

## Social Security Scotland statistics

# Social Security Scotland feedback statistics to 30 September 2023

### Key Figures

In the first half of 2023/24:

- 1,560 Stage 1 complaints were received.
- 500 Stage 2 complaints were received.
- 165 compliments were received.
- 75 suggestions were received.

### Frequency of publications

The next publication will cover up to the end of March 2024 and will be released in June 2024.

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

<sup>1</sup> The Code of Practice for Statistics is available on the [UK Statistics Authority website](#).

<sup>2</sup> The forthcoming publication timetable is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

# Introduction

This report covers feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced on 4 September 2018, until 30 September 2023. It includes statistics for specific benefits as well as feedback that was not benefit specific. In this publication, information relating to the latest reporting year, 2023/24, relates to information covering 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.

The volume of feedback received will be related to the number of live benefits and clients. New benefits have launched over time, bringing more people in touch with Social Security Scotland. The benefits included within the time period covered by the report are: Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment, Child Winter Heating Payment, Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment.

Carer Support Payment, which launched as a pilot in November 2023, is beyond the scope of the publication and will be included in future editions. All tables and charts relating to this publication can be found at the [Social Security Scotland](#) website.

These statistics are being published as official statistics in development. Official statistics in development may be new or existing statistics, and will be tested with users, in line with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). The UK Statistics Authority has not yet assessed these statistics. They have not been designated as Accredited Official Statistics<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on Official Statistics in development please see the [Office for Statistics Regulation website](#).

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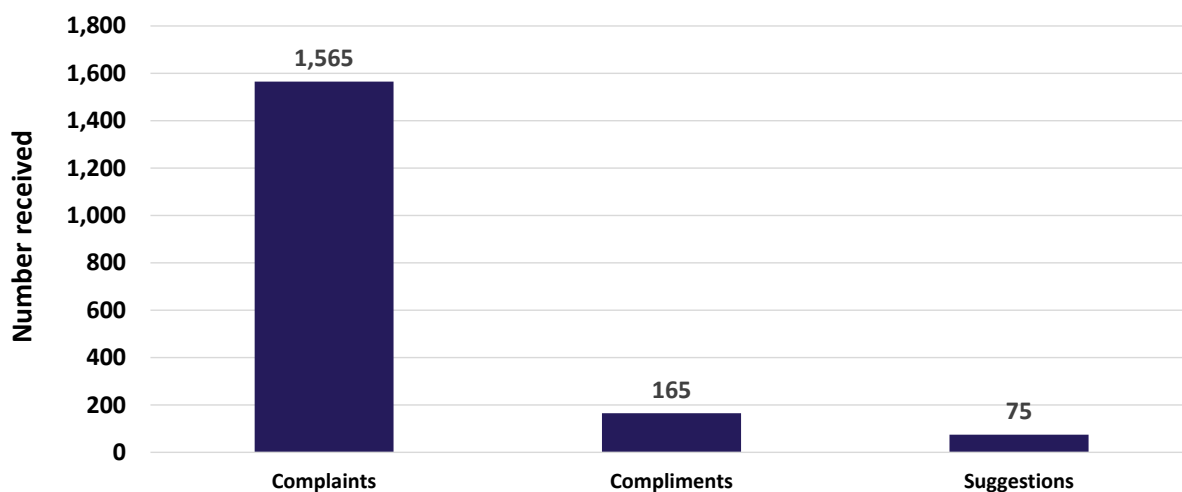
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# Main findings

In the first half of 2023/24, a total of 1,565 complaints, 165 compliments and 75 suggestions were received. The most common type of feedback received was complaints, in line with previous years **[Chart 1(i)]**.

In the time period of the publication, 13 benefits were being delivered by Social Security Scotland. Adult Disability Payment, now operating nationally, accounted for more than half of feedback in every category.

**Chart 1(i): Feedback in the first half of 2023/24**



Complaints include all Stage 1 complaints, plus complaints received at Stage 2.

# Complaints

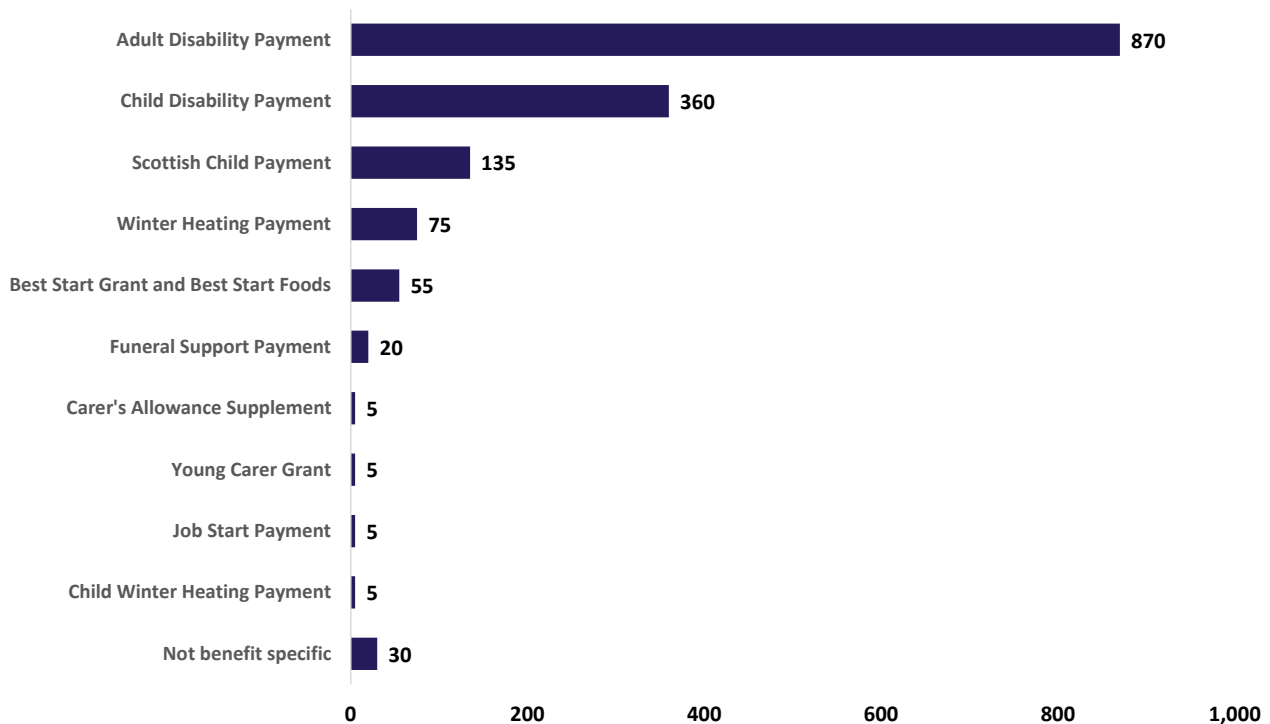
## Complaints received in the first half of 2023/24

