

Social Security Scotland statistics

Social Security Scotland feedback statistics to 31 March 2022

Key Figures

From 4 September 2018 to 31 March 2022, Social Security Scotland received 895 complaints, 240 compliments and 105 suggestions.

In 2021/22:

- 400 Stage 1 complaints were received.
- 65 Stage 2 complaints were received.
- 45 compliments were received.
- 25 suggestions were received.

Frequency of publications

The next bi-annual publication will cover up to the end of September 2022 and will be released in December 2022.

Under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics¹ we publish a timetable of statistical releases for the twelve months ahead².

¹ The Code of Practice is found online at: <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

² The forthcoming publication timetable is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/official-statistics-forthcoming-publications/>

Introduction

This report covers feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced on 4 September 2018, until 31 March 2022. It includes statistics for specific benefits as well as feedback that was not benefit specific.

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 Assistance, Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment.

All tables and charts relating to this publication can be found at:
<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/statistics/social-security-scotland-statistics-publications>

These statistics are being published as experimental statistics. Experimental statistics are defined in the Code of Practice for Statistics as "*new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early Stage.*" These statistics have not yet been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority. They have not been designated as National Statistics³.

³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

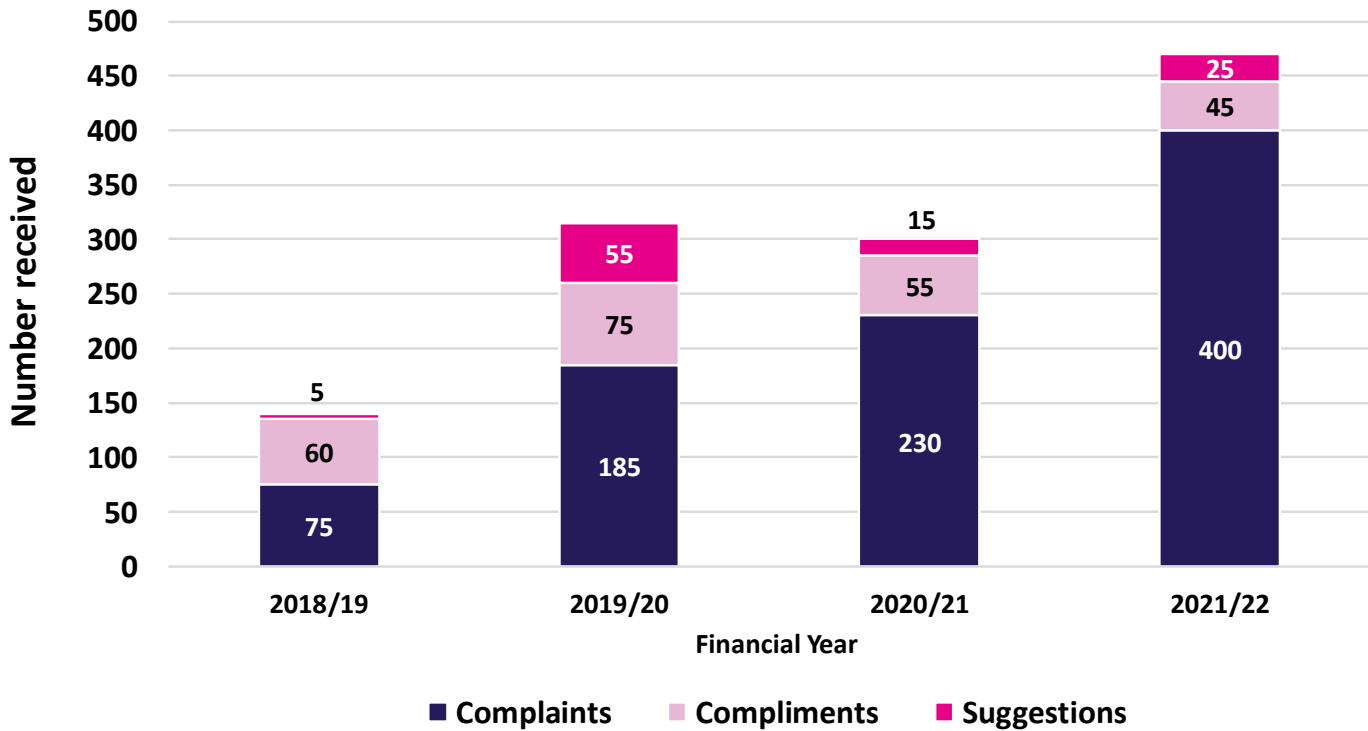
<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/experimental-statistics-official-statistics-in-development/>

Contents

Introduction	2
Main findings	4
Complaints	5
Compliments	17
Suggestions	19
Background to Feedback	20
Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints	20
Complaint reasons	22
Complaint outcomes	23
Compliments and suggestions	23
About the data	24
How the data is collected	24
Quality assurance	24
Data Quality	25
Comparisons with DWP complaints statistics	27
Related Social Security Scotland publications	27

Main findings

Chart 1: Feedback by financial year



Complaints includes all Stage 1 complaints, plus complaints received at Stage 2. Figures for individual years may not sum to all time figures in other tables/charts due to rounding.

In total 895 complaints, 240 compliments and 105 suggestions were received by 31 March 2022. The most common type of feedback received in all years has been complaints **[Chart 1]**.

The overall amount of feedback received increased in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. The proportion of complaints increased, while the proportion of compliments decreased and the proportion of suggestions remained the same.

The year 2021/22 was the first full financial year following the launch of Scottish Child Payment. This year also included the launch of Child Disability Payment, and the pilot for Adult Disability Payment went live at the end of 2021/22.

Complaints

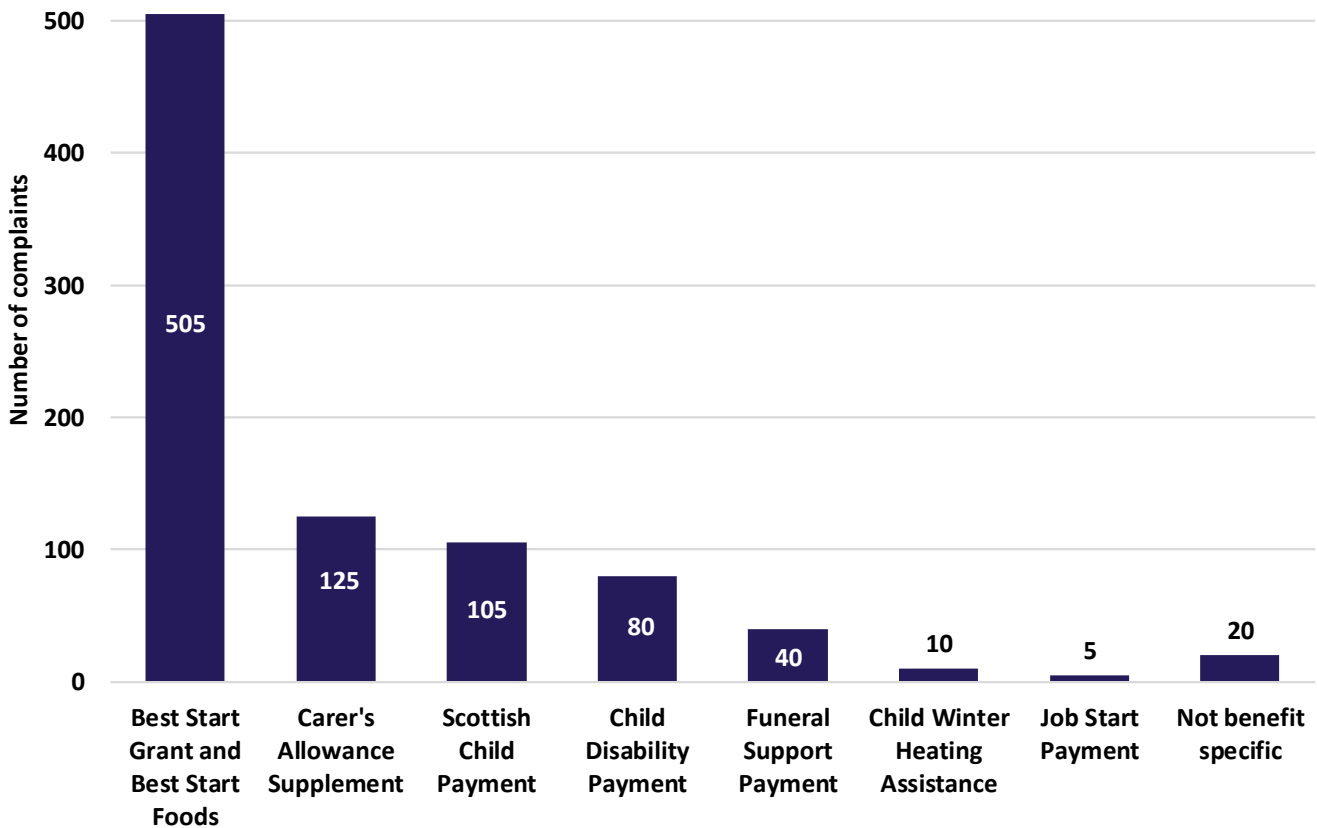
Complaints received since September 2018

