.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Staff didn't follow up**

Some responses mentioned that Social Security Scotland did not follow up on client contact in the way they said they would. For example, not calling back or sending out documents as promised.

“Staff were helpful when I spoke to them but didn't do the thing they said they would.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Although the staff member I spoke with was very polite and helpful she promised to call me back with an update a few days later which I have still not received 9 days after she said she would.” [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment and Adult Disability Payment](#)

## 9. Overall experience with Social Security Scotland

Survey respondents were asked to rate their overall experience with Social Security Scotland over the last 12 months. Table 57 shows that more than eight in ten (82%) respondents rated their overall experience good or very good. Around one in ten (12%) said it was neither good nor poor and a smaller proportion (6%) said it was poor or very poor.

**Table 57: Overall experience with Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months**  
(number of respondents=1,555)

| Response options      |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Good or very good     | 82% |
| Neither good nor poor | 12% |
| Poor or very poor     | 6%  |

As shown in Table 58, more than eight in ten (82-88%) respondents who received Carer's Allowance Supplement, Scottish Child Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment gave a good or very good rating for their overall experience.

A smaller proportion (76%) of respondents who received Child Disability Payment and Child Winter Heating Assistance/Payment gave a good or very good rating.

For most benefits, results for this question were similar across 2023 and 2024. However, the proportion of Child Winter Heating Payment and Child Disability Payment respondents who gave a good or very good rating decreased across the two years (see Table 58).

**Table 58: Overall experience with Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months, by benefit**  
 % respondents who said very or good (number of respondents=33-1,074)

|  | 2023  | 2024 |
|--|-------|------|
| Carer's Allowance Supplement                                   | 88%   | 85%  |
| Best Start Grant*  | 88%   | 91%  |
| Best Start Foods*  | 92%   | 91%  |
| Scottish Child Payment   | 92%   | 88%  |
| Child Winter Heating Assistance / Child Winter Heating Payment | 88%   | 76%* |
| Child Disability Payment                                       | 89%   | 76%  |
| Adult Disability Payment                                       | 79%   | 82%  |
| Winter Heating Payment   | 82%   | 85%  |
| Carer Support Payment*   | n/a** | 81%  |

\*Fewer than 100 respondents, take caution

\*\*Carer Support Payment was rolled out nationally after the 2023 Annual Client Panels Survey

### **Respondents' suggestions for improvement and comments about their overall experience with Social Security Scotland**

The survey asked respondents if they would like to make any suggestions for improvement or provide further comments about their experience with Social Security Scotland in the last 12 months. The responses included themes which came up in responses to other questions across the survey.

#### **Overall positive experience**

Many of the comments were generally positive and said 'thank you' to Social Security Scotland. They described straightforward processes and feeling satisfied with the



service. Respondents said they were supported and respected by Social Security Scotland. Some spoke about the positive impact payments had on their lives. For example, payments helping respondents with a disability to access mobility aids and transport, or supporting parents to provide for their children.

Some respondents highlighted how experiences with Social Security Scotland made them feel. Several described how they felt 'comfortable', 'understood' and 'human'. Some said Social Security Scotland was 'inclusive' and they were treated with 'dignity, fairness and respect'.

"[...] The one thing that is keeping my stress under control when I think about this is knowing that all my experience with you in the past has been positive. You have never asked more than I can give and always been understanding with difficulties I have. Thank you very much for this. It goes a long way to making me feel more relaxed, despite the fact that I don't know what to expect. One thing I can be fairly certain of is that I will be treated with respect and understanding, whatever happens, and that makes a huge difference." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

"[...] Overall, everything is going smoothly, and I want to express my appreciation for the timely payments we've been receiving. They have benefited my son and significantly contributed to his well-being." [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment](#)

## DWP

Another theme in the responses was respondents saying their experience with Social Security Scotland was more positive than with DWP. Several of these respondents said they were poorly treated by DWP and that Social Security Scotland's system is 'more human' and treats them with 'dignity and respect'.

