



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Client experiences of re-determinations, appeals and complaints 2024



Exploring this research

Choose how much detail you want to read:

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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 surveys on clients' experience of challenging a decision on their benefits (covering the re-determinations and appeal processes), Short-term Assistance and the complaint process. Below is a summary of the key findings.

Almost three quarters of respondents (73%) agreed that it was clear how to ask for a re-determination. Nearly three quarters (72%) agreed that they had enough time to do this, but over a quarter (28%) did not feel Social Security Scotland were timely in giving them a decision. Almost six in ten (57%) were clear on what the process would involve.

Respondents mostly felt that the letters they received about their re-determination were clear but nearly a third (32%) did not feel that they were given enough information about what was happening during the process. Respondents spoke of wanting more updates and that re-determination decisions and the reasons for these were not clearly communicated. Some praised the knowledge and manner of staff.

Over a quarter of respondents (28%) said they faced challenges or barriers when asking Social Security Scotland for a re-determination. They spoke of being dissatisfied with Social Security Scotland policies, decision making processes and criteria and supporting information processes. Many also spoke of the process having a negative impact on their mental health, and errors made by Social Security Scotland.

Respondents often agreed that they were treated with kindness (74%), were listened to (67%) and that staff were knowledgeable (62%). Half of more agreed that Social Security Scotland treated them fairly (50%) and with dignity and respect (59%).

Half did not agree with their new re-determination decision and many were not clear on how to challenge this. Just under half (48%) rated their overall experience as good and just under a third (31%) said it was poor. Respondents were unhappy about policies and decision making processes, poor staff knowledge or treatment and lack of clear communication and updates. Positive comments often focussed on staff interactions.

Most respondents who appealed felt that it was clear how to ask for an appeal (over six in ten). Nearly three quarters of respondents did not face challenges or barriers when asking for an appeal. Just over half of respondents found that the letter they received explaining the impact of the appeal outcome on their benefit/s was clear. Nearly six in

ten respondents agreed with the Tribunal's appeal decision. Overall experience of appeals was mixed. Suggestions for improvements focussed on long timescales, ensuring clients are shown empathy and Social Security Scotland staff manner.

Only 9% of respondents were aware of Short-term Assistance¹. Over a quarter of these respondents (28%) said being aware of the payment encouraged them to request a re-determination. Over half of respondents (56%) who received the payments felt financially supported by them. Respondents described the positive impact of the payment and said that applying for and receiving it was straightforward.

There were 50 clients who responded to the survey about complaints. Complaint topics included long waits for decisions, treatment by staff, poor communication or Social Security Scotland policies and processes. Slightly more respondents agreed rather than disagreed when asked if it was clear how to make a complaint and easy to do so. Some said they were not updated on progress, that they had difficulties submitting a complaint or that information was poor. Over two thirds of respondents said they faced challenges or barriers when making a complaint because of communication issues. Many did not feel like their complaint was taken seriously.

Nearly six in ten respondents did not find the letters they received about their complaint clear and nearly two thirds felt they were not given enough information during their complaint. Respondents suggested improving the level and quality of communication and updates and staff knowledge and treatment of clients.

Respondents had mixed views on whether they were satisfied with the resolution they received. Half or slightly less of respondents did not feel like they were treated with dignity and respect or treated fairly. Nearly six in ten respondents said their overall experience was poor. Suggestions for improvement included wanting improved communication and updates and wanting shorter timescales for the complaint process.

¹ Short-term Assistance is a temporary payment clients can apply for when they ask to challenge a decision to reduce or stop Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment. While the challenge is ongoing, Short-term Assistance payments replace the amount Social Security Scotland reduced the disability payment by. Payments do not need to be paid back.

2. Executive summary

This report presents findings from surveys on clients' experience of challenging a decision on their benefits (including both the re-determinations and the appeals processes), Short-term Assistance and the complaint process. The separate surveys explored experiences of these processes, including what was working well and what could be improved. The research provides evidence to keep improving Social Security Scotland's service and processes. The data covered is mostly from clients who had experience of these processes in 2024 and this report is the first time data from these surveys has been published. These surveys will continue on a rolling basis.

Surveys on clients' experiences of the re-determination and appeals processes were sent to all clients who had experienced these processes from March 2023 to November 2024. 33,836 clients who had only requested a re-determination were sent a survey and 1303 responses were received (4% response rate). 658 clients who had requested both a re-determination and an appeal were sent a survey and there were 27 responses (4% response rate). The vast majority of respondents (88%) had requested a re-determination for Adult Disability Payment. Similarly, most who requested an appeal as well also did so for their Adult Disability Payment.

Surveys on clients' experiences of the complaint process was sent to all clients who had experienced this process in 2024. In the time period covered, 2980 clients had made a complaint. Of these clients, 489 had an email address on record, meaning the survey was sent to this many clients. 50 clients responded (10% response rate).

Key findings are detailed below.

Re-determinations

Requesting a re-determination

The most common method for requesting a re-determination was through the post (50%). Around three quarters of respondents (73%) agreed that it was clear how to ask Social Security Scotland for a re-determination.

Just under three quarters (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were given enough time to ask Social Security Scotland for a re-determination. Just over a half of respondents (54%) agreed that Social Security Scotland were timely in getting back to them with a decision, with just over a quarter (28%) disagreeing. Almost six in ten (57%) agreed that it was clear what the re-determination process would involve, with just under a quarter (23%) disagreeing.

Respondents were asked to explain what was unclear about the process. Most often they spoke about a lack of clear guidance or information – particularly around timescales and supporting information. Many disagreed or were dissatisfied with Social Security Scotland policies and decision making processes. Many felt unfairly treated because of re-determination decisions. Many also felt that communication was poor, with many saying they received no progress updates and that it was difficult to contact Social Security Scotland on the phoneline or webchat to get these. Some were told they would receive a phone call to discuss their re-determination but did not receive this.

Communication and information

Around a third of survey respondents (34%) accessed information to help them understand how the re-determination process worked, often the Social Security Scotland website or leaflet. Some noted that they could not have completed the information required without support from elsewhere. Most respondents (61%) said that they were happy with the with the method Social Security Scotland used to communicate with them, with those who were not most often saying that they would have preferred email (69%).

Respondents mostly agreed that the initial letter they received after requesting a re-determination was clear (65%) and that the letter they received explaining the outcome of the re-determination was clear (61%). However, only 44% agreed that they were given enough information by Social Security Scotland about what was happening during the process.

Respondents were asked if there was anything that could have improved communication. By far the most common theme was that respondents would have liked more updates on the progress of their re-determination, for example via a named

contact, and that that would have reduced stress and anxiety. Some said the reasons for re-determination decisions were not clearly communicated. However, many praised the knowledge and manner of staff, saying that they were helpful and clear about the process. A few respondents felt receiving a phone call about their re-determination helped keep them informed and put them at ease.

Challenges and barriers

Most respondents said they did not face any challenges or barriers when asking Social Security Scotland for a re-determination, whereas 28% did. Respondents again most often spoke about disagreeing or being dissatisfied with Social Security Scotland policies and decision making processes. Many said communicating through the re-determination form was difficult (due to disabilities or the questions being poorly designed) and that this was stressful and demoralising. Many also spoke of being unhappy with eligibility and decision making criteria, feeling like they were not able to express how health conditions affected their daily lives, often because of the application questions. Many said the process made them feel vulnerable and that they were not shown empathy or understood.

Others spoke of the link between re-determinations and respondents' mental health. Many found the process inherently stressful and anxiety provoking and said this was made worse by deadlines, difficulty communicating with Social Security Scotland and waiting to receive a decision. Many also spoke of difficulties with supporting information, saying they had trouble gathering this or that Social Security Scotland did not handle or review information effectively. Many also spoke of errors made by Social Security Scotland. This included lost documents or applications, mistakes with decisions or payments, receiving inaccurate information and letters being sent to the wrong address.

Staff and treatment by Social Security Scotland

Data about staff and treatment by Social Security Scotland was grouped together for respondents who had had a re-determination and those who had also had an appeal. Almost half (48%) had spoken to staff about their re-determination and/or appeal. Nearly three quarters (74%) agreed that they were treated with kindness, 67% agreed

that staff listened to them and 62% agreed that staff were knowledgeable. Just under half (46%) agreed that Social Security Scotland staff supported them throughout their re-determination and/or appeal.

When asked if Social Security Scotland treated them with dignity and respect during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process, 59% agreed and 21% disagreed. When respondents were asked if Social Security Scotland treated them fairly during their re-determination and/or appeal, 50% agreed and 32% disagreed.

Re-determination outcome

Half of respondents (50%) agreed with the new decision about their case and 41% did not. Of those who did not agree, 49% were clear on the next steps to challenge the new decision, whereas 41% were not. Respondents who disagreed with their re-determination decision but did not submit an appeal said they had not appealed the decision because they did not think their appeal would be successful (22%), that they did not know they could appeal (15%) or because they thought it would be too difficult (11%). Others did not appeal due to ill health, worries of being treated unfairly, anxiety and stress, not receiving communications about appealing and not having enough time to appeal or gather supporting information.

Overall experience

When rating their overall experience of the re-determination process, 48% of respondents answered good or very good and 31% answered poor or very poor. Those aged 16-44 and gay/lesbian respondents were less likely to say it was good or very good. Those aged 55-64, respondents who did not have an illness or long term health condition or those that had a re-determination for either Child Disability Payment or Scottish Child Payment were more likely to say it was good or very good.

Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions for improvements or further comments about the re-determination process. The themes that came up were similar to themes raised elsewhere. Respondents most often spoke about being unhappy with Social Security Scotland policies and decision making processes, especially in relation to assessing disability and feeling like they had not been listened to, understood or fairly assessed. Many mentioned staff treatment or knowledge had contributed to them

feeling this way. A further key theme was lack of communication and updates and the anxiety this causes. Many wanted clearer communications and explanations around decision making. Positive comments tended to focus on interactions with staff where they were kind and helpful. However, some said that staff said they would do something but did not (for example, calling respondents back).

Appeals

Requesting an appeal

The most common route for requesting an appeal was by post (over four in ten respondents). Most respondents agreed that it was clear how to ask for an appeal (over six in ten). Those who found the process unclear spoke of not being given enough information, being given conflicting information and being unclear on or unhappy about appeal policies and processes. Respondents were most likely to say that filling out the form for requesting an appeal was neither easy nor difficult (over four in ten). Almost six in ten respondents got help with filling out the appeal form, most often from a welfare rights adviser, a charity or third sector organisation or a family member or friend.

Communication and information

Just under half of respondents said that they had accessed information to help them understand the appeal process. This tended to be general online information or third sector and local authority advice services (such as Citizens Advice Bureau). Just over half of survey respondents found that the letter they received from Social Security Scotland explaining the impact of the appeal outcome on their benefit/s was clear.

Challenges and barriers

Nearly three quarters of survey respondents said that they did not face any challenges or barriers when asking for an appeal. Those who did spoke of health conditions, long timescales, lack of communication, deadlines missed by Social Security Scotland and poor staff knowledge.

Appeal outcome

Nearly six in ten survey respondents agreed with the Tribunal's decision once the appeal was complete and they were told of the outcome. Nearly half of respondents who did not agree said that they were not clear on what steps they could take to challenge the decision and just over a third said that they were clear on this.

Overall experience

Respondents said that their overall experience was either good or very good or poor or very poor in equal proportions. When asked for suggestions for improvement or comments about their overall experience, respondents most often said they were unhappy with the long timescales of the appeals process. Others spoke of feeling they were not listened to or showed empathy or understanding throughout the process. A few spoke about staff manner, stating that Social Security Scotland staff could be rude. A few also mentioned that the appeal process was stressful and anxiety provoking.

Short-term Assistance

Awareness and knowledge

Awareness of Short-term Assistance payments amongst survey respondents appeared to be poor, with only 9% saying that they knew about the payments. Of those who had been aware of Short-term Assistance, 28% agreed that knowing about the payments had encouraged them to request a re-determination.

Respondents were asked what they found unclear about Short-term Assistance. The vast majority said they were unaware that it existed. Others said information about Short-term Assistance was difficult to understand, particularly around eligibility criteria. Some mentioned that staff did not have good knowledge about this payment.

