



## Social Security Scotland Statistics

# Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods: high level statistics to 30 September 2019

### Frequency of publications

The next publication, covering up to end December 2019 will be released in February 2020.

Under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics<sup>1</sup> we publish a timetable of statistical releases for the twelve months ahead<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Code of Practice is found online at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> The forthcoming publication timetable is available at: <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/ForthcomingPubs>

# Introduction

The Best Start Grant includes three types of payment: Pregnancy and Baby Payment (applications taken from 10 December 2018), Early Learning Payment (applications taken from 29 April 2019) and School Age Payment (applications taken from 3 June 2019). The [Background](#) section has further detail about these different payments. This publication provides information on applications and payments for Best Start Grant from 10 December 2018 to 30 September 2019. It therefore includes figures for approximately ten months of Pregnancy and Baby Payment applications, five months of Early Learning Payment applications, and four months of School Age Payment applications.

Best Start Foods is a recurring four weekly pre-paid card payment, which replaced Healthy Start Vouchers for new claims in Scotland from 12 August 2019. This publication provides information on applications and payments for Best Start Foods from 12 August 2019 to 30 September 2019.

All tables and charts relating to this publication can be found at: [www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland](http://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland)

These statistics are being published as experimental statistics. Experimental statistics are defined in the Code of Practice for Statistics as "*new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.*" These statistics have not yet been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority. They have not been designated as National Statistics<sup>3</sup>.

## Main findings

### Key figures

- From 10 December 2018 to 30 September 2019, 96,535 applications for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods were received **[Table 1]**. Out of these applications, around 36,750 (38%) were for Pregnancy and Baby Payment, 32,805 (34%) were for Early Learning Payment, 19,645 (20%) were for School Age Payment, and 13,115 (14%) were for Best Start Foods payment. Applications for multiple types of payment are counted multiple times within these figures **[Table 2]**.
- Around 91,380 applications had been processed by 30 September 2019. Of these, around two thirds (61,345, 67%) were authorised for at

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on experimental statistics please see:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-and-designation-of-experimental-statistics.html>

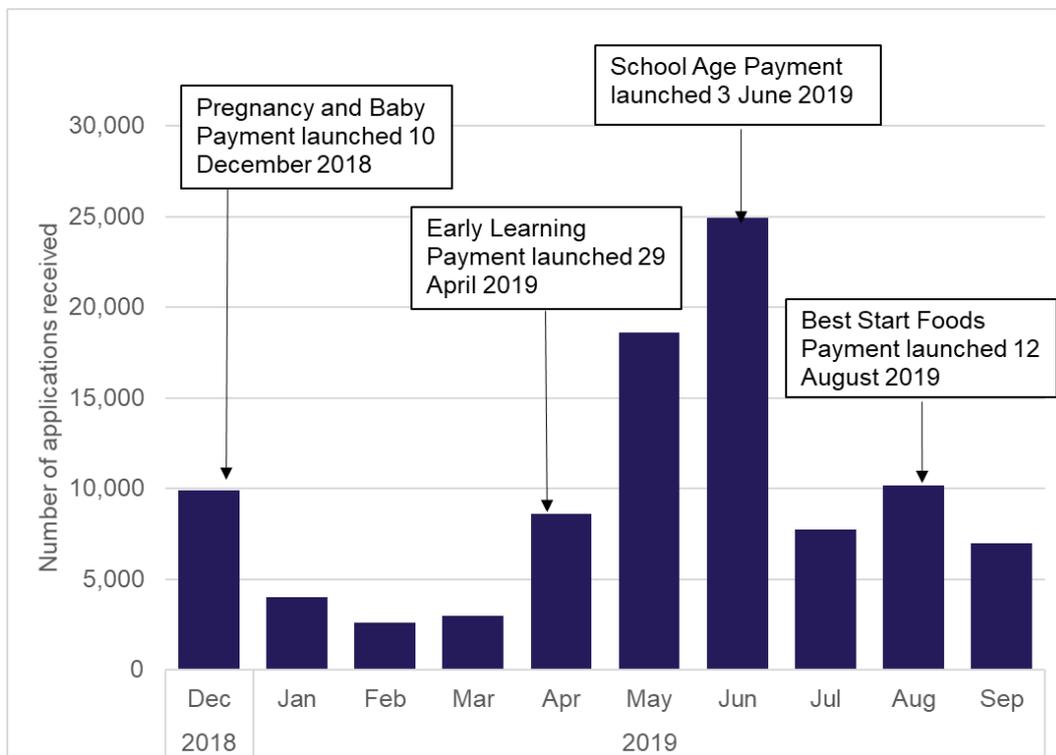
least one Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods payment type, under one third (26,605, 29%) were denied for both Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payment, and a small proportion (3,430, 4%) were withdrawn [Table 1].

- In total, £17.8 million of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payments had been issued to clients by 30 September 2019. Of this, £7.7 million (43%) of payments was for Pregnancy and Baby Payment, £6 million (34%) was for Early Learning Payment and almost £4 million (22%) was for School Age Payment. Less than 1% (£72,471) of total payments was for Best Start Foods by the end of September 2019 [Table 9].

