Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings April 2020 to the end of March 2021

1. Introduction

An insights research programme has been established in Social Security Scotland. This publication covers client experiences at point of contact with the organisation. Results from this research programme are used to continuously improve services.

This publication covers the period April 2020 to end of March 2021, during which Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, and Young Carer Grant were live.

The following benefits are also covered by this publication, which variously went live between August and November 2020: Job Start Payment, Scottish Child Payment, joint Best Start Grant/Foods and Scottish Child Payment and Child Winter Heating Assistance.

Of note, in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic Social Security Scotland did not have the capability to offer its normal telephony client contact service. This is reflected in the report.

2. Key Findings

- From 23 March 2020 Social Security Scotland stopped receiving inbound phone calls due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid move to home working. On 2 April 2020 a temporary call-back system was put in place, enabling clients to request a client advisor to return their call.

- July 2020 saw the gradual return of telephony services. From 4 July 2020 to 29 March 2021, Social Security Scotland handled approximately 195,252 contacts by phone.

- Of these, approximately 79,706 were in relation to Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, 12,041 in relation to Carer's Allowance Supplement, 2,526 in relation to Child Winter Heating Assistance, 34,876 in relation to Funeral Support Payment, 5,901 in relation to Job Start Payment, 19,048 in relation to Scottish Child Payment, 2,720 in relation to Young Carer Grant and 38,434 were general enquiries.

- Between 4 July 2020 to 29 March 2021, the average time a caller waited before a call was answered was 10 minutes and 58 seconds across all benefit queues. This ranged from an average of 2 minutes and 50 seconds for Carers Allowance Supplement to an average of 15 minutes and 30 seconds for Scottish Child Payment.

- The insights programme has had feedback from clients on their experiences of engaging with the organisation during the period April 2020 to end of March 2021. 109,832 clients left ratings following postal, online and telephony applications for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. Ratings of 'Very good' or 'Good' were given by 86% of postal applicants who left a rating; 95% for online applicants, and 86% for telephony applicants.

- 95,597 clients left ratings following postal, online and telephony applications for Scottish Child Payment. Ratings of 'Very good' or 'Good' were given by 85% of postal applicants who left a rating; 96% for online applicants, and 99% for telephony applicants.

- 6,774 clients left ratings following postal, online and telephony applications for Funeral Support Payment. Ratings of 'Very good' or 'Good' were given by 82% of postal applicants who left a rating; 92% for online applicants, and 95% for telephony applicants.

- 2,974 clients left ratings following postal, online and telephony applications for Job Start Payment. Ratings of 'Very good' or 'Good' were given by 80% of postal applicants who left a rating; 95% for online applicants, and 100% for telephony applicants.

- 3,227 clients left ratings following postal, online and telephony applications for Young Carer's Grant. Ratings of 'Very good' or 'Good' were given by 88% of postal applicants who left a rating; 95% for online applicants, and 95% for telephony applicants.

- A subset of clients left feedback in the form of open text comments following applications for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment, Scottish Child Payment, and joint Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant/Foods.

- The majority of comments were positive (65% for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications, 72% for Funeral Support Payment applications, 75% for Young Carer Grant applications, 69% for Job Start Payment, 73% for Scottish Child Payment, and 64% for joint Best Start Grant/Food and Scottish Child Payment applications).

3. Background

An analytical team within Social Security Scotland are responsible for collecting, analysing and publishing management information, research and statistics that relate to the delivery and performance of Social Security Scotland. Within this, a programme of insights research has been established.

The aim is to gather the experiences, needs and priorities of those who use and deliver social security in Scotland. This information, in turn, is fed back into the organisation's processes, policy and practice, to facilitate continuous improvement.

Further detail on the background of the insights research programme and future plans can be found here.

4. Methodology

This insights research involves the collection of routine management information, as well as directly asking clients about their experiences when interacting with the organisation and applying for benefits. The following section outlines the methods used to collect insights data.

4.1 Client Insights

To capture client interactions and experiences with Social Security Scotland, research mechanisms have been built into telephony, postal and online channels.

4.1.1 Telephony – call data and general call experience

Management information is taken from the organisation's telephony reporting system. This is used to report on call wait and handling times, as well as call volumes.

Before the COVID-19 epidemic an automated survey mechanism was also in place to gain insights from clients about how well telephony services are being received. However, this service stopped on 23 March 2020 due to COVID-19 and the rapid move to home working, and did not resume during the following financial year.[1]

4.1.2 Applications – telephone, online and postal

Clients' immediate views and feelings on the process of applying for benefits, across telephone, online and postal applications have been gathered using embedded surveys.

For the current reporting period, this has taken the form of two client satisfaction questions. These questions are embedded within a questionnaire, which clients complete at the end of benefit applications.

For clients applying via postal application, the questionnaire is included in their application pack with a freepost envelope for returning both forms. For clients applying online, the questionnaire is available prior to submitting the application. For clients applying over the telephone, a client advisor takes the client through the questionnaire over the phone, prior to submitting their application.

Full application experience questions and response options are detailed in Annex A.

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[1] The telephony survey did not resume for the rest of the financial year due to the limited functionality of the telephony system during home working.

5. Findings

5.1 Client Insights – telephony contacts

From 23 March 2020 Social Security Scotland stopped receiving inbound phone calls due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid move to home working. On 2 April 2020 a temporary call-back system was put in place, where clients requested a client advisor to return their call.

Data for the call back service was recorded manually, and is not sufficiently accurate to include in this report.