In total 895 complaints were received by 31 March 2022 [Table 1, Chart 2], including:

- 505 for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods
- 125 for Carer’s Allowance Supplement
- 105 for Scottish Child Payment
- 80 for Child Disability Payment
- 40 for Funeral Support Payment
- 10 for Child Winter Heating Assistance
- five for Job Start Payment
- 20 that were not benefit specific

There were a small number of complaints for Young Carer Grant received by 31 March 2022, which are not reported due to disclosure control. There were no complaints received for Adult Disability Payment following the pilot launch shortly before the end of the reporting period covered in this release. The [background section](#) gives the launch dates for each benefit.

Chart 2: Total complaints received by benefit to 31 March 2022



Complaint numbers remain low compared to the number of people receiving payments or making applications. For example, while Social Security Scotland has received 505 complaints about Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods, there have been 350,345 applications received since 2018. While there have been 105 complaints about Scottish Child Payment, there have been 157,755 applications since November 2020. The [background section](#) gives a full list of benefit launches since 2018 with application or payment numbers and sources.

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

Complaints received in 2021/22

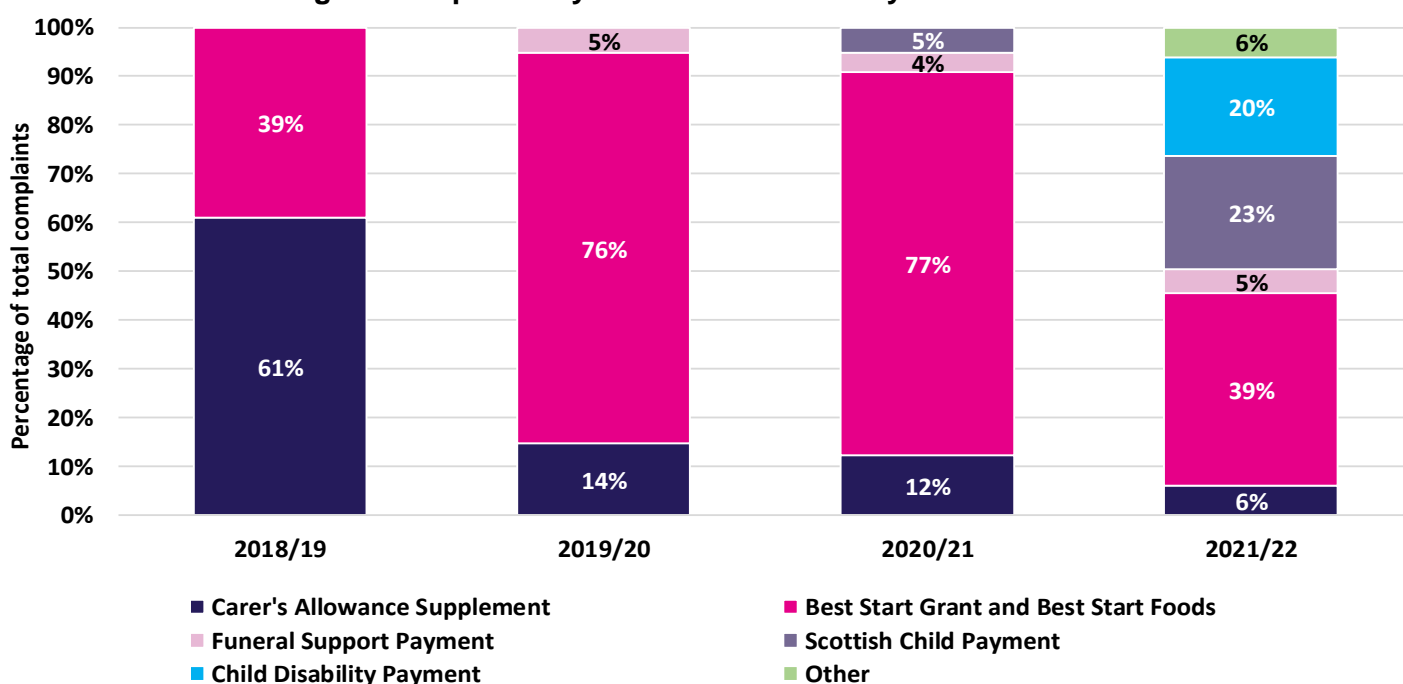
Social Security Scotland received 400 complaints during 2021/22 [Table 1].

Of all complaints received in 2021/22:

- Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods accounted for 39%.
- Scottish Child Payment accounted for 23%. Scottish Child Payment opened for applications in November 2020, and launched nationally in February 2021.
- Child Disability Payment accounted for 20%. Child Disability Payment pilot launched in July 2021, followed by national launch in November 2021.

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

Chart 3: Percentage of complaints by benefit and financial year

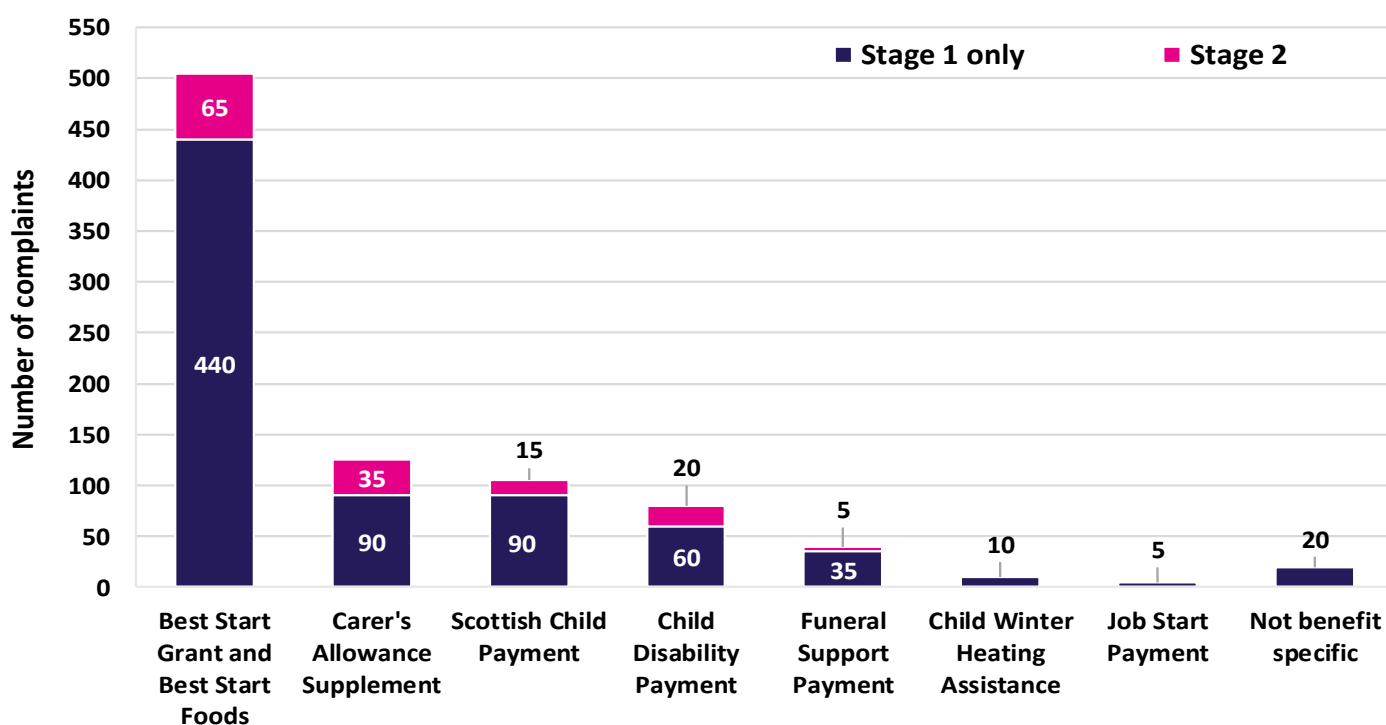


'Other' includes Child Winter Heating Assistance, Job Start Payment, Young Carer Grant and not benefit specific complaints.