## Applications by month

- Around 7,730 applications were received in July 2019, with further 10,185 applications received in August following the launch of Best Start Foods. Application numbers decreased to just under 7000 in September 2019.
- The proportion of applications authorised decreased from 73% in June 2019 to 66% in July, with an authorisation rate of 71% being recorded in August 2019. 69% of applications were authorised in September 2019 [Table 1].

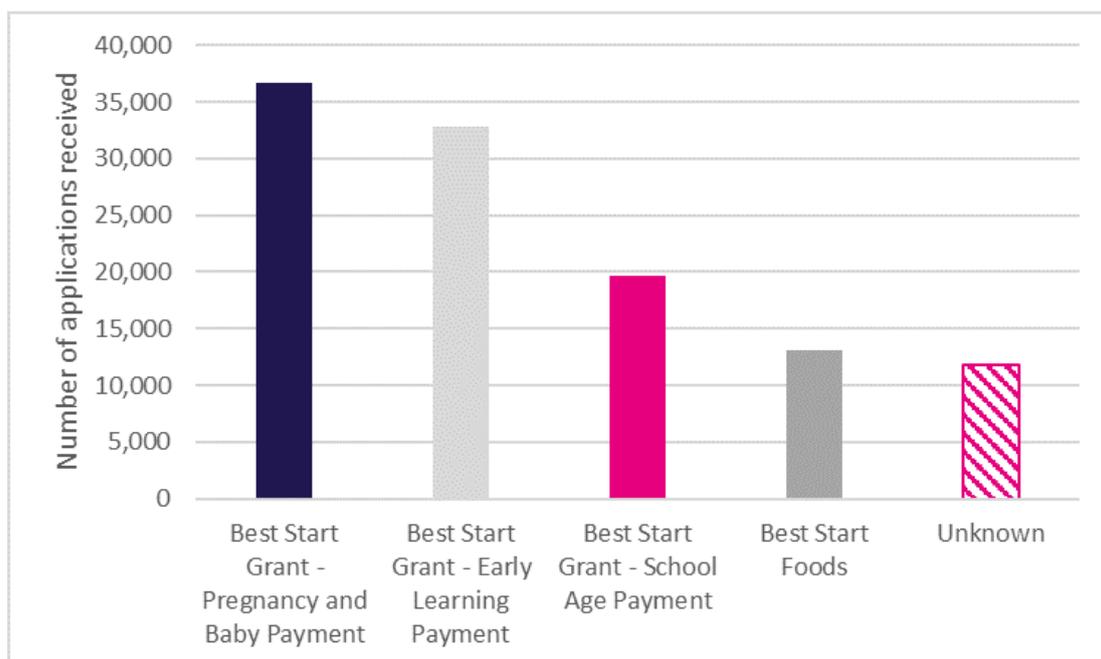
Chart 1: Applications received by month



## Applications by Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payment type

- Of the applications received to 30 September 2019, around 36,750 (38%) were estimated to be for Pregnancy and Baby Payment, 32,805 (34%) for Early Learning Payment, 19,645 (20%) for School Age Payment and 13,115 (14%) for Best Start Foods. An additional 11,800 (12%) applications were classified as Unknown due to them not containing details of eligible children [Table 2, Chart 2]. This is based on the details of children included in applications. The [About the data](#) section explains how the payment being applied for is derived.
- In total, 61,345 applications (67%) were authorised for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods, with some applicants being authorised for multiple payments [Table 2].
- Of the applications assumed to be for Pregnancy and Baby Payment based on presence of baby details in the application form, 58% were authorised by the end of September 2019 [Table 2]. A higher proportion of applications assumed to be for Early Learning Payment, School Age Payment, or Best Start Foods, based on the age of children included in applications, were authorised (76%, 84% and 68% respectively).

**Chart 2: Applications received by Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payment type to 30 September 2019.** Applications for multiple types of payment are counted multiple times within this chart.



## Application channel (method of application)

- Around 93% of applications received by 30 September were made online (89,435 applications). The remainder were made through phone or paper applications (6,955, 7%) or unknown channel (140, 0%) **[Table 3]**. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of applications by phone and paper for December 2018 to April 2019. The [About the data](#) section has further information about the application channel data.
- From May to September 2019, around 68,435 (93%) applications were online, 3,980 by phone (6%) and 435 (1%) by paper application **[Table 3]**.
- The proportion of applications made online increased from 89% in December 2018 to 95% in April 2019 and remained at 95% until June. It has since decreased to 88% in September 2019 **[Table 3]**.

## Age group

- Around 97% of applications were made by people aged 18 to 44. Only 1% of applications were made by people under 18, and 1% by people aged 45 or over **[Table 4]**.