From 4 July 2020 to 29 March 2021, there was a gradual return of Social Security Scotland's telephony service. During this period Social Security Scotland handled approximately 195,252 contacts by phone. 111,858 of these calls were received by Social Security Scotland (in-bound), while 83,394 were call-backs (out-bound).

From 30 March 2021 Social Security Scotland switched telephony systems. Data for these last two days of the financial year are not included in the report.

5.1.1 In-bound and out-bound calls handled between 4 July 2020 and 29 March 2021

A breakdown of the number of in-bound and out-bound calls handled during this period for each benefit is provided in the tables below. A more detailed presentation of this data, by benefit and by month, is included in Annex B.

In-bound calls handled, 4 July 2020 to 29 March 2021, by benefit					
	Total calls for all benefits	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant and Best Start Food	Funeral Support Payment	Young Carer Grant
Calls	111,858	11,980	57,388	15,800	2,270
	Job Start Payment	Scottish Child Payment	Child Winter Heating Assistance	General enquiries	
Calls	2,548	19,048	1,973	851	

Out-bound calls handled, 4 July 2020 to 29 March 2021, by benefit				
	Total calls for all benefits	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant and Best Start Food	Funeral Support Payment	Young Carer Grant
Calls	83,394	61	22,318	19,076	450
	Job Start Payment	Scottish Child Payment	Child Winter Heating Assistance	General enquiries	
Calls	3,353	0	553	37,583	

5.1.2 Call wait times

Between 4 July 2020 to 29 March 2021, the average time a caller waited before a call was answered was 10 minutes and 58 seconds across all benefit queues. This ranged from an average of 2 minutes and 50 seconds for Carers Allowance Supplement to an average of 15 minutes and 30 seconds for Scottish Child Payment.

Average call wait time, 4 July 2020 to 29 March 2021, by benefit	
Queue	Average waiting time (hours:minutes:seconds)
Best Start Grant	00:14:21
Carers Allowance Supplement	00:02:50
Child Winter Heating Assistance	00:07:42
Funeral Support Payment	00:02:14
General Enquiries	00:08:59
Job Start Payment	00:03:10
Scottish Child Payment	00:15:30
Young Carer Grant	00:03:41
All Queues	**00:10:58**

A more detailed presentation of this data, made divisible by benefit and by month, is included in Annex C.

5.1.3 Call lengths (handling times)

Due to limitations in the reporting functionality of the telephony service used between 4 July 2020 to 29 March 2021, accurate overall average handling times cannot be calculated for this period.

When taking a monthly average, the longest call lengths (total time a client was connected with a client advisor) were experienced by those who called with a general enquiry in the month of July (1 hour, 12 minutes and 16 seconds).

When taking a monthly average, the shortest call times were experienced by those who called in relation to Carer's Allowance Supplement in the month of November (5 minutes, 50 seconds).

The longest and shortest monthly average call lengths are presented in the chart below. A more detailed presentation of this data, made divisible by benefit and by month, is included in Annex D.
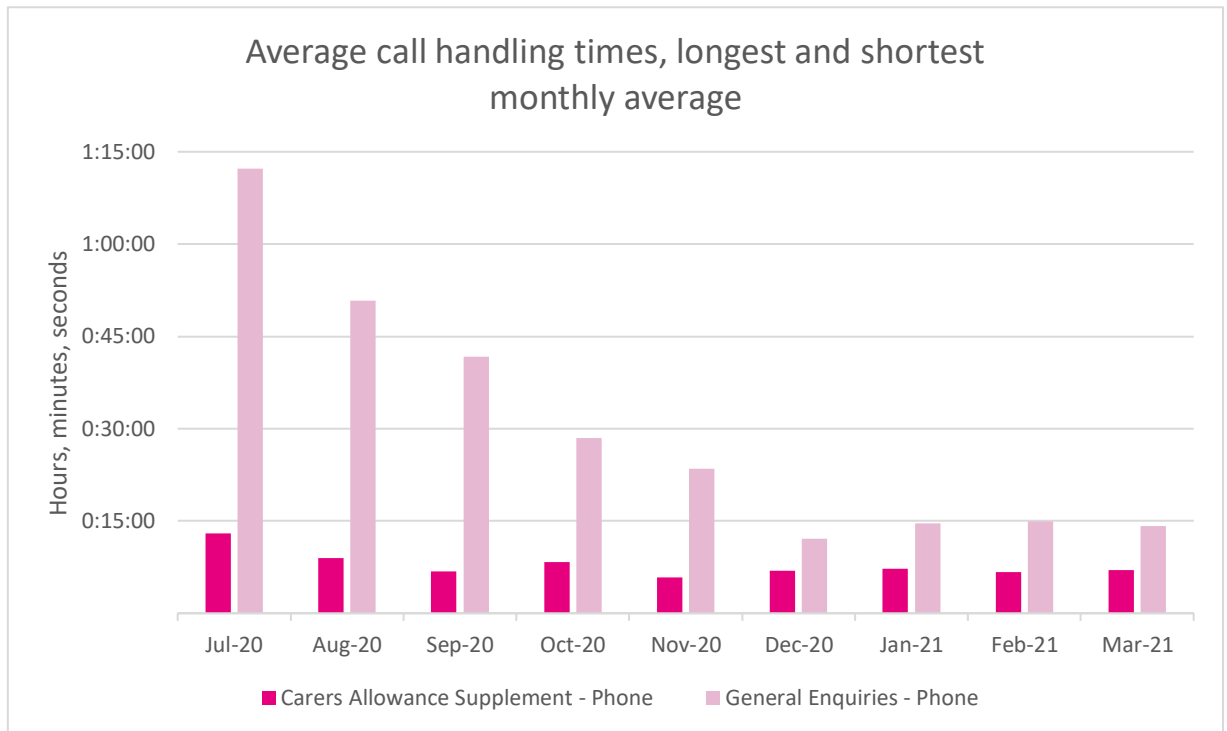
5.2 Client Insights – application contacts

From 1st April 2020 to the end of March 2021,118,545 applications for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods were received. More detail on Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods high level statistics have been published.