A couple of respondents called for more joined up communication between DWP and Social Security Scotland to prevent errors when a benefit is transferred or when a client receives benefits from both organisations.

“I was moved from Personal Independence Payment over to Social Security Scotland and I found the process to be a lot less stressful than dealing with Personal Independence Payment. I didn't cry once when I was dealing with Social Security Scotland! I feel calm about my benefit now. I was really on edge about it when it was with Personal Independence Payment and I kept considering withdrawing my application because I felt so bad and guilty about my MS and thought that I didn't deserve anything. Everything felt better when I applied to you because of a "change in circumstance" (my mobility deteriorated).” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Please work together with DWP to stop mistakes and as you are the ones making changes surely it is for you to ensure info is correctly passed to all departments not the poor client having to do it.” [Respondent with experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement, Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment, Winter Heating Payment and Carer Support Payment](#)

### **Communication from Social Security Scotland**

A few comments about receiving communications from Social Security Scotland were positive. These respondents said they were ‘happy’ with the communication, describing it as helpful and easy to understand.

However, problems with communications from Social Security Scotland was a key theme in responses to this question and other survey questions. Most of these comments asked for increased communication. Respondents asked for updates on the progress of applications and reviews and confirmation that forms they submitted had been received. A few respondents wanted clearer communication about expected timelines for their application or review. Some respondents suggested an online portal would improve communication during processing times and allow clients to monitor their applications and payments.

“I have always felt the information I have received has been helpful and answered all my concerns” [Survey respondent \(benefit experience unknown\)](#)

“If possible it would be a good idea to inform people of where you are within the review process i.e. your case is in a queue, your case is now being assessed etc. or confirm that you have all relevant documents, or you have received your change of circumstances form. It’s the not knowing that leads to anxiety.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Contacting Social Security Scotland**

Some comments about contacting Social Security Scotland were positive. Several were grateful that they could communicate with Social Security Scotland online, including through online application forms, webchat and the document upload service.

However, most responses on this theme were negative or gave suggestions for improvement. Most of these comments said wait times for getting through to the phone helpline or a webchat advisor were too long. Others suggested there should be a direct number or email address for getting in touch. A few suggested there should be the option to request a call back rather than waiting in a queue.

“[...] Social Security Scotland is a lot better than dealing with DWP I have severe anxiety and don’t like talking on the phone so having the web chat is ideal for people like myself.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment](#)

“Phone wait times can be quite long, I'd like to be able to email if it was something like a change of address. I feel I may be taking up vital space in the queue if I have a minor change or question.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Social Security Scotland Staff**

Almost all the comments which mentioned Social Security Scotland staff were positive. These respondents described staff as helpful, friendly, empathetic and knowledgeable. In the small number of negative comments, a couple of respondents felt staff lacked knowledge or training. A small number said staff gave incorrect or inconsistent information.

“Staff I engaged with were understanding and put me at ease through every step of the transition process.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“The case worker who contacted me to discuss our child was exceptional. She was highly professional and very sensitive when discussing his needs and our circumstances. Thank you for making a difficult conversation more comfortable.” [Respondent with experience of Child Disability Payment](#)

“Staff should either have the knowledge to provide a clear answer to queries, or should know when they don't have information and then know where to obtain that information. They shouldn't be guessing.” [Respondent with experience of Carer's Allowance Support, Winter Heating Payment and Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Submitting forms and supporting information for change of circumstances, re-determinations, etc.**

Several respondents commented on the application process. Some said the application forms were long and difficult to complete and should be simplified. Others had technical problems with, for example, submitting their ID or uploading documents. A small number of respondents said the application questions did not allow them to communicate their condition properly. Some respondents described uncertainty about processes including reporting a change of circumstances. These respondents were unsure what information to report to Social Security Scotland, when to report it, and how. A couple of respondents said it was vulnerable sharing very personal information and receiving a decision they disagreed with was emotionally challenging.