Experience of receiving Short-term Assistance

Only 4% of survey respondents applied for Short-term Assistance and 76% of these respondents went on to receive payments. Over half (56%) agreed that they felt financially supported when receiving payments during the re-determination process. Most respondents spoke positively of receiving payments, often describing the impact

the payment had had on their lives or saying that the process of applying for and receiving the payment was straightforward. A few mentioned that they had issues with their payments – with these either being missed or being the wrong amount.

Complaints

Submitting a complaint

Nearly two thirds of respondents who submitted a complaint did so about their experience of Adult Disability Payment. Reasons for complaints included long wait times for decisions on cases, treatment by staff, poor communication or Social Security Scotland policies and processes. Slightly more respondents agreed rather than disagreed that it was clear how to make a complaint and easy to do so. Respondents said the process was unclear because they were not updated on progress, because they had difficulties submitting a complaint or because information around the process was lacking or conflicting. Many felt their complaint was not taken seriously.

Communication and information

Nearly six in ten respondents disagreed that the letter acknowledging and detailing their complaint was clear and accurate. Similarly, the same proportion disagreed that the letter explaining the outcome of the complaint was clear. Nearly two thirds disagreed that they were given enough information by Social Security Scotland about what was happening during the complaints process. For those who received a call about their complaint, over six in ten said they were treated with kindness, that the call was useful, that the staff member they spoke to was knowledgeable about the complaint process and that staff listened to them.

Respondents were asked if there was anything that could have improved communication. Respondents most often wanted improvements to the level and quality of communication and updates – particularly given that it was difficult to contact Social Security Scotland. Some said the information they did receive was unclear or lacking in detail. A few spoke about wanting improvements in how staff treated them and in staff knowledge. Some felt they were not listened to or understood, whereas others felt staff could not cater to their accessibility needs.

Challenges and barriers

Over two thirds of respondents said they faced challenges or barriers when making a complaint due to communication issues. Many spoke of long wait times on the phone line or web chat, the available methods of communication not being accessible and a lack of quality information and updates.

Complaint outcome

For those respondents whose complaint was resolved at stage one, most said the complaint was not resolved in the allowed timescale set by Social Security Scotland. For stage two complaints, slightly more said that the complaint was resolved within the allowed timescale than those that did not. Half of respondents disagreed that they were happy with the amount of time it took Social Security Scotland to get back to them with a resolution. An equal amount of respondents said they were satisfied with how their complaint was resolved as those that said they were not. Nearly three quarters of respondents who were not satisfied with the resolution said they were not clear on the next steps for taking their complaint further.

Overall experience

When asked if Social Security Scotland treated them with dignity and respect and treated them fairly, half or slightly less of respondents disagreed. When asked to rate their overall experience of the complaint process, nearly six in ten respondents said it was poor or very poor.

When asked to make suggestions for improvement or further comments about their overall experience, respondents spoke about wanting improved communication and updates or wanting shorter timescales for complaints. A few mentioned being unhappy with general Social Security Scotland policies and processes as well as those involved in making a complaint. A few were dissatisfied with how complaints were resolved.

3. Background and research methods

3.1. Background and research aims

This report presents findings from new surveys on clients' experience of challenging a decision on their benefits (covering the re-determinations and appeal processes), Short-term Assistance and the complaint process. The separate surveys asked respondents about their experiences of the different processes, giving them an opportunity to say what was working well and what could be improved. The research provides evidence to keep improving Social Security Scotland's service and processes.

From the beginning of 2025, the surveys will be repeated on a quarterly basis to monitor client experiences of these processes. Findings covering each calendar year will be published annually. This report is the first time data from these surveys has been published. The data mostly covers 2024, but further details about the time period covered by each survey can be found below in section 3.2.

3.2. Who took part?

3.2.1 Re-determinations and appeals

Surveys on clients' experiences of the re-determination and appeals processes were sent to all clients who had experienced these processes from March 2023 to November 2024. In the time period covered, around 45,500 Social Security Scotland clients had had a re-determination and/or appeal. Clients were sent a different survey depending on whether they had only requested a re-determination or had requested a re-determination and then an appeal. Only clients who had an email address were sent a survey². 33,836 clients who had only had a re-determination were sent a survey and 1303 responses were received (4% response rate). 658 clients who had both a re-determination and an appeal were sent a survey and there were 27 responses (4% response rate).

² Email was used as a contact method for ease and as it was low cost. For future rounds of the surveys the use of post and SMS messaging will be explored.

Demographic information on the survey respondents is set out in Annex A. This information is summarised below:

- Over a third (35%) of respondents were aged 55-64, just under a quarter (24%) were aged 45-54 and just over a fifth (21%) were aged 35-44. Respondents were least likely to be aged 16-24 (3%) and 1% preferred not to say.
- More than nine in ten respondents (94%) were white. 4% were minority ethnic and 3% selected 'prefer not to say'.
- More than six in ten (63%) were women and over a third (34%) were men. 1% described their gender in another and 3% preferred not to say.
- 1% of respondents identified as trans, whereas 96% did not. 3% preferred not to say.
- Nearly nine in ten respondents (87%) said they had a lasting physical or mental health condition. Less than one in ten (8%) said they did not have a lasting condition and a small percentage (5%) preferred not to say.
- Nearly nine in ten (87%) said they were heterosexual/straight, a small number said they gay/lesbian (3%) or bisexual (3%) and 6% preferred not to say.

Information on which benefit respondents requested a re-determination for can be found in table 1. Details on which benefit respondents requested an appeal for can be found in section 5.1. The vast majority of respondents (88%) requested a re-determination for Adult Disability Payment. The next most common benefit respondents had requested a re-determination for was Scottish Child Payment (5%), followed by Child Disability Payment (4%) and Best Start Grant (1%). Less than 1% had requested a re-determination for Funeral Support Payment, Winter Heating Payment, Child Winter Heating Payment, Young Carer Grant and Carer Support Payment.

Table 1: Benefit which the re-determination was requested for. If the respondent had more than one re-determination, they were asked to select the most recent benefit they had a re-determination for (number of respondents=1328)

	% of respondents
Adult Disability Payment	88%
Scottish Child Payment	5%
Child Disability Payment	4%
Best Start Grant	1%
Funeral Support Payment	<1%
Winter Heating Payment	<1%
Child Winter Heating Payment	<1%
Young Carer Grant	<1%
Carer Support Payment	<1%
Prefer not to say	2%

3.2.2 Complaints

Surveys on clients' experiences of the complaint process was sent to all clients who had experienced this process in 2024. In the time period covered, 2980 clients had made a complaint. Of these clients, 489 had an email on record, meaning the survey was sent to this many clients. 50 clients responded (10% response rate).

Full demographic information on the survey respondents is set out in Annex A.

Demographic characteristics of respondents were similar to those of respondents to the survey on re-determinations and appeals. However, the proportions of women and men who responded were more similar and respondents were most likely to be aged 45-54.

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. Invites to take part in the surveys were sent to clients, but sometimes a person supporting the client has responded.

A small number of written responses suggest that some respondents mix up their experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions and Social Security Scotland

when answering some survey questions. 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.

This report includes breakdowns by demographic groups (e.g. gender, ethnicity) for some key questions that give an insight into respondents' overall experience of a process. Differences in how demographic subgroups responded to a question were only included where meaningful and where there was a percentage point difference of five or more between the response and the average response.

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 (less than 25) are not published (shown as '#' in results tables) to make sure respondents are not identifiable. Where less than 100 respondents answered a question, results are discussed in the report but the corresponding table is only included in the annex. Where less than 100 respondents in a subgroup answered a question this is marked in results tables with an '**' (for example, respondents of different ethnicities).

4. Re-determinations

A re-determination is where a benefit decision Social Security Scotland has made is challenged by a client. When a re-determination is submitted, a new team at Social Security Scotland looks at the original benefit application and any new and existing information provided to make a new decision on the benefit applied for. The re-determinations and appeals survey sought to explore respondents' experience of the full re-determination process and the results are detailed below.

4.1. Requesting a re-determination

The most common method for requesting a re-determination was through the post (50%), followed by online (22%) and over the phone (19%) (table 2).

Table 2: Which method respondents used to request a re-determination (number of respondents=1321)

	% of respondents
By post	50%
Online	22%
Over the phone	19%
Through the Local Delivery service	2%
Over the phone – text relay service	<1%
Don't know/Can't remember	7%

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their experience of requesting a re-determination (table 3). Most were positive about this process, with around three quarters of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that it was clear how to ask Social Security Scotland for a re-determination (73%) and that it was clear how long they had to ask Social Security Scotland for a re-determination (75%). Around two thirds (65%) agreed or strongly agreed that it was clear how long Social Security Scotland had to look at the re-determination, with around a fifth (21%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Respondents were less likely to agree that it was clear what their options were if Social Security Scotland did not respond to their re-determination within the time period allowed, with just over half (53%) agreeing or strongly agreeing and around a quarter (23%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 3: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about how clear the re-determination process was. Row percentages (number of respondents=1321-1327)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
It was clear how to ask Social Security Scotland for a re-determination (number of respondents=1327)	73%	12%	13%
It was clear how long I had to ask Social Security Scotland for a re-determination (number of respondents=1323)	75%	10%	11%
After I had asked them for a re-determination, it was clear how long Social Security Scotland had to look at my decision again (number of respondents=1326)	65%	9%	21%
It was clear what my options were if Social Security Scotland did not respond to my re-determination within the time period allowed (number of respondents=1321)	53%	16%	23%

Respondents had mixed views about their experiences of timings of the re-determination process (table 4). Just under three quarters (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were given enough time to ask Social Security Scotland for a re-determination, with only 13% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. However, when respondents were asked if Social Security Scotland were timely in getting back to them with a decision on their re-determination, just over half (54%) agreed or strongly agreed with just over a quarter (28%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 4: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about timings of the re-determination process. Row percentages (number of respondents=1318-1320)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
I was given enough time to ask Social Security Scotland for a re-determination (number of respondents=1320)	72%	13%	13%
Social Security Scotland were timely in getting back to me with a decision on my re-determination (number of respondents=1318)	54%	15%	28%

When asked ‘it was clear what the re-determination process would involve and what I should expect’, 57% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, with 23% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (table 5).

Table 5: How much respondents agreed or disagreed about how clear the re-determination process was (number of respondents=1326)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
It was clear what the re-determination process would involve and what I should expect	57%	17%	23%

Those who answered ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ were asked to explain what was unclear about the process. Often respondents spoke about a lack of clear guidance of information throughout the re-determination process. Many were not sure what would

happen during the re-determination process or how the decision would be made and by whom. Some respondents said staff gave them incorrect or unclear advice, such as taking them through the re-determination process instead of a change of circumstances. Some said staff advice contradicted the written guidance around re-determinations.

Some said guidance or information around timescales for a decision could be lacking or conflicting, although comments about timescales were more commonly about long waits for decisions on both the initial application and the re-determination.

Many spoke about guidance on what supporting information to include with the re-determination being particularly difficult to find or follow. There was confusion around what supporting information Social Security Scotland would collect and what the client should supply and also around what supporting information would be assessed at the re-determination stage.

Some also said that they were not aware that challenging the decision on their benefit could lead to a lower award or reduced points on their disability benefit case.

