**Data and Methodology Changes**

**Policy on Data Revisions**

**Planned Revisions**

Each time new Social Security Scotland statistics are published, the entire data series is revised, which allows for full retrospection of the statistics. This is because each time figures are published, they are based from a new 100% data cut from the case management system, which can include retrospective changes to data going back to the beginning of the time series. This is due to the time it takes for clients to provide information at different stages of the client journey, and for new information to be input to the case management system (where information is sourced). Months that are more recent tend to be subject to a greater degree of revision than more distant ones. In addition, methodological changes or improvements can also lead to revisions.

**Unplanned Revisions to correct errors**

When an error is identified, data is revised and republished as soon as practicable, with measures to ensure any corrections are accurate and robust.

**Ongoing review of re-determinations and appeals reporting**

The data sources which underpin re-determinations and appeals reporting across all Social Security Scotland official statistics are currently under review as part of a continuous improvement exercise. This review is being undertaken to ensure the statistics continue to be robust and transparent for users.

The majority of existing Statistics reporting is based on an old version of the re-determinations and appeals dataset. A newer version is available, which addresses known limitations of the older dataset, and has now been quality assured for all benefits. The new dataset was already used in the latest Carer Support Payment Statistics publication and will now be introduced more widely. This will start with the publication of winter benefits statistics on 29 April, and cascade through all other statistics publications as they are produced through May and June 2025. Forthcoming publication dates can be found at [Social Security Scotland Forthcoming Publications (.xlsx)](https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/asset-storage/production/downloads/Social-Security-Scotland-Forthcoming-Publications-updated-01.04.25.xlsx)

The change will result in some revisions to previously published figures on re-determination and appeals numbers, with the effect of this change varying between benefits. Additional detail on the specific impacts on each benefit will be available in the background notes of the individual benefit publications as they are released.

**Changes to re-determinations reporting from February 2025**

There is a known limitation in the calculation of re-determinations rate measures that is now impacting reporting of measures which are used to give a sense of scale of re-determinations received by Social Security Scotland.

The impacted measures are:

* “re-determinations as a percentage of application decisions made”
* “re-determinations which are allowed or partially allowed as a percentage of all decisions processed”

These measures have previously been reported as part of our benefit statistics publications. The measures compare the number of re-determinations to decisions made; however, the calculations are made using only the number of initial application decisions made. Review decisions are not included in the calculation.

When the measures were first established, all benefits were one-off payments and re-determinations were raised against a single decision. As Social Security Scotland has grown, the complexity of the benefits delivered has increased, and the logic is no longer applicable across all benefits. For example, planned award reviews and change of circumstance reviews are increasing each month for disability benefits, and clients have the right to a re-determination and appeal based on both the original application, and the outcome of their review.

There is no current method for including additional decisions such as reviews in the calculation, nor is it possible to remove the review re-determinations. The measures’ accuracy will continue to decline over time as a result of the increase in reviews, with disability benefits most impacted. As such the measures can no longer be considered fit for purpose.

To ensure that our published statistics continue to meet high standards of trustworthiness and quality for our users, we have taken the decision to remove these measures from our published statistics until further options can be explored.

The first official statistics publication that these measures will be removed from will be the Child Disability Payment statistics due to be published on 18 February 2025. The measures will be removed from other benefit publications across the next reporting cycle as follows:

* 25 February 2025
  + Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods statistics to December 2024
  + Scottish Child Payment statistics to December 2024
* 04 March 2025
  + Funeral Support Payment statistics to December 2024
* 18 March 2025
  + Adult Disability Payment statistics to January 2025
* June 2025
  + Young Carer Grant statistics to March 2025

Statisticians in Social Security Scotland are currently undertaking a business planning exercise with the intention of publishing a statistics plan for 2025-26. This plan should ensure users are better sighted on our development plans and be better placed to engage with us on prioritisation and the value of our statistics.

The resource required to explore options for developing our re-determinations and appeals reporting is being considered as part of business planning discussions underpinning the wider statistics plan. While we cannot currently put a timescale on when an alternative solution may be available, an update will be provided to users as soon as this changes.

If you have any questions, please contact us at [MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot](mailto:MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot).