Social Security Scotland received 1,565 complaints in the first half of 2023/24. The complaints received in the period include **[Table 1, Chart 2]**:

- 870 for Adult Disability Payment
- 360 for Child Disability Payment
- 135 for Scottish Child Payment
- 75 for Winter Heating Payment
- 125 for other benefits and non-benefit specific.

The [background section](#) gives the launch dates for each benefit.

**Chart 2: Complaints received by benefit in the first half of 2023/24**



Complaint numbers remain low compared to the number of people receiving payments or making applications. For example, there were 870 complaints received for Adult Disability Payment in the first half of 2023/24, but in a similar time period (to 31 October 2023) the number of clients paid Adult Disability Payment was 129,745.

Below is a table showing three benefits with largest number of complaints in the first half of 2023/24 and the corresponding number of people who received payment for those benefits. Information on numbers of applications received can be found in the [background section](#) on pages 21 and 22 of the publication.

**Complaints by benefit and number of clients paid in the first half of 2023/24**

	Benefit		
	Adult Disability Payment <sup>4</sup>	Child Disability Payment <sup>5</sup>	Scottish Child Payment <sup>6</sup>
Complaints	870	360	135
Number of clients paid	129,745 (to 31 October 2023)	72,005	192,485

Complaints can come from people that did not make an application for a benefit, or did not receive a payment (for example, for Carer’s Allowance Supplement where there is no application process), therefore it is not possible to calculate a rate of complaints per applications or payments.

<sup>4</sup> Number of clients paid sourced from Adult Disability Payment statistics to 31 October 2023 available at [Social Security Scotland website](#)

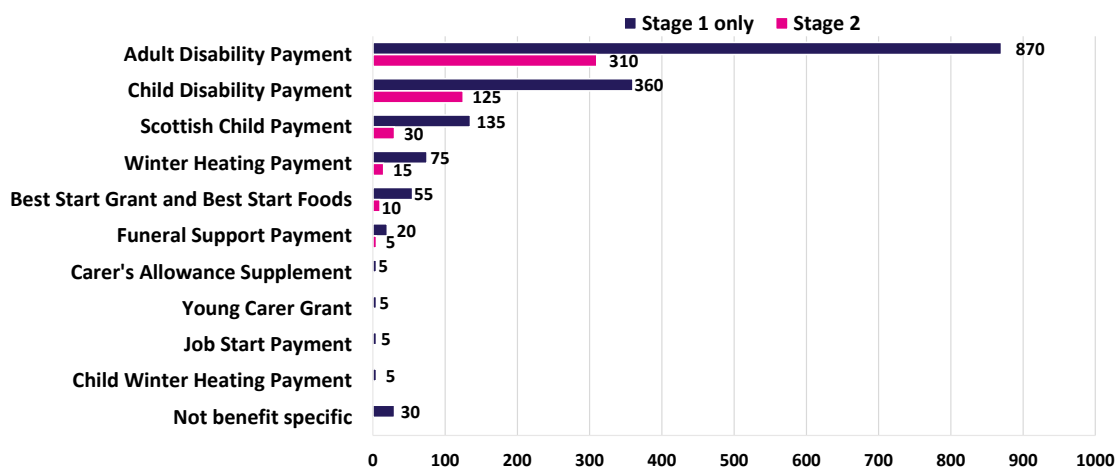
<sup>5</sup> Number of clients paid sourced from [Child Disability Payment: high level statistics to 30 September 2023](#)

<sup>6</sup> Number of clients paid sourced from [Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 30 September 2023](#)

## Complaints reaching Stage 2

- In the first half of 2023/24, 32% of complaints reached Stage 2. This means either progressing from Stage 1 to Stage 2, or being received at Stage 2. This is more than in 2022/23 when 20% of complaints reached Stage 2 [Table 1]. The [background section](#) explains the difference between Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints.
- The highest number of complaints that reached Stage 2 was for Adult Disability Payment at 310, followed by Child Disability Payment at 125 and Scottish Child Payment at 30 [Table 1, Chart 3]. This may relate to both Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment being more complex benefits in terms of both processing and decision making.