Complaints reaching Stage 2

- Overall for all complaints since 2018, 16% have reached Stage 2 [Table 1]. This means either progressing from Stage 1 to Stage 2, or being received at Stage 2. The [background section](#) explains the difference between Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints.
- In 2021/22, 16% of complaints reached Stage 2, which was lower than the previous year when 18% of complaints reached Stage 2 [Table 1].
- Overall since September 2018, 28% of Carer’s Allowance Supplement complaints have reached Stage 2, while only 13% of Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods complaints and 13% of Scottish Child Payment complaints have reached Stage 2 [Table 1]. This difference may be due to clients using complaints in different ways for the benefits. While Best Start Grant and Scottish Child Payment have a re-determinations and appeals process, for Carer’s Allowance Supplement there is no statutory right to appeal. This could lead clients to make complaints about Carer’s Allowance Supplement as a way of having their cases looked at again.
- Of all Child Disability Payment complaints received, 27% have reached Stage 2 [Table 1]. This may relate to Child Disability Payment being a more complex benefit in terms of both processing and decision making. This may also relate to Child Disability Payment including case transfers, as clients move from Disability Living Allowance with the Department for Work and Pensions, to Child Disability Payment with Social Security Scotland.
- No cases have been referred to Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) [Table 1].

Chart 4: Complaints by benefit and stage to 30 September 2021

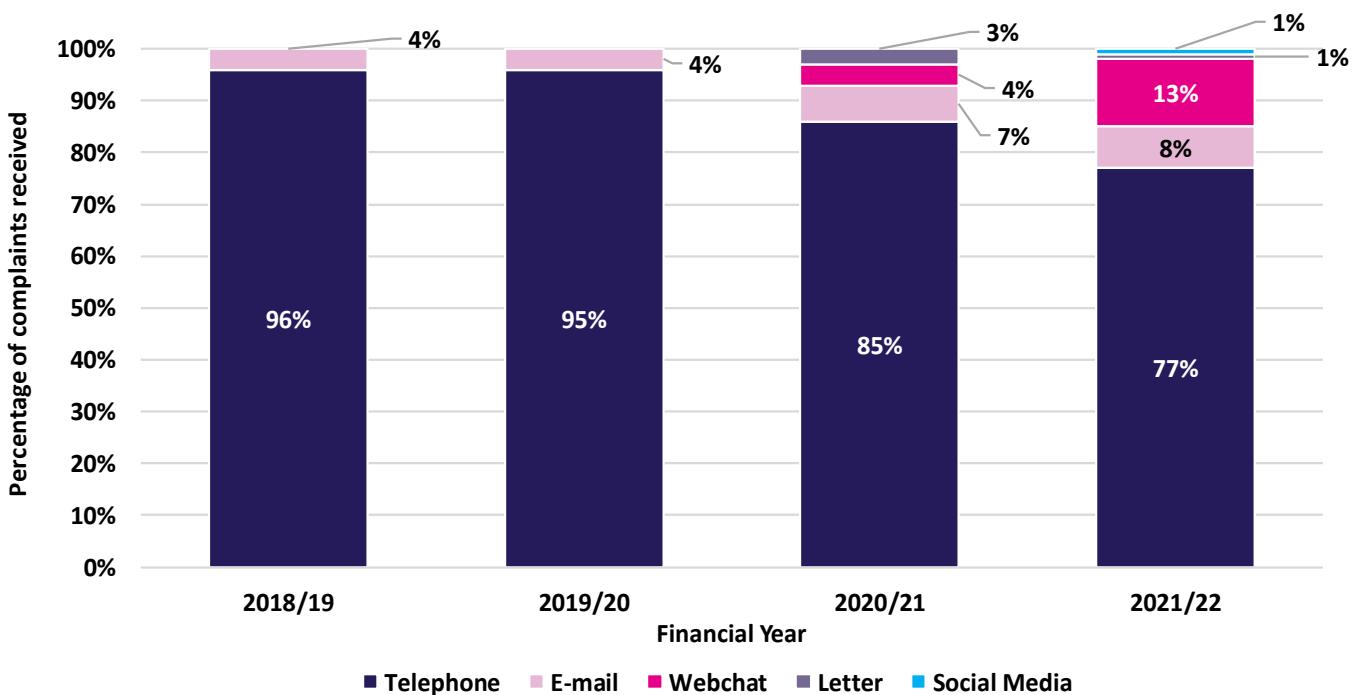


*Stage 2 figures include a small number of complaints that went straight to Stage 2, as well as complaints progressing from Stage 1 to Stage 2. Figures may not sum to those in Table 1 due to rounding. Complaint numbers for Young Carer Grant are too small to display.

Complaints channels

- In 2021/22, telephone remained the most common channel for complaints, although the percentage of complaints received this way decreased from 85% in 2020/21 to 77% in 2021/22 [Table 2, Chart 4].
- The proportion of complaints received by webchat increased from 4% in 2020/21 to 13% in 2021/22 [Table 2, Chart 4]. Webchat was introduced as a communication channel from 1 May 2020 and added to the feedback recording system in February 2021.
- A small number of complaints were recorded via social media for the first time in 2021/22 [Table 2, Chart 4]. 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 – the [background section](#) gives further details on this channel.

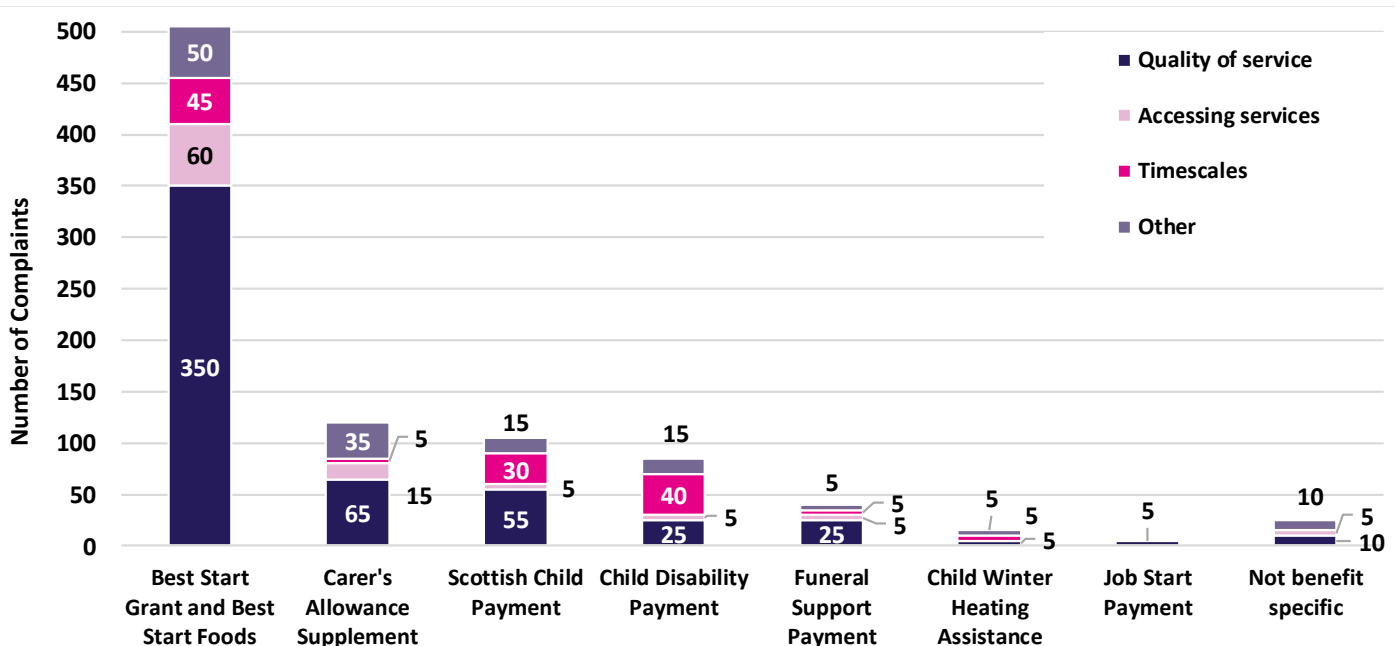
Chart 5: Complaints by channel to 31 March 2022