**List of previous data revisions – Disability Benefits**

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| **Publication to** | **Measures affected** | **Description** | **Impact on Statistics** |
| 31 December 2024 (Child Disability Payment) | Number and proportion of decisions by processing time category | Updated methodology for calculating number and proportion of decisions by processing time. Previously these measures included both normal rules and special rules cases, now the methodology has been updated to only include normal rules applications. This update increases the overall accuracy of the data. | The impact of this change was the number and proportion of applications processed in 1-20 days and the same day by 2% and 6% respectively. The impact on the rest of the time band categories is negligible, with a decrease of less than 0.5%. The reason for the shorter time band categories being affected more by this change is that special rules for terminal illness applications are fast-tracked and are therefore processed as quickly as possible. The median average processing time is not affected by this update. |
| 30 September 2024 (Child Disability Payment) & 31 October 2024 (Adult Disability Payment) | Part 2 application dates | Improved methodology for capturing part 2 application dates. Previously, where there have been multiple applications from the same person, it has not been possible to correctly assign the part 2 date to the application. For a number of these cases, we are now able to replace the older, incorrect part 2 date with the more appropriate one. | The impact of this change was a 2% reduction for Child Disability Payment and a 3% reduction for Adult Disability Payment in the number of part 2 dates recorded in the data extract since the launch of the benefit, but this improved the overall quality of the part 2 date data. This change has also resulted in a slight decrease in processing times, when comparing the current publication’s data before and after the part 2 date improvement. The overall median processing time decreased by one working day for Child Disability Payment and five working days for Adult Disability Payment, with individual months decreasing by between one to three working days for Child Disability Payment and one to five working days for Adult Disability Payment. There are 14% less cases processed in the ‘141 or more working days’ category for Child Disability Payment and 37% fewer for Adult Disability Payment.    This change affected all tables where a figure for part 2 applications is recorded - tables 1, 5 and 9 in both publications.  Due to the impact of this change, the breakdown of special rules applications between those made via the special rules application route and those made via the normal rules route has been temporarily removed from the Adult Disability Payment publication, while the data undergoes further quality assurance.  For Child Disability Payment, 6% of approved normal rules applications were missing their part 2 application date at this point. The part 2 date issue has improved over time, as a result of various updates and improvements to the data extract. For example, in 2022 around 15% of approved normal rules applications were missing their part 2 application received date. This compares to around 4% in 2023, and 1% in 2024 up to the end of September. This means that the earlier part 2 data is most impacted by the part 2 date issue, whereas more recent data is much more complete. |
| 31 July 2024 (Adult Disability Payment) | Part 1 application dates | Fix to paper application part 1 improvement | We identified that online applications were erroneously included in the fix for paper applications in the previous publication. We have now correctly excluded these applications. The effect of this error on the data was changes of less than 1% in most months for part 1 applications. Additionally around 25 additional part 1 applications and 20 additional part 2 applications to the publication were included as a result of this. This affected tables 1,5,6 and 7. |
| 30 June 24 (Child Disability Payment) & 31 July 2024 (Adult Disability Payment) | Part 2 application dates | Improved methodology for capturing part 2 application dates. | For Child Disability Payment, the impact of this change was a 3% reduction in the number of part 2 dates recorded in the data extract since the launch of the benefit, but this improved the overall quality of the part 2 date data. This change affected all tables where a figure for part 2 applications is recorded, tables 1, 5 and 9.  For Child Disability Payment, 6% of approved normal rules applications were missing their part 2 application date at this point.  For Adult Disability Payment, the impact of this change was a 2% reduction in the number of part 2 dates recorded in the data extract since the launch of the benefit, but this improved the accuracy of the data. This change affected all tables where a figure for part 2 applications is recorded, tables 1, 5 and 9. |
| 30 June 24 (Child Disability Payment) & 31 July 2024 (Adult Disability Payment) | Application outcomes | In the previous publication we improved the methodology used to determine the decision date in our published tables to include only information on the date of the first decision in tables which use the decision date. In the current publication we further improved this methodology to include the first outcome which corresponds to that first decision. | For Child Disability Payment, the impact of this change was a 2% reduction in approved applications and a corresponding 9% increase in denied applications. These are approximately 900 cases that were initially denied and later approved via re-determination or appeal since the launch of the benefit. This change affected all tables where an application outcome is recorded, tables 1-5, 7 and 8.  For Adult Disability Payment, the impact of this change was a 9% reduction in approved applications and a corresponding 14% increase in denied applications. These are approximately 11,000 cases that were initially denied and later approved via re-determination since the launch of the benefit. This change affected all tables where decision outcome is recorded, tables 1-5, 7 and 8. |