Chart 3: Complaints by benefit and stage\* in the first half of 2023/24

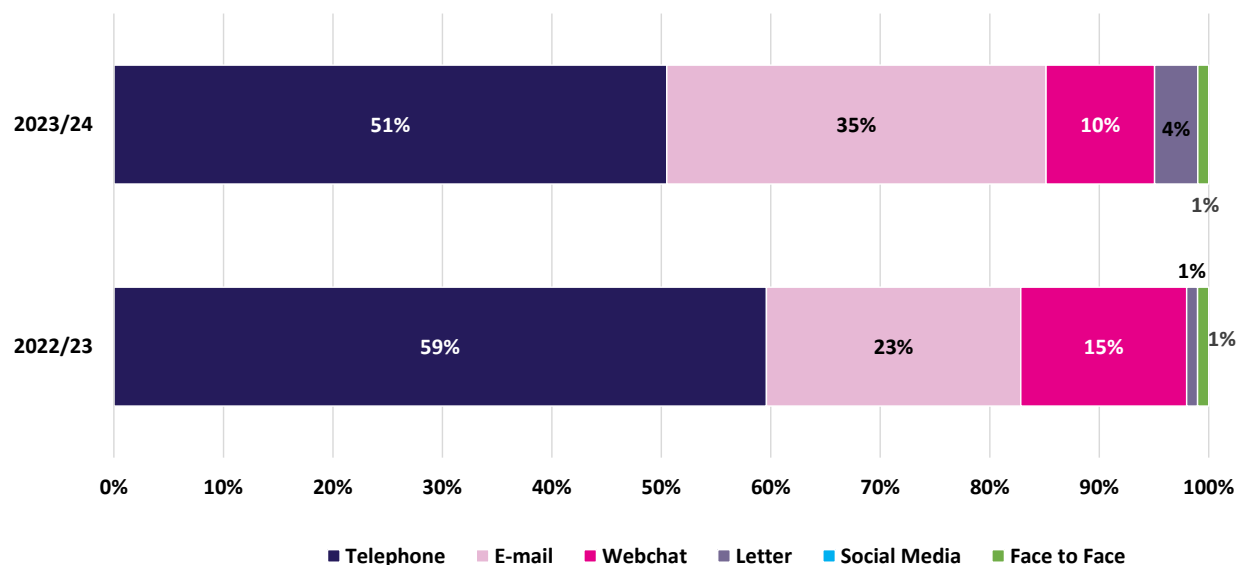


\*Stage 2 figures include a small number of complaints that went straight to Stage 2, as well as complaints progressing from Stage 1 to Stage 2. Figures may not sum to those in Table 1 due to rounding. Stage 2 complaint numbers for Child Winter Heating Payment and complaints that are not benefit specific are too small to display.

## Complaints channels

- In the first half of 2023/24, telephone remained the most common channel for complaints, although the percentage of complaints received this way decreased from 59% in 2022/23 to 51% [Table 2, Chart 4(i)].
- The proportion of complaints received by e-mail increased from 23% to 35% and by webchat decreased from 15% to 10% between 2022/23 and the first half of 2023/24 [Table 2, Chart 4(i)].
- A small number of complaints were recorded via letter and face to face. The number of complaints recorded via social media was too small to be reported due to disclosure control [Table 2, Chart 4(i)].
- The [background section](#) gives further details on communication channels and when they have been introduced.

Chart 4(i): Complaints by channel in 2022/23 and the first half of 2023/24

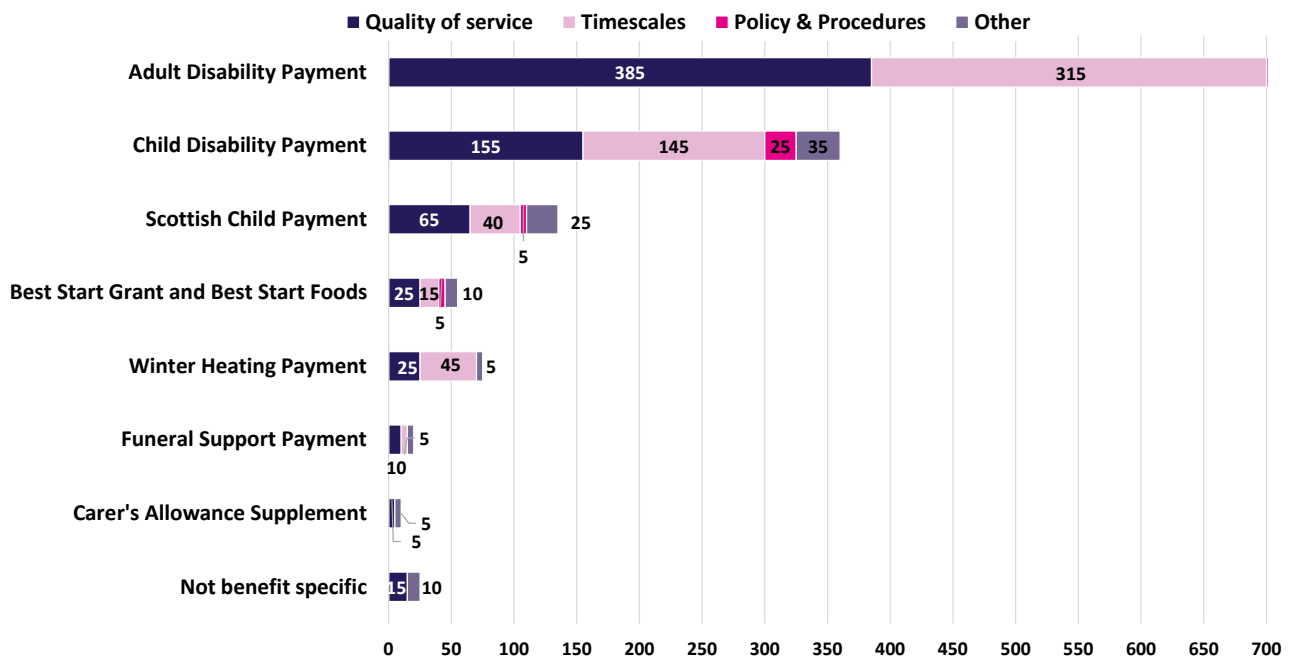




## Reasons for complaints

- In the first half of 2023/24, the most common reasons for complaints were 'Quality of service' and 'Timescales' which accounted for 44% and 36% of complaints received, respectively. These were followed by 'Policy and Procedures' which accounted for 7%. Each other reason accounted for 4% or less **[Table 3]**. More information about complaint reasons is found in the [background section](#).
- The most common reason for complaints across the majority of benefits, including Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment, was 'Quality of service'. For Winter Heating Payment the most common reason for complaints was 'Timescales'. **[Table 3, Chart 5]**.
- Overall, the proportion of complaints relating to 'Quality of service' increased from 38% in 2022/23 to 44% in the first half of 2023/24. The proportion of complaints relating to 'Timescales' decreased from 39% in 2022/23 to 36% in the first half of 2023/24 **[Table 3]**.