Reasons for complaints

- Overall, 59% of complaints have been about 'Quality of service', followed by 15% of complaints about 'Timescales' and 11% about 'Accessing services' [Table 3, Chart 5]. More information about complaint reasons is found in the [background section](#).
- For Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Carer's Allowance Supplement, Scottish Child Payment and Funeral Support Payment, the most common reason for complaints was 'Quality of service'. For Child Disability Payment, the most common reason for complaints was 'Timescales' with 49%, which is relatively high compared to other benefits [Table 3, Chart 5].
- Overall, the proportion of complaints relating to 'Quality of service' decreased from 72% in 2020/21 to 45% in 2021/22. The proportion of complaints relating to 'Timescales' increased from 3% in 2020/21 to 30% in 2021/22 [Table 1, Table 3].

Chart 6: Complaint reasons by benefit to 31 March 2022



Complaint numbers for Young Carer Grant are too small to display. 'Other' includes 'Policy & Procedures', 'Disagreement with a Decision', 'Treatment by Member of Staff', and 'Information Provided'. Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Complaints processing times

- By 31 March 2022, 880 Stage 1 and 130 Stage 2 complaints had been closed, leaving five outstanding Stage 1 complaints and 15 outstanding Stage 2 complaints at the end of the reporting period **[Table 4]**.
- Overall since September 2018, the median processing time has been three working days for Stage 1 complaints, and 18 days for Stage 2 complaints. In total, 92% of Stage 1 complaints were closed within the initial five working day timescale, and 94% of Stage 2 complaints 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](#).
- For Stage 1 complaints, the median average processing time decreased from four working days in 2020/21 to three working days in 2021/22 **[Table 4]**.
- The proportion of Stage 1 complaints closed within the initial five working day timescale decreased slightly from 89% in 2020/21 to 88% in 2021/22. The proportion closed within an agreed extended timescale decreased from 100% in 2020/21 to 98% in 2021/22 **[Table 4]**.
- For Stage 2 complaints, the median average processing time also decreased, from 19 working days in 2020/21 to 17.5 working days in 2021/22 **[Table 4]**.
- The proportion of Stage 2 complaints closed within the initial 20 working day timescale increased from 88% in 2020/21 to 94% in 2021/22. A small number were not closed within the extended timescale, but this number is not reported due to disclosure control **[Table 4]**.

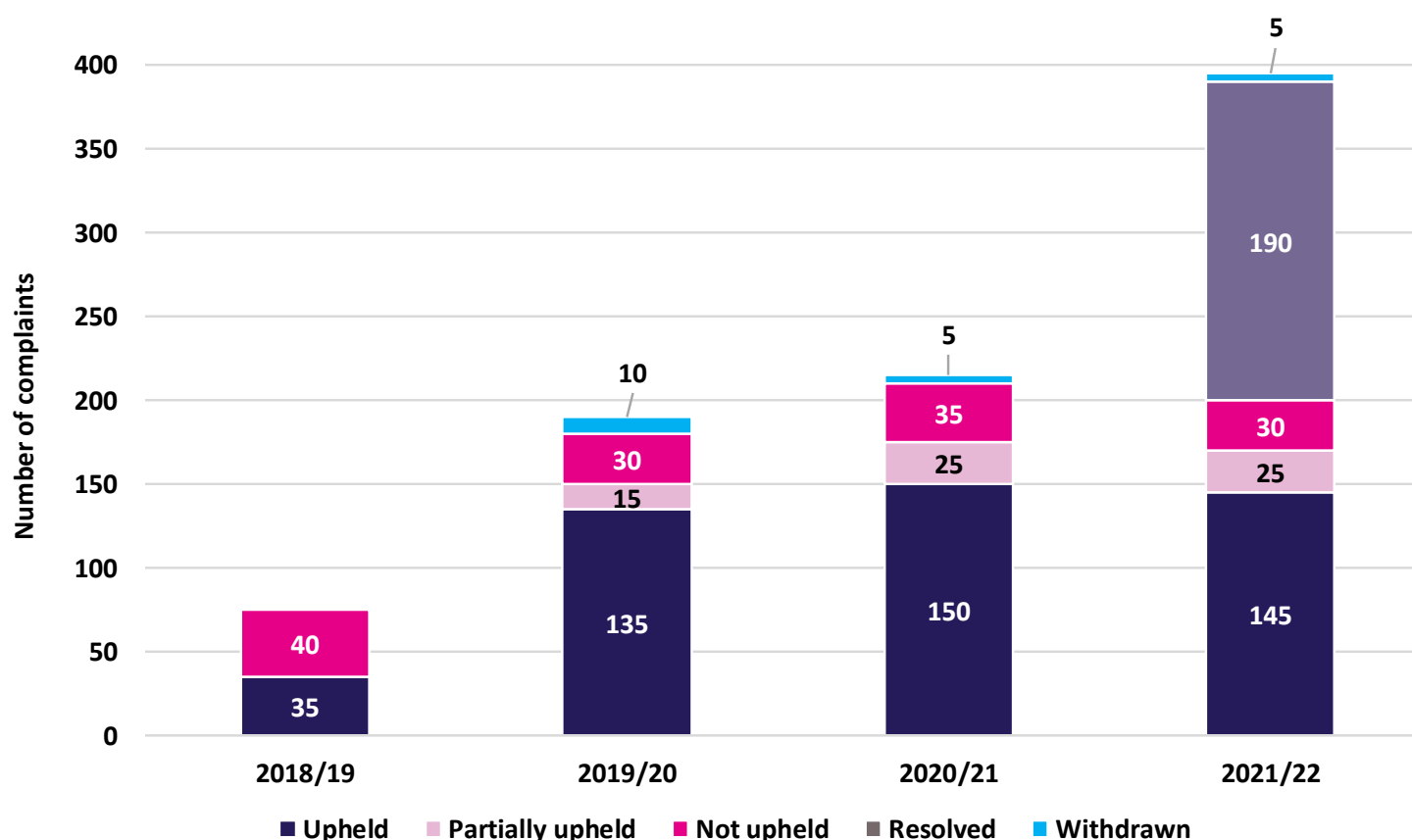
Complaint outcomes

Stage 1 complaint outcomes by year

Complaint outcomes are counted separately for Stage 1 and 2 – a complaint that progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 will have two outcomes. In total since September 2018, for Stage 1 complaints:

- 465 were upheld
- 190 were resolved
- 135 were not upheld
- 65 were partially upheld
- 25 were withdrawn

Chart 7(i): Stage 1 complaints by outcome and financial year



Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2022 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