| 30 April 24 (Adult Disability Payment) & 30 June 24 (Child Disability Payment) | Re-determination and appeal outcomes | Due to a data extraction issue which arose during April 2024, it was not possible to extract the detailed information on the outcomes of re-determinations and appeals that occurred after 20 April 2024.  For Adult Disability Payment, there was an additional issue where a small number of re-determinations could not be closed due to a system issue. A fix was implemented to close these applications, but because this fix occurred after 20 April 2024, the outcomes of these re-determinations could not be extracted. | For both Adult and Child Disability Payment, from April 2024 onwards, redetermination and appeal outcome information was unavailable. As a result, the number of re-determinations and appeals with outcomes did not sum to the total completed for months affected, and for the overall total figure from launch to the latest published months. Additionally, where the percentage of missing outcomes is greater than 5% for the total figure from launch, or monthly figures, we have been unable to provide the percentages of completed re-determinations or appeals by outcome due to these figures not being robust. Similarly, in these cases, we are also unable to provide the re-determinations which are allowed or partially allowed as a percentage of all decisions processed.  For Adult Disability Payment, there were a small number of re-determinations that were reported as pending between October 2023 and January 2024 in previous publications that should have been reported as closed. The closure of these led to minor revisions in these months (less than 3% change in re-determinations completed). As these redeterminations were retrospectively closed after 20 April 2024, we were unable to extract the outcomes for these redeterminations. As a result, the number of re-determinations with outcomes did not sum to the total completed for months between October 2023 and April 2024, and for the overall total figure from launch to April 2024. |
| 30 April 24 (Adult Disability Payment) & 30 June 24 (Child Disability Payment) | Part 1 application dates | Changes made to the methodology for identifying the date that the first part of an application was submitted for paper applications. For paper applications with a part 2 date before their part 1 date, we have used the part 2 date as a substitute for the part 1 date. This is because for these cases, the part 2 date is closer to the date that the mailroom received the application, and both the part 1 and part 2 application would have been received on the same day. | The impact of this change was to move part 1 applications to earlier months in tables 1 and 5-8, leading to revisions in most months and an overall increase in the number of applications included. |
| 31 January 24 (Adult Disability Payment) & 31 March 24 (Child Disability Payment) | Application decision dates & Processing times | Changes made to the way that decision date is determined. We now have information on separate denial, withdrawal and approval dates and we use earliest available date. This means that decisions information no longer reflects time of re-determination decision and instead reflects date of first decision. | All tables with decision date information had a significant move of decisions to earlier months. Applications with an associated re-determination were moved to earlier months, changing from the month of the re-determination decision to the month of the initial decision. This improvement also meant that applications with a re-determination no longer need to be removed from the processing times table as the decision date now reflects the initial decision.  For Adult Disability Payment, this had a negligible impact on the processing times, with no monthly median changing by more than one since the previous publication and no effect on the overall median.  For Child Disability Payment, this had a negligible impact on the processing times, with no monthly median changing by more than two working days since the previous publication. |
| 31 January 24 (Adult Disability Payment) & 31 March 24 (Child Disability Payment) | Special Rules for Terminal Illness indicator | Changes made to the way that we identify cases eligible under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness for processing times. We previously used a flag on cases to identify those eligible under the special rules. We now have information on when a case is flagged as a Special Rules case. We are therefore able to exclude cases from our Special Rules processing times table where the flag was added after the date of the initial decision and add them to the normal rules processing times table. | For Adult Disability Payment, there were 375 fewer cases included in the Special Rules for Terminal Illness processing times table to end of October.  For Child Disability Payment, the March, June, September and December 2023 Special Rules for Terminal Illness caseload figures were revised upwards. |
| 31 October 23 (Adult Disability Payment) | Part 2 application dates | Improved methodology for capturing part 2 application dates. | For Adult Disability Payment, less than 1% of approved normal rules applications were missing their part 2 date at this point. |
| 31 July 23 (Adult Disability Payment) & 30 September 23 (Child Disability Payment) | Processing times | Processing times figures now include applications where the part 2 date was before the part 1 date, as these are the result of combined applications, where the part 2 date is considered accurate. | For Adult Disability Payment, this change had a negligible impact on processing times, due to the small proportion of cases with their part 2 date before their part 1 date.  For Child Disability Payment, this change, along with the change made to the data extract mentioned below, resulted in small changes to the retrospective data for previous months in the processing times table, and a 3 day increase in the median average processing time. These changes did not affect the overall trend of the data. |
| 30 September 23 (Child Disability Payment) | Part 2 application dates | Changes made to data extracts to improve issue of missing part 2 information. | For Child Disability Payment, the number of cases missing part 2 date information reduced, however the issue was not fully resolved. The improvement to the data extract meant that the vast majority of part 2 dates would be filled in for approved applications from October 2023 onwards, but historic missing data from before this point would remain missing.  For Child Disability Payment, 9% of all approved normal rules applications were missing their part 2 date at this point, but this was gradually decreasing over time. This proportion was as high as 19% in March 2022, but saw a gradual decrease since December 2022, when 10% were missing, to September 2023, where only 2% were missing. |