**Chart 5: Complaint reasons by benefit in the first half of 2023/24**



## Complaints processing times

- In the first half of 2023/24, 1,565 Stage 1 and 475 Stage 2 complaints had been closed, leaving 65 outstanding Stage 1 complaints and 70 outstanding Stage 2 complaints at the end of the reporting period **[Table 4]**.
- The median processing time was four working days for Stage 1 complaints, and 20 days for Stage 2 complaints. In total, 75% of Stage 1 complaints were closed within the initial five working day timescale, and 96% of Stage 2 complaints were closed within the initial 20 working day timescale **[Table 4]**. An extension of five working days can be added to these initial timescales by Social Security Scotland if it will benefit the client. More information can be found in the [background section](#).
- The proportion of Stage 1 complaints closed within the initial five working day timescale decreased from 80% in 2022/23 to 75% in the first half of 2023/24. The proportion closed within an agreed extended timescale decreased from 83% in 2022/23 to 75% in the first half of 2023/24 **[Table 4]**.
- The proportion of Stage 2 complaints closed within the initial 20 working day timescale decreased from 98% in 2022/23 to 96% in the first half of 2023/24. The proportion closed within an agreed extended timescale stood at 99% in the first half of 2023/24 **[Table 4]**.

## Complaint outcomes

### Stage 1 complaint outcomes in the first half of 2023/24

Complaint outcomes are counted separately for Stage 1 and 2 – a complaint that progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 will have two outcomes. The breakdown of 1,565 Stage 1 complaints that had an outcome in the first half of 2023/24 is shown in the table below [Table 5].

#### Excerpt from table 5(iii): Stage 1 complaints in the first half of 2023/24 by outcome

Stage 1 outcome in the first half of 2023/24				
Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Resolved	Withdrawn
645	180	210	515	15

Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 30 September 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

The outcome 'resolved' was introduced from 12 April 2021, in result of which the proportion of other outcomes decreased compared to previous reporting years [Table 5].

### Stage 2 complaint outcomes in the first half of 2023/24

Outcomes of the 475 Stage 2 complaints that had an outcome in the first half of 2023/24 is shown in the table below [Table 5].

#### Excerpt from table 5(iii): Stage 2 complaints in the first half of 2023/24 by outcome

Stage 2 outcome in the first half of 2023/24				
Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Resolved	Withdrawn
320	50	50	25	25

Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 30 September 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

## Stage 1 complaint outcomes by benefit in the first half of 2023/24

- The most common outcome for Stage 1 complaints was 'resolved' across the majority of benefits, including Child Disability Payment. Of Stage 1 complaints made for Adult Disability Payment, the most common outcome was 'upheld' [Table 5].
- The excerpt below from Table 5(i) summarises the outcomes of Stage 1 complaints completed in the first half of 2023/24 by benefit for the five benefits with largest number of complaints.

**Excerpt from table 5(i): Complaints by benefit and outcome in the first half of 2023/24 for the five benefits with largest number of complaints.**

Stage 1 complaint outcome	Benefit				
	Adult Disability Payment	Child Disability Payment	Scottish Child Payment	Winter Heating Payment	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods
<b>Total</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>60</b>
Upheld	420	120	45	25	15
Partially upheld	100	45	10	10	5
Not upheld	135	35	15	5	10
Resolved	190	155	80	40	25
Withdrawn	5	5	0	0	[c]

Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 30 September 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding. [c] indicates figures suppressed for disclosure control.

## Stage 2 complaint outcomes by benefit in the first half of 2023/24

- The majority of Stage 2 complaints have been upheld for all benefits overall, with 68% having this outcome. For Adult Disability Payment, 68% of Stage 2 complaints have been upheld and for Child Disability Payment, 73% of Stage 2 complaints have been upheld [Table 5].
- The excerpt below from Table 5(i) summarises the outcomes of Stage 2 complaints completed in the first half of 2023/24 by benefit for the five benefits with largest number of complaints.

**Excerpt from table 5(i): Complaints by benefit and outcome in the first half of 2023/24 for the five benefits with largest number of complaints**

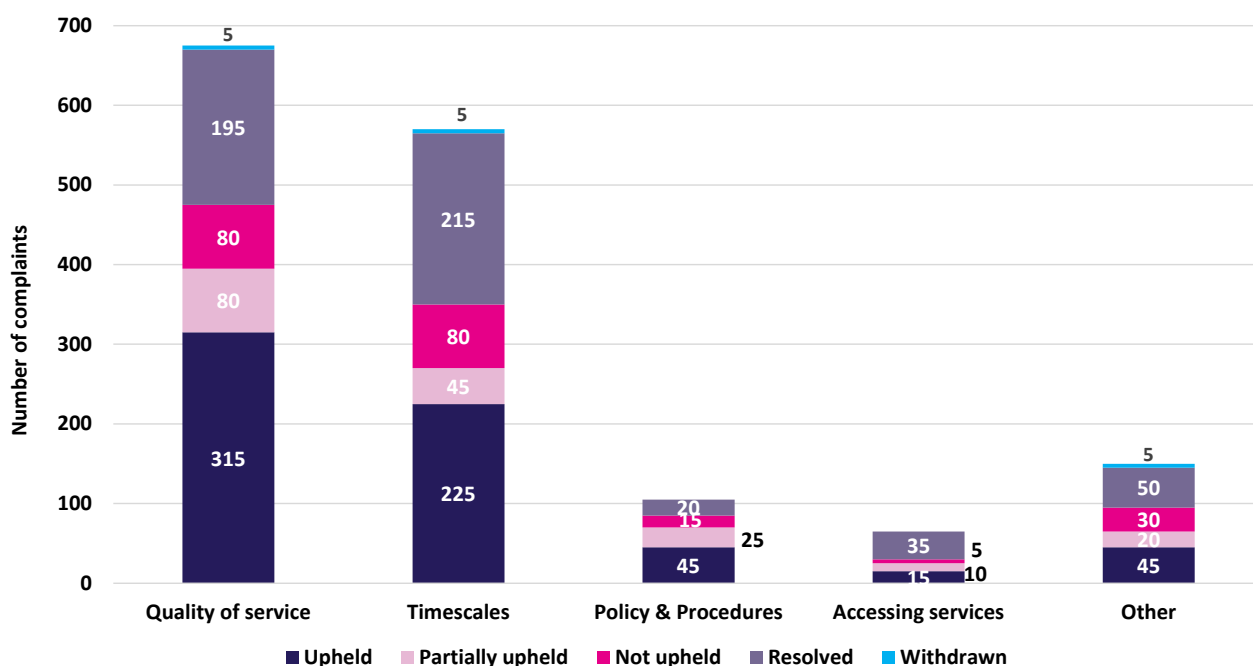
Stage 2 complaint outcome	Benefit				
	Adult Disability Payment	Child Disability Payment	Scottish Child Payment	Winter Heating Payment	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
Upheld	190	90	15	15	5
Partially upheld	30	10	5	5	[c]
Not upheld	20	15	10	5	[c]
Resolved	15	5	[c]	0	[c]
Withdrawn	25	5	0	0	0

Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 30 September 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding. [c] indicates figures suppressed for disclosure control.