“I was confused and it was really a change of circumstances I thought I was doing and gave additional information which [was] actually a re-determination – I used the wrong thing – I was confused – I got help from a charity Voiceability to do a change of circumstances after the re-determination as it was too stressful for me to do a challenge. Also I got a call one morning out of the blue asking me lots of questions that I couldn’t answer as my brain doesn’t work well with pulling out the relevant info quickly. I wasn’t sure what was going on and it should have been better if I had a letter telling me beforehand that I would be getting a call.” [Survey respondent](#)

“The full process start to finish is stressful and hard. There isn’t proper communication between people who answer the phones. I could phone get an answer hang up phone back get a different person and different answer. I have hated the full process. Including when I eventually got to speak to my case manager who was also giving me wrong information. I think more needs to be done to realise the people phoning aren’t in the best positions in life and should at the very least should be given the correct information if they are to be on hold for up to an hour before getting through to an adviser.” [Survey respondent](#)

“It wasn’t made clear that by asking for a redetermination that I could be penalised and lose benefits that had already been awarded. It was also unclear how long the re-determination would take, I am still waiting on a decision.” [Survey respondent](#)

“The re-determination process provides an essential mechanism for reconsidering decisions, but there are aspects that could be clarified to improve user understanding and experience:

1. **Timeline for Re-determination:** While the statutory timeframe is stated, the process for when the clock starts and how long individuals have to submit a request could be communicated more clearly. Specific examples or scenarios might help.
2. **Evidence Requirements:** It’s not always clear what type of additional evidence is needed or how it should be submitted. Providing examples of acceptable forms of evidence for common scenarios would be beneficial.
3. **Notification Process:** The method and frequency of updates during the re-determination process could be better explained. Users are often unsure when or how they will be informed about progress or decisions.
4. **Support Availability:** Although assistance is offered, the availability and scope of support during the re-determination process could be more prominently advertised. A clearer outline of how advisors can help would reduce confusion.
5. **Appeals After Re-determination:** The next steps, should the re-determination still result in a dispute, could be explained in more detail, especially around transitioning to an appeal.

These adjustments would ensure a more accessible and transparent process, reducing stress for applicants.” [Survey respondent](#)

Another common theme was disagreement or dissatisfaction with Social Security Scotland policies and decision making processes. This theme often came up across the survey. Comments commonly mentioned feeling unhappy with re-determination decisions and feeling that health conditions were not fully understood, especially mental health or rare conditions. Some mentioned how poor staff manner or knowledge during interactions had made them feel this way, whereas others spoke about the questions used to assess disability. Many felt discriminated against or treated unfairly by the re-

determination policy and process. Respondents felt Social Security Scotland had not listened to them and that the re-determination had been a waste of time.

Some expressed cynicism over whether their re-determination or supporting information was actually looked at and if decisions were pre-determined. Some said Social Security Scotland went to the wrong source for supporting information (e.g. GP rather than specialist) or did not get in touch with contacts they had supplied for supporting information.

Some felt applications had to be worded 'in a certain way' in order to receive support. Some respondents who were unhappy with their re-determination decision spoke of feeling that they were deserving of payments, whereas others who were less deserving had received payments or higher awards.

“The process of applying for re-determination of the decision was unclear. There was no transparency who would be contacted about my current health situation not that I have an option of a phone call with Social Security Scotland. Once I received the refusal, it was still not specified who was contacted about my health other than social worker. Also when I initially contacted Social Security Scotland with the first application Social Security Scotland failed to contact the most important people to ask about my condition which is my leading specialist from hospital. Instead they contacted my GP practice, and more specifically a GP who has not seen me at all in the past year or so and had no idea about how I am overall and how my condition has deteriorated in a span of few months.” [Survey respondent](#)

“When doing re-determination my further information wasn't considered as seen as new or worsening which wasn't the case. I just didn't know what was relevant when first filling out form so a lot information wasn't even considered second time round. When on phone call only certain questions were asked in areas where I had gained points and asked in different wording from last assessor so answers were noted different and therefore went against me which was totally unfair. Wasn't consistent questions.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Time frames were unclear due to technical errors. Staff did not advise on what support was available for filling out the forms. Assessors seemed to assume malice and, even though they may acknowledge the effects of a documented disability, preferred to find ways to say you 'seem to be managing' rather [than] acknowledge the stress and mental load of trying to 'manage' without support which can have significant negative impact on someone's health. Excuses were also found not to award points based on not having a specific medical condition even though the impact was overlapping. It was therefore unclear how you were being evaluated.”

Survey respondent

Many felt communication throughout the re-determination process was poor. Respondents said they were not kept informed about their re-determination and its progress, with a few saying that they were not even aware they had made a re-determination until they received the survey about it. Many said they would have liked more updates during the process, especially as it was difficult to contact Social Security Scotland via the phonenumber or webchat to get these updates. A few said they weren't sure if their re-determination had been received and would have liked confirmation of receipt. Some spoke about how re-determination decisions and the reasons for these were not clearly communicated, particularly in relation to why disability benefit applications were awarded the number of points they received.

Some respondents said they wanted to speak to staff during the process in order to better explain their condition but were not given the opportunity. Quite a few respondents were told they would receive a phone call to discuss their re-determination but did not receive this; consequently they felt like they had missed out on an opportunity to discuss their case.

“I was advised upon requesting a re-determination online that I would receive a phone call to discuss my application and go over the details of my re-determination request, I then received a letter through the post informing me of the same. However, I received no such phone call, and no chance to provide context as was intended. Social Security Scotland failed in their efforts to accurately assess my re-determination and provide a thorough assessment as was implied by their letter suggesting they would call me to discuss. I received my decision letter with opinions and assumptions of an unnamed “health care professional” who seemed to know more about my conditions than I do despite having never spoken to me or asked me questions about my response(s).” [Survey respondent](#)

“No communication wasn’t clear what I should include in the re-determination and enormously difficult to get through to Social Security Scotland either on the phone or web chat. They did not post out my original decision for many weeks so that made re-determination application stressful and difficult to apply as I did not know the details of what I was challenging.” [Survey respondent](#)

“It was a very stressful time for me as there was literally no contact for nearly 9 months. No real discussion or explanation of how they came to the decision other than a generic template. I felt that the additional information that I sent in was dismissed without even being looked at.” [Survey respondent](#)

4.2. Communication and information

Around a third (34%) of survey respondents said they accessed information to help them understand how the re-determination process worked, whereas just under a half (46%) did not and a fifth (20%) did not know or could not remember (table 6).

Table 6: Whether respondents accessed any information to help them understand how the re-determination process worked (number of respondents=1321)

	% of respondents
Yes	34%
No	46%
Don't know/Can't remember	20%

When asked where they accessed information on the re-determination process, respondents most often referred to Social Security Scotland information (either the leaflet that came with the decision letter or the website). Some also talked about speaking to Social Security Scotland staff on the phone, and a few commented positively about the support they were given (although one respondent said their questions could not be answered). Many respondents also talked about using other websites, either for information or for support from online groups. Citizens Advice Bureau and other third sector and local authority advice services or support officers were often referenced. Some noted that they could not have completed the information required without that support from elsewhere. A few also mentioned advocacy support (for example, from VoiceAbility), or help from friends or family.

“Everything was clearly explained to me over the phone. The agents you have are empathetic and patient. They deserve accolades as they reduced my anxiety and educated me at the same time.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I actually just called Social Security Scotland direct and asked an advisor to go through things step by step and they were willing and kind enough to be slow and understanding so I could take written notes as I am not good with lots of information and remembering. The agent was absolutely fantastic and made me feel much better and much calmer about the situation.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Read online, asked questions on chat and by phone which unfortunately could not be answered in a timely or clear manner due to communication roadblocks for Social Security Scotland staff as service users.” [Survey respondent](#)

Just over six in ten respondents (61%) said that they were happy with the with the method Social Security Scotland used to communicate with them during the re-determination process, with just under a third (31%) saying they were not (table 7).

Table 7: Whether respondents were happy with the method Social Security Scotland used to communicate with them during the re-determination process
(number of respondents=1318)

	% of respondents
Yes	61%
No	31%
Don't know/Can't remember	8%

Those who said they were not happy with the method of communication were asked which method they would have preferred. The most common answer was email (69%), followed by phone (45%) and letter (44%) (table 8).

Table 8: Which method of communication respondents who were not happy with how Social Security Scotland communicated with them would have preferred. Respondents could select more than one answer (number of respondents=410)

	% of respondents
Email	69%
Phone	45%
Letter	44%
SMS	29%
Other	4%
Don't know/Can't remember	1%

There were mixed views on respondents' experience of communication they received throughout the re-determination process (table 9). Respondents broadly felt that the initial letter they received from Social Security Scotland after requesting a re-determination was clear, with around two thirds (65%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement and 14% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Respondents were slightly less likely to agree that the letter they received explaining the outcome of the re-determination was clear, with 61% agreeing or strongly agreeing and around a quarter (24%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Respondents were least likely to agree that they were given enough information by Social Security Scotland about what was happening during the re-determination process, with 44% agreeing or strongly agreeing and around a third (32%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 9: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about communication during the re-determination process (number of respondents=1317-1323)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
The initial letter I received from Social Security Scotland after requesting a re-determination was clear (number of respondents=1323)	65%	15%	14%
The letter I received from Social Security Scotland explaining the outcome of the re-determination was clear (number of respondents=1317)	61%	12%	24%
I felt I was given enough information by Social Security Scotland about what was happening during the re-determination process (number of respondents=1322)	44%	21%	32%

If a re-determination is not completed within the stipulated timescales then clients are sent a letter about this. When asked if they had had this experience, 8% of respondents said yes and 83% said no (table 10).

Table 10: Whether respondents received a letter from Social Security Scotland which said their re-determination was not completed within the allowed timescales (number of respondents=1319)

	% of respondents
Yes	8%
No	83%
Don't know/Can't remember	10%

Respondents were asked how they found this letter (table 11). Almost three quarters (71%) agreed or strongly agreed that the letter made it clear about next steps they could take and 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents were less likely to

agree that they were given enough information about why their re-determination was not completed on time, as just under half (47%) agreed or strongly agreed and just under a third (32%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 11: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about the letter they received from Social Security Scotland which said their re-determination was not completed within the allowed timescales (number of respondents=98-99)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
The letter made it clear about the next steps I could take (number of respondents=99)	71%	16%	12%
I was given enough information about why my re-determination was not completed on time (number of respondents=98)	47%	18%	32%

Respondents were asked if there was anything that could have improved communication during their re-determination. By far the most common theme that arose was that respondents would have liked more updates on what was happening with their re-determination throughout the process. Many also expressed dissatisfaction with the long timescales to get a decision on their re-determination and that not receiving updates to know what was happening with it caused them stress or anxiety. Many also mentioned that they would have liked a named contact they could keep in touch with about their case, as they found they were having to repeat information multiple times to different staff members every time they had contact with Social Security Scotland.

“I was constantly left hanging with no updates. From sending in the initial application right through to the final decision after re-determination no one ever phoned me to update me or at least let me know what was happening, it was over the space of a year which is a very long time when you're waiting for something so vital. I do think perhaps a check in now and again every other month or so just to update the person would allay a lot of anxiety.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Having one case worker/advisor throughout the process would be comforting rather than relaying personal details to several people, being kept up to date regularly would be reassuring.” [Survey respondent](#)

There was also a common theme of respondents expressing a generally positive sentiment about communication during re-determinations. Many praised the knowledge and manner of staff, saying that they were helpful and clear about the process. A few respondents spoke about receiving a phone call about their re-determination and how this helped keep them informed and put them at ease.

“I was exceptionally distressed when I got my decline letter. The person who I spoke with was amazing, going through the re-determination with me over the phone. I felt so much calmer after the call.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Everything was clear, you were given time to resend information and when I spoke to an advisor she was helpful and clear to what I needed to do and what happened next.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I think Social Security Scotland have been the only people who have genuinely encouraged and guided me through my difficulties to complete this application. I know I missed calls and letters the first time round from people who wanted to advise me to send more information, and that's the first time any agency has ever understood my troubles and tried to help me and give me a chance, so I appreciate that and the patience and kindness from your staff which makes the process much less anxiety inducing. I'd put this off so long because I was nervous about being judged.” [Survey respondent](#)

4.3. Challenges and barriers

Over six in ten respondents (61%) said they did not face any challenges or barriers when asking Social Security Scotland for a re-determination, whereas just over a quarter (28%) said they did face challenges or barriers (table 12).

Table 12: Whether respondents faced any challenges or barriers when asking Social Security Scotland for a re-determination (number of respondents=1313)

	% of respondents
Yes	28%
No	61%
Don't know/Can't remember	10%

When asked to describe these challenges or barriers, respondents most often spoke about disagreeing or being dissatisfied with Social Security Scotland policies and decision making processes. This theme has been common across the survey and can be subdivided into two areas. First, many respondents spoke of difficulties completing the forms required for a re-determination. Some mentioned that this was because of physical or mental disabilities (for example, tremors or dyslexia), whereas others spoke of the questions being difficult or poorly designed. Some talked about the format of the form not being accessible for them and some said they were not able to communicate the way they wanted to. For example, respondents mentioned not being able to post documents, not being able to fit or write what they wanted on a paper form, not being confident with computers and not being comfortable talking on the phone. Many spoke of not knowing if they had a choice about how to fill in forms and submit information. Respondents also spoke about the process of completing the form being stressful and demoralising.