“Please take into account the needs of neurodivergent people. The forms are daunting and hard to answer for someone whose brain does not work in the same way as others.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“Questions should not be so black and white, people's needs are all different not black and white, and I think a little more understanding with this problem would help.” [Survey respondent \(benefit experience unknown\)](#)

“[...] I am unsure of the review process and would like the information about this as soon as possible so I can prepare for it.” [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment](#)

### **Decision making for disability benefits**

The decision making process for disability benefits was a key theme in responses. Respondents felt the process was flawed and their award did not reflect their circumstances and level of need. Some said they did not feel ‘listened to’ or ‘trusted’. Others felt the decision makers lacked understanding of their condition. Some respondents said the questions on the application form did not allow them to communicate the complexity or fluctuations of their condition. Others said that medical experts and supporting information needed to be taken more seriously in decision-making.

“The assessor that I interacted with had little to no understanding of neurodivergence and their assessment was garbage because of that. It has had a significantly damaging effect on me and has seriously harmed my trust in Social Security Scotland.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I think people need to be looked at as an individual not a points scoring system that I don't understand how they get to scoring different categories I would be liked to be looked at as individual.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“They got everything wrong and I’m still fighting and now going to court to get my point back, that I had before they took them away for no reason as my condition is worse. There was no explanation as why they were removed when I called to ask.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## Processing times

Many respondents found processing times too long. This was a theme in written responses across the survey. Some suggested Social Security Scotland needed to employ more staff to 'cope with the backlogs'. Comments said processing times were too long for applications, change of circumstances and reviews.

"Quick to chase up people about submitting reviews but not very quick in processing them." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

"As previously stated, the timescales are appalling. I would imagine more staff would be the answer to this issue." [Survey respondent \(benefit experience unknown\)](#)

## Awareness of eligibility

Some responses recommended more promotion of Social Security Scotland benefits and the extra supports available. In these comments, respondents said they had been unaware of the benefits available to them.

"I feel more information should be made available to clients about what benefits are available. Also how clients can access help and advice, not everyone has access to the internet." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

"This is the first time I've been dependant on benefits. I get Universal Credit and Adult Disability Payment from Social Security Scotland. It's quite confusing as to who does what and how to find out what you're entitled to." [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

## 10. Experience of being a Client Panel member

The Client Panels currently have over 12,000 members<sup>27</sup>. Clients volunteer to join the Client Panels to participate in research about their experiences with Social Security Scotland. The purpose of the research is to help improve Social Security Scotland's services.

The research team who work with the Client Panels send out communications by email, letter and SMS depending on members' preferences. All new Client Panel members receive a welcome message when they join the panel. A newsletter is sent to all members regularly.

For some research projects (like the Annual Client Panels Survey) almost all Client Panel members are sent an invitation to take part. However, some projects have a more specific subject or only need a small number of participants. In those cases, invitations are only sent to a specific group of Client Panel members. For example, in 2024, some Client Panel members were invited to take part in research on:

- the design of Social Security Scotland's letters to clients, including letters leading up to a review period.
- sending an SMS to let clients know to expect a call from Social Security Scotland.
- how we share information about Our Charter with clients.

The Client Panels team publishes full reports and shorter summaries of research findings on the [Social Security Scotland website](#).

The final section of the Annual Client Panels Survey 2024 asked about respondents' experience of being a Client Panel member over the last year.

### Communications from the Client Panels team

The survey asked respondents which communications they had read from the Client Panels team in the last year (Supplementary Table 43). Respondents were most likely to have read an invitation to take part in a survey or research interview (61%). Around

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<sup>27</sup> As of May 2025.

one third had read a Client Panels Newsletter (35%) and similar proportion had read a welcome message (31%). A small proportion (6-9%) had read a research report or summary.

