



Social Security Scotland  
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



# Client Survey 2021-2022

Summary report

Dignity,  
fairness,  
respect.

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## Background

- This report presents the combined results from three rounds of the Social Security Scotland Client Survey. The first round ran from 10 November to 17 December 2021, the second from 7 February to 20 March 2022, and the third between 25 April and 22 May 2022.
- Everyone who received an application decision or a benefit payment between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 was invited to take part in the survey.
- For the first time the survey invited Child Disability Payment clients, including those had been case transferred from the Department for Work and Pensions.

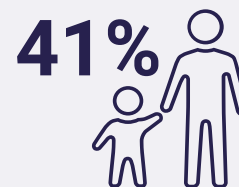
## About the survey respondents

- The report is based on a total of 7,534 responses.
  - Most described their ethnicity as 'white' (79%, compared to 18% minority ethnic)
  - Most described their gender identity as 'woman' (81%, compared to 18% 'man')
  - Most said their age was 25-44 (60%)
  - Most did not have a physical or mental health condition lasting or expected to last 12 months or more (59%), although more than one-in-three did (34%)
  - Most lived in an urban area (86%, compared to 14% rural)
  - 10% of respondents said that they had some form of communication needs
- Nearly half (47%) of respondents had experience of one benefit, 17% of two benefits, 31% of three, and 5% of four or more.

Of survey respondents:



had received  
Carer's Allowance  
Supplement



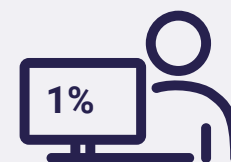
had experience of  
Best Start Grant/  
Foods



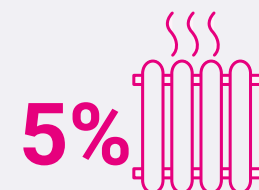
had experience of  
Funeral Support  
Payment



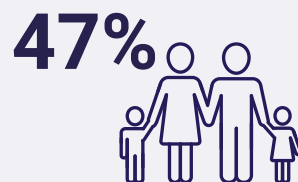
had experience of  
Young Carer Grant



had experience of  
Job Start Payment



had received Child  
Winter Heating  
Assistance



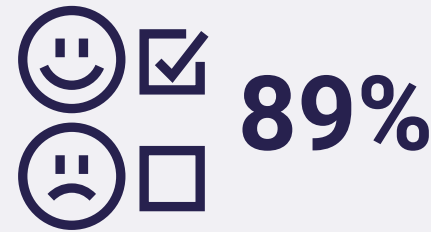
had experience of  
Scottish Child Payment



had experience of Child  
Disability Payment

## Overall experience

- Nearly nine-in-ten respondents believed that they had been treated with dignity (87%), fairness (87%) and respect (89%). A similar proportion agreed that Social Security Scotland had not wasted their time (86%), whilst 81% said they understood what Social Security Scotland does.
- A similar proportion of respondents said Social Security Scotland is an honest (86%) or open (84%) organisation.
- Those with a communication need (84%) were less likely to rate their overall experience as 'very good' or 'good' compared to those with no communication needs (90%).



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

Only 2% described their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

**Respondents were asked to make any suggestions for improvement or further comments about their overall experience.**

**Many suggested that better and more frequent communication from Social Security Scotland would have been helpful.**

I think it would be good if people who apply online were able to check the status of their applications online instead of waiting for letters, emails, texts or phone calls.

Better communication with regards to claims ie updates on applications.

Improved communication in a more timely manner.

## Contact with Social Security Scotland

- 24% said they first found out about Social Security Scotland by word-of-mouth, 19% via 'online or social media', and 17% by being contacted by us.
- 53% of all respondents said that they had tried to contact Social Security Scotland at some point since 1 April 2021.
- Respondents most commonly made contact with us via: the phone helpline (68%), sending a letter (37%), the webchat (15%), or a phone appointment (15%).
- Most respondents felt they had enough choice about how they communicated with Social Security Scotland (85%). A similar proportion (84%) said that they got the support they needed.
- Respondents aged 55 years or over were less likely to agree that 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland' (74%, compared to 84% of 16-54 year olds).



Four in five respondents who had tried to contact Social Security Scotland agreed that 'it was easy to contact Social Security Scotland'



24%

of respondents said they first found out about us by word-of-mouth



68%

of respondents made contact with us via the phone helpline

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

## Experiences with staff

- 48% 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 (89%), made them feel comfortable (91%) and were knowledgeable about benefits (89%).
- 89% said they trusted staff and a similar proportion felt like they were trusted by staff (88%).
- Those aged 55 and older were less likely to rate their experience with staff as 'very good' or 'good' (89%) compared with those aged 16-54 (94%).
- Nearly three-in-ten respondents who had been in contact with staff said they would have liked to have been told about other benefits (29%), or other sources of additional help (31%), but were not.



93%

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

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

Always helpful and polite.

Everyone I had contact with were most helpful and understanding listened to me and had empathy.

**A minority had a mixed or negative experience with staff.**

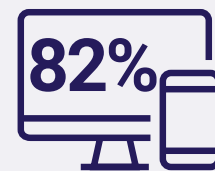
The individual staff were almost all polite and respectful but all promised to sort things out which never seemed to happen. I lost trust that I was being given accurate information.