“Due to hand and arm tremors I faced challenges with writing. Arthritis in my hips and knees proved painful while completing the form.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I have language and communication difficulties. Getting what I mean across accurately is difficult for me. I also struggled to understand the often vague nature of some of the questions.” [Survey respondent](#)

“It was generally stressful, and therefore caused a flare up of my condition. There is a lot of fear put around losing current benefit when asking for a re-determination. Also, just the energy required to complete the re-determination and post it was a lot, it would be useful to be able to complete it online as I am physically restricted.”
[Survey respondent](#)

“I don't like speaking on the on the phone because of my stammer. Everyone's stammer is different and I block, my words just don't come out especially on the phone. When you wait so long in a que then get hung up on. It puts fear and anxiety on me straight away. There should be an online thing just like this for people with speech difficulties. I need to write letters and then wait for a reply back. If I was able to complete an online form instead of writing and posting and then waiting again. It's quite a lengthy way of communicating especially in this day and age.” [Survey respondent](#)

Second, under the theme of Social Security Scotland polices and processes, respondents spoke of being unhappy with eligibility and decision making criteria. This was particular common amongst those who had had a re-determination for disability benefits, with respondents saying they felt they were not properly assessed or were not given an opportunity to express how their specific conditions affected their daily lives. Some respondents said questions were not relevant for their disability and that questions were more focused on physical rather than mental disability. Some expressed that they had 'bared their soul' and felt vulnerable sharing information about themselves throughout the process but were not shown empathy or understood.

“I struggle with rejection due to my disability which made it difficult to reapply. Additionally I struggled with trying to write down properly how my symptoms presented effectively as the whole questionnaire seemed not to be directed at someone with my disability. When I received my initial response I felt that my inability to say things in the correct way meant I was not actually successful rather than my actual disability.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I felt a lot of questions on form were irrelevant for a mental health issues. Maybe they could refer to specialist for autism and ADHD to word questions better as this can cause anxiety and then struggling to fill out the relevant form as these questions seem not to be relevant for my disability.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I have been through a journey of great personal pain when it comes to my conditions and talking about it was awful. That is a challenge talking, being vulnerable, baring my soul over and over again. To be treated so generically and no empathy at all in my assessment for my conditions.” [Survey respondent](#)

Another common theme that arose was links between the re-determination process and respondents' mental health or feelings of anxiety or stress. Many found that receiving a decision they disagreed with and having to go through a re-determination was inherently stressful and anxiety provoking. Some spoke of how this was made worse by deadlines, difficulty communicating with Social Security Scotland and waiting to receive a decision. Some respondents said their mental health was a barrier to completing the re-determination or was made worse by the process.

“Phone call lasted nearly three hours, I was stressed having to go over and over the same things.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Mentally I was unstable on extreme medication, despite these factors I was expected to perform this re-determination myself, I could hardly tell you what day it was let alone responding to detailed questions, I did my best to write it but as I told the agent my writing was terrible, so he took notes as I tried to explain, clearly I could not have been precise enough...” [Survey respondent](#)

“I have mental health issues. The barriers have been communication. You can never talk to anyone and it is very poorly worded for those with a mental illness.”
Survey respondent

A further common theme was around supporting information for re-determinations. Many said that the timeframe they were given was not enough to gather the necessary evidence. Others said they struggled with or were not able to gather all the information needed (for example, their GP was not forthcoming) or that they did not have the required evidence or documentation (for example, they did not have a thorough medical record of their condition or did not have photo ID). Some said they were not clear what they needed to supply for the re-determination. A few respondents mentioned that Social Security Scotland did not contact health professionals put forward by respondents for evidence. Some felt that Social Security Scotland did not thoroughly review or take into consideration supporting information that was provided.

“They didn't contact all my medical professionals and on the letter they stated that they had, when I asked my eye specialist he stated this was untrue and no one from Social Security Scotland had contacted him and yet you had made a re-determination based on this and no one had called me to ask for this info or my specialist.” Survey respondent

“I was told to send a letter showing my name and address however as a young person this is not common to receive. My bank statement was not considered eligible so it was difficult for me to access the required documents needed for re-determination.” Survey respondent

“As I am not in constant contact with doctors because my conditions are long term and all I can be offered is my regular medication I was not able to provide satisfactory clinical evidence. I am not in constant contact with doctors phoning and complaining how bad I am to make sure I have a built up case there. I struggle alone and have no written proof from professionals about it and I have found that without said written proof my experience and struggle doesn't count as after reconsideration I was still 2 points short.” [Survey respondent](#)

“It can take a long time to get responses from doctors when they are about non-urgent things like letters for benefits are. So, I didn't have time (or money, as it is a charged service) to get new letters written and needed to rely on old notes.” [Survey respondent](#)

Many respondents also spoke of errors made by Social Security Scotland during their re-determination. Some said that Social Security Scotland lost their documents or application or said they did not receive them. Some were told that Social Security Scotland had made a mistake with the re-determination decision or payment. Others said they were given inaccurate, inconsistent or conflicting information, including being told they would receive a phone call and then not receiving one. A few mentioned that letters about their re-determination were sent to the wrong address.

“No mail was being sent to my new address and nobody cared. I got told I was worrying about nothing when this whole time Social Security Scotland were sending all my personal data to an address I no longer lived at. My name, date of birth, address, medical information and my national insurance number were being given to a total stranger!” [Survey respondent](#)

“They lost it in the post, online or email is much easier and allows you to keep a record of progress and have a single contact.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Once the re-determination was found in my favour I was then notified four weeks later that they had made a mistake and I wasn't to get my award after all. That was in April 2024 and 8 months later I am still waiting to get it sorted out.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I was told I would be called by staff and when this did not happen I put in a complaint which I feel was not dealt with appropriately. The staff member who called me about my complaint said that a standard letter is sent to everyone telling them that they will get a call but they don't do this. I was told a call to me would not have made any difference to my claim.” [Survey respondent](#)

4.4. Staff and treatment by Social Security Scotland

Data about staff and treatment by Social Security Scotland was grouped together for respondents who had only had a re-determination and those who had had a re-determination and appeal. Only 27 clients who responded to the survey had experience of the appeal process, so the analysis in this section mainly relates to respondents who had only had a re-determination.

Around half of those who responded to the re-determinations and appeals survey had spoken to staff about their re-determination and/or appeal (48%), whereas 45% had not (table 13).

Table 13: Whether respondents spoke to staff about their re-determination and/or appeal (number of respondents=1321)

	% of respondents
Yes	48%
No	45%
Don't know/Can't remember	7%

Respondents were asked about their experiences with Social Security Scotland staff they had interacted with during their re-determination and/or appeal (table 14).

Respondents were most likely to agree that staff treated them with kindness, as nearly

three quarters (74%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and only 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The majority of respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that staff listened to them (67%) and that staff were knowledgeable about the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (62%), with 19% and 20% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with these statements, respectively.

Respondents were less likely to feel that Social Security Scotland staff supported them throughout their re-determination and/or appeal, as just under half (46%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and around a third (31%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 14: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about staff they spoke to during the re-determination and/or appeal process (number of respondents=622-629)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Staff were knowledgeable about the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=629)	62%	17%	20%
Staff treated me with kindness (number of respondents=622)	74%	14%	11%
Staff listened to me (number of respondents=626)	67%	13%	19%
Social Security Scotland staff supported me throughout my re-determination and/or appeal (number of respondents=628)	46%	21%	31%

The survey asked respondents to reflect on how Social Security Scotland treated them during the re-determination and appeal processes (table 15). When asked if Social Security Scotland treated them with dignity and respect during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process, 59% agreed or strongly agreed and just over a fifth (21%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Some groups were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. This included those aged 16-44 (ranging from 28% to 29%) (table B1) and those who described their sexuality as bisexual (30%) or as gay/lesbian (50%) (table B3). Some groups were more likely to agree or strongly agree with this statement. This included those aged 55-64 (65%) (table B1), those who said they did not have a long term health condition or illness (74%) (table B2), those who had a re-determination for Child Disability Payment (78%) (table B4) and those who had a re-determination for Scottish Child Payment (78%) (table B4).

When respondents were asked if Social Security Scotland treated them fairly during their re-determination and/or appeal, half (50%) agreed or strongly agreed and just under a third (32%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Groups that were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree included those aged 16-24 (45%) (table B5), those aged 25-34 (39%) (table B5) and those who described their sexuality as gay/lesbian (53%) (table B7). Those who described their sexuality as bisexual were more likely to both agree or strongly agree (55%) and disagree or strongly disagree (39%) (table B7). Groups more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement included those aged 55-64 (57%) (table B5), those who did not have a long term health condition or illness (66%) (table B6), those who had a re-determination for Child Disability Payment (72%) (table B8) and those who had a re-determination from Scottish Child Payment (67%) (table B8).

Table 15: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about how Social Security Scotland treated them during the re-determination and/or appeal process (number of respondents=1312-1322)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Social Security Scotland treated me with dignity and respect during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1322)	59%	18%	21%
Social Security Scotland treated me fairly during my re-determination and/or appeal (number of respondents=1312)	50%	17%	32%

4.5. Re-determination outcome

Half (50%) of those who responded to the survey who had had a re-determination agreed with the new decision about their case, 41% did not agree with the new decision and 9% had not yet heard back (table 16).

Table 16: Whether respondents who had a re-determination agreed with the new decision (number of respondents=1294)

	% of respondents
Yes	50%
No	41%
I've not heard back yet	9%

Respondents who disagreed with their re-determination decision were asked if it was clear what the next steps they could take were to challenge the new decision (table 17). Just under half (49%) said yes and 41% said no.

Table 17: Whether respondents who disagreed with their re-determination decision felt it was clear what the next steps were they could take to challenge the new decision (number of respondents=533)

	% of respondents
Yes	49%
No	41%
Don't know/Can't remember	11%

Respondents who disagreed with their re-determination decision but did not submit an appeal were asked why (table 18)³. Respondents were most likely to say that they had not appealed the decision because they did not think their appeal would be successful (22%), that they did not know they could appeal (15%) or because they thought it would be too difficult (11%).

Table 18: Why respondents who disagreed with their re-determination decision did not submit an appeal (number of respondents=384)

	% of respondents
I didn't think my appeal would be successful	22%
I didn't know I could appeal	15%
I thought it would be too difficult	11%
I was worried about going to a Tribunal hearing	10%
I was worried the appeal might lead to a reduction in my award	6%
I thought the appeal process would take too long	5%
I didn't know how to appeal	4%
I thought I would need a solicitor or legal representative	3%
Prefer not to say	4%
Other (see below)	20%

A fifth of respondents (20%) answered 'other'. Amongst those who explained their answer, a common theme was that they had ill health (with some saying that the exertion of going through an appeal would make it worse). Others said that they did not

³ Some responded saying they had submitted an appeal. This was likely due to a data error that occurred when creating the sample to send clients the survey. These responses were excluded from the analysis.

want to appeal as they felt they had been treated unfairly and so they felt disengaged with the process and that their appeal would not be properly considered. Others did not want to appeal because of the anxiety and stress it would cause, some said they did not receive communications about submitting an appeal and some felt they did not have enough time to submit an appeal or gather supporting information. A few respondents said they did not want to appeal as they were embarrassed or felt there was stigma related to appealing.

4.6. Overall experience

When asked to rate their overall experience of the re-determination process, just under half (48%) answered good or very good and just under a third (31%) answered poor or very poor (table 19).

Groups more likely to respond 'poor' or 'very poor' included those aged 16-44 (ranging from 36 to 40%) (table B9) and those who described their sexuality as gay/lesbian (56%) (table B11). Those who described their sexuality as bisexual were more likely to answer both 'good' or 'very good' (55%) and 'poor' or 'very poor' (39%) (table B11).

Groups more likely to respond 'good' or 'very good' included those aged 55-64 (53%) (table B9), those who did not have a long term health condition or illness (60%) (table B10), those who had a re-determination for Child Disability Payment (61%) and those who had a re-determination for Scottish Child Payment (66%) (table B12).