## Applications by local authority, health board and non-Scottish postcodes

- Applications were received from people in all local authorities, with the highest number of applications coming from Glasgow City (15,820, 16%), North Lanarkshire (7,395, 8%) and Fife (6,830, 7%). The lowest number of applications came from Orkney Islands (175), Shetland Islands (200), and Na h-Eileanan Siar (280) **[Table 5]**.
- Similarly, the health board with the highest number of applications was Greater Glasgow and Clyde (24,995, 26%), with the lowest numbers from Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles **[Table 6]**.
- While the average percentage of applications authorised at Scotland level was 67%, this varied between local authorities, ranging from 63% in Orkney Islands to 76% in Dundee City **[Table 5]**.
- Around 4,875 (5%) applications were made by people living at non-Scottish postcodes **[Table 5]**. The proportion of such applicants has decreased from 10% to 5% of total applications received over the period December 2018 to September 2019. This was likely following a change in the application form making it clearer that only Scottish residents are eligible for the payments.

## Pregnancy and Baby Payment applications for first and subsequent births

- More Pregnancy and Baby Payment applications were received for subsequent births than first births. By 30 September 2019, 55% of applications (20,215) were for subsequent births (i.e. to clients that already had children under 16 that lived with them and that they were responsible for), whereas 45% of applications (16,540) were for first births **[Table 7]**.
- The proportion of applications authorised was higher for subsequent births (74%) than first births (38%) **[Table 7]**. This may be because clients applying for their first child are less likely to be on a qualifying benefit, particularly if the application for Best Start Grant was received before the birth of their baby. In total 13,955 payments were authorised for subsequent births and 5,875 for first births.
- Only 2% of applications received by the end of September 2019 were for multiple births, which had an authorisation rate of 63%.

## Processing times

- In total, three quarters (68,055, 75%) of the applications that were received since December 2018 and decided by 30 September 2019 were processed within 10 working days. Around 9% of all applications took 21 days or more to be processed **[Table 8]**. This processing time includes time spent waiting to receive copies of documents from clients, but does not include additional time to make payments.
- Median average<sup>4</sup> processing time was highest for applications processed in January 2019 (12 days), and the lowest for applications processed in April 2019 (1 day). This has reached an average of 10 days in September 2019.
- There were high proportions of applications processed within 10 days between May and August 2019 (92% in May, 83% in June, 73% in July and 77% in August). However recent figures show a decrease in the amount of applications being processed within 10 working days, which was 56% of those applications decided in September 2019, with a further 19% processed within 11 to 15 days.
- The higher proportions processed within 10 days in May, June and August could be due to the launch of Early Learning Payment, School Age Payment and Best Start Foods respectively. Most of these payments are processed without the need to contact the client, whereas for Pregnancy and Baby Payments often needs to be verified by asking clients for copies of additional documents. This may contribute to the faster processing time for Early Learning Payment, School Age Payment and Best Start Foods. The increase in

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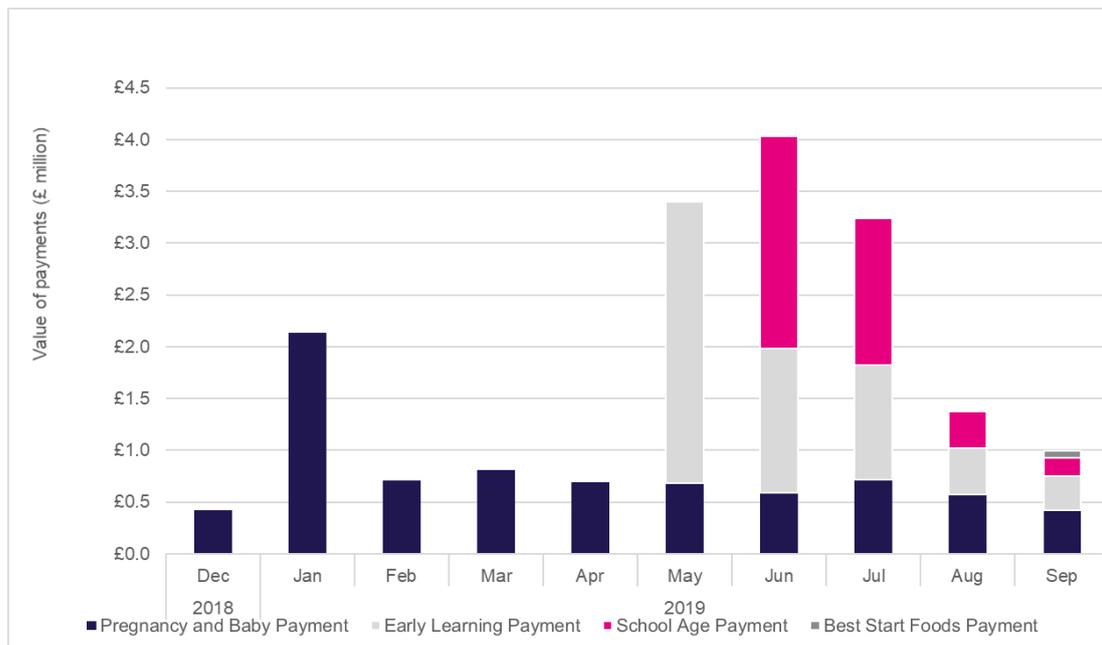
<sup>4</sup> The median is the middle value of an ordered dataset, or the point at which half of the values are higher and half of the values are lower.

processing times seen in September may be the result of the number of applications being processed, which could have resulted in longer processing times for some applications.