Respondents who said they had read the communications from the Client Panels team were asked to consider a set of statements about the quality of what they read. Across all statements, a large majority of respondents (83-94%) were positive (see Supplementary Tables 44.1-44.4)

For all forms of Client Panels communication, the vast majority (87-94%) said it was easy to understand (Supplementary Tables 44.1.-44.4).

More than eight in ten (86%) respondents said the newsletter was interesting (Supplementary Table 40.1). A similar proportion (83%) said the research report or summary they read was interesting (Supplementary Table 44.3) and that the research they were invited to take part in was interesting to them (83%) (Supplementary Table 44.4).

A large majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the contents of the welcome message was useful (87%) and made it clear what the Client Panels do (93%) (Supplementary Table 44.2).

### **Taking part in Client Panels research**

Those who had received an invitation in the last 12 months were asked whether they had taken part in any Client Panels research in the last year (excluding the Annual Client Panels Survey 2024). Almost one third (31%) said they had participated while more than two in five (45%) said they had not (Supplementary Table 45).

Those who said they had not participated in a survey or research interview – despite being invited – were asked to tell us why they had not taken part (see Table 59). The most common reason (36%) was respondents not noticing the invitation when it arrived or forgetting about it. 14% said the invitations they had received were not relevant to them. A similar proportion said they did not have time to participate (13%) or were not sure how to take part (13%).



Around one quarter (24%) of respondents gave another reason for not participating in Client Panels research. Most of these respondents said they had not received an invitation to participate. Some of this group said that they were new to the panel. Others described their ill health as a barrier which stopped them from participating in research when invited. A small number said the invitation went to their spam folder or was not received in time to allow them to take part. A small number said they had responded to the invitation but were not chosen by researchers to take part in the project<sup>28</sup>.

**Table 59: Reasons for not participating in Client Panels surveys or research interviews**  
(number of respondents=410)

| Response options   |     |
|--|-----|
| I didn't notice the invitation when it arrived or I forgot about it                      | 36% |
| The invitations I've received have not been relevant to me                               | 14% |
| I didn't have time to take part  | 13% |
| Not sure how to take part  | 13% |
| My experience with Social Security Scotland was a long time ago                          | 5%  |
| I have particular needs and it wasn't clear how I could take part in a way that suits me | 4%  |
| Other  | 24% |

### Being a Client Panel member

Finally, the survey asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed that being a member of the Client Panels was worthwhile for them. As shown in Table 60, seven in ten (70%) respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was worthwhile and 2% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

<sup>28</sup> The Client Panels team will usually accept all research participants who accept an invitation to take part in a project. However, sometimes the Client Panels team sends invitations on behalf of other research teams who might have specific requirements for who can participate in their project.

**Table 60: How much do you agree or disagree: Being a member of the Client Panels is worthwhile for me**  
(number of respondents=1,546)

| Response options              |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Agree or strongly agree       | 70% |
| Neither agree nor disagree    | 20% |
| Disagree or strongly disagree | 2%  |
| Can't remember / Don't know   | 5%  |
| Not applicable                | 4%  |

Across benefits, a majority (69-82%) said they felt being a member of the Client Panels was worthwhile (Supplementary Table 46).

### **Respondents' comments about being Client Panel members**

Respondents were asked whether there was anything else they would like to tell us about being a member of the Client Panels.

### **Feeling heard and making a difference**

Respondents said being a Client Panel member allowed them to express their views, share their experiences, and feel heard. They hoped being on the Client Panels would 'help' fellow clients and applicants. Many said they wanted their feedback to inform improvement of Social Security Scotland's services. However, a small number doubted whether their participation would have an impact or if Social Security Scotland would listen to their feedback. Several respondents felt the Client Panels were a good idea and that listening to and acting on client feedback is important.