Table 19: How respondents rated their overall experience of the re-determination process (number of respondents=1319)

	% of respondents who said 'good' or 'very good'	% of respondents who said 'neither good nor poor'	% of respondents who said 'poor' or 'very poor'
Overall, how was your experience of the re-determination process?	48%	20%	31%

Respondents were also asked if they had any suggestions for improvements or further comments about the re-determination process. The themes that came up were similar to themes raised elsewhere by survey respondents. Respondents most often spoke about being unhappy with Social Security Scotland policies and decision making processes, especially in relation to assessing disability. Many respondents felt like they had not been listened to or understood, with some feeling discriminated against by the process. Respondents spoke about feeling like their disabilities and supporting information about these were not fairly assessed in a way that demonstrates the impact on their lives. Some said they would have preferred face-to-face assessments and more input from medical experts to better demonstrate this, whereas others were unhappy with the questions asked in application forms.

“The comments made on my re-determination sent me into depression. They made me feel like my condition had been trivialised and that there had not only been a lack of understanding of my condition's effects, but an active disbelief/prejudice of its effects. Decisions had been made based on assumptions/the individual's own beliefs rather than on evidence. Assessors should be up-to-date with the effects of conditions.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Whoever writes the letters need to use a spell check, there were several errors on the letter. The team need to take into consideration all of the information as a whole, this is a redetermination/appeal, not two different applications, the alleged doctor used for reviewing the forms cannot comment on somebody's health/conditions based solely on forms, they need to speak to the person to understand the symptoms and impact on the person's life and wellbeing. To have a doctor who knows nothing about the person applying is unfair to the applicant and clearly only for the benefit of Social Security Scotland to reject wherever possible”. [Survey respondent](#)

“I felt my experiences were minimalised and not taken seriously, therefore I didn't get my payment even though I got it last time I applied and little has changed. When on the phone to staff they are always lovely though. I also felt that my form was not fully read or understood given the responses I got.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Whoever did my re-determination did not read any of my evidence, disregarded my illness and symptoms completely and made assumptions unrelated to what I had said. I felt completely dehumanised and broken down by this experience.” [Survey respondent](#)

Another frequent theme that came up under this question was staff manner, conduct and knowledge. Many respondents that said staff made them feel not listened to, that they did not understand their specific conditions or were dismissive of them. A few mentioned that Social Security Scotland staff said they would do something but they did not – for example, calling respondents back. Some respondents suggested that staff did not have a good knowledge of the re-determination process and were not able to answer their questions. However, some comments about staff were positive, with many saying that staff were kind and helpful.

“I had a phone call to verify a few things, I felt I wasn’t listened to, the guy just wasn’t really interested in what I was saying, asked the same thing a few times I felt he was making me out to be a liar, got met with a few ohh and ahh that was about it.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I feel I was treated very very poorly there was no communication from the staff as I had to call them every single time and even then they would just tell me what I wanted to hear to get rid of me and not tell me the truth. Then I was as previously stated forced to make a new claim as they said with no explanation that I was not allowed to appeal the original decision. The staff were very unprofessional and lacking in the knowledge base required to sufficiently deal with the questions asked of them.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I had a great experience with the process I had a call within two weeks and the lady was lovely, kind and made it so much less stressful for me and I had decision a few weeks later.” [Survey respondent](#)

“For the last few questions it was hard to summarise as I encountered fantastic agents and at times staff who I believe appeared very inexperienced to the point one said to me ‘it depends who looks at the re-determination if you get it or not!’ As a result of all the issues I encountered I submitted a formal complaint which was handled well and it was upheld.” [Survey respondent](#)

A further key theme was lack of communication and updates throughout the re-determination process. Many felt there were long waits for decisions, during which they did not receive any updates about the progress of their case. This led to increased worry and anxiety around the process. Some mentioned that having a specific member of staff they could contact for updates and to discuss their case would have been useful. A few mentioned that using letters to communicate was not effective due to the longer time for them to arrive and the potential for communications to be lost. Emails or text were mentioned as preferred methods of communication. Some respondents said they did not understand how decisions had been reached and what information had been used for this. They spoke of wanting clearer communications and explanations around decision making.

“I feel that the re-determination process was the first time in my Adult Disability Payment application process that I had been treated like a human being with serious health issues, whereas the initial application had made me feel like I was being treated like a fraudster. I just wish that there had been more communication with me, and that I had been given a specific person/team, whose names were given to me, who I could contact.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I'd suggest better communication about the reasons for claim rejections would help claimants understand the process and feel more supported.” [Survey respondent](#)

“The re-determination process has been fraught with confusion and inadequate communication. The lack of clarity provided throughout this ordeal has exacerbated my anxiety, leading to sleepless nights and constant worry. The stress induced by this process has been overwhelming and has negatively affected my daily life and overall well-being. The mental strain caused by this re-determination has been so severe that it has necessitated a return to anxiety medication. I had previously managed to cope without these medications, but the undue pressure and uncertainty have forced me to seek medical intervention once again. This is a situation I had hoped to avoid, and it is deeply disheartening to find myself in this position due to an administrative process.” [Survey respondent](#)

A few survey respondents left positive comments under this question. The sentiment of these comments tended to focus on positive interactions with staff, especially where they showed empathy or made efforts to understand the respondents' circumstances. A few mentioned receiving a call about their re-determination and that this was helpful and reassuring. Others positively compared their experiences of Social Security Scotland against more negative experiences with the Department for Work and Pensions, mentioning that they felt less stress and more compassion.

“The whole process was fast and efficient. I was given plenty of time to send off information and supporting evidence. I have recently been through the same process with the Department for Work and Pensions and it is by far a better service provided. I felt when dealing with Social Security Scotland I was listened to and there was compassion something that the Department for Work and Pensions lack.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I feel like it helped when the lady called me to ask questions about my child's condition because it felt personal and also that my child mattered. Thank you.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Just want to reiterate how helpful it was when I was called and asked more about my conditions and how I cope. The woman I spoke to had clearly looked carefully at my form and sought advice from elsewhere as well. She pointed out things that I could gain points for that I hadn't even thought about because it's just second nature to me and told me her colleagues had suggested that some of the issues I have were probably causing me to do things which would gain me points. This was the case. I'm not sure if everyone who asks for a re-determination gets a phone call like this but it really helped me have a positive experience.” [Survey respondent](#)

5. Appeals

The second stage of challenging a decision is called an appeal. An appeal can be made when a client has received a re-determination decision and disagreed with it. Appeals can also be made if Social Security Scotland does not make a re-determination decision in time.

Appeals are made to the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland, which is totally independent from Social Security Scotland. The Tribunal looks at all the facts and information available and makes a decision on the appeal. The Tribunal is responsible for communicating with clients during the appeal process, with Social Security Scotland having little input to the process and how it is conducted. For this reason, the questions in the survey about appeals focus mainly on the interactions clients may have had with Social Security Scotland during appeals.

The few questions on respondents' overall experience of making an appeal will be used to help Social Security Scotland explore how well they are delivering on the commitments set out in [Our Charter](#) that relate to appeals. Social Security Scotland will also provide feedback to the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland on respondents' experience of the overall appeal process.

There were only 27 clients who responded to the re-determinations and appeals survey who had experience of the appeal process. Results from this part of the survey will be presented here in more general terms to avoid over generalisation of results from the small sample size.

5.1. Requesting an appeal

Almost nine in ten respondents who requested an appeal did so for their Adult Disability Payment, with a small proportion requesting an appeal for Child Disability Payment (table B13). The most common route for requesting an appeal was by post (over four in ten respondents), followed by online and then over the phone (table B14). Seven in ten respondents felt that they were given enough time to ask for an appeal (table B15).

Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was clear how to ask for an appeal (over six in ten) and what the deadline was for doing this (just under six in ten) (Table

B16). Those who found the process unclear were asked to explain their answer. A few respondents answered and they spoke about a range of issues including not being given enough information about the appeal process, being given conflicting information about it and also not being clear on or being unhappy about appeal policies and processes.

“Again I filled out the form over the phone for yet another advisor to do it incorrectly and set me back again. It was also unclear as I got an email telling me that I had to contact further then a letter at same time saying that had been done.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Not given enough information about my appeal to the stage where it was months before anything was put in place. The panel never took into consideration all of my health problems and decided to do what it wanted. To the fact that Social Security Scotland admitted they had made a mistake, but Tribunal would not accept this and totally changed everything about my claim.” [Survey respondent](#)

Respondents were most likely to say that filling out the form for requesting an appeal was neither easy nor difficult (over four in ten), a smaller proportion said this process was difficult or very difficult (a third) and smaller proportion again said the process was easy or very easy (over two in ten) (table B17). The majority of respondents (almost six in ten) got help with filling out the appeal form, most often from a welfare rights adviser, a charity or third sector organisation or a family member or friend (table B18).

5.2. Communication and information

Just under half of respondents said that they had accessed information to help them understand the appeal process (table B19). When asked what information they had accessed, respondents were most likely to say general online information or third sector and local authority advice services (such as Citizens Advice Bureau).

After an appeal decision has been made, Social Security Scotland sends clients a letter explaining the impact of the appeal outcome on their benefit or benefits. Just over half of survey respondents found that this letter was clear (table B20).

5.3. Challenges and barriers

Nearly three quarters of survey respondents said that they did not face any challenges or barriers when asking for an appeal (table B21). The smaller proportion of those who said they did face challenges or barriers were asked to describe what these were. Only a few respondents answered and they spoke of health conditions, long timescales, lack of communication, deadlines missed by Social Security Scotland and poor staff knowledge. One respondent felt having to justify their illness despite having already provided evidence for this was a barrier.

“Having to justify my mental health illness even though they had a written statement from my GP.” [Survey respondent](#)

“The advisor was clueless, the length of time it took and the fact my appeal was somehow done before my change of circumstances which had been sent in twice, both a year before the appeal was sent in.” [Survey respondent](#)

“They took longer to process my appeal before sending onto the Tribunal. They missed the deadline for this.” [Survey respondent](#)

5.4. Appeal outcome

Nearly six in ten survey respondents agreed with the Tribunal’s decision once the appeal was complete and they were told of the outcome (table B22). Those who disagreed with the Tribunal’s decision were asked if it was clear what steps they could take to challenge the decision. Nearly half of respondents said that they were not clear on what steps they could take to do this and just over a third said that they were clear on this (table B23).

5.5. Overall experience

Respondents were asked to rate their overall experience of the appeal process. Responses were mixed, with around half of respondents saying that their experience

was either good or very good and around half saying it was poor or very poor (table B24).

When asked for suggestions for improvement or comments about their overall experience of the appeal process, respondents most often said they were unhappy with the long timescales involved in the appeals process. Comments were about long waits to get a decision on appeals, poor understanding of the timescales involved and one respondent spoke of Social Security Scotland missing the deadline to send their appeal to the Tribunal.

“Social Security are strict with their 8 week deadline for re-determinations but not as so with the deadline for sending off your appeal to the Tribunal on time.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Have been waiting 18 months for the appeal process this has now been rescheduled for another 6 weeks, all information had been given to Social Security Scotland but at the last hearing the representative from Social Security Scotland stated they had not read the notes on the case so needed more information.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Length of time is very long from start to finish.” [Survey respondent](#)

Others spoke of feeling they were not listened to or showed empathy or understanding throughout the process. There was a feeling that more should be done to ensure clients and their situations are understood throughout the appeal process. A few respondents spoke about staff manner, stating that Social Security Scotland staff could be rude. A few respondents also mentioned that the appeal process was stressful and anxiety provoking.

“Believe the person, not paperwork.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I felt at the Tribunal hearing they actually listened to me and had read the evidence properly. The social security representative however was very rude.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Hearing was very disorganised. Hadn’t been made clear how many people would be present. Panel’s timekeeping was poor. Hearing dragged on for a very long time, causing distress and anxiety and impacting on my plans for the day. Significant impact on mental health in the following weeks.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Like I said you rejected me at every stage making me feel absolutely worthless. The whole application is enough to give you a disability. I had several breakdowns and ended up on stronger medication because of Social Security Scotland. Even after winning my appeal you told me I had been awarded Adult Disability Payment and the Tribunal told me I had been awarded it. Even got paid and back pay. THEN a week or so later I get an email saying Social Security wanted the Tribunal to review its decision! It’s absolutely sickening.” [Survey respondent](#)

6. Short-term Assistance

Short-term Assistance is a temporary payment clients can apply for when they ask to challenge a decision to reduce or stop Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment. While the challenge is ongoing, Short-term Assistance payments replace the amount Social Security Scotland reduced the disability payment by. Short-term Assistance payments do not need to be paid back, no matter what the outcome of the challenge is.