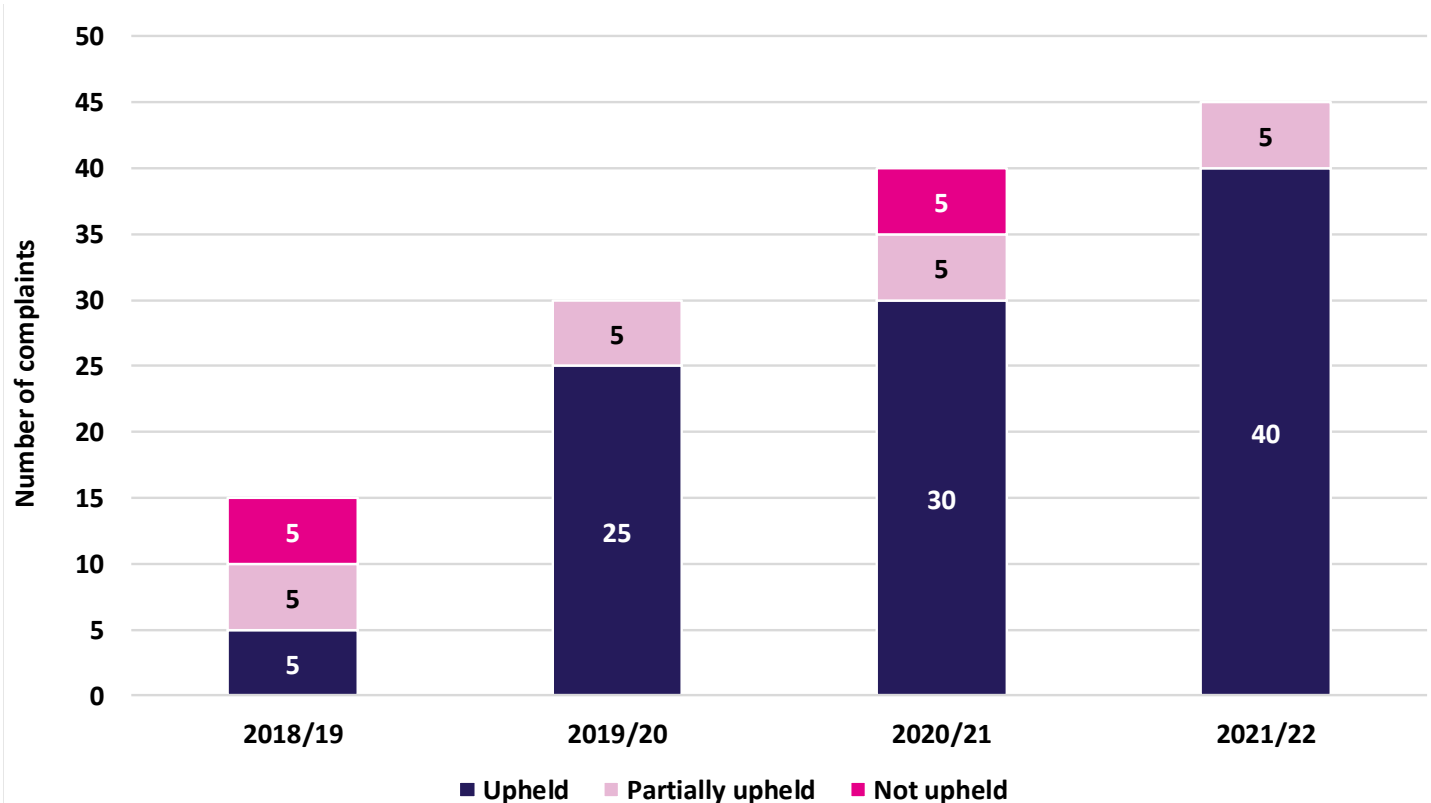
The outcome 'resolved' was introduced from 12 April 2021. In 2021/22, 48% of Stage 1 complaints had this outcome, and the proportion of Stage 1 complaints that were upheld (37%), partially upheld (6%) or not upheld (8%) all decreased as a result of this change in reporting options compared to the previous reporting year [Table 5, Chart 7(i)].

Stage 2 complaint outcomes by year

In total since September 2018, for Stage 2 complaints:

- 95 complaints were upheld
- 20 were partially upheld
- 10 were not upheld
- five were withdrawn [Table 5]

Chart 7(ii): Stage 2 complaints outcomes by financial year



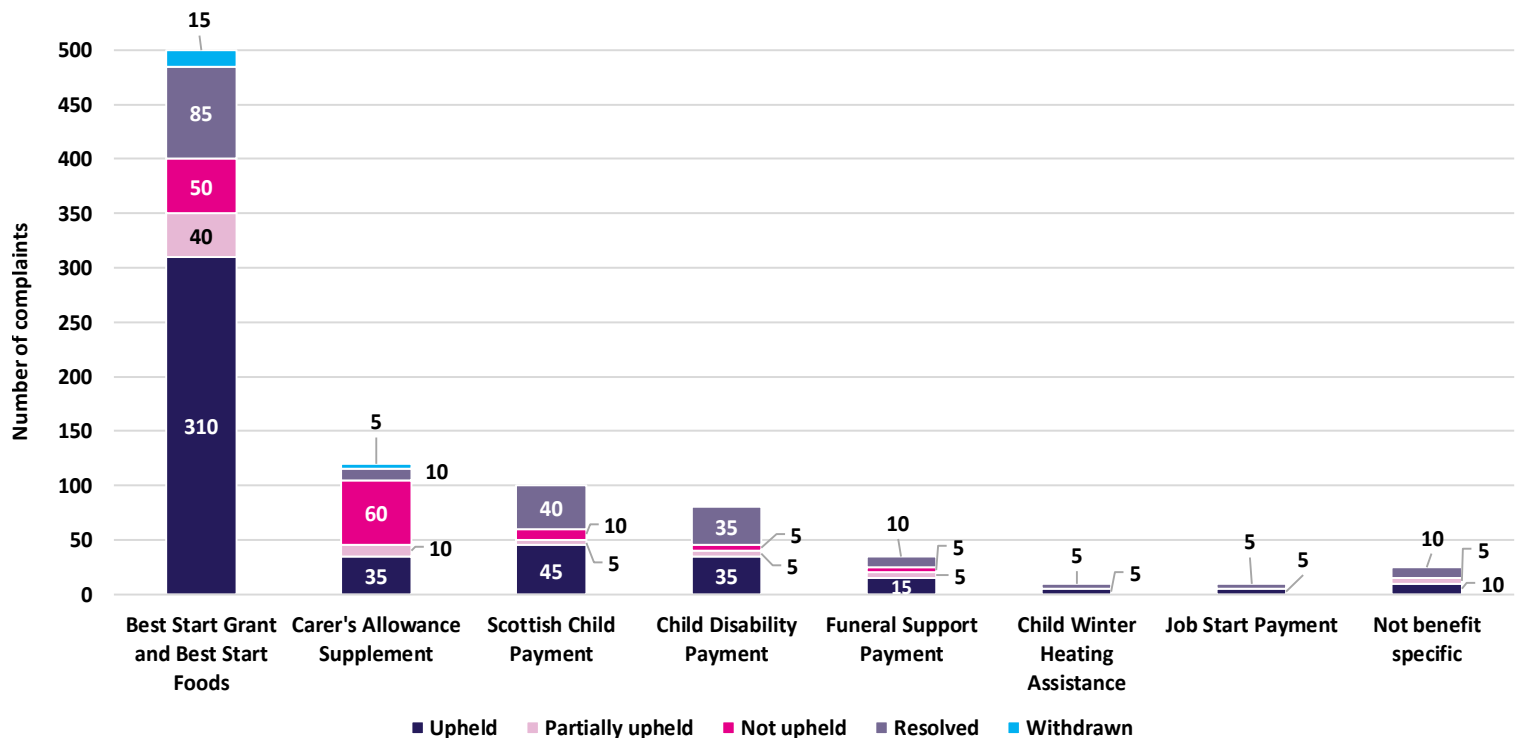
Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2022 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

In 2021/22, 75% of Stage 2 complaints had the outcome of upheld with a further 14% being partially upheld. The proportion with the outcomes of not upheld, withdrawn and resolved are not reported due to disclosure control.

Stage 1 complaint outcomes by benefit to 31 March 2022

- Of Stage 1 complaints made for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, 62% have been upheld. For Carer’s Allowance Supplement, 31% of Stage 1 complaints have been upheld. For each of Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment and Funeral Support Payment, around 45% of Stage 1 complaints have been upheld. For complaints which were not benefit specific, 40% have been upheld [Table 5, Chart 8(i)].
- The highest proportion of Stage 1 complaints which were resolved was for Child Winter Heating Assistance at 55%. Scottish Child Payment and Child Disability Payment each have around 40% of Stage 1 complaints resolved, followed by Funeral Support Payment with 23%. For Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, 17% of Stage 1 complaints have been resolved and for Carer’s Allowance Supplement, 9% of Stage 1 complaints have been resolved. For Stage 1 complaints which were not benefit specific, 40% were resolved [Table 5, Chart 8(i)].