A comparison of the number of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods application contacts against the volume of insights data from April 2020 to end of March 2021 is provided in the table below.

Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods – Application contacts vs insights data April 20 to March 21+		
Number of telephony applications	Number of telephony feedback ratings	Number of telephony open text feedback responses
5,515*	2,099 (38%)	573 (10%)
Number of online applications	Number of online feedback ratings	Number of online open text feedback responses
110,500*	106,059 (96%)	2,985 (>1%)
Number of postal applications	Number of postal feedback ratings	Number of postal open text feedback responses*
2,440*	1,674 (69%)	105 (4%)

* a number of applications are categorised as 'unknown' channel. For more information refer to published statistics.

+ These figures include feedback ratings and responses from joint Best Start Grant and Scottish Child Payment applicants.

From April 2020 to end of March 2021, 8,685 applications for Funeral Support Payment were received. More detail on Funeral Support Payment high level statistics have been published.

A comparison of the number of Funeral Support Payment application contacts against the volume of insights data is provided in the table below.

Funeral Support Payment – Application contacts vs insights data April 20 to March 21		
Number of telephony applications	Number of telephony feedback ratings	Number of telephony open text feedback responses
2,845	1,490 (52%)	259 (9%)
Number of online applications	Number of online feedback ratings	Number of online open text feedback responses
5,350	5,048 (94%)	304 (6%)
Number of postal applications	Number of postal feedback ratings	Number of postal open text feedback responses
490	236 (48%)	20 (4%)

From April 2020 to end of March 2021, 3,375 applications for Young Carer Grant were received. More detail on Young Carer Grant high level statistics have been published.

A comparison of the number of Young Carer Grant application contacts against the volume of insights data is provided in the table below.

Young Carer Grant – Application contacts vs insights data April 20 to March 21		
Number of telephony applications	Number of telephony feedback ratings	Number of telephony open text feedback responses
90	48 (53%)	16 (35%)
Number of online applications	Number of online feedback ratings	Number of online open text feedback responses
3,250	3,163 (97%)	152 (5%)
Number of postal applications	Number of postal feedback ratings	Number of postal open text feedback responses[+]
35	16 (80%)	1 (5%)

From August 2020 to end of March 2021, 3,190 applications for Job Start Payment were received. More detail on Job Start Payment high level statistics have been published.

A comparison of the number of Job Start Payment application contacts against the volume of insights data is provided in the table below.

Job Start Payment – Application contacts vs insights data August 20 to March 21		
Number of telephony applications	Number of telephony feedback ratings	Number of telephony open text feedback responses
175	79 (45%)	35 (20%)
Number of online applications	Number of online feedback ratings	Number of online open text feedback responses
3005	2890 (96%)	122 (5%)
Number of postal applications	Number of postal feedback ratings	Number of postal open text feedback responses
10	5 (50%)	1 (10%)

From November 2020 to end of March 2021, 104,345 applications for Scottish Child Payment were received. More detail on Scottish Child Payment high level statistics have been published.

A comparison of the number of Scottish Child Payment application contacts against the volume of insights data is provided in the table below.

Scottish Child Payment – Application contacts vs insights data November 20 to March 21[+]		
Number of telephony applications	Number of telephony feedback ratings	Number of telephony open text feedback responses
4,495	1,355 (30%)	288 (6%)
Number of online applications	Number of online feedback ratings	Number of online open text feedback responses
98,495	93,804 (95%)	2145 (2%)
Number of postal applications	Number of postal feedback ratings	Number of postal open text feedback responses
1,200	438 (37%)	4 (0 %)

[+]These figures include feedback ratings and responses from joint Best Start Grant and Scottish Child Payment applicants.