The survey about re-determinations and appeals included some questions on Short-term Assistance and these were shown to all respondents who had challenged a decision about their Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment. As only clients who already receive Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment are eligible for Short-term Assistance, this meant that some respondents would have been shown these questions despite not being eligible for these payments (first time applicants to disability benefits). In future iterations of the re-determinations and appeals survey, routing will be changed to ensure that only those eligible for Short-term Assistance are shown questions about it.

6.1. Awareness and knowledge

Awareness of Short-term Assistance payments amongst survey respondents appeared to be poor, with 84% saying that they were not aware of Short-term Assistance and only 9% saying that they knew about the payments (table 20).

Table 20: Whether respondents were aware of Short-term Assistance (number of respondents=1217)

	% of respondents
Yes	9%
No	84%
Don't know/Can't remember	6%

Respondents were also asked if they had a good knowledge of Short-term Assistance payments before reading a description about them included in the survey (table 21).

Nearly three quarters (71%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, with only 8% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Table 21: Whether respondents had a good knowledge of Short-term Assistance before reading a description about it (number of respondents=1216)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Before reading the description above, I had a good knowledge of Short-term Assistance	8%	14%	71%

Respondents were asked what they found unclear about Short-term Assistance. The vast majority said they were unaware that it existed. Some spoke about becoming disengaged with communications from Social Security Scotland when they found out their case had not been decided in their favour. Some respondents mentioned that information about Short-term Assistance was difficult to understand or that they needed help understanding it. A few mentioned that eligibility criteria for Short-term Assistance were particularly unclear, with some also saying that Social Security Scotland staff did not have a good knowledge of eligibility.

“No idea about it. When you open a letter in fear and get rejected you don't tend to read or want to read the rest, your fate is sealed.” [Survey respondent](#)

“To be honest there is a bit too much information for me to take in and I don't understand it, I would need to get it explained as I can't retain information.” [Survey respondent](#)

“It seemed to go round in a loop and wasn't clear if it was only available if you had been granted no award and given I'd waited a year for original decision how would I know what your idea of short term was.” [Survey respondent](#)

“It appeared that you could have Short-term Assistance even if the first decision was ‘no award’, even the staff involved thought this, but it was not the case.” [Survey respondent](#)

Those who had been aware of Short-term Assistance were asked if knowing about the payments had encouraged them to request a re-determination (table 22). Just over a quarter (28%) agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case, whereas just under a third (32%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 22: Whether respondents’ prior awareness of Short-term Assistance payments encouraged them to request a re-determination (number of respondents=116)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who ‘neither agreed or disagreed’	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Knowing that it was possible to apply for Short-term Assistance encouraged me to request a re-determination	28%	35%	32%

6.2. Experience of receiving Short-term Assistance

Only 4% of survey respondents applied for Short-term Assistance; 92% did not (table 23). Of the small number who those who had applied, just over three quarters went on to receive Short-term Assistance payments and just under a fifth did not (table B25).

Table 23: Whether respondents applied for Short-term Assistance (number of respondents=1217)

	% of respondents
Yes	4%
No	92%
Don't know/Can't remember	5%

Those who received Short-term Assistance were asked about how financially supported they felt when receiving payments during the re-determination process (table B26). Over half agreed or strongly agreed that they felt supported, just under a third neither agreed nor disagreed and 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Those who received Short-term Assistance were asked about their experience of receiving the payments. There were 19 responses. Most often respondents left a positive comment describing the impact the payment had had on their lives or saying that the process of applying for and receiving the payment was straightforward. A few mentioned that they had issues with their payments – with these either being missed or being the wrong amount. A few respondents said the information given about Short-term Assistance was unclear.

“Allows me to balance me life, without hustling and overworking while in pain. The assistance allows me to choose shifts during days I can work.” [Survey respondent](#)

“It was good but I then got a letter saying that I had been overpaid, this made me feel upset even though I am not required to pay it back. I feel like I am being told that I shouldn't have applied.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I didn't know about Short-term Assistance until I read it online as there wasn't an option on my form. I had to phone and sort it out and missed payment which wasn't backdated either.” [Survey respondent](#)

7. Complaints

Complaints to Social Security Scotland are handled as either a stage one or a stage two complaint. During a stage one complaint Social Security Scotland usually try to resolve the complaint at the time it is made. This could involve an apology, an explanation about why the issue happened, or outlining action they are going to take to solve the problem.

If clients are not satisfied with the response at stage one, they can take their complaint to stage two. During stage two, a fuller investigation into the issue usually takes place and Social Security Scotland will try to fix the issue and will send the client a letter with their decision.

There were 50 clients who responded to the complaints survey. Results from this part of the survey will be presented here mostly in general terms to avoid over generalisation of results from the small sample size.

7.1. Submitting a complaint

Nearly two thirds of respondents who submitted a complaint did so about their Adult Disability Payment, with a smaller proportion complaining about an issue related to their Child Disability Payment (table B27). Before receiving the survey, the vast majority respondents were aware that they had made an official complaint (table B28). When respondents were asked if they were happy with the amount of time they had to make a complaint to Social Security Scotland, responses were split fairly evenly, with around a third agreeing with this statement (table B42).

Respondents were asked to explain why they submitted a complaint to Social Security Scotland. Most often they said it was because of long wait times for decisions on cases. A few respondents specifically mentioned long waits to process a change of circumstances or to review cases. One respondent mentioned long waits for large print letters to arrive.

“The process of my child’s review being completed took too long. 9 months. Staff were rude or unhelpful when I tried to make enquiries about the progress.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Letters in our preferred format (large print) were taking over a month to arrive.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I waited far too long for my application on reconsideration to be assessed: I contacted the Department for Work and Pensions in January 2023, my transfer to Social Security Scotland wasn’t completed till April. I sent back my form at the end of May 2023, but heard nothing about the award until December 2024, despite repeated contact by myself. It resulted in significant stress and distress which impacted my multiple health conditions negatively.” [Survey respondent](#)

The next most common reason respondents gave for submitting a complaint was treatment by staff. Respondents spoke about staff being rude, unhelpful, giving them incorrect information or having poor knowledge of processes. A few mentioned that they thought they had been hung up on by staff on the phone line.

“The lack of co-operation from some staff on your calls is a massive red flag. When dealing with severe cases, we don't always have direct engagement with our clients, this is where implied consent is paramount. Your staff don't seem to understand what implied consent is. Also, your staff answering the phone, saying nothing and hanging up is becoming far too frequent.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I was humiliated by a Social Security staff member when inquiring about the progress of my claim as I had received a letter saying I had no points (it turned out this letter should not have been sent out) to me.” [Survey respondent](#)

Less common themes that were discussed were poor communication and Social Security Scotland policies and processes. Respondents spoke about a lack of communication and updates, misinformation and conflicting information. In relation to policies and processes, respondents spoke of being dissatisfied with how Social

Security Scotland handled their benefit case or how they made decisions about their case.

“I was given the wrong information over the phone about the process for transferring from Child Disability Payment to Adult Disability Payment and it meant I did not get the Adult Disability Payment application in time for the payment to be continuous.”

Survey respondent

“There has been no communication from Social Security to acknowledge my appeal or Short-term assistance request. I have also been told 3 different things each time I have called for an update. I also was promised a telephone call which did not happen. It has been very stressful as calling can take up to an hour each time.”

Survey respondent

“I submitted the complaint via a national engagement team member due to a client I had been working with being sent out a letter and form emblazoned with Terminal Illness which I think is totally inappropriate especially when I had already made an application for the person in question. She was aware she was terminally ill but she still didn't need reminding of this by your paperwork.”

Survey respondent

Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about making a complaint (table B29). When asked if it was clear how to make a complaint, slightly more respondents agreed than disagreed. More respondents also agreed that it was easy to make a complaint than disagreed with this. However, respondents were more likely to disagree with the statement ‘I felt my complaint was taken seriously’ than to agree with it.

Those who disagreed that it was clear how to make a complaint were asked what was unclear about the complaint process. Most often they said the process was unclear because they were not kept up to date with what was happening during the process. A few respondents spoke specifically about how they did not receive any acknowledgment that their complaint had been submitted and that they would have liked this.

“When submitting the complaint online, it was not at all clear whether or not my complaint had been submitted: there was no acknowledgment email and no reference number displayed.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I had no idea what stage the complaint was at and what the outcome would be.” [Survey respondent](#)

Others spoke about difficulties submitting a complaint and poor information around the process. Some said it was not clear where or how to submit a complaint whereas others said they were given conflicting information on the process by staff. Some said there was a general lack of information around the complaint process.

“I had to ask how to do a complaint cause it was not clear on website.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Different information being provided by different staff in terms of how to raise a complaint. I was being told I could do it in writing, on webchat, by phone but then this was changing dependent on who I was speaking to. I was then being told that all complaints are raised as stage 1 complaints. A manager told me my initial complaint was raised as stage 2 but then when her manager phoned me back they advised it was a stage 1 complaint. There is a clear lack of consistency and possible areas of training required.” [Survey respondent](#)

“No information offered about the complaints process.” [Survey respondent](#)

7.2. Communication and information

Clients who submit a stage two complaint are sent a letter acknowledging and detailing the reasons for their complaint and then a letter explaining the outcome of their complaint. Clients whose complaint is resolved at stage one are usually phoned about their complaint, but in some instances, if they cannot be reached, they are sent a letter. Respondents were asked about these letters and communication during the process

(table B30). Almost six in ten respondents disagreed that the letter acknowledging and detailing their complaint was clear and accurate. Similarly, the same proportion disagreed that the letter explaining the outcome of the complaint was clear. Nearly two thirds of respondents disagreed that they were given enough information by Social Security Scotland about what was happening during the complaints process.

Half of respondents said they were not happy with the method Social Security Scotland used to communicate with them during the complaints process (table B31). When asked which method of communication they would prefer, these respondents most often said email, followed by letter and SMS (table B32).

A small majority of respondents said they received a call from Social Security Scotland to acknowledge that they had submitted a complaint (table B33). Those who received a call were asked about their experience of this (table B34). Nearly eight in ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated with kindness. Over six in ten respondents said that the call was useful, that the staff member they spoke to was knowledgeable about the complaint process and that staff listened to them. However, over a fifth of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with these three statements.

Respondents were asked if they got in contact with Social Security Scotland during the complaint process aside from the call mentioned above. Slightly more respondents said that they were in contact again than those that were not (table B35). Those who did get in contact with Social Security Scotland again were asked if there was anything they would like to tell us about this contact. Most often they spoke about feeling like they were not listened to or understood, often in relation to how their complaint was handled or resolved. Others spoke of getting in contact to chase up progress on their case and frustrations around this. A few mentioned that they tried to get updates on the web chat but got through to staff members who worked on carers' benefits rather than staff who deal with complaints.

“It is futile. The "final resolution" had nothing to do with the complaint I had originally filed.” [Survey respondent](#)

“My views and facts were deliberately ignored as if I had not made any contact.”
Survey respondent

“As my complaint had not been acknowledged within 5 working days, despite this being the published process, I tried contacting Social Security Scotland by live chat to see what was going on. That was just farcical: for some reason I reached a member of staff who dealt with the Carer's Allowance Supplement. She was unable to access any records apart from Carer's Allowance Supplement and refused to help.” Survey respondent

Respondents were asked if there was anything that could have improved communication with Social Security Scotland during the complaints process. The most common theme by far was improving the level and quality of communication and updates so that clients know what is happening with their case. Respondents also said they had difficulties getting in touch with Social Security Scotland to get updates and that there was a lack of communication channels available for this. A few respondents mentioned missing calls about their case. Some said the information they did receive was unclear or lacking in detail.