Chart 8(i): Stage 1 complaints by outcome and benefit to 31 March 2022

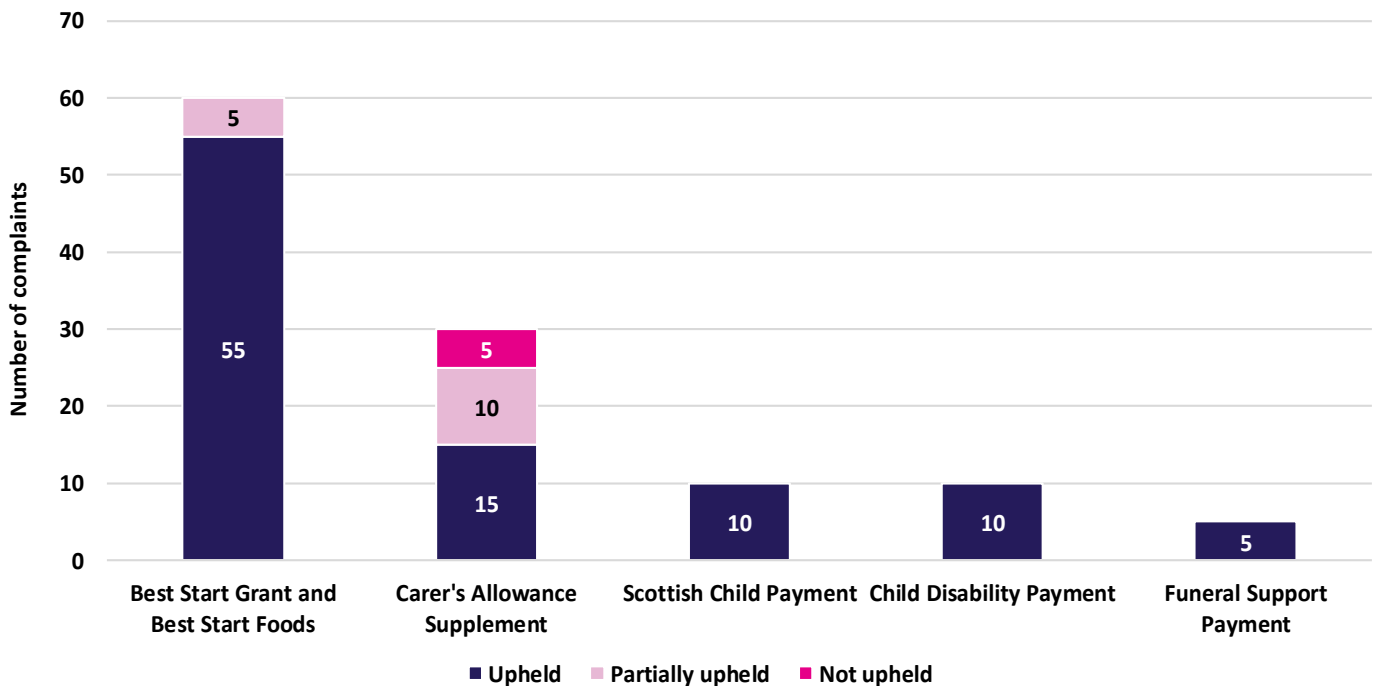


Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2022 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Stage 2 complaint outcomes by benefit to 31 March 2022

- The majority of Stage 2 complaints have been upheld for all benefits overall, with 73% having this outcome. For Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, 84% of Stage 2 complaints have been upheld, for Child Disability Payment 80% have been upheld and for Scottish Child Payment 75% have been upheld. For Carer’s Allowance Supplement, 48% have been upheld, while 33% were partially upheld and 18% were not upheld [Table 5, Chart 8(ii)].
- One of the reasons for less Carer’s Allowance Supplement complaints being upheld could be the different types of reasons that clients complain about this benefit – relatively more clients complained about ‘Policy & Procedures’ for Carer’s Allowance Supplement, and these complaints were relatively more likely to be not upheld. Similarly, relatively less clients complained about ‘Timescales’ for Carer’s Allowance Supplement, and these complaints were relatively more likely to be resolved [Table 3, Table 5].

Chart 8(ii): Stage 2 complaints by outcome and benefit to 31 March 2022

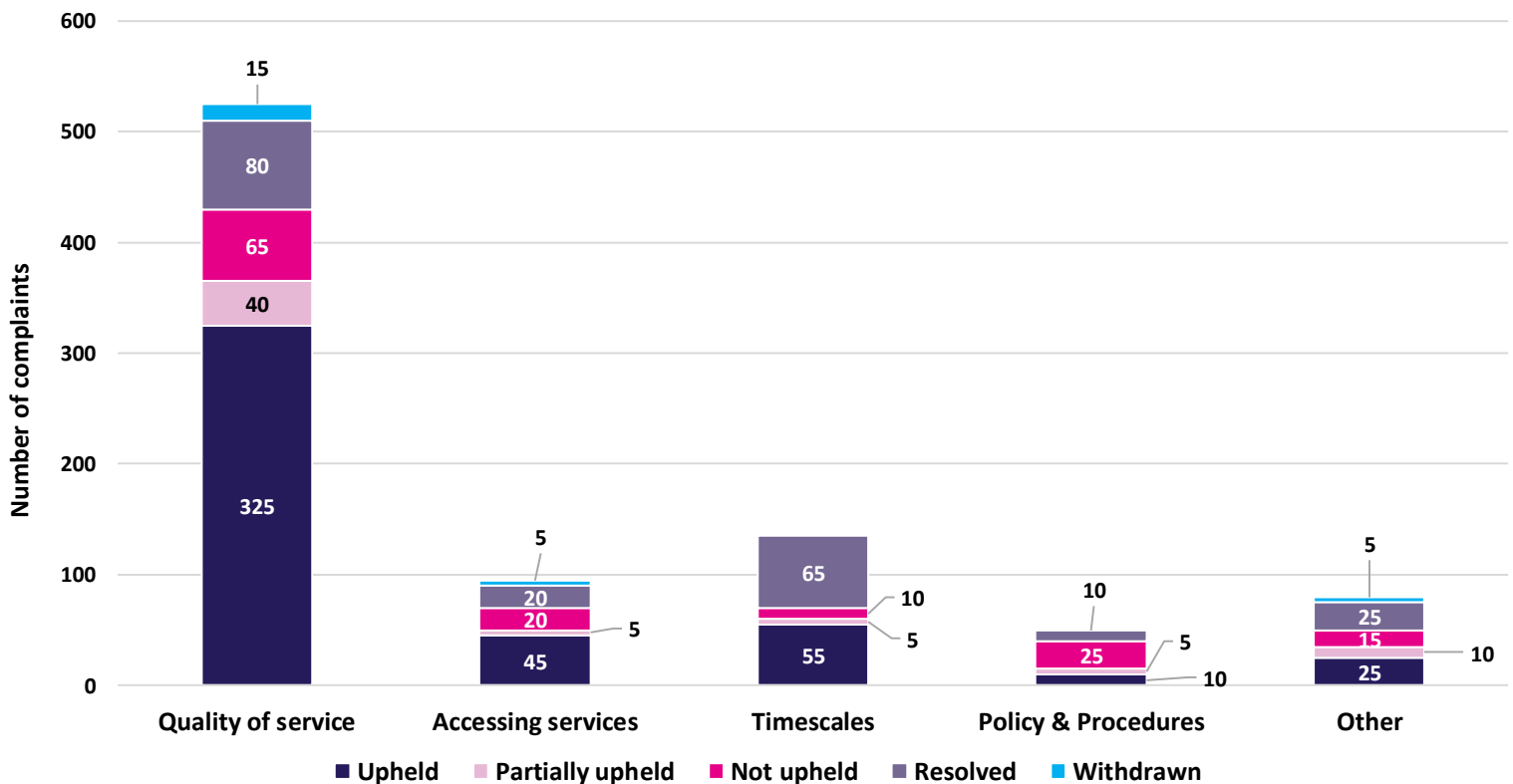


Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2022 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Stage 1 complaint outcomes by complaint reason to 31 March 2022

- For Stage 1 complaints, the highest proportion which were upheld has been for those about 'Quality of service' with 62%, followed by 'Accessing services' with 50% upheld and 'Timescales' with 42% upheld [Table 5, Chart 9(i)].
- For Stage 1 complaints, the highest proportion which were not upheld has been for those about 'Policy & Procedures' with 50% [Table 5, Chart 9(i)].
- For Stage 1 complaints, the highest proportion which were resolved were for those about 'Information not provided' with 50% and 'Timescales' with 48% [Table 5, Chart 9(i)].