5.3 Client insights - satisfaction following applications

Following postal, online and telephony applications, a questionnaire offers applicants the opportunity to make ratings on how the experience has been for them.
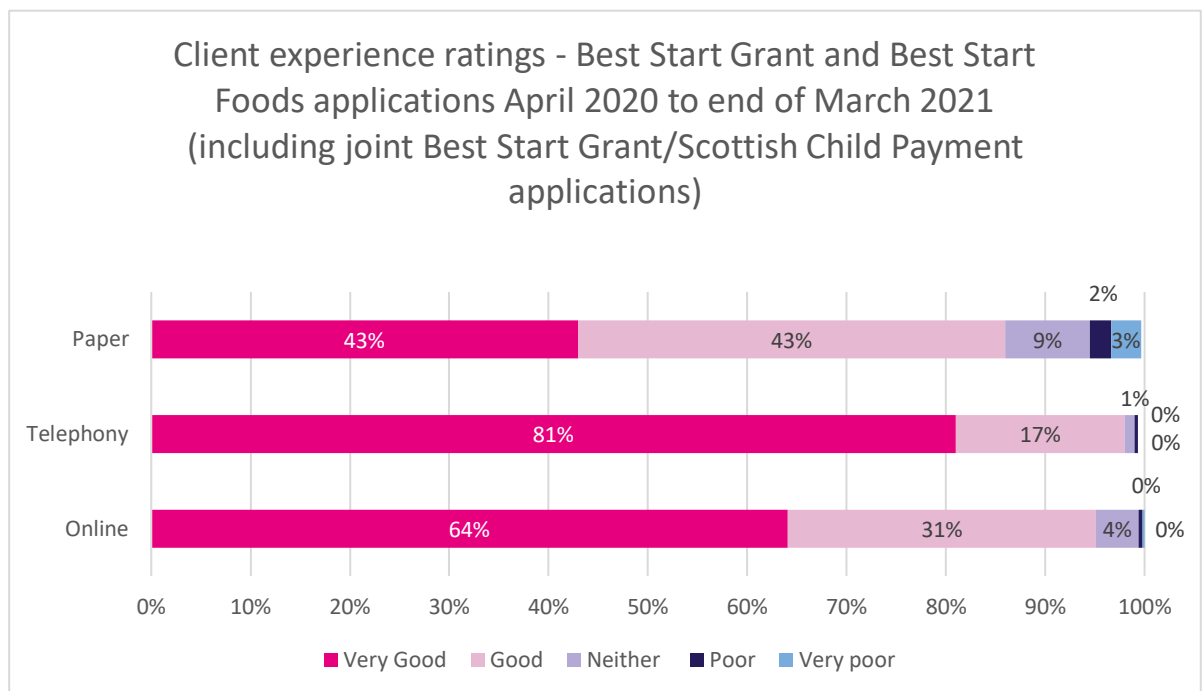
5.3.1 Experience ratings following Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications

109,832 clients left ratings following postal, online and telephony applications for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods between April 2020 and end of March 2021.

Of postal Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applicants who left a rating during this period, 86% rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For online Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applicants, 95% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For telephony Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applicants, 86% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

Client experience ratings - Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications April 2020 to end of March 2021 (including joint Best Start Grant/Scottish Child Payment applications)

Total number of ratings following a postal application: 1,674

Total number of ratings following a telephony application: 2,099

Total number of ratings following an online application: 106,059
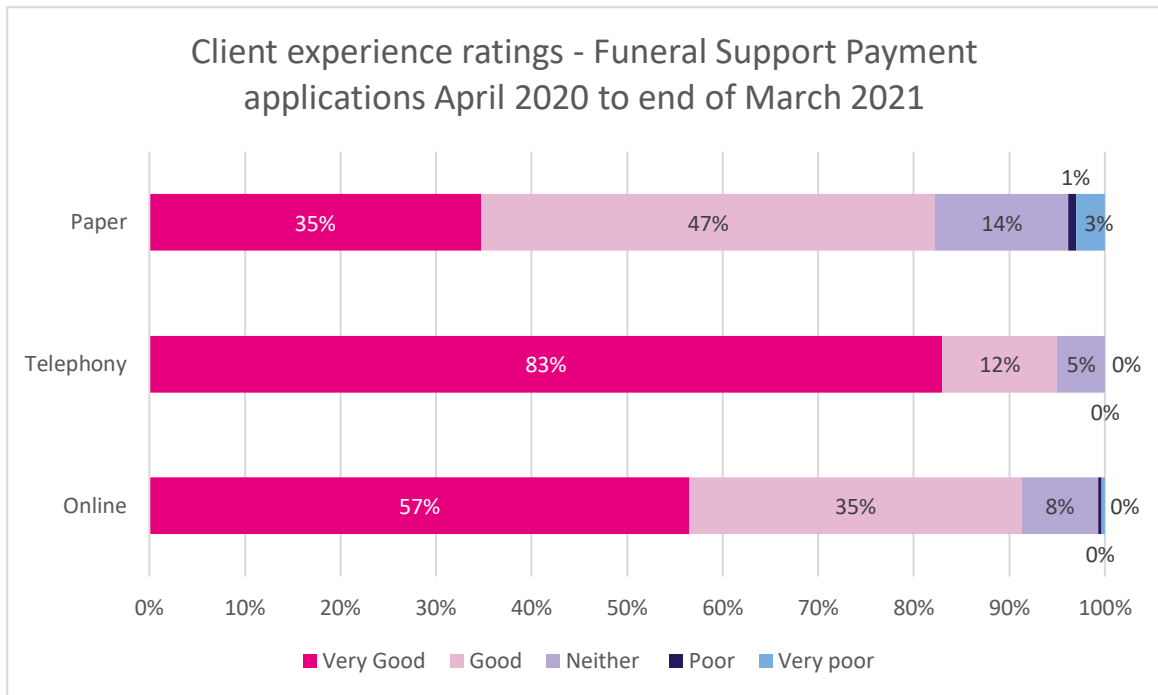
5.3.2 Experience ratings following Funeral Support Payment applications

6,774 applicants left experience ratings following a Funeral Support Payment application between April 2020 and end of March 2021.