“Any and all communication from your side. You ring once and hang up. Don't leave any contact details. Don't have an email address. I have to try to convince people who are already overwhelmed to sit on hold for an hour just to start a conversation with you. Then, half the time the phone gets cut off and you don't phone back. So frustrating.” Survey respondent

“After a complaint was lodged there was no follow up from Social Security Scotland about how they were dealing with the complaint or even feedback.” Survey respondent

“1) Once the initial complaint has been submitted, the complainer should be provided with an onscreen complaint reference number for their records. They should also be provided with a) an email, or b) a text message, or c) a letter, or d) a

phone call to separately acknowledge the complaint and reconfirm this reference number.

2) Contact should be available by email.

3) The information and communications received from various staff at each stage were lacking in detail and the explanations were very vague.

4) It was never clear in the communications what each letter was - was it an acknowledgement, a Stage 1 response, an acknowledgement of my escalation, a Stage 2 response, all of the above, none of the above? It was never clear.” [Survey respondent](#)

A few respondents also spoke about wanting to see improvements in how staff treated them and staff knowledge about Social Security Scotland processes. Some felt staff were dismissive of their case, whereas others felt staff could not cater to their accessibility needs.

“Yes, not simply insisting that everything has to be by phone. Training your staff on the Equality Act 2010. Providing the same level of service to disabled people. I felt I was constantly having to explain a 14 year old law to the very people who should be living its values irrespective of their legal obligations to. It took months to get the help I needed, and it was months of being dehumanised and having my rights ignored.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Regular updates on the stages of the complaint. An update on timescales of dealing with the complaint. Improvement in staff not trying to close the complaint down at the first point of contact. Perhaps this is to assist with metrics for reporting monitoring information to the government.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Staff to be more knowledgeable about the Tribunal process.” [Survey respondent](#)

7.3. Challenges and barriers

When asked if they faced any challenges or barriers when making a complaint, over two thirds of respondents said that they did (table B36). Respondents most often said that they could not communicate with Social Security Scotland how they wanted, followed by saying that they could not communicate with Social Security Scotland when

they wanted to. A small number of respondents also responded with 'other' when asked this question.

All respondents who faced challenges or barriers were asked to explain what these were. The themes that came up are similar to those that arose across the other survey questions. Most often respondents spoke of communication issues. They often mentioned long wait times to speak to staff members on the phone line or web chat and general difficulties in being able to speak to Social Security Scotland to submit complaints and get updates. This included some respondents talking about the method of communicating with Social Security Scotland being a barrier. Some said they would have liked to communicate over email but were not able to, whereas others said communicating online was difficult for them. Some spoke of accessibility needs that were not met by the methods of communications available to them. Others spoke about feeling that they faced challenges or barriers in the complaint process because of poor or inconsistent information about it and a lack of communication and updates.

“Wait time for live chat was HOURS. There was also no way to contact Social Security Scotland by email, meaning I had to type a letter, struggle to a friend's house to print it, struggle to a post box to post it.” [Survey respondent](#)

“As I only received a phone call in response to my complaint the only way to follow up (to see if the actions they had promised had been put in place) was through the web chat or phone line, both of which can involve a long queue and didn't feel quite the right way to do it.” [Survey respondent](#)

“It's so hard to get a hold of you. You don't leave a return number. There's no email address. If we're waiting on a call from you, you try once and give up. This is harder than it needs to be.” [Survey respondent](#)

“I was advised my complaint would not be upheld. This was inconsistent with the information available on the Scottish Government website.” [Survey respondent](#)

7.4. Complaint outcome

The majority of respondents could not remember or did not know at which stage their complaint was resolved. For those that did, more said their complaint was resolved at stage two rather than stage one (table B37).

For those respondents whose complaint was resolved at stage one, most said the complaint was not resolved in the allowed timescale set by Social Security Scotland (five days) (table B38). For those whose complaint was resolved at stage two, slightly more said that that the complaint was resolved within the allowed timescale (20 days) than those that did not (table B39). When respondents were asked if they were happy with the amount of time it took Social Security Scotland to get back to them with a resolution, half of them disagreed (table B42).

When asked whether the timescale Social Security Scotland had to respond to their complaint was extended, most respondents answered either 'don't know/can't remember' or 'no' (table B40). A very small number of respondents said the timescale for responding to their complaint was extended for either for their stage one complaint or for both their stage one and stage two complaint. This small number of respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about this experience (table B41). Respondents most often disagreed that they were kept up to date with what was happening with their complaint when the timescale to respond had been extended and most disagreed when asked if they understood why the timescale to respond to their complaint had been extended.

Respondents were asked if they were satisfied with how their complaint was resolved by Social Security Scotland (table B43). An equal amount said they were satisfied with the resolution as those that said they were not satisfied. Those who were not satisfied with the resolution to their complaint were asked if it was clear what next steps they could take for taking their complaint further (table B44). Nearly three quarters said they were not clear on the next steps.

7.5. Overall experience

Respondents were asked to say how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about their overall experience of making a complaint (table B45). When asked if Social Security Scotland treated them with dignity and respect, just over four in ten disagreed and four in ten agreed. Half of respondents disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them fairly and nearly three in ten agreed with this.

When asked to rate their overall experience of the complaint process, nearly six in ten respondents said it was poor or very poor and just under a quarter said it was good or very good (table B46).

All respondents were asked if they would like to make any suggestions for improvement or further comments about their overall experience of making a complaint to Social Security Scotland. The most common theme was around improving communication and updates about the process. Respondents were frustrated that they did not receive any acknowledgement of their complaint or were not given an opportunity to discuss it with Social Security Scotland or be told of the outcome. Some suggested that receiving an immediate acknowledgment and a reference number once their complaint was submitted would give them more confidence that the complaint was being processed.

“I can't really recall the process. At the time I felt compelled to put in a complaint about the individual because of the way he dealt with me. I thought I might have received some acknowledgement at the time but I heard absolutely nothing. To be honest I forgot all about it. I made the complaint through the Social Security Scotland website, if I recall correctly.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Better communication. I've explained my issues with you phoning once then hanging up. Half the time you don't arrange a meeting time, and then if you do you still call at the wrong time. I'm a support worker with a schedule. I (or my client) shouldn't lose their chance to resolve an issue just because you phoned at the wrong time. I can't even be 100% sure it was you because the numbers are withheld and/or you don't leave a voicemail with a return number/email. So frustrating. You are literally there to give assistance to vulnerable people who are struggling – including those considered "disabled" because of their mental health capacities. I honestly don't know how people do this without a support worker. Much harder than it needs to be.” [Survey respondent](#)

Other respondents spoke about wanting to see improvements to the timescales of the complaint process. Most respondents spoke of wanting a response to their complaint sooner. One person said that the time to challenge the response to the complaint was too short.

“Regardless of how a complaint is made you should make an effort to deal with the complaint within a reasonable timescale.” [Survey respondent](#)

“The response was dismissive of my experiences. The timescale to challenge the response was too short.” [Survey respondent](#)

A few respondents spoke about being unhappy with general Social Security Scotland policies and processes as well as those involved in making a complaint. A few spoke about being specifically dissatisfied with how complaints were resolved.

“Better route map for complaint resolution. Better training and understanding of the process by staff whom are first point of contact roles. More accountability and transparency. Ending of attempts to close complaints down at first point of contact.” [Survey respondent](#)

“My complaint was upheld but I was told they wouldn't do anything about it which to me is not a resolution.” [Survey respondent](#)

“Respond in a more timely fashion and provide additional support for such e.g. with independent advocacy organisations. More information and a simpler process should be provided.” [Survey respondent](#)

8. Next steps

This research and other work has highlighted key areas that could be improved within re-determinations, appeals, Short-term Assistance and complaints. For example, a key area that could be improved when clients challenge a decision or make a complaint is communication. Across multiple survey questions respondents mentioned a lack of timely updates on their cases, poor quality information and difficulties getting in touch with Social Security Scotland or communicating how they wanted to.

Some improvements have already been made to address these issues. For example, the Client Experience team now ensure that they attempt to phone all clients who submit a re-determination to acknowledge and discuss this. There has been a focus on the quality of decision making during re-determinations and ensuring that decisions are fair and easily understandable for clients. The re-determination form is also now available to be completed online, giving clients more choice for how to submit a re-determination. Further engagement with colleagues is taking place to consider the research findings and what steps may be taken to address challenges raised in the findings.

Both the survey on re-determinations and appeals and the survey on complaints will continue on a rolling basis to ensure Social Security Scotland has up to date data on clients' experiences. This will allow for continuous improvement of these processes. Results from the surveys will be published annually, with more frequent dissemination and discussion of findings taking place internally in Social Security Scotland.

Some changes have been made to the surveys based on consultation with colleagues and learning from previous rounds of the surveys. These changes have streamlined the surveys – making them easier for clients to fill in. The changes have also helped to ensure that all of the data collected is relevant and helpful for continuous improvement.

The next publication of these findings will be in early 2026.

9. Annex A: Respondent demographics

9.1. Re-determinations and appeals

Table A1: Age of survey respondents (number of respondents=1320)

	% of respondents
16-24	3%
25-34	11%
35-44	21%
45-54	24%
55-64	35%
65+	5%
Prefer not to say	1%

Table A2: Ethnicity of survey respondents (number of respondents=1317)

	% of respondents
Minority ethnic	4%
White	94%
Prefer not to say	3%

Table A3: Gender of survey respondents (number of respondents=1311)

	% of respondents
Woman	63%
Man	34%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	3%

Table A4: Whether survey respondents consider themselves to be trans (number of respondents=1304)

	% of respondents
Yes	1%
No	96%
Prefer not to say	3%

Table A5: Whether survey respondents consider themselves to have a disability (number of respondents=1313)

	% of respondents
Yes	87%
No	8%
Prefer not to say	5%

Table A6: How survey respondents described their sexuality (number of respondents=1298)

	% of respondents
Heterosexual/straight	87%
Gay/lesbian	3%
Bisexual	3%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	6%

9.2. Complaints

Table A7: Age of survey respondents (number of respondents=48)

	% of respondents
16-24	-
25-34	15%
35-44	13%
45-54	38%
55-64	13%
65+	8%
Prefer not to say	15%

Table A8: Ethnicity of survey respondents (number of respondents=48)

	% of respondents
White	85%
Minority ethnic	-
Prefer not to say	15%

Table A9: Gender of survey respondents (number of respondents=47)

	% of respondents
Woman	47%
Man	36%
Other	4%
Prefer not to say	13%

Table A10: Whether survey respondents consider themselves to be trans (number of respondents=47)

	% of respondents
No	85%
Yes	2%
Prefer not to say	13%

Table A11: Whether survey respondents consider themselves to have a disability (number of respondents=47)

	% of respondents
Yes	80%
No	12%
Prefer not to say	8%

Table A12: How survey respondents described their sexuality (number of respondents=48)

	% of respondents
Heterosexual/straight	69%
Gay/lesbian	4%
Bisexual	2%
Other	4%
Prefer not to say	21%

10. Annex B: Supplementary tables

10.1. Re-determinations and appeals

Table B1: How much respondents of different age groups agreed or disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them with dignity and respect during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1316)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
16 to 24*	50%	14%	29%
25 to 34	53%	18%	28%
35 to 44	56%	15%	28%
45 to 54	56%	21%	21%
55 to 64	65%	17%	16%
65 or over*	63%	28%	9%
Prefer not to say	#	#	#

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (16 to 24: 42; 65 or over: 68)

Table B2: How much respondents who did or did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more agreed or disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them with dignity and respect during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1308)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Respondents who did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more	74%	11%	12%
Respondents who did have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more	58%	19%	22%
Prefer not to say*	53%	18%	27%

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (prefer not to say: 62)

Table B3: How much respondents of different sexualities agreed or disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them with dignity and respect during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1293)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Heterosexual/straight	60%	19%	20%
Gay/lesbian*	36%	14%	50%
Bisexual*	55%	12%	30%
In another way	#	#	#
Prefer not to say*	52%	9%	36%

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (gay/lesbian: 36; bisexual: 33; prefer not to say: 75)

Table B4: How much respondents with experience of different benefits agreed or disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them with dignity and respect during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1320)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Adult Disability Payment	57%	19%	23%
Child Disability Payment*	78%	9%	13%
Scottish Child Payment*	78%	9%	11%
Best Start Grant	#	#	#
Funeral Support Payment	#	#	#
Winter Heating Payment	#	#	#
Child Winter Heating Payment	#	#	#
Young Carer Grant	#	#	#
Carer Support Payment	#	#	#
Prefer not to say	#	#	#