## Payments

- The total value of Best Start Grant and Best Start Food payments to 30 September 2019 was £17.8 million. Of this, £7.7 million was for Pregnancy and Baby Payment, £6 million was for Early Learning Payment and £4 million was for School Age Payment. Less than 1% (£72,471) of total payments was for Best Start Foods by the end of September 2019 [Table 10]. Some clients will have received multiple types of payment.
- At local authority level, the highest total value of payments was made to people in Glasgow City (£3,071,000), North Lanarkshire (£1,459,962) and Fife (£1,351,599) and the lowest to people in Orkney Islands (£33,860), Shetland Islands (£35,987) and Na h-Eileanan Siar (£55,299) [Table 9].

**Chart 3: Payments issued by Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payment type to 30 September 2019**



## Redeterminations and appeals

- Management information collected manually by the Client Experience team at Social Security Scotland indicates that around 1175 redeterminations were requested by 30 September 2019. This represents around 1.3% of the total number of decisions made during this period [Table 11].

- By 30 September 2019, 1145 redetermination requests had been decided, with over half of these disallowed (655, 57%), just under a third allowed or partially allowed (345, 30%) and 145 (13%) withdrawn. A disallowed redetermination request is one that is accepted as valid, however payment has been rejected as the criteria for a payment has not been met. A further 30 redetermination requests (3% of the 1145 received) were pending an outcome.
- The median average number of days to respond to a redetermination request was 12 working days. Up to 30 September 2019, around 98% of completed redeterminations were closed within 16 working days. Where redeterminations were closed after the deadline of 16 working days, extensions were agreed with the client and the redeterminations were closed within the 21 working day deadline.
- Management information also indicates that 55 appeals were received by 30 September 2019. The tribunal have considered 25 appeals and in each case, the appeal has been dismissed and the Social Security decision upheld.

# Background to Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

The Scotland Act 2016<sup>5</sup> gives Scottish Parliament powers over a number of social security benefits which had been administered to Scottish claimants by the Department for Work and Pensions.

On 10 December 2018, Scottish Ministers initiated their competence to deliver the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment, a form of Early Years Assistance, under the Social Security Scotland Act 2018. Social Security Scotland – the executive agency of Scottish Government responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland – began taking applications for Pregnancy and Baby Payment on Monday 10 December. This replaced the Sure Start Maternity Grant which the Department for Work and Pensions ceased to deliver on the same day.

On 29 April 2019, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment.

On 3 June 2019, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Grant School Age Payment.

On 12 August 2019, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Foods. Best Start Foods replaces the UK Government Healthy Start Vouchers Scheme. Clients currently getting Healthy Start Vouchers will be sent an invitation to apply for Best Start Foods between August 2019 and December 2019.

Further details about all Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payments can be found at <https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant/>.

## Pregnancy and Baby Payment

The Pregnancy and Baby Payment is a cash payment for the parents, or carers, of a baby. It is paid to help cover some of the costs of having children. These costs could be things like needing a pram or buying clothes. The Pregnancy and Baby Payment provides eligible families with £600 on the birth of their first child and £300 on the birth of any subsequent children. There is an additional payment of £300 to help with the costs of having more than one baby, such as twins or triplets. There is no limit on the number of children that are supported.

For example, if someone has twins and one is their first child, they would receive £1,200. This is made up of £600 for the first child, £300 for the second child and £300 for having twins. An applicant having twins where none of the children are

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<sup>5</sup> The Scotland Act 2016 webpage at <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/scotland.html>

their first child would get £900. This is made up of £300 for each child plus a £300 payment for twins.

The application window is from 24 weeks pregnant to 6 months after the birth (or up to the day before the child is 1 year old for people who take over looking after a baby, such as adopted parents or kinship carers). If a baby was stillborn or died after they were born, applications can still be made up to six months after their birth date. Applicants must not already be in receipt of the Sure Start Maternity Grant for the baby being applied for.

## **Early Learning Payment**

The Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment is a new £250 payment to help support child development, for example travel costs, changes of clothes for messy play, trips out and toys for home learning. The application window is from a child's second birthday up to the day the child is 3 years 6 months old.

The application window captures the two common ages for starting nursery, depending on whether parents qualify for a nursery place when the child is two or three. There is no requirement to take up a place at nursery to qualify for a payment.

## **School Age Payment**

The Best Start Grant School Age Payment is a new £250 payment to help with the costs of preparing for school, for example educational toys or after school activities. Eligibility is based on the child's age and relates to when a child is first old enough to start school, which is usually between the ages of 4.5 and 5.5. Exact dates when applications should be made depend on when the child was born. These dates are shown in the table below. Children born before 1 March 2014, who could have started school last year, are not eligible to receive the grant.