"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." [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment](#)

“It made me feel listened to as the email stated that the information I had provided had helped. This made me feel like I was making a difference, despite however small.” [Respondent with experience of Scottish Child Payment and Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I’m not sure my views make a difference or that it’s worthwhile taking the time to complete the surveys.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Participation in Client Panels research**

Many said they would like to take part in more Client Panels research. Some said they had not received Client Panels communications or invitations to participate in research. A small number lacked knowledge of the Client Panels, for example, a few did not know if they were a member and others did not know what the Client Panels were.

“I haven’t been asked yet to participate in surveys or other tasks, but I hope I can be of service some time soon.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

“I cannot think of anything I have received that was relevant to me or required my participation.” [Respondent with experience of Adult Disability Payment](#)

### **Benefits of being a member and suggestions for improvement**

Several said they enjoyed being on the Client Panels. Some said it was interesting and kept them informed. Among the suggestions for improvement, a key theme was respondents wanting to see the results of Client Panels research and how the research impacts change.

“They are so interesting and you learn so much from them as much as giving your time to them.” [Survey respondent \(benefit experience unknown\)](#)

“It would help to hear where Client Panel feedback has resulted in actual change to Social Security Scotland approaches.” Respondent with experience of Carer’s Support Payment, Scottish Child Payment and Adult Disability Payment

“Please keep us informed of the survey responses and how Social Security Scotland responds to them so that we know this isn’t simply a cosmetic activity.” Respondent with experience of Winter Heating Payment

## 11. Discussion

The survey aimed to understand what parts of respondents' experiences with Social Security Scotland are working well and not so well. For most parts of the client experience covered in the survey, respondents responded positively. Table 61 summarises some of the overall ratings respondents gave for different experiences.

**Table 61: Overall experience of aspects of client experience in the last 12 months**  
(number of respondents=195-1,546)

|   | Good or very good |
|---|-------------------|
| Receiving payments  | 93%               |
| Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme  | 94%               |
| Telling Social Security Scotland about a change of circumstances and (where applicable) having it processed | 61%               |
| Recent contact with Social Security Scotland staff  | 78%               |
| Overall experience with Social Security Scotland  | 82%               |

### What is working well?

General positivity and praise for the service were common themes in the written responses, across the survey. Annual Client Panels Survey 2024 respondents were positive about the impact of Social Security Scotland payments on their lives. A vast majority (93%) were positive about their experience of receiving payments (see Table 7). This is consistent with Client Survey data which shows that, across benefits, a majority of clients said they received payments when Social Security Scotland said they would (78-98%) and they were paid the right amount every time (87-99%) ([Measuring Our Charter 2023-24](#)).

The Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme was rated positively by a vast majority (94%) of survey respondents (see Table 14). Findings from this survey are

consistent with some of the findings in an [evaluation of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme, published in September 2024](#). The evaluation found that people “had a positive view of the scheme, feeling it is good value for money and offers a good range of choice”. There was also evidence that the scheme was enhancing independence for disabled people. On the other hand, some of the research participants felt there was a lack of choice of vehicles and the scheme did not always meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Most respondents (78%) were positive about their recent interactions with Social Security Scotland staff (see Table 55). Interactions with staff are usually rated highly in the Client Survey which people get when they receive their decision or first payment from Social Security Scotland. For example, in [2023-2024](#), 85% of Client Survey respondents said their experience with staff was good or very good.

A large majority (80-83%) of respondents were also positive about their experience of the review process (see Table 45). The questions on reviews were new additions to the Annual Client Panels Survey in 2024. Repeating these questions in future Annual Client Panel Surveys will allow us to look at trends over time. In November 2024, Social Security Scotland did research with Adult Disability Payment clients about the letters they receive in the lead up to a review. Insights from this research, and previous research on letter designs, have been used to improve the letters.

### **Change of Circumstances**

The survey’s questions about respondents’ experiences of change of circumstances produced some mixed results. Table 61 shows that respondents were less likely to rate their overall experience of change of circumstances highly compared to other aspects of client experience (61% compared to 78-94%).