Chart 9(i): Stage 1 complaint outcomes by complaint reason to 31 March 2022

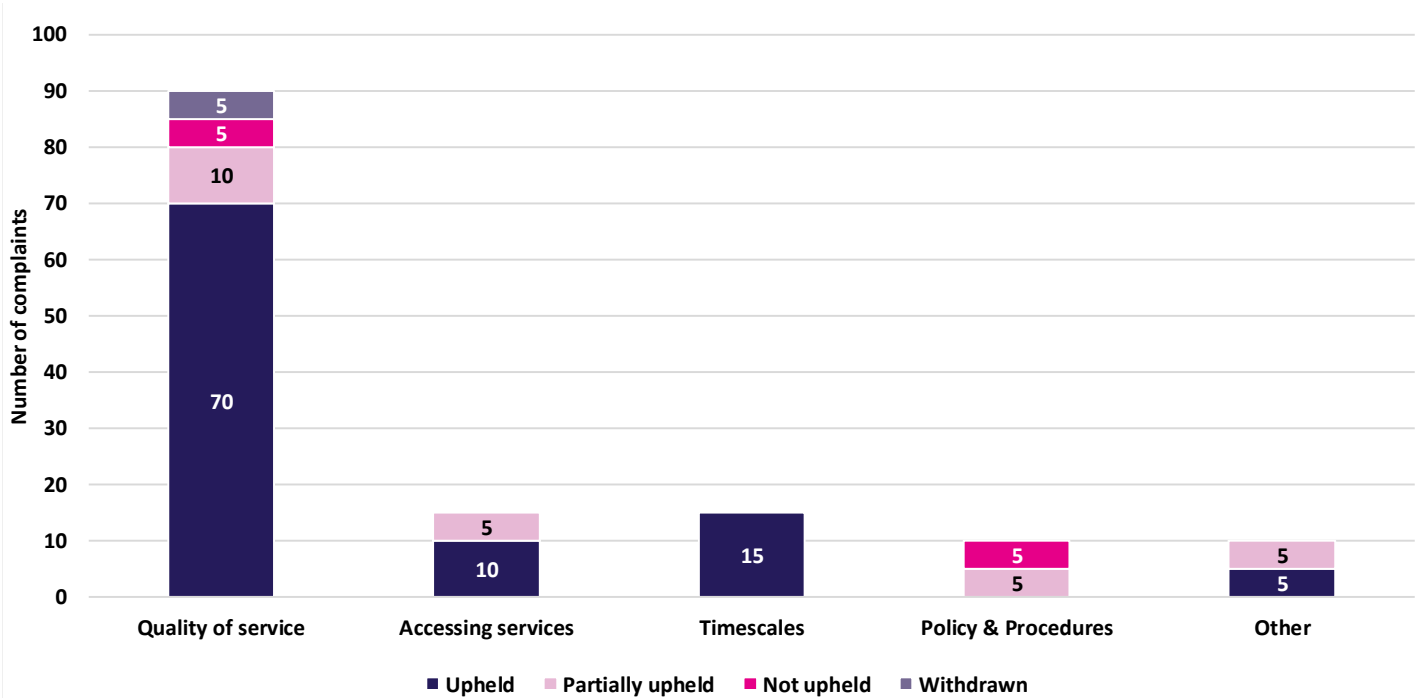


'Other' includes 'Disagreement with a Decision', 'Treatment by Member of Staff', and 'Information Provided'. Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2022 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Stage 2 complaint outcomes by complaint reason to 31 March 2022

- For Stage 2 complaints about 'Quality of service', 81% have been upheld, while 69% of those about 'Accessing services' have been upheld [Table 5, Chart 9(ii)].

Chart 9(ii) Stage 2 complaint outcomes by complaint reason



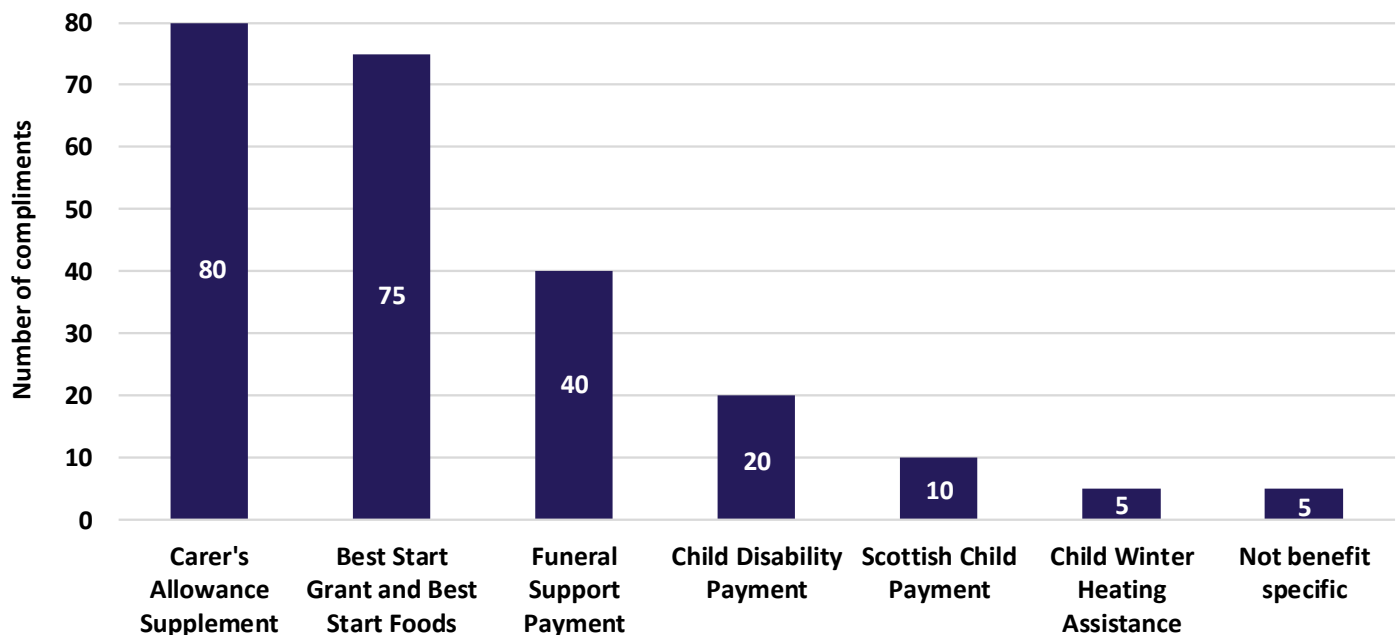
'Other' includes 'Disagreement with a Decision', 'Treatment by Member of Staff', and 'Information Provided'. Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2022 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Compliments

From 4 September 2018 to 31 March 2022, a total of 240 compliments were received including:

- 80 for Carer’s Allowance Supplement
- 75 for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods
- 40 for Funeral Support Payment
- 20 for Child Disability Payment
- 10 for Scottish Child Payment
- five for Child Winter Heating Assistance
- five not benefit specific compliments [Table 6, Chart 10].