<b>Child's date of birth</b>	<b>When application can be made</b>
Between 1 March 2014 and 28 February 2015	Between 3 June 2019 and 29 February 2020
Between 1 March 2015 and 29 February 2016	Between 1 June 2020 and 28 February 2021

## **Best Start Foods**

Best Start Foods is available to families on certain low income benefits. It introduces a prepaid card that can be used to support the purchase of healthy foods for children under three. Eligible families can apply from pregnancy and any time up to their child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday if they are in receipt of qualifying benefits.

There is transitional protection for current recipients of Healthy Start Vouchers where a child is over 2 years old at the time of application. This transitional protection gives the child Best Start Foods payments up until their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. Healthy Start Vouchers, which are administered by the Department for Health and Social care, will no longer be available to Scottish recipients after March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 when the UK Scheme will be revoked in Scotland.

The payments of Best Start Foods are:

- £17 every 4 weeks during pregnancy
- £34 every 4 weeks from your child being born up until their 1<sup>st</sup> birthday
- £17 every 4 weeks for children between the ages of 1 and 3
- £17 every 4 weeks for transitionally protected children between the ages of 2 and 4

## Eligibility

To be eligible to qualify for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applicants must live in Scotland. Best Start Grant applicants over 18 must be getting at least one of: Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit, Income Support, Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income-based, Jobseekers Allowance or Income-related Employment and Support Allowance. Applicants under 18 do not need to be getting any qualifying benefits. This also applies to some applicants aged 18 to 19 going to school or college for at least 12 hours a week.

The benefits you need to be on to get Best Start Foods are the same as Best Start Grant, but some of the benefits have an income limit. These include:

- Universal Credit – if applicant or applicant's partner have a job, their joint income from working must be less than £610 a month, after tax and National Insurance – Universal Credit payments are not counted as part of this
- Child Tax Credit – applicant and applicant partner's joint income must be less than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit – only counts if applicant also gets full Child Tax Credit and applicant's income is less than £7,320 per year
- Housing Benefit – the weekly income of applicant and applicant's partner must be no more than £311.

Applications can be made by the main person who is responsible for the child, or their partner. This includes: the child's birth mother; her partner; her parent or carer if she is dependent on them (Pregnancy and Baby Payment only); single fathers; or people who have started looking after, and are responsible for, the child e.g. kinship carers. Further details about the benefits and legal orders that identify the main people responsible for looking after a child are given at

<https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods/>. Claims cannot be made by foster or residential carers, because in these cases the local authority will already be paying for the items that the Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods are intended to help provide.

For Best Start Grant, there is usually one payment for each child for each life event i.e. one payment for each child for each of the three different Best Start Grant payments. There is an exception if responsibility for the child changes within the application window i.e. the child moves to live with a different carer (kinship carer/adoptive parent) who now meets the responsibility test. In this case there can be one further payment.

## **Application and decision making process**

Applications can be made online, by phone, and by paper form ('application channel').

There is a single application form for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods that covers the Pregnancy and Baby, Early Learning and School Age Payments and Best Start Foods. Rather than indicating what they wish to apply for on the form, applicants provide details about themselves, their partner, all dependent children, and any details about their pregnancy and expected children. When the application is processed, Social Security Scotland determines which elements of Best Start Grant the client is eligible to receive, and makes a single payment to the client to cover all of these elements. Social Security Scotland will also determine whether client is eligible for Best Start Foods, which is a recurring payment being issued every 4 weeks.

Social Security Scotland processes each application received and makes a decision whether to approve or deny the application. An application will be denied if the client is not eligible to receive any of the Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payments. An application will be authorised if the client is eligible to receive at least one of the Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods payments. Applicants may also withdraw their application before a decision is made.

Social Security Scotland aims to process the application and make a decision, and provide a decision letter to the applicant, within ten days of receiving an application. Applications may take longer to process if copies of documents need to be requested and received from clients. This is more likely for Pregnancy and Baby Payments, where copies of maternity or birth certificates are often required. Once an application is decided, Social Security Scotland then aims to provide payment within five working days of applicants receiving their decision letter.

In this publication, application processing time is calculated as the number of working days from the application being received by Social Security Scotland to the date that a decision was made or the application was withdrawn. We do not include time to make payments within processing time.

## Redeterminations and appeals

Best Start Grant applicants can ask Social Security Scotland to look again at what they have decided if their application is denied, or if they think the amount they are going to be paid is wrong. This is known as a redetermination. A request for a redetermination should be made within 31 calendar days of being notified of the determination. This is extended to up to 1 year under extenuating circumstances. Social Security Scotland then has 16 working days to make the new determination. Best Start Grant applicants also have the right to appeal to a Tribunal if they do not agree with Social Security Scotland's redetermination, or if Social Security Scotland is not able to make a redetermination within 16 working days.

Best Start Foods has no statutory right of appeal which means it does not have a redetermination or appeal process. It does however have an internal review process which means that applicant can have their decisions looked at again.