More than half of respondents said reporting a change of circumstances made them feel anxious and they were worried that the process would be long or difficult. Just under half were worried about losing some of their payments or were unsure whether they were supposed to report the change.

Respondents who reported substantial changes (which can impact payments, as opposed to simple changes) were less likely to be positive about the process of

reporting a change (see Table 21) and more likely to say they were anxious, worried or unsure about aspects of reporting a change (see Table 24). This was reflected in written responses where respondents described fear that reporting a change would reduce or stop their payments.

The process of reporting substantial changes requires more action from the client and tends to take longer than simple changes. It can require the client to provide supporting information and explain their circumstances. Respondents' comments highlighted that the longer processing times were anxiety-provoking and that explaining their circumstances, such as worsening health, was difficult.

### **Case transfer and change of circumstances**

The survey found that Adult Disability Payment respondents who had experienced case transfer in the last year were less likely to be positive about the process of reporting a change of circumstances (see Table 22) and more likely to say they were anxious, worried or unsure about reporting a change (see Table 25).

When a client receiving a disability payment from DWP reports a change to DWP, this can prompt the process of transferring their benefit to Social Security Scotland. For these respondents, their responses about change of circumstances might reflect their broader experience of case transfer. [Client Survey data](#) shows that around half (48%) of respondents said being case transferred make them feel anxious.

While there were differences in responses about the process of reporting a change and how they felt about reporting a change, Adult Disability Payment respondents who did and did not experience case transfer gave very similar ratings for their overall experience of telling Social Security Scotland about a substantial change of circumstances (see Table 42).

Adult Disability Payment respondents who experienced case transfer were more likely to say Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with their change (see Table 40). In written comments, several respondents said their anxiety about reporting a change was due to negative past experiences with DWP and some said their experience with Social Security Scotland was more positive.

### **Trends in satisfaction for different benefits, year on year**

Comparing the Annual Client Panels Survey 2023 and 2024, satisfaction among Adult Disability Payment respondents increased for some parts of client experience. Whereas, there were some decreases in satisfaction among Scottish Child Payment and Child Disability Payment respondents.

In 2024, Adult Disability Payments respondents were more likely to highly rate the impact of Social Security Scotland payments compared to other benefits. Adult Disability Payment respondents' satisfaction with the level and usefulness of the communication they received increased in 2024. Similarly, for some of the statements about contacting Social Security Scotland (see Table 52.5), Adult Disability Payment respondents' were more likely to be positive in 2024 than 2023.

On the other hand, Scottish Child Payment and Child Disability Payment respondents' satisfaction with the level and usefulness of the communication they received decreased in 2024 (Supplementary Tables 36.1-36.3). For some of the statements about contacting Social Security Scotland, Scottish Child Payment and Child Disability Payment respondents were less likely to be positive in 2024 compared to 2023 (see Table 52.2-52.3).

Among Child Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment respondents who reported substantial changes, a decreased proportion said Social Security Scotland treated them with fairness and respect when dealing with the change of circumstances (compared to 2023) (see Table 40). The proportion of these groups who rated their overall experience of change of circumstances as good or very good also decreased year-on-year (see Table 42).

Child Disability Payment respondents' ratings also decreased in 2024 for their experience of recent interactions with Social Security Scotland staff (see Table 56) and their overall experience with Social Security Scotland in the last year (see Table 58).

### **Points for improvement in written responses**

In written responses, respondents often described long processing times and a lack of updates during the wait. These comments referred to applications, change of



circumstances, reviews and re-determinations. Respondents called for more communication from Social Security Scotland, including more updates during processing times. Respondents spoke about this theme in response to many survey questions, describing it as relevant to many parts of the client experience. For example, long processing times were said to delay access to extra supports for those receiving disability payment. Long processing times were also said to make the change of circumstances experience more anxiety provoking and were linked to poorer overall experience with Social Security Scotland over the last year.