Of postal Funeral Support Payment applicants who left a rating during this period, 82% rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For online Funeral Support Payment applicants, 92% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For telephony Funeral Support Payment applicants, 95% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

Client experience ratings - Funeral Support Payment applications April 2020 to end of March 2021

Total number of ratings following a postal application: 236

Total number of ratings following a telephony application: 1,490

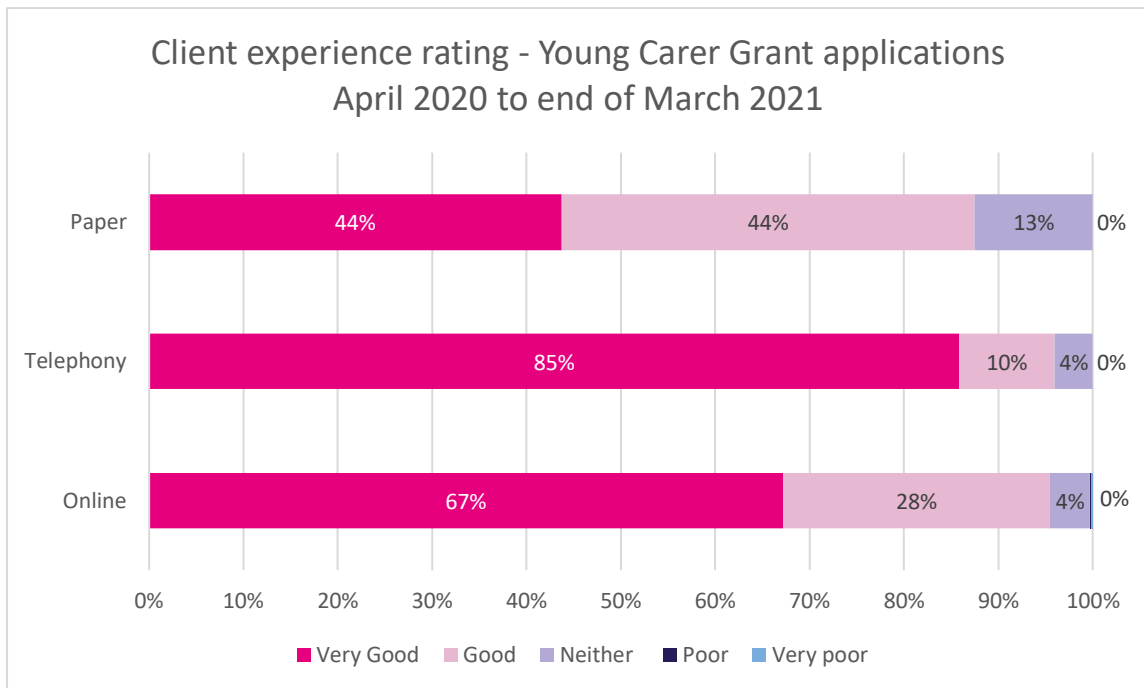Total number of ratings following an online application: 5,048

5.3.3 Experience ratings following Young Carer Grant applications

3,227 applicants left experience ratings following a Young Carer Grant application between October 2020 and end of March 2021.

For postal Young Carer Grant applicants, 88% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For online Young Carer Grant applicants, 95% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For telephony Young Carer Grant applicants, 95% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

Total number of ratings following a postal application: 16

Total number of ratings following a telephony application: 48

Total number of ratings following an online application: 3,163
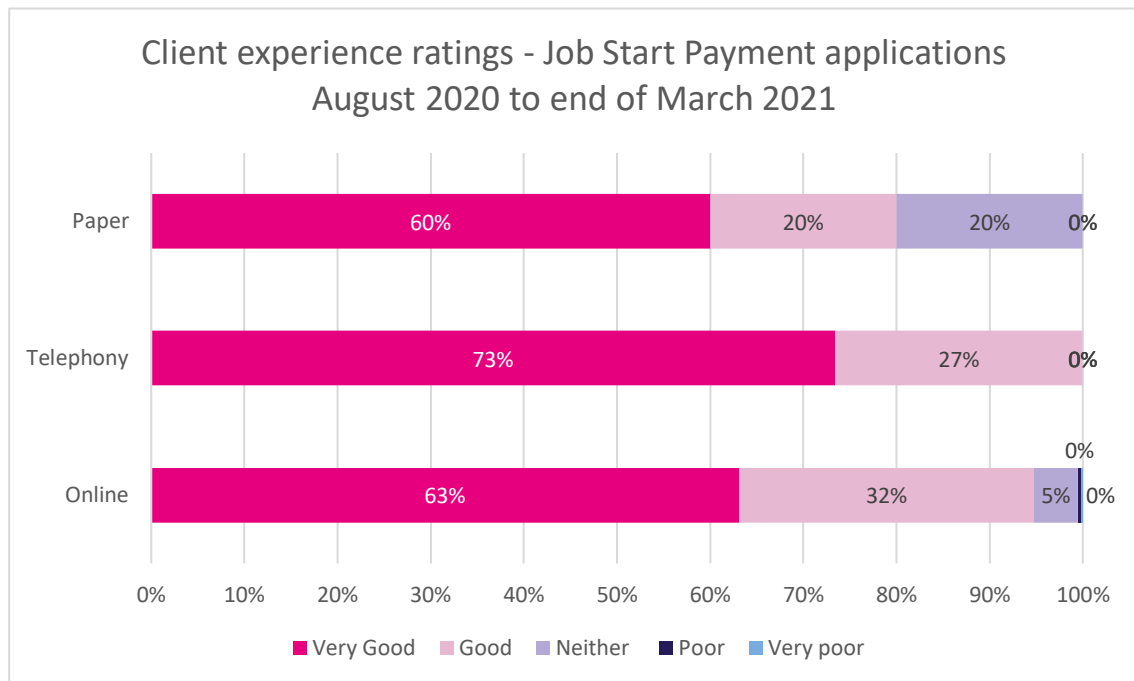
5.3.4 Experience ratings following Job Start Payment applications

2974 applicants left experience ratings following a Job Start Payment application between August 2020 and end of March 2021.