## About the data

### How the data is collected

The data in this publication is sourced from Social Security Scotland's case management system. The system holds information on all applications received, decisions and payments. Data about the applicant, their partner, and their children is collected through the online application form or is entered by client advisors during telephone applications or processing of paper applications. Information about the application outcome and payments is created in the case management system as an application is processed.

The information is held across multiple tables within the system. 100% extracts of administrative data are taken from this system every day for internal reporting purposes. Data cuts combine information from the different tables in the system into one daily extract which includes details of all applications made since 10 December. An additional child extract containing details about children listed in the application forms is also available for reporting purposes. A new payments extract has been recently introduced and used for calculations in this publication too. This extract was not available for previous publications. It contains information on financial aspects of applications. Information on the change of methodology to use payments extract can be found in [Revisions](#) section.

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, the data cut from 31 October has been used to produce statistics on applications received and decisions made up to 11.59 pm on 30 September 2019. Later data cuts may include additional retrospective changes to application details, including corrections to details in the case management system, and changes that have resulted from redeterminations and appeals.

When a redetermination or appeal is requested, the data in this publication will show the decision date, outcome, payment date and payment value after a redetermination or appeal has been decided. Where a redetermination or appeal has been requested but not decided, decision date, outcome, payment date and payment value will be updated to reflect information about the redetermination or appeal, rather than the original application.

More detailed redeterminations and appeals management information is collected manually by the Client Experience team at Social Security Scotland. It is currently not possible to link this management information to data extracted from the case management system. However, in future updates to these statistics, information on redeterminations and appeals will be available for each application directly from the case management system.

## Revisions

Each updated publication of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods statistics will include revisions of numbers of applications received, processed, processing times and payment values going back to December 2018. This is because each time figures are published they will be based from a new 100% data cut from the case management system, which can include retrospective changes to data going back to December 2018 as described in the [How the data is collected](#) section. More recent months tend to be subject to a greater degree of revision than more distant ones.

For this publication, we have improved the methodology used to calculate payments issued to clients. Previously the method of calculation involved making an estimation of when payments were issued. The data is now drawn from a new data extract covering payments made by Social Security Scotland, which contains a 'date issued' field for all payments. As a result, the payment information previously published has been revised to reflect the 'date issued' in the payments extract, which provides a more accurate reflection of the date that payments are issued to clients [**Tables 9, 10**]. Previously released versions of these tables have now been superseded.

A revised geography look up file has been used for this publication. This has reduced the number of postcodes in the applications that do not match to a Scottish local authority or health board [**see Tables 5, 6, and 9**].

An improved method was used to calculate first and subsequent births. This has been achieved by allowing a 14 day window around expected child's due date when matching children across the extracts and excluding them from calculations [**Table 7**]. This resulted in a better match between the child's actual date of birth and child's expected date of birth, meaning a baby would be less likely to be counted as two different children if one is not born on the exact expected date provided in the original application form.

Processing time calculations have also been reviewed for this publication. Applications are processed in either Glasgow or Dundee, however the two cities differ at some public holidays. Glasgow had public holidays in July and September, whereas Dundee had public holidays in October. One of these sites was always open over these days. As such, calculations in this publication were produced based on these public holiday dates being counted as working days [Table 8].

## Quality assurance

The data used to produce the official statistics are the same as the data extracted from the case management system on a daily basis that is used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland. As such, the data is checked daily for consistency with previous extracts (i.e. do applications, decisions and payments figures increase as expected over time, and are they in proportion to each other) and compared to other sources of information such as the number of payment instructions reported by the finance team.

Additional quality assurance and cleaning has been carried out on the variables used in the official statistics:

- Check for duplicate and missing application references
- Checking application dates, processing times and payment times are within the expected ranges
- Checking applicant and child dates of birth are within the expected ranges – see [Age and Gender](#) section
- Checking postcodes that do not match to local authorities – see [Geography](#) section
- Checking payment values match to expected number of children – see [First and Subsequent birth](#) section

Once the data is aggregated and copied into the publication and supporting Excel tables, the final statistics are quality assured by a different member of the statistics team. The final documents are checked by the lead statistician.

## Data Quality

### *Rounding and disclosure control*

Application and outcome figures have been rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control. Data has been suppressed where it would disclose fewer than five applications or payments.

### *Missing and duplicate applications*

The data comes from 100% data cut of the case management system.

The data cut contained a small proportion of applications where the fields relating to application date and the outcome and payment of the application were blank. These applications represent temporary 'prospect cases', which are created when clients contact Social Security Scotland without a National Insurance number, and are later replaced once a National Insurance number is received from the applicant. These applications are therefore duplicates and have been excluded from the statistics.

Clients can make multiple applications for different components of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods over time, or may make repeated applications for the same component, for example if their first application is denied. This means that there can be several applications in the data cut from the same client. For this publication we have retained all these applications.

### *Unverified information from application form*

Information about the client and their children is taken from the application form completed by the client or by a client advisor over the telephone. This information may contain errors because it has not been verified by comparison to other sources of information such as records held by the Department for Work and Pensions. This means for example that it is possible to have authorised applications where the original application form did not include details of any eligible children, because the date of birth of any children was originally incorrect but was later amended as the application was processed.