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Child Disability Payment: 54; Scottish Child Payment: 65)

Table B5: How much respondents of different age groups agreed or disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them fairly during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1307)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
16 to 24*	36%	17%	45%
25 to 34	42%	18%	39%
35 to 44	48%	15%	36%
45 to 54	48%	18%	31%
55 to 64	57%	16%	27%
65 or over*	49%	22%	29%
Prefer not to say	#	#	#

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (16 to 24: 42; 65 or over: 68)

Table B6: How much respondents who did or did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more agreed or disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them fairly during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1299)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Respondents who did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more	66%	11%	19%
Respondents who did have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more	48%	18%	33%
Prefer not to say*	48%	16%	32%

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (prefer not to say: 62)

Table B7: How much respondents of different sexualities agreed or disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them fairly during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1293)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Heterosexual/straight	51%	17%	30%
Gay/lesbian*	36%	11%	53%
Bisexual*	55%	6%	39%
In another way	#	#	#
Prefer not to say*	37%	17%	40%

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (gay/lesbian: 36; bisexual: 33; prefer not to say: 75)

Table B8: How much respondents with experience of different benefits agreed or disagreed that Social Security Scotland treated them fairly during the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1310)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Adult Disability Payment	48%	18%	34%
Child Disability Payment*	72%	9%	17%
Scottish Child Payment*	67%	14%	16%
Best Start Grant	#	#	#
Funeral Support Payment	#	#	#
Winter Heating Payment	#	#	#
Child Winter Heating Payment	#	#	#
Young Carer Grant	#	#	#
Carer Support Payment	#	#	#
Prefer not to say	#	#	#

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Child Disability Payment: 54; Scottish Child Payment: 64)

Table B9: How much respondents of different age groups rated their overall experience of the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1313)

	% of respondents who said 'good' or 'very good'	% of respondents who said 'neither good nor poor'	% of respondents who said 'poor' or 'very poor'
16 to 24*	36%	21%	40%
25 to 34	42%	19%	36%
35 to 44	45%	15%	38%
45 to 54	46%	21%	29%
55 to 64	53%	20%	25%
65 or over*	51%	22%	28%
Prefer not to say	#	#	#

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (16 to 24: 42; 65 or over: 69)

Table B10: How much respondents who did or did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more rated their overall experience of the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1305)

	% of respondents who said 'good' or 'very good'	% of respondents who said 'neither good nor poor'	% of respondents who said 'poor' or 'very poor'
Respondents who did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more	60%	17%	21%
Respondents who did have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more	47%	19%	32%
Prefer not to say*	40%	27%	29%

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (prefer not to say: 62)

Table B11: How much respondents of different sexualities rated their overall experience of the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1290)

	% of respondents who said 'good' or 'very good'	% of respondents who said 'neither good nor poor'	% of respondents who said 'poor' or 'very poor'
Heterosexual/straight	49%	20%	29%
Gay/lesbian*	33%	11%	56%
Bisexual*	55%	6%	39%
In another way	#	#	#
Prefer not to say*	33%	19%	40%

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (gay/lesbian: 36; bisexual: 33; prefer not to say: 75)

Table B12: How much respondents with experience of different benefits rated their overall experience of the re-determination process and/or the appeal process (number of respondents=1317)

	% of respondents who said 'good' or 'very good'	% of respondents who said 'neither good nor poor'	% of respondents who said 'poor' or 'very poor'
Adult Disability Payment	46%	20%	32%
Child Disability Payment*	61%	11%	26%
Scottish Child Payment*	66%	17%	17%
Best Start Grant	#	#	#
Funeral Support Payment	#	#	#
Winter Heating Payment	#	#	#
Child Winter Heating Payment	#	#	#
Young Carer Grant	#	#	#
Carer Support Payment	#	#	#
Prefer not to say	#	#	#

*Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Child Disability Payment: 54; Scottish Child Payment: 64)

Table B13: Benefit which the appeal was requested for. If the respondent had more than one appeal, they were asked to select the most recent benefit they had an appeal for (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents
Adult Disability Payment	89%
Child Disability Payment	7%
Prefer not to say	4%

Table B14: Which method respondents used to request an appeal (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents
By post	44%
Online	33%
Over the phone	15%
Don't know/Can't remember	7%

Table B15: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with a statement about the time they were given to ask for an appeal (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who 'neither agreed or disagreed'	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
I was given enough time to ask for an appeal	70%	22%	7%

Table B16: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about the appeal process (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
It was clear what the deadline was for making an appeal (number of respondents=27)	59%	19%	19%
It was clear how to ask for an appeal (number of respondents=27)	63%	19%	15%

Table B17: How easy or difficult respondents found the process of filling in the appeal form (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents
Very easy	11%
Easy	11%
Neither easy nor difficult	41%
Difficult	26%
Very difficult	7%

Table B18: Whether respondents got help with filling out the appeal form (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents
No	44%
Yes – from a welfare rights adviser	22%
Yes – from a charity or third sector organisation	15%
Yes – from a family member or friend	15%
Yes – from a solicitor or legal representative	4%

Table B19: Whether respondents accessed any information to help them understand the appeal process (number of respondents=26)

	% of respondents
No	38%
Yes	46%
Don't know/Can't remember	15%

Table B20: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with a statement about a letter they received from Social Security Scotland during the appeal process (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who 'neither agreed or disagreed'	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
The letter I received from Social Security Scotland explaining the impact of the appeal outcome on my benefit/s was clear	52%	19%	26%

Table B21: Whether respondents faced any challenges or barriers when asking for an appeal (number of respondents=26)

	% of respondents
No	73%
Yes	19%
Don't know/Can't remember	8%

Table B22: Whether respondents agreed with the Tribunal’s decision once the appeal was complete and they were told of the outcome (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents
No	41%
Yes	56%
I’ve not heard back yet	4%

Table B23: Whether respondents who disagreed with the Tribunal’s decision were clear on what steps they could take to challenge the Tribunal’s decision (number of respondents=11)

	% of respondents
No	45%
Yes	36%
Don’t know/Can’t remember	18%

Table B24: How respondents found their overall experience of the appeal process (number of respondents=27)

	% of respondents
Very good	15%
Good	30%
Neither good nor poor	11%
Poor	19%
Very poor	26%

Table B25: Whether respondents receive/d Short-term Assistance payments (number of respondents=45)

	% of respondents
Yes	76%
No	18%
Don’t know/Can’t remember	7%

Table B26: How much respondents who receive/d Short-term Assistance payments agreed or disagreed with a statement about how supported they felt when receiving payments (number of respondents=34)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who 'neither agreed or disagreed'	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Receiving Short-term Assistance payments helped me feel financially supported during the re-determination process	56%	29%	15%

10.2. Complaints

Table B27: Benefit which the complaint related to. If the respondent had more than one complaint, they were asked to select the most recent benefit they had a complaint for (number of respondents=50)

	% of respondents
Adult Disability Payment	64%
Child Disability Payment	22%
Carer's Allowance Supplement	6%
Carer Support Payment	2%
Winter Heating Payment	2%
Prefer not to say	4%

Table B28: Whether respondents were aware that they had made an official complaint to Social Security Scotland before receiving the survey (number of respondents=50)

	% of respondents
Yes	88%
No	4%
Don't know/Can't remember	8%

Table B29: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about making a complaint (number of respondents=50)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
It was clear how to make a complaint (number of respondents=50)	48%	12%	40%
It was easy to make a complaint (number of respondents=50)	50%	18%	32%
I felt my complaint was taken seriously (number of respondents=50)	32%	4%	62%

Table B30: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about communication during the complaint process (number of respondents=49)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
The letter I received acknowledging and detailing the reasons for my complaint was clear and accurate (number of respondents=49)	27%	6%	57%
The letter I received from Social Security Scotland explaining the outcome of the complaint was clear (number of respondents=49)	33%	2%	57%
I felt I was given enough information by Social Security Scotland about what was happening during the complaints process (number of respondents=49)	18%	12%	63%

Table B31: Whether respondents were happy with the method Social Security Scotland used to communicate with them during the complaint process (number of respondents=48)

	% of respondents
No	50%
Yes	44%
Don't know/Can't remember	6%

Table B32: Which method of communication respondents who were not happy with how Social Security Scotland communicated with them would have preferred. Respondents could select more than one answer (number of respondents=23)

	% of respondents
Email	96%
Letter	48%
SMS	26%
Phone	13%
Don't know/Can't remember	-

Table B33: Whether respondents received a call from Social Security Scotland to acknowledge that they had submitted a complaint (number of respondents=50)

	% of respondents
Yes	52%
No	34%
Don't know/Can't remember	14%

Table B34: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about the call they received from Social Security Scotland acknowledging that they had submitted a complaint (number of respondents=25-26)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
I was treated with kindness (number of respondents=26)	77%	15%	8%
The call was useful (number of respondents=25)	64%	16%	20%
The staff member I spoke to was knowledgeable about the complaint process (number of respondents=26)	62%	15%	23%
Staff listened to me (number of respondents=26)	65%	12%	23%

Table B35: Whether respondents got in contact with Social Security Scotland at any other point during the complaint process (number of respondents=49)

	% of respondents
Yes	43%
No	41%
Don't know/Can't remember	16%

Table B36: Whether respondents faced any challenges or barriers when making a complaint. Respondents could select more than one answer (number of respondents=49)

	% of respondents
I could not communicate with Social Security Scotland how I wanted	43%
I could not communicate with Social Security Scotland when I wanted to	35%
Other	14%
No (I didn't face any barriers)	41%

Table B37: Whether respondents' complaints were resolved at stage one or stage two (number of respondents=50)

	% of respondents
Stage two	30%
Stage one	18%
Don't know/Can't remember	52%

Table B38: Whether Social Security Scotland resolved respondents' stage one complaint within the allowed timescale (five days) (number of respondents=9)

	% of respondents
No	56%
Yes	22%
Don't know/Can't remember	22%

Table B39: Whether Social Security Scotland resolved respondents' stage two complaint within the allowed timescale (20 days) (number of respondents=15)

	% of respondents
Yes	47%
No	33%
Don't know/Can't remember	20%

Table B40: Whether the timescale Social Security Scotland had to respond to respondents' complaint was extended (number of respondents= 50)

	% of respondents
No	46%
Yes, for my stage one complaint	6%
Yes, for my stage two complaint	-
Yes, for both	2%
Don't know/Can't remember	46%

Table B41: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about their experience of the timescale to respond to their complaint being extended (number of respondents=4)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
I was kept up to date with what was happening with my complaint when the timescale to respond was extended (number of respondents=4)	25%	25%	50%
I understood why the timescale to respond to my complaint was extended (number of respondents=4)	25%	-	75%

Table B42: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about timescales of the complaints process (number of respondents=50)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
I was happy with the amount of time I had to make a complaint to Social Security Scotland (number of respondents=50)	32%	28%	28%
I was happy with the amount of time it took Social Security Scotland to get back to me with a resolution for my complaint (number of respondents=50)	32%	8%	50%

Table B43: Whether respondents were satisfied with how their complaint was resolved by Social Security Scotland (number of respondents=50)

	% of respondents
Yes	34%
No	34%
My complaint has not been resolved yet	24%
Don't know/Can't remember	8%

Table B44: Whether respondents who were not satisfied with the resolution to their complaint were clear what next steps they could take for taking their complaint further (number of respondents=17)

	% of respondents
No	71%
Yes	24%
Don't know/Can't remember	6%

Table B45: How much respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about their overall experience of making a complaint (number of respondents=50)

	% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed	% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed	% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed
Social Security Scotland treated me with dignity and respect (number of respondents=50)	40%	14%	42%
Social Security Scotland treated me fairly (number of respondents=50)	28%	18%	50%

Table B46: How respondents rated their overall experience of making a complaint with Social Security Scotland (number of respondents=48)

	% of respondents
Very good	15%
Good	8%
Neither good nor poor	15%
Poor	21%
Very poor	38%
Don't know/Can't remember	4%



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