



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Client Survey 2018-2021

Summary report

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

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Background

- This report presents the combined results from the first and second rounds of the Social Security Scotland Client Survey. The first round ran from 17 August to 25 September 2020, and the second from 10 May to 20 June 2021.
- It was open to everyone who had received Carer's Allowance Supplement or Child Winter Heating Assistance (which do not require an application) or a successful decision on an application for at least one of Best Start Grant/Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Scottish Child Payment, or Job Start Payment from the beginning of Social Security Scotland in September 2018 to 31 March 2021.
- The Scottish Child Payment, Job Start Payment, and Child Winter Heating Assistance benefits were not launched until after the first round of the survey, and so were only included in the second round of fieldwork.

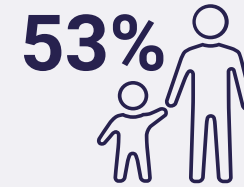
About the research

- The report is based on a total of 10,575 responses.
 - 41% had received Carer's Allowance Supplement
 - 53% had applied for Best Start Grant/Foods
 - 5% had applied for Funeral Support Payment
 - 2% had applied for Young Carer grant
 - 0.3% had applied for Job Start Payment
 - 44% had applied for Scottish Child Payment
 - 8% had received Child Winter Heating Assistance
- Around half (53%) of respondents had experience of one benefit, a little over a third (37%) of two benefits, and 6% of three or more.

Of the people who responded to the survey:



had received
Carer's Allowance
Supplement



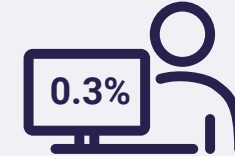
had applied for
Best Start Grant/
Foods



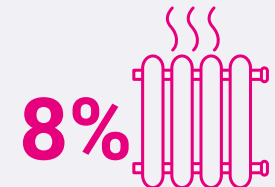
had applied for
Funeral Support
Payment



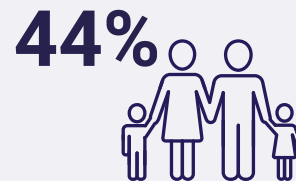
had applied for
Young Carer Grant



had applied for
Job Start Payment



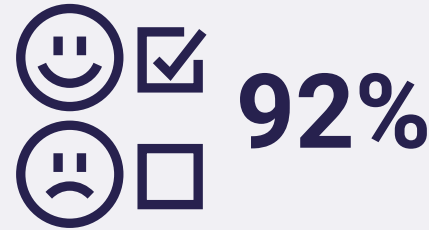
had received Child
Winter Heating
Assistance



had applied for Scottish
Child Payment

Overall experience

- Only 2% described their experience as poor or very poor.
- Around nine-in-ten respondents believed that they had been treated with dignity (90%), fairly (90%) and with respect (91%). A similar proportion agreed that Social Security Scotland had not wasted their time (89%), whilst 85% said they understood what Social Security Scotland does.
- Although the majority were still positive, fewer respondents said Social Security Scotland is an honest (83%) or open (74%) organisation. However, only 1% of respondents said they disagreed with each of these points. The rest said they 'neither agreed nor disagreed' or that they 'didn't know'.
- Women (93%) were more likely than men (89%) to rate their overall experience as 'good' or 'very good'.



9 in 10 people said their overall experience was 'good' or 'very good'.

Many respondents said their experience was 'professional', 'caring' or 'helpful'. Some negative comments referred to slow or lack of communication.

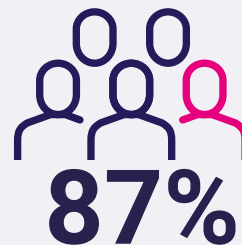
Our overall experience with Social Security Scotland has been very positive. We are kept well informed of updates to payment and all communication has been very respectful.

Literally could not do better. So helpful and genuinely nice.

More updates when a delay is long like in my case. Maybe at least one per month so I could be sure you still have my application.