### *Delay between application authorised and payment*

In this publication, the date that applications were processed by client advisors is the date used to produce statistics of processed applications by month. After applications are authorised for payment by client advisors, the decision is approved by a manager, and then a payment is issued. In some cases, payments will be issued on the same day that payments are authorised by client advisors, however in other cases there can be a delay before payments are issued. Clients should receive money in their nominated account within four working days after payment is issued.

In previous publications we reported on the value of payments that had successfully reached clients by the end of the month. We are now reporting on the value of payments that had been issued by the end of each month. This should provide a more accurate estimate because it is not based on the assumption that payments reach clients four days after a decision is made.

### *Applications by payment type*

There is one application form covering all types of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payment. Clients do not need to select which type of payment they wish to apply for. Therefore statistics on number of applications by Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods payment type have been derived from the type of information and ages of children included in applications for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. In the current publication, applications are classed as follows:

Application form details				Component(s) included in the application
Baby details	Dependent children of eligible age for Early Learning Payment	Dependent children of eligible age for School Age Payment	Dependent children of eligible age for Best Start Foods	
✓				Pregnancy and Baby Payment
	✓			Early Learning Payment
		✓		School Age Payment
✓ (if application received from 12 August 2019 only)			✓ (if application received from 12 August 2019 only)	Best Start Foods
x	x	x	x	Unknown

Applications that included baby details are classed as applications for Pregnancy and Baby Payment. From 12 August, these are also classed as being applications for Best Start Foods.

Applications are classed as being for Early Learning Payment, School Age Payment and/or Best Start Foods based on the age of dependent children included in the application, and only if the application was received after the launch date of each of these payments. If there are no children of eligible age for any of these payments the application is categorised as 'Unknown'. The authorisation rate for unknown applications is therefore very low because the application did not include a child of eligible age. Correspondingly, the authorisation rates for Early Learning Payment, School Age Payment and Best Start Foods are higher (76%, 84% and 68% respectively) because all applications in these categories did include a child of eligible age.

From 12 August 2019, an application was counted as unsuccessful if it was denied for both Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods components. If an application is withdrawn for Best Start Grant, it is also always withdrawn for Best Start Foods.

### *Application channel*

It is not possible to break down applications into paper and phone before May 2019. Application channel is manually entered into the case management system for applications taken by phone or paper. In a small number of cases it is known that application channel has been manually entered incorrectly. For these cases application channel has been classed as 'unknown'.

### *Age and gender*

In a small number of cases the date of birth of the child or the application date has been entered in the parent date of birth field in the case management system. In these cases the date of birth of the parent has been changed to 'unknown'. Further dates of birth of the parent showed very young ages. For these applicants, we have assumed that the dates contained typographical errors and have classed age as 'unknown', although we cannot be certain that their date of birth contained an error.

We are not currently able to provide figures on the gender of applicants.

### *Geography*

Applications are assigned to local authority and health board by postcode using a Scottish Government lookup file. For some applications, the postcode will not match to the lookup file. This can be because the postcode is not in a Scottish local authority, or because the postcode has been introduced too recently to appear on the lookup file, for example if a property is in a new development. For postcodes that could not be matched to a Scottish local authority or health board, the postcode area was used to check whether the postcode was in Scotland or elsewhere. Non-matching postcodes from Scottish border postcode areas (postcodes starting 'DG' and 'TD') were also checked individually and assigned to Scottish local authorities or health boards or as 'non-Scottish postcodes' manually.

Following these checks on postcodes, in this publication a very small number of applications (25, 0%) were made by people with Scottish postcodes that could not be matched to a local authority or health board. A very small proportion (250, less than 1%) did not include address information and therefore could not be matched to a local authority, health board or country [**Table 5 and Table 6**].

### *First and subsequent births and multiple births*

A birth is a 'first birth' if there are no other children under 16 in the household who the applicant is responsible for. This means that there are no other children for whom the applicant is receiving responsibility benefits (Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit (child element) or Pension Credit (child addition)). There are some exceptions to this where the parent is under 16, because they may have a brother or sister in the house who is under 16. 'Subsequent' births are births of either one or multiple children to an applicant who already has dependent children.

When the first birth in a household is a multiple birth (e.g. twins), for the purposes of calculating payment values the first baby to be born (e.g. the first of two twins) would be the 'first birth' and any other babies (e.g. the second of two twins) would be 'subsequent births' (the [Payment amounts](#) section has further detail on how this would be calculated). However, for the purpose of these statistics, we have counted first births of multiple babies as one 'first birth'. Similarly, multiple births to a household that already includes children under 16 would be counted as one 'subsequent birth'.