For postal Job Start Payment applicants, 80% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For online Job Start Payment applicants, 95% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For telephony Job Start Payment applicants, 100% rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

Client experience ratings - Job Start Payment applications
August 2020 to end of March 2021

Total number of ratings following a postal application: 5

Total number of ratings following a telephony application: 79

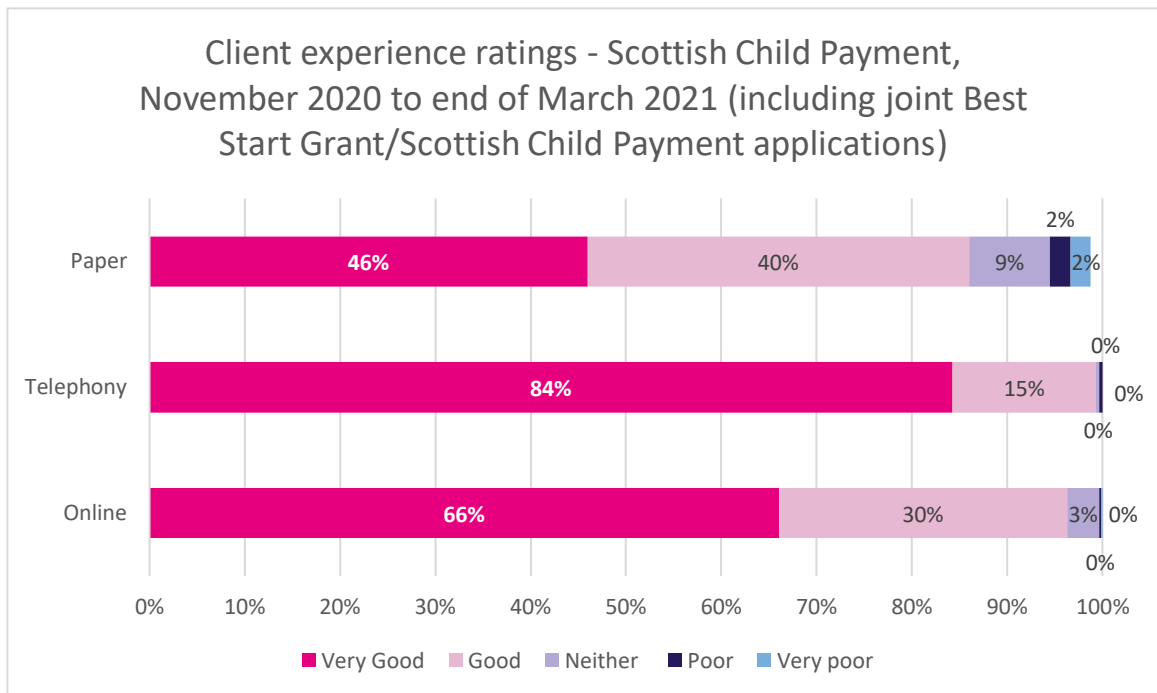Total number of ratings following an online application: 2,890

5.3.5 Experience ratings following Scottish Child Payment applications

95,597 applicants left experience ratings following a Scottish Child Payment application between November 2020 and end of March 2021.

Of postal Scottish Child Payment applicants who left a rating during this period, 86% rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For online Scottish Child Payment applicants, 96% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

For telephony Scottish Child Payment applicants, 99% of those who left a rating rated the service as 'Very good' or 'Good'.

Client experience ratings - Scottish Child Payment, November 2020 to end of March 2021 (including joint Best Start Grant/Scottish Child Payment applications)

	Very Good	Good	Neither	Poor	Very poor
Paper	46%	40%	9%	2%	2%
Telephony	84%	15%	0%	0%	0%
Online	66%	30%	3%	0%	0%

Total number of ratings following a postal application: 483

Total number of ratings following a telephony application: 1,355

Total number of ratings following an online application: 93,804

5.3.7 Open text responses

In addition to making a rating, clients have the opportunity to leave an open text comment about their application experience in response to the question "Is there any further feedback you would like to provide?".

5.3.8 Open text responses following Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications

Of those who applied for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods between April 2020 and the end of March 2021, 3,663 chose to answer the further feedback question. 2985 of those responses were made online, 573 were made by telephone, and 105 were postal.

Negative responses fell into four broad categories: issues with the application form, applicants expressing dissatisfaction about the service they have

received, applicants not receiving a decision after applying, and making suggestions for service improvement.

Neutral responses commonly expressed that applicants had no further comments, or they commented on matters not related to Best Start Grant and Best Start Food application. Others were making suggestions for service improvement.

Mixed responses focused on issues with the application form, as well as applicants suggesting improvements to the service. Applicants also wanted more information about Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods.

Positive responses left by clients fell into three broad categories: applicants finding the form easy to fill in, applicants agreeing with Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods policy and applicants being happy with the service they received.

Of those who applied for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods between April 2020 and March 2021, 3,663 chose to answer the further feedback question following applications. 66% responses were positive and 10% of responses were negative. 13% of responses were mixed while 11% were neutral.

Some illustrative examples of each classification are provided below.