Finding out about Social Security Scotland and getting information and advice

- 23% said they first found out about us by being contacted by us, 21% via 'online or social media', or 22% via 'word-of-mouth'.
- Nearly three-fifths (56%) of respondents had looked up or made contact with us to find out about benefits or services. This was more common amongst respondents who had applied for a benefit (67%).
- People most commonly looked up or made contact with us via: the internet (58%), an online form on the Social Security Scotland website (38%), or the phone helpline (30%)
- Nearly nine-in-ten felt they had enough choices of communication to (89%) and from (88%) Social Security Scotland. Most people (89%) said that they got the support they needed.
- Respondents with a long-term health condition were less likely to say that looking up or contacting us was 'very easy' or 'easy' (83%, compared to 89% of those without such a condition).



Over four in five people who looked up or made contact with us to find out about benefits or services said that this was 'easy' or 'very easy'.

People found information clear and easy to locate, and had a good experience contacting staff. Many negative comments related to the helpline waiting time.

Great service provided customer service was very straight forward and helpful.

The time it has taken to talk to anyone online or by phone is really long I have waited over an hour in queues before speaking to anyone.

Website was informative and easy to use.

Experiences with staff

- 41% of respondents said they had been in contact with a member of Social Security Scotland staff.
- The vast majority of respondents agreed that they were treated with kindness (94%) and that staff listened to them (92%).
- Most also reported that staff were able to help them (91%), made them feel comfortable (91%) and were knowledgeable about benefits (90%).
- 90% said they trusted staff and a similar proportion felt like they were trusted by staff (88%).
- Almost half (49%) who had applied for a benefit had been in contact with staff, compared to a little more than a quarter (28%) of those who had not applied for a benefit.
- Nearly two-in-five respondents who had been in contact with staff said they would have liked to have been told about other benefits (38%), or other sources of additional help (36%), but were not.



93%

Most people said their experience with staff was 'good' or 'very good'.

Most comments about staff were positive and complimented their manner and helpfulness.

I had to call the helpline twice and each time the staff were very helpful and polite.

Staff were knowledgeable and handled my query in a professional and timely manner.

A minority had a mixed or negative experience with staff.

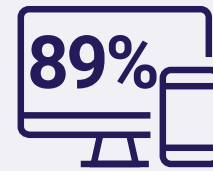
The last two members of staff I spoke to were amazing. The previous two had a lack of understanding and the first one did not get back to me in enough time.

very rude, unhelpful and can't be bothered attitude from staff. Passed from person to person without any help at all

Applying for benefits

- Around three fifths (61%) of respondents said they had applied for at least one Social Security Scotland benefit – Best Start Grant/Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment, or Scottish Child Payment.
- The vast majority of respondents said the application process was clear (94%) and asked only relevant questions (92%).
- However, relatively fewer agreed their application was handled within a reasonable time frame (85%) or that they got enough updates (76%).
- Around one-in-ten respondents disagreed that they got enough updates on the progress of their application (11%).
- Respondents aged 55 were more likely to say their application was handled in a reasonable time frame (92%, compared to 86% of respondents aged 16-54).

How people applied for a benefit



applied online



applied
by phone



applied
by post



Most people said the overall experience of applying for a benefit was 'good' or 'very good'.

Most comments were positive and said the application process was straightforward and clear. This was not the view for everyone though.

Everything was perfect and so easy which is really great as it is a stressful time so it was good that the application was straightforward.

Very complex, hard to understand, not easy to complete, very time consuming, not enough information how to complete, don't explain enough how to complete certain questions.

Receiving payments from Social Security Scotland

- Around two fifths had received Scottish Child Payment (42%), and a similar proportion (41%) had received Carer's Allowance Supplement. A third (34%) had received Best Start Grant, and nearly a quarter (23%) Best Start Foods.
- Much smaller proportions had received payments for Child Winter Heating Assistance (8%), Funeral Support Payment (4%), Young Carer Grant (1%), and Job Start Payment (0.3%).
- Most respondents said they received their payment(s) when Social Security Scotland said they would (91%). A similar amount reported that they received the right amount on the first time (93%) and every time (92%).
- On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'a lot', respondents gave the following average scores for how much benefit payments:
 - Helped to make a difference to their life – 8.4
 - Helped them to control their finances – 7.8
 - Helped them to pay for what they needed – 8.2



Around nine-in-ten people said they had received a benefit payment from Social Security Scotland.



The vast majority of people said their overall experience of receiving benefit payments was 'very good' or 'good'.