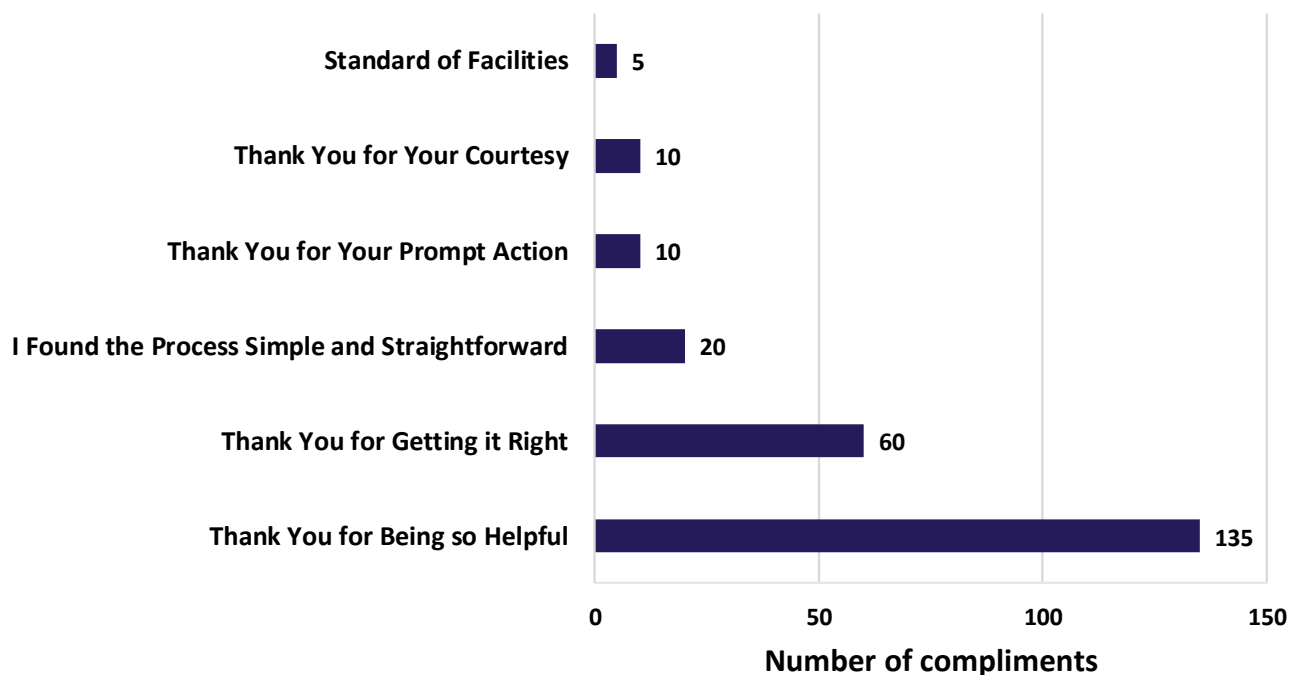
Chart 10: Total compliments received by benefit to 31 March 2022



In 2021/22, 45 compliments were received, with 15 for Child Disability Payment and ten or fewer for each of Carer’s Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment and Scottish Child Payment. This is less than the previous year where 55 compliments were received overall [Table 6].

Overall, the most common reason for compliments has been 'Thank you for being so helpful', accounting for 56% of compliments, with a quarter of compliments being 'Thank you for getting it right'. In 2021/22, the proportion of compliments relating to these reasons has been broadly similar to the previous two years [Table 7, Chart 11].

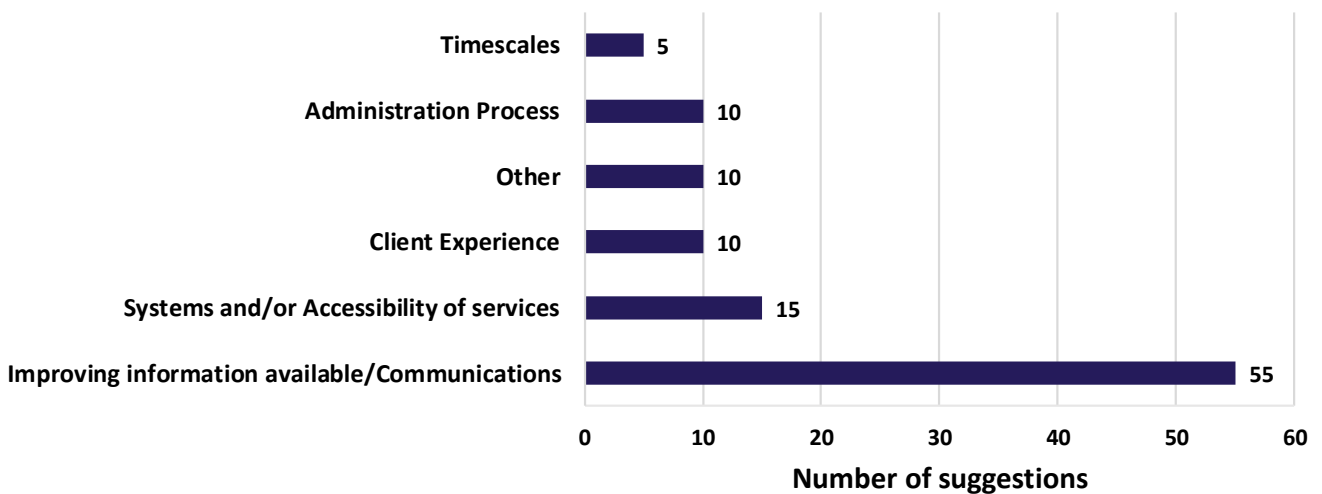
Chart 11: Compliments by reason to 31 March 2022



Suggestions

- From 4 September 2018 to 31 March 2022, a total of 105 suggestions were received [Table 8].
- Most suggestions were about ‘Improving information available/Communications’, which accounted for 53% of all suggestions received [Table 9, Chart 12].
- Around 42% of suggestions have been about Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, with smaller proportions for other benefits or not specific to a benefit [Table 8].
- In 2021/22, 25 suggestions were received, which is ten more than in 2020/21 [Table 8].
- Of these, 26% related to Child Disability Payment, followed by 22% for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods [Table 8]. This is the first year that suggestions have been recorded for Child Disability Payment as it launched nationally in November 2021.
- A small number of suggestions were recorded for Adult Disability Payment, but this number is too small to report [Table 8]. The pilot for Adult Disability Payment launched in three local authorities in Scotland in March 2022.

Chart 12: Suggestions by reason to 30 September 2021



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.

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

Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints

Complaints fall under the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and their complaints handling procedure. This sets out a two Stage internal complaints process. Frontline resolution – Stage 1, allows 5 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.

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

Benefit	Start date	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	All time	Complaints to March 2022
Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods - 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	128,070 applications	118,605 applications	84,185 applications	350,345 applications	505
Carer's Allowance Supplement	3 Sep 18	86,570 carers in receipt	89,260 carers in receipt	91,565 carers in receipt	90,240 carers in receipt	126,055 carers in receipt	125
Scottish Child Payment	9 Nov 20 (applications) 15 Feb 21 (payments)	n/a	n/a	104,570 applications	53,185 applications	157,755 applications	105
Child Disability Payment	16 Jul 21 (pilot) 22 Nov 21 (national)	n/a	n/a	n/a	9,570 applications	9,570 applications	80
Funeral Support Payment	16 Sep 19	n/a	3,975 applications	8,685 applications	8,710 applications	21,375 applications	40
Child Winter Heating Assistance	27 Nov 20	n/a	n/a	18,315 payments	19,865 payments	38,180 payments	10
Job Start Payment	17 Aug 20	n/a	n/a	3,190 applications	6,915 applications	10,105 applications	5
Young Carer Grant	21 Oct 19	n/a	1,750 applications	3,375 applications	3,930 applications	9,055 applications	0
Adult Disability Payment	21 March 22 (pilot)	n/a	n/a	n/a	520 applications	520 applications	0

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)
- 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. 100% extracts of administrative data are taken from this system every month for internal reporting purposes. Data cuts combine information from the different tables in the system into one monthly extract which includes details of all feedback made since September 2018. The data cut used to produce statistics for this publication was taken on 2 May 2022.

Quality assurance

The data used to produce the figures has been checked on a case by case basis with clerical records used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland, and discrepancies investigated.

Additional quality assurance and cleaning has been carried out on specific variables:

- The dataset has been checked for duplicate records based on Case ID number.
- Variables have been checked for missing information.
- Feedback received dates and decisions dates have been checked to see whether they fall within expected ranges (e.g. after September 2018) and are consistent with those produced by clerical records.
- Feedback channels, reasons, benefits and outcomes have been checked for consistency with those produced by clerical records.
- For complaints, the benefit that a complaint refers to and reason for the complaint have been checked for consistency between Stage 1 and Stage 2.

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

Data from the case management system has been compared to clerical records. Discrepancies have been investigated with the Client Experience team, and errors in case management system data have been 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 due to migration of feedback information onto the case management system during the first months following the launch of Carer's Allowance Supplement. Dates have been amended back to the original dates received and 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 small 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.

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.

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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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot

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

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#socialsecurityscotlandfeedbackstatistics>

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact 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 statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

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