Category	Example
Negative response	"When applying for food vouchers I don't think my gender ethnicity or religion make a difference" "I have already applied online, but you sent me the letter to apply again for some missing info, but what missing info was there? !" "It seems a long way round having to send hard copies of mat b form when they could easily be sent online to the necessary department" "[Name redacted] is due to start school in August, based on his date of birth. This has been deferred due to him having autism. He isn't near ready to apply for school. Having to apply this year because next year he will be too old to qualify. There isn't enough support for parents with kids being deferred."
Neutral response	"Just ok Thank you" "I don't have any feedback. Thanks"

Category	Example
Mixed response	"the equality questions at the end need to be removed there is no purpose to which to have these stated To apply is simple and easy however but it takes you so long to respond which can be annoying" "I struggled with knowing what to tick because I get confused with questions but did my best but I do like the click and go system"
Positive response	"I think the Scottish government are doing a wonderful job in helping children in poverty Applications are straightforward and processed quickly Also the customer service team are friendly and efficient Thank you" "I found this application pretty easy to fill out as I am dyslexic I find it hard to fill out applications but this one was pretty easy" "Thanks to client advisor for phoning back during a very difficult time and making life a little less stressful"

5.3.9 Open text responses following Funeral Support Payment applications

Of those who applied for Funeral Support Payment between April 2020 and the end of March 2021, 583 chose to answer the further feedback question. 304 of these responses were made online, 259 by phone and 20 by post.

Negative responses fell into three broad categories: applicants expressing dissatisfaction with being asked equalities questions at the end of the application, applicants being unhappy with the service they received, and applicants having issues with the application form.

Most neutral responses commented on topics not related to Funeral Support Payment application. Others had no further comments.

Mixed responses requested more information on Funeral Support Payment and suggested improvements for the service.

Positive responses left by clients fell into two broad categories: applicants finding the form easy to fill in and applicants being happy with the service they received.

Of those who applied for Funeral Support Payment between April 2020 and March 2021, 583 chose to answer the further feedback question following applications. The majority of these were positive (72%) with 11% of responses negative, 11% neutral and 5% of responses mixed. Some illustrative examples of each classification are provided below.[2]

Category	Example
Negative response	"I feel that it is a bit insensitive being asked to fill in a survey under these circumstances" "I have applied already for this payment and a woman phoned me she said I wasn't on universal credit and she shut down my claim obviously at that point I was an emotional wreck and felt as though she bullied me" "Awful number of questions, surely this can be downsized? Triple checked questions but I will be told that I've missed something?"
Neutral response	The funeral will take place on [date]" "Nothing to add"
Mixed response	"Some of the questions are just yes/no. Would be good to have a comments box per question as some things are not straight forward to answer" "Some information on how the award is worked out would be informative I thought that I needed the invoice before I could apply but I haven't been asked for a breakdown of costs"
Positive response	"Every question and the format for applying was straight forward" "Don't think there is anything to improve. Thank you to my adviser for putting a smile on my face"

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[2] Where percentages do not add to 100% these figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

5.3.10 Open text responses following Young Carer Grant applications

Of those who applied for Young Carer Grant between April 2020 and the end of March 2021, 169 chose to answer the further feedback question. 152 of these responses were made online, 16 by phone and 1* by post.[3]

Negative responses focused on applicants not receiving a response after applying, and issues with the application form.

Most neutral responses commented on topics not directly related to Young Carer Grant application, or expressed that applicants had no further comments.

Mixed responses focused on suggested improvements for the application form.

Most positive responses fell into three broad categories: applicants found the application form easy to fill in, applicants were pleased with the service they received from Social Security Scotland, and applicants agreed with Young Carer Grant policy.

Of those who applied for Young Carer Grant between April 2020 and March 2021, 169 chose to answer the further feedback question following applications. The majority of these were positive (75%), with 7% of responses negative. 4% of responses were mixed while 14% were neutral. Some illustrative examples of each classification are provided below.

Category	Example
Negative response	"3rd application submitted today but I have not received any response" "I tried to enter an email address that ended in org.uk however this was not accepted as it came up as invalid"
Neutral response	"I support my mum around the house and at night when she's in bed if she needs anything" "prefer not to say"
Mixed response	"Very easy process so far I love the layout of the website maybe have some toggle buttons at bottom for Dyslexia Font or High contrast options" "The application process is very easy however I did not know about this grant until recently and only found out

[3] * Figures on a small number of applications for the 2020-2021 financial year were suppressed for disclosure control.

Category	Example
	about it by accident I don't think it is very well publicised"
Positive response	"I found this really easy and I didn't get too nervy filling it in" "They were very helpful when I needed too phone when I applied in the past as I had a lot of things going on they helped me every step of the way" "SSS are doing a fantastic job supporting families"

5.3.11 Open text responses following Job Start Payment applications

Of those who applied for Job Start Payment between August 2020 and March 2021, 158 chose to answer the further feedback question. 122 of those responses were made online, 35 were made by telephone, and 1* was postal.[4]

Negative responses fell into two broad categories: applicant dissatisfaction with the method for providing evidence, and applicants having issues with the online application form.

Most neutral responses fell into three broad categories: applicants giving suggestions for service improvement, applicants expressing that they had no further comments, and applicants commenting on topics not related to Job Start Payment application.

Mixed responses were made that focused on issues with the application form and telephone helpline, but also the relative ease with which these issues were overcome.

Positive responses left by clients fell into three broad categories: applicants expressing they were happy with the service they received, the ease of the online application form, and agreement with Social Security Scotland policy for the provision of Job Start Payment.

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[4] * Some figures for the 2020-2021 financial year were suppressed for disclosure control.