## Stage 1 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in the first half of 2023/24

- For Stage 1 complaints, the highest proportion which were upheld was for those about ‘Quality of service’ with 47%, followed by ‘Policy and Procedures’ with 42%, ‘Timescales’ with 40% and ‘Information provided’ with 32% upheld [Table 5(ii), Chart 6(i)].
- For Stage 1 complaints, those about ‘Disagreement with a decision’ had an equal proportion of 34% for both not upheld and resolved complaints [Table 5(ii), Chart 6(i)].
- For Stage 1 complaints, the highest proportion which were resolved were for those about ‘Accessing Services’ with 50% and ‘Treatment by member of staff’ with 39% [Table 5(ii), Chart 6(i)].

Chart 6(i): Stage 1 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in the first half of 2023/24

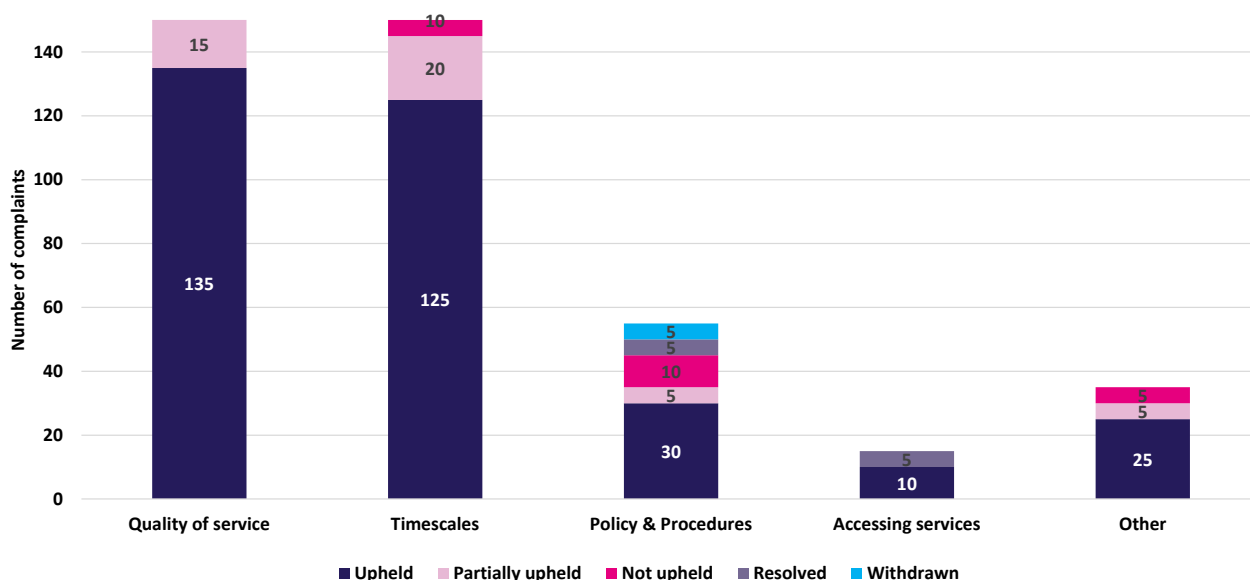


‘Other’ includes ‘Disagreement with a Decision’ and ‘Treatment by Member of Staff’. Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 30 September 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

## Stage 2 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in the first half of 2023/24

- For Stage 2 complaints, the highest proportion of upheld was for complaints about 'Quality of Service' with 72%, 'Timescales' with 71% and 'Information provided' with 65% upheld [Table 5(ii), Chart 6(ii)].

Chart 6(ii) Stage 2 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in the first half of 2023/24



'Other' includes 'Disagreement with a Decision' and 'Treatment by Member of Staff'. Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 30 September 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

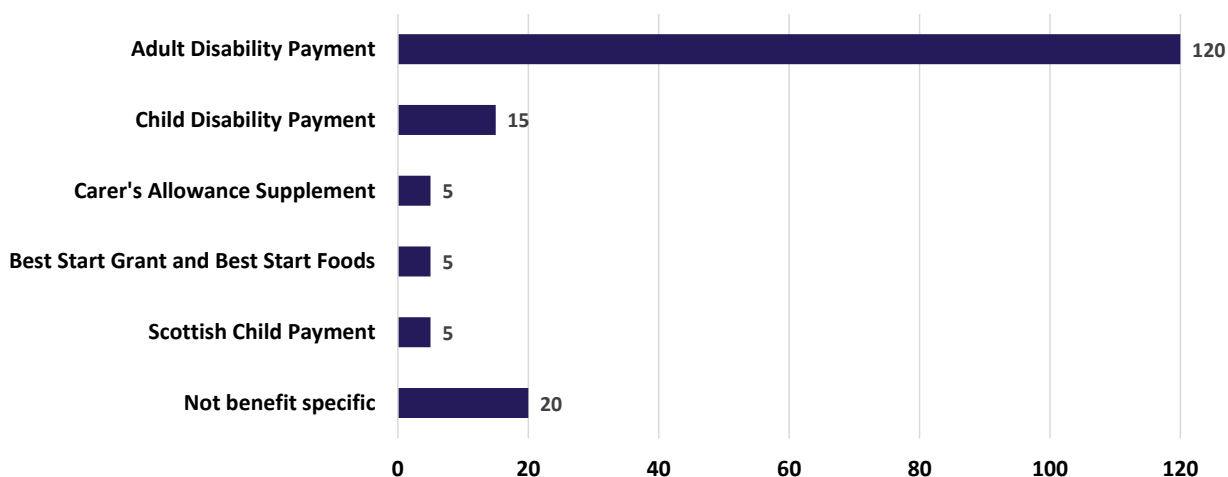
# Compliments

In the first half of 2023/24, a total of 165 compliments were received including:

- 120 for Adult Disability Payment
- 15 for Child Disability Payment
- five for Scottish Child Payment
- five for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods
- five for Carer’s Allowance Supplement
- 20 not benefit specific compliments **[Table 6, Chart 7]**.