Another theme in written responses across the survey was decision-making for disability benefits (for applications, change of circumstances and reviews). Some respondents described a lack of trust in Social Security Scotland's decision-making process, including concerns about their circumstances being misunderstood or supporting information not being properly taken into account.

These themes were also found in the written comments in last year's Annual Client Panels Survey and in Client Survey 2023-24 data.

## **Conclusion**

These survey findings have been shared with teams across Social Security Scotland. Work is already underway to improve Social Security Scotland's processes. Findings from this survey will inform further improvements.

The results from this and future Annual Client Panel Surveys will be used alongside other evidence to feed into the Charter Measurement Framework which reports on Social Security Scotland's performance.

## 12. Annex A: Client Panels demographics

As of May 2025, we have 12,747 members on our Client Panels. Below is a summary of who is on the Client Panels. (Please note that percentages will not add up to precisely 100% where we do not have complete information available).

- 62% are women, 27% are men
- 1% self-identify as transgender
- 10% are aged 34 or under, 76% are aged 35-64, and 14% are over 65
- 89% are white, 10% are minority ethnic
- 86% live in urban areas, 14% live in rural areas
- 31% are carers
- 6% are care experienced
- 88% are heterosexual, 7% are gay/lesbian or bisexual
- 69% of members have a physical or mental health condition
- 5% of members have UK refugee status

## 13. Annex B: Annual Client Panels Survey 2024

### Respondents demographics

The Annual Client Panels Survey did not ask respondents to provide details of their age, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Demographic data for survey respondents was taken from existing Client Panels records where possible.

**Table B1: Age**  
(number of respondents=1,332)

| Age   |     |
|-------|-----|
| 16-24 | 1%  |
| 25-34 | 3%  |
| 35-44 | 18% |
| 45-54 | 25% |
| 55-64 | 37% |
| 65+   | 16% |

**Table B2: Ethnicity**  
(number of respondents=1,424)

| Ethnicity         |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| White             | 92% |
| Minority Ethnic   | 7%  |
| Prefer Not To Say | 1%  |

**Table B3: Gender**  
(number of respondents=1,435)

| Gender            |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Woman             | 62% |
| Man               | 35% |
| Prefer not to say | 1%  |
| Other             | 2%  |

**Table B4: Whether respondents identified as trans**  
(number of respondents=1,414)

| Trans status      |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Yes               | 1%  |
| No                | 97% |
| Prefer not to say | 2%  |

**Table B5: Sexual orientation**  
(number of respondents=1,423)

| Sexual Orientation    |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Heterosexual/Straight | 89% |
| Gay/Lesbian           | 5%  |
| Bisexual              | 1%  |
| Prefer not to say     | 5%  |
| In another way        | <1% |

**Table B6: Lasting physical or mental health condition**  
(number of respondents=1,429)

| Disability        |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Yes               | 76% |
| No                | 21% |
| Prefer not to say | 4%  |

**Table B7: Whether respondents have ever been granted refugee status to live in the UK**  
(number of respondents=1,403)

| Refugee status    |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Yes               | 3%  |
| No                | 96% |
| Prefer not to say | 1%  |

**Table B8: Whether respondents have ever been in care**  
(number of respondents=1,428)

| Care experience   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Yes               | 5%  |
| No                | 92% |
| Prefer not to say | 2%  |

**Table B9: Whether respondents are carers**  
(number of respondents=1,360)

| Carer status      |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Yes               | 34% |
| No                | 62% |
| Prefer not to say | 4%  |

## How to access background or source data

### The data collected for this report:

- ☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- ☐ are available via an alternative route
- ☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [ResearchRequests@socialsecurity.gov.scot](mailto:ResearchRequests@socialsecurity.gov.scot) for further information. This email address is for research related requests only. Any unrelated queries (e.g. benefit information) will be automatically deleted.
- ☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

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