Many were thankful for the impact payments had for them and their children. A small proportion thought payments were not enough.

I am a working single mum of twin toddlers. The payments have helped me to buy items like clothes, footwear.

In all honesty £10 these days does not go far.

The payments meant my children got what they needed, without added worry on how I would pay for bills etc.

Your application decision

- Over nine-in-ten respondents who had applied for a benefit agreed that the decision on their application was 'explained clearly' (92%), and a similar proportion (93%) said that they 'understood the decision'.
- 95% said they agreed with the decision, with 5% disagreeing.
- Of the 261 respondents who disagreed with the decision made on their application:
 - 50% disagreed with the statement 'I knew how to challenge it'
 - 47% disagreed with the statement 'I felt I could challenge it'
 - 26% said they challenged it.

Barriers

- 7% of respondents said they had faced some sort of barrier getting help from Social Security Scotland.
- Just over half (53%) of those people who had faced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland.
- Of those respondents, less than two-in-five (38%) felt that the Social Security Scotland 'understood them'. A similar proportion felt that Social Security Scotland 'supported [them] in overcoming them' (35%).

Discrimination

- 2% of respondents said they had been discriminated against during their experience with Social Security Scotland, and 3% preferred not to say.
- Of the 220 respondents who said they had experienced discrimination, 40% said it related to Social Security Scotland processes, 41% said it related to policies, and 25% said it related to staff.
- Of those who had experienced discrimination, 60% disagreed that it was 'clear how to challenge it'.
- 60% also disagreed that they 'could challenge it', and less than three-in-ten (28%) said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination.

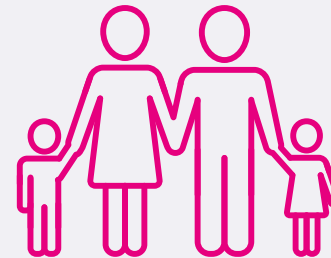
Single benefit experience

- This page covers only those who had experience of just one benefit.
- Overall satisfaction was highest among respondents whose sole experience was with Young Carer Grant (99% rated 'very good' or 'good').
- Just 29% of Scottish Child Payment applicants had been in touch with a member of staff, whereas nearly eight-in-ten (79%) Funeral Support Payment applicants had been.
- Those who only applied for Young Carer Grant (94%) and Scottish Child Payment (93%) were more likely to say that their decision was explained clearly, compared with those who only applied for Best Start Grant/Foods (87%) and Funeral Support Payment (88%).
- Those who only experienced Best Start Grant/Foods (10%) were most likely to say that they experienced barriers getting help.



A total of 5,593 respondents experienced just one benefit.

All of those who only applied for Young Carer Grant described the application process as 'very good' or 'good'.



94%

of those who only applied for Scottish Child Payment described their overall experience as 'very good' or 'good'.

Change over time

- Collecting data over two separate fieldwork periods allows us to explore whether any changes have occurred over time.
- This section looks at those who had only experienced Carer's Allowance Supplement or Best Start Grant/Foods, and compares the responses given by people in the 2020 and 2021 fieldwork cohorts.
- There was little difference in the overall rating given by those who only received Carer's Allowance Supplement in 2020 and those in 2021. However, those in 2021 who only applied for Best Start Grant/Foods were marginally more likely to assess their overall experience as 'good' or 'very good' (93%), compared to those in 2020 (89%).
- Those who only experienced either Carer's Allowance Supplement or Best Start Grant/Foods in 2020 were less likely to say that their experience with Social Security Scotland staff was 'good' or 'very good', and more likely to rate as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

This report includes data collected over two separate fieldwork periods.



- Best Start Grant/Foods applicants from the 2021 fieldwork cohort were more likely to agree with the statements: 'Staff were able to help me' (91%, compared to 80% from 2020), 'Staff listened to me' (94%, compared to 85% from 2020), and 'I trusted staff' (91%, compared to 83% from 2020).
- Those who only applied for Best Start Grant/Foods in 2020 were less likely to say that the application process was 'good' or 'very good' (87%, compared to 92% of those in 2021) and more likely to rate as 'poor' or 'very poor' (7%, compared with 3% those from 2021).



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Contact us



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