| 30 June 23 (Child Disability Payment) | Processing times | Processing times figures are now calculated for applications from all channels, where previously the processing times were only based on online applications. | This change, along with the change made to the data extract mentioned below, resulted in small changes to the retrospective data for previous months in the processing times table, and a 3 day decrease in the median average processing time when comparing the current published data up to March 2023, with the previous publication. These changes did not affect the overall trend of the data – while there was a slight decrease in the median for each previously published month, the processing times showed the same trend of generally increasing over time. |
| 31 July 23 (Adult Disability Payment) & 30 June 23 (Child Disability Payment) | Part 2 application dates | An update was implemented in June 2023 to extract more part 2 dates into the data extracts where previously they were missing. | For Adult Disability Payment, the number of cases missing part 2 date information reduced, and the issue was mostly resolved. The number of part 2 applications received to end April 2023 increased by 31% using the new methodology.  For Adult Disability Payment, 7% of all approved normal rules applications were missing their part 2 date at this point.  For Child Disability Payment, the number of cases missing part 2 date information reduced, however the issue was not fully resolved. This update allowed us to calculate processing times figures for applications from all channels, rather than just online (Adult Disability Payment processing times had always been provided for all channels).  For Child Disability Payment, 14% of all approved normal rules applications were missing their part 2 date at this point. |
| 30 April 23 (Adult Disability Payment) & 30 June 23 (Child Disability Payment) | Caseload by award level and type | The methodology for calculating caseload by award type has been revised to use the award level extract which contains information on a client's award and any changes to their award type and level over time. Previously the methodology was based on which payments a client received (care, mobility or accessible vehicles and equipment). | The new methodology identified the current award type at an earlier stage as it identified all cases who were in receipt of or had been approved for a payment in the caseload period, even if they had not been paid yet. This change did not affect the overall total monthly caseload figures, it only affected the proportions within each award. The difference was minimal for those awarded both care and mobility, which was the category with the highest number of clients. Variability increased with the other award types which had smaller numbers. The largest difference was for those in receipt of accessible vehicles and equipment awards, likely because these awards were now being identified earlier than they would have been using the payments data. |
| 31 March 23 (Child Disability Payment) & 30 April 23 (Adult Disability Payment) | Caseload | Changed methodology for calculating caseload. Previously the methodology was based on payments, whereas the new methodology identifies all cases who are in receipt of or have been approved for a payment in the caseload period, even if they have not been paid yet. This led to the inclusion of cases up to one month earlier, because payments are made in arrears every 4 weeks. | Increase in caseload for all months, particularly for case transfers as cases enter caseload one month earlier. |
| 31 January 23 (Adult Disability Payment) | Processing times | Cases flagged as eligible under special rules for terminal illness removed from processing times table due to different processing requirements. | Small reduction in number of cases included in processing times tables. |
| 31 December 22 (Child Disability Payment) & 31 January 23 (Adult Disability Payment) | Application channel | Paper applications now also include the application channel "combined form". | Increase in number of paper applications reported and corresponding reduction in number of applications from other channels in application channel tables. |
| 30 September 22 (Child Disability Payment) | Part 2 application dates | A change has been implemented in the data extracts to try and resolve the issue of part 2 received dates not being extracted for a number of applications. | Following this change, the proportion of applications processed without a part 2 date reduced, however the issue was not fully resolved. This was reflected in Table 1 where the “total part 2 applications received” in months covered by previous publications (July 2021 – June 2022) increased by 19% compared to previous publications. Similarly, this change also impacted Table 9 where the “Total applications processed where a part 2 application date is available” increased by 3% in the months covered by previous publications.  For Child Disability Payment, 17% of all approved normal rules applications were missing their part 2 date at this point. |
| 30 September 22 (Child Disability Payment) | Processing times | From this publication until the publication covering to 30 June 23, processing times figures were calculated only for the subset of applications where the part 1 application form was completed online. This was due to ongoing data extraction issues, which meant that the extraction of part 2 received dates was more accurate for applications where a part 1 is registered online, than for applications from other channels. | Processing times were calculated for a subset of online applications that do have a part 2 received date populated. This may introduce bias to the calculation, as it is possible that applications via other channels such as telephone and mail would have a longer or shorter processing time. Furthermore, the online processed applications that are missing a part 2 date in the extract may also add bias if there is some reason that these applications have a longer or shorter processing time. |
| 30 June 22 (Child Disability Payment) | Data settling time | Earlier data cut used, with two weeks 'settling time' rather than one month. | In some test analysis, the majority of measures matched or had very small differences. The highest difference was in denied applications, where in the data cut with only two weeks of settling time, denied applications were slightly higher than the data cut that had a month of settling time. |
| 31 March 22 (Child Disability Payment) | Payment dates | Revised methodology used to calculate payments issued to clients. Now using a payment issued date variable instead of payment creation date, which provides a more accurate reflection of the date that payments were issued to clients. | Payments are issued around six days after creation, which has reduced the number and value of payments in months covered by the time period in previous publications. The total payments in the previous publication was £394,770 in comparison to this publication where the payments to 31 December 2021 totalled £335,560. |