A small number of compliments for Winter Heating Payment was suppressed for disclosure control.

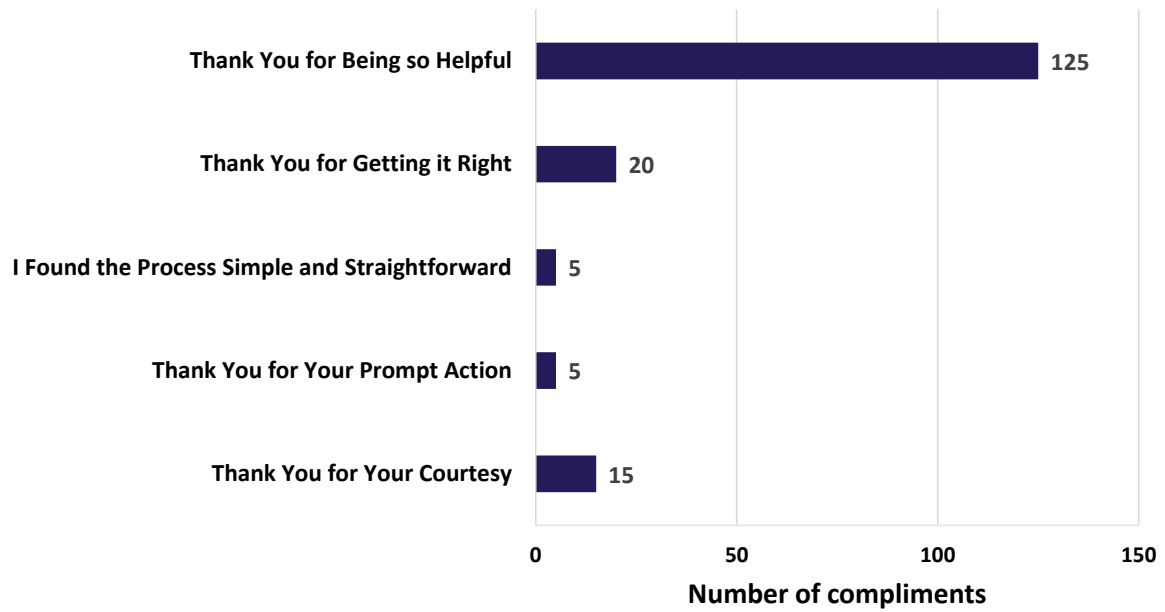
**Chart 7: Total compliments received by benefit in the first half of 2023/24**





- In the first half of 2023/24, the most common reason for compliments has been 'Thank you for being so helpful', accounting for 76% of compliments, with 11% of compliments being 'Thank you for getting it right'.

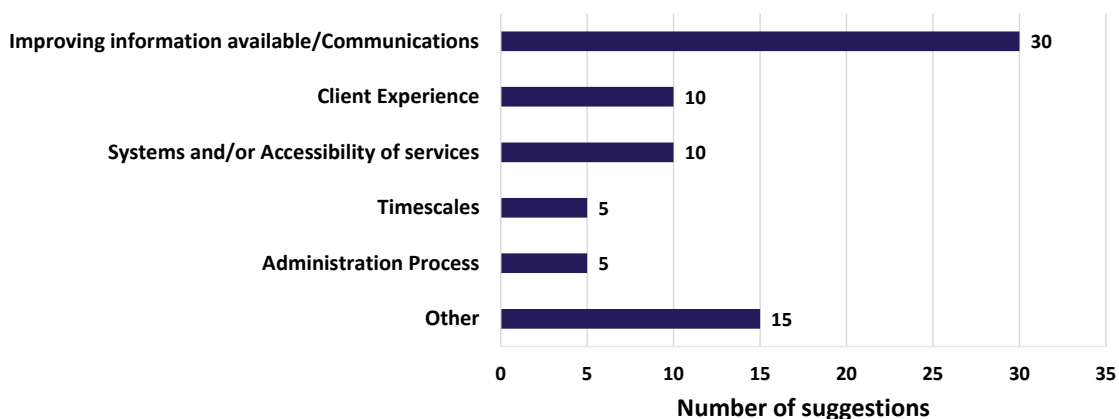
**Chart 8: Compliments by reason in the first half of 2023/24**



# Suggestions

- In the first half of 2023/24, a total of 75 suggestions were received [Table 8].
- Around 64% of suggestions were about Adult Disability Payment, followed by 14% about Child Disability Payment and 12% not specific to a benefit [Table 8].
- Most suggestions were about 'Improving information available / Communications', which accounted for 40% of all suggestions received, followed by 18% of suggestions about 'Other' [Table 9, Chart 9].

Chart 9: Suggestions by reason in the first half of 2023/24



# Background to Feedback

Social Security Scotland is the executive agency of Scottish Government which is responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland. Social Security Scotland was introduced on 4 September 2018. Feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) has been received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced in September 2018. Feedback can be about a particular benefit or not specific to a benefit.

Initially feedback was received by telephone, email or letter. Webchat was introduced as a communication channel to Social Security Scotland from 1 May 2020. Social media was added to the feedback recording system from April 2021, and includes complaints received through telephone, email, letter or webchat that were originally signposted via social media. From 2022/23, feedback can also be received face to face.

The volume of feedback received will be related to the number of live benefits and clients. New benefits have launched over time, bringing more people in touch with Social Security Scotland. Benefit launch dates and application/payment volumes are summarised in a table below.

## Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints

Complaints fall under the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and their complaints handling procedure. This sets out a two Stage internal complaints process. Frontline resolution – Stage 1, allows five working days to respond to the client's complaint. From January 2020, an extension of five working days can be added to this initial timescale by Social Security Scotland where it will be beneficial to the client. Prior to this, extensions had to be agreed with the client. For Stage 1 complaints it may be more appropriate to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 rather than applying an extension. Where a client remains unhappy with the response to a Stage 1 complaint, they can proceed to investigation – Stage 2, which allows 20 working days to investigate and provide a response. Again, since January 2020 an extension of five working days can be added to this timescale by Social Security Scotland if required, whereas prior to this extensions were agreed with the client.

If the client still remains unhappy then they can choose to take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Complaints taken to Scottish Public Services Ombudsman are not included in the publication.

A small number of complaints went straight to investigation – Stage 2. Not all complaints are suitable for frontline resolution and not all complaints will be satisfactorily resolved at that stage. Complaints handled at the investigation stage of the complaints handling procedure are typically complex or require a detailed examination. Examples of this include:

- the client/appointee refuses to take part in frontline resolution
- the issues raised are complex and require detailed investigation

- the complaint relates to serious, high-risk, or high-profile issues

The following table gives the launch dates and application numbers for each benefit.

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Start date</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>All time (to 30 September 2023)</b>	<b>Complaints all time (to 30 September 2023)</b>
<a href="#">Carer's Allowance Supplement</a>	3 Sep 18	86,570 carers in receipt	89,265 carers in receipt	91,605 carers in receipt	93,530 carers in receipt	92,090 carers in receipt	84,325 carers in receipt at Apr-23 eligibility date	148,515 carers in receipt	150
<a href="#">Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods</a> - Pregnancy and Baby Payment - Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment - Best Start Grant School Age Payment - Best Start Foods	10 Dec 18 29 Apr 19 3 Jun 19 12 Aug 19	19,480 applications	128,075 applications	118,605 applications	84,215 applications	85,725 applications	27,475 applications to Sep-23	463,685 applications	820
<a href="#">Funeral Support Payment</a>	16 Sep 19	n/a	3,975 applications	8,690 applications	8,715 applications	8,875 applications	4,725 applications to Sep-23	34,980 applications	80
<a href="#">Young Carer Grant</a>	21 Oct 19	n/a	1,750 applications	3,375 applications	3,935 applications	4,475 applications	2,555 applications to Sep-23	16,090 applications	10
<a href="#">Job Start Payment</a>	17 Aug 20	n/a	n/a	3,190 applications	6,915 applications	2,295 applications	950 applications to Sep-23	13,350 applications	10

<a href="#">Scottish Child Payment</a>	9 Nov 20 (applications) 15 Feb 21 (payments)	n/a	n/a	104,575 applications	53,365 applications	160,840 applications	27,960 applications to Sep-23	346,955 applications	610
<a href="#">Child Winter Heating Payment</a>	27 Nov 20	n/a	n/a	18,360 payments	20,000 payments	26,555 payments	No published data	64,915 payments	15
<a href="#">Child Disability Payment</a>	16 Jul 21 (pilot) 22 Nov 21 (national)	n/a	n/a	n/a	9,570 applications	21,405 applications	10,955 applications to Sep-23	41,930 applications	1,050
<a href="#">Adult Disability Payment</a>	21 Mar 22(pilot) 29 Aug 2022 (national)	n/a	n/a	n/a	520 applications	85,935 applications	59,810 applications to Sep-23	146,270 applications	1,300
<a href="#">Winter Heating Payment</a>	Feb 2023	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	392,425 payments	No published data	392,425 payments	90

Note: Annual figures are based on the latest Official Statistics publications, but may be revised when the statistics are updated.

## Complaint reasons

Complaint reasons are categorised by Social Security Scotland staff based on the information received from clients. Complaint reasons were amended from 12 March 2021 to better reflect types of complaints received and provide more focussed data to inform improvement activity. In the table below, complaints received prior to 12 March 2021 have been mapped to new categories as set out below. 'Client expectation not met - Information provided' is a new category that does not map onto previous complaint reasons.

Previous categories	New categories	Description
Inadequate standard of service	Client expectations not met – Quality of service	Should be used where we have provided the client with a service which is below the expected standard.
Failure to provide a service	Client expectations not met – Accessing services	Should be used where we have not delivered a service e.g. online application form unavailable
Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy	Client expectations not met - Policy and procedures	Should be used when client is unhappy with Social Security Scotland's policy or procedures.
Disagreement with a decision	Disagreement with a decision	Use only for benefits with no right of appeal
Failure to follow the appropriate process	Client expectations not met – Timescales	Should be used where we did not meet published timescales.
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	Client expectations not met - Treatment by member of staff	Should be used where the service provided by a staff member was not at the expected standard.
N/a	Client expectations not met - Information provided	Should be used where the client is unhappy about information provided on Social Security Scotland websites, social media, advertising or letters.

For the purposes of this publication we have removed the prefix 'Client expectations not met' from these categories.

## **Complaint outcomes**

Possible outcomes for complaints are:

- Upheld – the client’s complaint has been upheld, as it meets the terms in the definition of a complaint.
- Not upheld – the client’s complaint was not upheld because it did not meet the terms in the definition of a complaint.
- Partially upheld – if the client makes a complaint raising more than one issue, one part (or parts) of the complaint may meet the terms in the definition of a complaint, and other(s) do not. In this case the complaint would be partially upheld.
- Resolved - if a client has made a complaint and their complaint is resolved without the need to look further into why something went wrong or to mark it as upheld or not upheld. This outcome was introduced on 12 April 2021.

In this publication complaint outcomes are counted separately for Stage 1 and Stage 2. A complaint that progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 will have two outcomes.

## **Compliments and suggestions**

Compliments and suggestions should be recorded within five working days. Suggestions are investigated and the outcome is provided directly to the client.



# About the data

## How the data is collected

The data in this publication is primarily sourced from Social Security Scotland's case management system. The system holds information on all feedback received, including:

- type of feedback (complaint, compliment, suggestion)
- date received
- channel by which feedback was received (e-mail, telephone, letter, webchat, social media, face to face)
- benefit (or no specific benefit)
- reason for feedback, chosen from defined lists of possible categories
- where applicable, the date that feedback was actioned
- outcome of any decisions, selected from a defined list of possible outcomes

The information is held across multiple tables within the system. The data cut used to produce statistics for this publication was taken on 20 November 2023.