Staff are rude, applications are slow and no one keeps in contact to keep you updated.

## Applying for benefits

- Two thirds (66%) of respondents said they had applied for at least one Social Security Scotland benefit.
- Nine-in-ten respondents said the application process was clear (90%) and asked only relevant questions (90%).
- Marginally fewer agreed their application was handled within a reasonable time frame (87%).
- Nine out of ten applicants who provided supporting information said it was clear how to include the supporting information (90%).

### How respondents applied for a benefit



applied online



applied  
by phone



applied  
by post



90%

Most respondents said their overall experience of applying for a benefit was 'good' or 'very good'.

**Comments about the application process were most commonly negative. Many said the application process was too delayed and lacked communication.**

Application took too long to be processed.

My main issue is the lack of communication after an application.

## Application decisions

- A little under nine-in-ten respondents who had applied for a benefit agreed that they 'understood the decision' (88%).
- Just seven-in-ten (70%) agreed with the statement 'I got enough updates on the progress of my application(s)'. A little under one-in-five (17%) disagreed with this statement. This included just 62% of those who had applied for Child Disability Payment.
- Around three-in-four (75%) agreed with the statement 'My application(s) was (were) handled within a reasonable time frame'. Around one-in-seven (14%) disagreed with this statement.
- 11% said they disagreed with a decision they received. Of these respondents, 27% asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision again. Of the cohort who did not ask us to look at the decision again:
  - 38% thought it wouldn't be successful
  - 23% didn't feel they could.



**87%**

Most respondents said agreed that the decision on their application was 'explained clearly'

**Comments negatively discussed wait time on decisions, poor communication and eligibility criteria:**

It's a joke that working parents don't get any help with children. Understandably people on benefits need help but so do working parents.

Unfortunately long drawn out process. Communication would be good. Only letter I received was a decline letter.

My latest application is still being processed and it is well over the expected time frame.



## Receiving payments

- Most respondents said they received their payment(s) when Social Security Scotland said they would (96%). A similar amount reported that they received the right amount on the first time (97%) and every time (93%).
- 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 – 8.3
  - Helped them to control their finances – 7.6
  - Helped them to pay for what they needed – 8.1
- The mean ratings given by those who received Child Disability Payment were higher across all three statements compared to other benefit groups.



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



The majority of respondents 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.**

The payments are not enough to cover fruit and veg and baby milk as everything has gone up in price.

It's giving my little girl opportunities and now she will get the help and support she needs!

Benefits payments are great. They do make a difference when you have a low income.

## Barriers

- 17% of respondents said they had faced some form of barrier getting help from Social Security Scotland.
- Just over a third (35%) of respondents who had faced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland.
- Of those respondents, half (52%) felt that the Social Security Scotland 'understood them'. A slightly lesser proportion felt that Social Security Scotland 'supported [them] in overcoming them' (45%).

**The most frequently mentioned barrier was the long wait times for the phone helpline:**

Getting through to talk to someone about the application was difficult as it took ages to be answered.

## Discrimination

- 3% of respondents said they had been discriminated against during their experience with Social Security Scotland, and 4% preferred not to say.
- Of the 220 respondents who said they had experienced discrimination, 44% said it related to Social Security Scotland policies, 36% said it related to processes, and 27% said it related to staff.
- Of those who had experienced discrimination, 43% disagreed that it was 'clear how to challenge it'.
- 46% also disagreed with the statement 'I felt I could challenge it', and less than four-in-ten (38%) said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination.

**There were no clearly prevalent themes from the comments about discrimination. Some referred to eligibility criteria:**

I do feel discriminated against as I work and don't claim benefits that's why I wasn't granted the help with funeral costs.

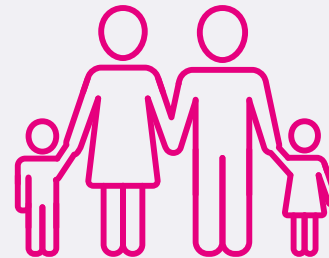
## Single benefit experience

- This page covers only those who had experience of just one benefit.
- Overall satisfaction was highest among respondents whose sole experience was with Scottish Child Payment (94% rated 'very good' or 'good').
- Respondents who only experienced Child Winter Heating Assistance trusted staff less (76%) and felt less trusted by staff (73%), compared with all Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients.
- Those who only applied for Scottish Child Payment (94%) and Young Carer Grant (90%) were more likely to say that their application process was 'very good' or 'good', compared to other benefit groups.
- Those who only experienced Funeral Support Payment (19%), Young Carer Grant (20%), or Best Start Grant/Foods (23%) were most likely to say that they experienced barriers getting help.



A total of 4,092 respondents experienced just one benefit.

Almost all of those who only applied for Young Carer Grant described their interaction with staff as 'very good' or 'good'.



97%

of those who only experienced Scottish Child Payment received their payment when Social Security Scotland said they would.



Social Security Scotland

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ISBN: 978-1-804435-873-3