In the first Best Start Grant statistics publication, we derived 'first births' and 'subsequent births' from payment information. However, this meant it was not possible to derive whether an application was for first or subsequent birth where the application had been denied, withdrawn, authorised but not yet paid, or where an application remained pending. Where an application for Pregnancy and Baby payment included baby details, but no details of other dependent children, we have classed an application as being for a first birth. Where an application for Pregnancy and Baby payment included baby details, and also details of other dependent children, we have classed an application as a subsequent birth.

Multiple births have been derived by calculating applications for Pregnancy and Baby Payment that would have more than 1 child listed as expected.

### *Effect of redeterminations*

Application decision dates, outcomes and payment amounts are updated to reflect information about redeterminations and appeals as described in the [How the data is collected](#) section. Information in tables about decisions, outcomes and payments should therefore be viewed as the final decision, outcome and payment value, after a redetermination request or appeal has been received and/or decided. This excludes the processing times table, where applications with redeterminations and appeals have been removed from the processing times calculations.

## *Processing time*

Processing time is the number of days from the application being received to a decision being made or the application being withdrawn. It includes time spent waiting to receive copies of documents from clients, but does not include additional time to make payments. It is calculated in working days. Weekends and public holidays are excluded, even if applications were processed by staff working overtime on these days. The time of day that an application was received or processed is not taken into account.

Processing times data does not include any applications that are flagged as having had a redetermination request because the decision date for these applications will represent the redetermination decision date, which can be some time after the original decision date. The number of applications in the processing times table is therefore lower than the number of applications shown as processed or decided in other tables. Redeterminations are a small proportion of the total applications processed, and the average processing times for applications that go on to redetermination or appeal compared to other applications should not differ from all other applications. Therefore, removal of these should not impact the average processing times shown in the table.

Processing time is only calculated for applications that were decided within the period being reported on. Data is presented by the month of decision rather than month the application was received. All decisions made in December 2018 were made within 15 working days, because there were only 14 working days from launch of Best Start Grant on 10 December until the end of the month, meaning that any decisions made in December 2018 were made within 15 working days.

## **Future developments**

More detailed information on redeterminations and appeals will be available for each application directly from the case management system in future updates to the statistics when this becomes available.

We will be seeking users' views on the content of this publication to ensure it best meets their requirements. If you have any comments or suggestions that you would like to provide us please email [MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot](mailto:MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot).

## **Comparisons with Department for Work and Pensions Sure Start Maternity Grant statistics**

Department for Work and Pensions published information about Sure Start Maternity Grant in the Social Fund annual report 2017 to 2018 at Great Britain level only: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-fund-annual-report-2017-to-2018>. Department for Work and Pensions also published annual expenditure for Sure Start Maternity Grants at Great Britain level in their Benefit

expenditure and caseload tables:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-expenditure-tables>.

Information about Sure Start Maternity Grants in Scotland in 2017/18 was also published as part of correspondence between Department for Work and Pensions and Scottish Fiscal Commission:

<http://www.fiscalcommission.scot/about-us/correspondence/correspondence-response-from-dwp-on-social-fund-figures-for-scotland-4-september-2018/>

Key differences between any figures for Sure Start Maternity Grant and Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment are:

- Applicants can only apply for Sure Start Maternity Grant for their first child. No payments are made for subsequent children (with some exceptions for multiple births) whereas Pregnancy and Baby Payment is applicable for first children and subsequent children.
- Sure Start Maternity Grant payments are £500 for the first child, whereas Pregnancy and Baby Payments are £600 for the first child, £300 for subsequent children and £300 for multiple births.
- The Sure Start Maternity Grant application window is from 11 weeks before due date to 6 months after birth, whereas Pregnancy and Baby Payment is from 24th week of pregnancy to 6 months after birth.
- Additionally, in 2018/19 it is possible that some applicants delayed applying for Sure Start Maternity Grant because they were aware that they could wait for the launch of Pregnancy and Baby Payments on 10 December. This would affect numbers of people applying for both Sure Start Maternity Grant and Pregnancy and Baby Payments in Scotland.

Department for Work and Pensions does not have an equivalent of Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment.

The Department for Health and Social Care does not produce statistical publications covering the uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers in Scotland. However, management information on uptake has previously been published by the Scottish Government in a Freedom of Information response covering a 4 week period in 2018: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-18-00531/>.

## **Related Social Security Scotland publications**

Future research and statistics publications will be available through the Social Security Scotland 'Reporting' webpage at:

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/what-we-do/reporting>.

Statistics on Best Start Grant feedback (complaints, compliments and suggestions) are published at:

<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland>.

## **An Official Statistics publication for Scotland**

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

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e-mail: [statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through [statistics.gov.scot](http://statistics.gov.scot)

are available via an alternative route. Summary tables are available at:

[//www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland](http://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland)

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [SocialSecurityStats@gov.scot](mailto:SocialSecurityStats@gov.scot) for further information.

cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

### **Complaints and suggestions**

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail [statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

If you would like to be consulted about statistical collections or receive notification of publications, please register your interest at [www.gov.scot/scotstat](http://www.gov.scot/scotstat)

Details of forthcoming publications can be found at [www.gov.scot/statistics](http://www.gov.scot/statistics)

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