## Quality assurance

The data used to produce the figures has been checked where anomalies were discovered and discrepancies investigated.

Due to the increasing volume of feedback, for data from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 clerical records were not used for comparison. Instead, spot checking of anomalous records had been carried out with the client experience team:

- The dataset has been checked for duplicate records based on Case ID number.
- Anomalous data has been checked and investigated (e.g. where a decision date falls before received date)
- For complaints with decision date is after the deadline as prescribed by Scottish Public Services Ombudsman complaints handling procedure, it was investigated whether extension had been granted.

The quality assurance process might result in revision of figures published previously.

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

## Data Quality

### *Comparison to clerical data*

For historic data to the end of the 2021/22 financial year, data from the case management system was compared to clerical records. Discrepancies were investigated with the Client Experience team, and errors in case management system data were manually fixed to match the clerical record where necessary. Discrepancies included:

- A small number of items of feedback received had a date before September 2018, or had the date of feedback being recorded rather than date received. There were also errors in date feedback was received and decisions were made on the case management system compared to the clerical records. Dates have been amended on a case by case basis as decided with reference to the clerical records.
- Some feedback had discrepancies in channel, reason or outcome between the case management system and clerical records. Each of these cases have been investigated with the Client Experience team and corrected.
- Some feedback on the case management system is recorded as being not benefit specific. While this is true in some cases, in others this occurs where benefit information is missing. Missing benefit information has been completed with reference to clerical records.
- In a small number of cases the Stage 1 and Stage 2 of one complaint have been recorded as two separate complaints on the case management system. These have been merged back into one complaint where necessary.
- The case management system includes a number of complaints where the outcome is recorded as 'Deleted'. In some cases these are complaints that have been created in error, and these have been removed from the dataset used to produce the figures in this publication. In others cases the outcome of the complaint has been amended from 'Deleted' to the correct outcome of the complaint.

For the 2022/23 financial year, records that were missing from either the case management system or clerical records were investigated with the Client Experience Team. A small number of duplicate cases were also identified and checked with the Client Experience Team.

For the 2023/24 financial year, anomalous records have been checked with the Client Experience Team when required.

### *Rounding and disclosure control*

Feedback numbers have been rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control. Figures may not sum due to rounding. Percentages are based on actual figures and rounded to the nearest percent. Some percentages have been suppressed to prevent back-calculation of small numbers.

### *Channel*

Complaint channel is based on the first channel given for a complaint when it was received at either Stage 1 or 2.

Telephone, email and letter have been available for clients to use to complain since 2018. Telephone was unavailable from mid-March to mid-April 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. Following the launch of Child Disability Payment, we have seen face to face complaints recorded through local delivery interaction with clients.

Webchat was introduced as a communication channel from 1 May 2020. However, webchat was only added to the feedback recording system in February 2021. Where a complaint was received before February 2021, but the complaint notes indicate the complaint was received through webchat, we have counted this complaint as being received by webchat. It is possible that there were further complaints by webchat that have not been identified – these will be counted under ‘telephone’.

Social media complaints have been recorded since 12 April 2021. Complaints are classed as ‘social media’ when a client complains through a social media platform and is signposted by Social Security Scotland communications to make a complaint through one of the other channels, and the client does so. If a client is signposted but does not make a complaint through one of the other channels, their complaint is not recorded. Prior to 12 April 2021, social media was monitored but this type of complaint could not be recorded, and will have been counted as telephone, email, letter or webchat.

### *Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints*

For complaint benefit and reason, we have used the first recorded benefit or reason with a complaint. In general, benefit and reason are not expected to change between Stage 1 and Stage 2, although this may be possible in some cases.

For complaint outcomes, if an application had both a Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint outcome, we have counted this as two separate outcomes – a complaint that progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 will have two outcomes.

Complaints that went straight to Stage 2 are included in total complaints and Stage 2 complaints figures, and used to calculate the percentage of complaints reaching Stage 2.

### *Processing time*

Processing time is the number of days from the complaint being received to a decision being made. It is calculated in working days. Weekends and public holidays are excluded. The time of day that a complaint was received or processed is not taken into account. The day the complaint was received is counted as ‘day one’ of processing, regardless of the time of day a complaint was received. For example, a complaint received and processed on the same day would have a processing time of one working day. A complaint received on one day and processed on the next working day would have a processing time of two working days.

Withdrawn complaints have not been included in median processing times statistics. Numbers of withdrawn complaints are relatively small [Table 5], therefore this has had little impact on average processing times.

Processing times are calculated separately for each complaint stage. Where an extension has been agreed on a Stage 1 or Stage 2 complaint, complaints will be classed as having been processed 'within agreed timescales' if they were processed within these extensions [Table 4]. Complaints classed as not being closed within an extension include those that were completed after the extension end date, or completed after the initial timescale without an extension being applied.

#### *Compliments and suggestions recording*

Compliments and suggestions are passed on to the Client Experience team to be recorded. When Social Security Scotland staff have high work volumes it is possible that fewer compliments and suggestions will be passed on. This may be the reason for lower volumes of compliments and suggestions received during 2020/21, as a result of the impact of COVID-19.

### **Comparisons with DWP complaints statistics**

The Department for Work and Pensions has a different feedback process to Social Security Scotland, and as such, the Department for Work and Pensions complaints, compliments and suggestions statistics are not directly comparable to these statistics.

Further information about complaints at the Department for Work and Pensions and links to their latest statistics are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/complaints-about-the-department-for-work-and-pensions>.

### **Related Social Security Scotland publications**

Statistics about individual benefits are published at:

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/statistics/social-security-scotland-statistics-publications>

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

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications>. This includes qualitative analysis of feedback comments made by clients during the application process for benefits.

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

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

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Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,

e-mail: [ChiefStatistician@gov.scot](mailto:ChiefStatistician@gov.scot)

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

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

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

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

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications>

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

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

### **Complaints and suggestions**

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

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