**List of previous data revisions – Low Income Benefits**

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| **Publication to** | **Description** | **Impact on Statistics** |
| 30 June 2025 (Scottish Child Payment) | Table 9 was revised after a minor issue was identified in the code used to produce the number of children and clients actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment. | Analysis showed the number of children actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment had been slightly under reported for the previous two years. Table 9 of the publication to 30 June 2025 included minor revisions to previous statistics.  The number of children actively benefitting on 31 March 2025 was revised upwards from 326,225 to 326,945 – a change of 0.2%. Other reported time periods back to June 2023 were similarly revised and indicated there was no impact on the reported trend for Scottish Child Payment caseload over time.  Previous publications have not been updated. Users should therefore be aware that breakdowns of caseload by local authority area, SIMD and age (Tables 10-14) reported in publications prior this release have not been revised. |
| 30 June 2025 (Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods) | Table 11 (payments by local authority area) method was improved for payment records with no postcode information. | Where possible, missing postcode information was populated from clients' additional records for other benefit payments. This resulted in £1.2 million of mostly Best Start Foods payments being re-categorised from 'Unknown' to valid local authority areas. |
| 30 June 2024 (Scottish Child Payment) | Earlier data cut used, with three weeks 'settling time' rather than one month | Analysis showed the majority of measures matched or had very small differences which could not be observed when rounding was applied. |
| 31 March 2024 (Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods) | Development to the underlying code facilitated the expansion of two existing tables. | Table 13 was expanded to include a monthly breakdown of auto-awarded payments issued by benefit component. Table 14 was expanded to include all-time and previous financial year reporting of the number of individual Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods client paid. |
| 31 March 2024 (Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods) | A new data extract was introduced which contained the geographical location for auto-awarded payments. | Compared to previously published payment figures, this improvement resulted in a shift of approximately £15 million of payments from the “unknown” category to individual Local Authority areas. |
| 31 March 2024 (Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods) | Table 9 was revised and re-instated following an issue identified during the quality assurance process of the previous release. | It was discovered that previously a number of "subsequent births" had been automatically reclassified as "first births" over time as other dependent children on the application passed the age of 16 and got removed from the underlying data extract. This issue has now been addressed. |
| 31 December 2023 (Scottish Child Payment) | Number of children actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment broken down by intermediate zone (2011) and child age-band (0-4; 5-11; 12-15; overall) was published on the Scottish Government’s Open Data Platform. |  |
| 31 December 2023 (Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods) | Discovery that children over the age of 16 had been inadvertently filtered out of an underlying data extract at source was impacting Table 9. | A decision was taken not to publish some information in Table 9 pending a full review. |
| 30 June 2023 (Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods) | Steps were introduced to exclude cases which are manually built by Social Security Scotland staff in response to an identified system issue impacting a number of auto-awarded payments. | Analysis showed that failure to exclude these cases would adversely impact key metrics such as median processing times and approval rates. |
| 30 June 2023 (Scottish Child Payment) | A new caseload data extract enabled the development of a new methodology for directly determining the active caseload. Previously caseload was estimated using the value of payments issued. | This development allowed for more accurate calculation of the Scottish Child Payment caseload. Comparison between the two methodologies is contained in the publication background notes and showed the previous methodology was overestimating caseload by around one percent. Importantly, this new data extract enabled additional breakdowns of the total caseload counts to be developed. |