Of those who applied for Job Start Payment between August 2020 and March 2021, 158 chose to answer the further feedback question following applications. The majority of these were positive (69%) with 11% of responses negative, 19% neutral and 2% of responses mixed. Some illustrative examples of each classification are provided below.[5]

Category	Example
Negative response	"The online app did not work, the site may need an update" "It was difficult finding the application in the first place" "There wasn't an option in the application to upload a copy of my job offer or contract of employment which I was advised would be required"
Neutral response	"It would be useful if you could save the form and return to complete it at a later date I was unable to get all of the contact information I needed for my employer originally and the form timed out meaning that I had to start the process again from the beginning. No big deal just a suggestion" "Suggest adding Caucasian with white etc"
Mixed response	"First time calling was waiting for a long time but got through fine the second time." "My mum help me do the application but was not too bad"
Positive response	"Your site is really straight forward and well explained I cannot think of anything that would need to be made better" "Thank you for this opportunity for us young ones we often get left behind and lockdown has been so difficult I tried so hard to find a job and this grant will be so helpful" "Client advisor was helpful and pleasant"

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[5] Where percentages do not add to 100% this is because figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

5.3.12 Open text responses following Scottish Child Payment applications

Of those who applied for Scottish Child Payment between November 2020 and March 2021, 2,437 chose to answer the further feedback question. 2145 of those responses were made online, 288 were made by telephone, and 4 were postal.

Negative responses fell into four broad categories: applicant disagreeing with the equalities questionnaire, applicants having issues with the online application form, applicants wanting more information about Scottish Child Payment and applicants not receiving a decision after applying.

Most neutral responses fell into three broad categories: applicants giving suggestions for service improvement, applicants having no further comments, and applicants commenting on topics not related to Scottish Child Payment application.

Mixed responses made by applicants focused on issues with the equalities questionnaire, while others wanted more information on the Scottish Child Payment.

Positive responses left by clients fell into three broad categories: applicants expressing they were happy with the service they received, they were happy with ease of the application process, and agreed with Social Security Scotland policy for the provision of Scottish Child Payment.

Of those who applied for Scottish Child Payment between November 2020 and March 2021, 2,437 chose to answer the further feedback question following applications. The majority of these were positive (73%) with 10% of responses negative, 11% neutral and 3% of responses mixed. Some illustrative examples of each classification are provided below.

Category	Example
Negative response	"I really don't understand why my sexual orientation whether I am trans etc is relevant to a benefit to benefit my child" "Why does it say kids under 16 qualify however website is saying under 6" "I have applied for the pregnancy grant away back at the beginning of September and have had no one contact me with info on what's going on with that and I've had my baby he's 8 weeks old now"
Neutral response	"NA" "Many thanks for your efforts. I would prefer if you set up a system that enables the applicant to create an account in

Category	Example
	order to check their information regularly for example in case of moving the applicant can change their address easily by their account"
Mixed response	"It was hard to find this process I was directed to my local authority The process is straightforward once you find it" "I wish all online applications were as simple straight forward and easy as this The only down side to this which is like all other benefits I know of it is not made known that it is available and I only found out I could apply for this by chance" "It's very straight forward I think you could improve by not asking so many very personal questions that have nothing to do with applications"
Positive response	"CA very helpfully - explained very clearly what SCP was about this helping with the anxiety of calling" "this help everyone day to day especially struggling families helping people in Scotland get by when they wouldn't otherwise" "The application process was really easy to follow and not super complicated"

5.3.13 Open text responses following joint Best Start Grant/Foods and Scottish Child Payment applications

Of those who applied for joint Best Start Grant/Foods and Scottish Child Payment between November 2020 and March 2021, 219 chose to answer the further feedback question. 181 of those responses were made by telephone, and 38 were postal. Data is not available for those who applied online.

Negative responses fell into four broad categories: applicants having issues with the online application form, applicants making suggestions for improvement, and long call wait times.

Most neutral responses fell into three broad categories: applicants expressing that they had no further comments, applicants giving suggestions for service improvement, and applicants commenting on topics not related to Best Start Grant/Foods and Scottish Child Payment application.

Mixed responses made by applicants largely focused on issues with the call and/or application wait time, and good service provision.

Positive responses left by clients fell into two broad categories: applicants expressing they were happy with the service they received, and the ease of the application process.

Of those who applied for joint Best Start Grant/Foods and Scottish Child Payment between November 2020 and March 2021, 219 chose to answer the further feedback question following applications. The majority of these were positive (64%) with 12% of responses negative, 22% neutral and 2% of responses mixed. Some illustrative examples of each classification are provided below.

Category	Example
Negative response	"My partners experience not good when applying" "The prolonged waiting time on the phone. Was in queue for 35 minutes" "Double check your letters so they make sense before they are issued"
Neutral response	"None" "Gave me the giggles" "Improve the online forms"
Mixed response	"I think it was easier to do the application over the phone than on line as I got an explanation from the advisor. I found the online option complicated to access" "Really liked the process. My first application was not dealt with quick"
Positive response	"Straightforward and very clear" "I would like to say thanks and that CA has provided the best service to me over the phone and also she informed me about SCP the benefit which I was not aware of. So it has been a great help"

6. References

1) https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-security/engagement-on-social-security/

2) https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/our-charter

3) https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland---workforce-information-march-2021/

10. Annex A – Application experience survey content

About your experience with Social Security Scotland

10 Overall, how would you rate the service provided by Social Security Scotland e.g. in making your application?

1 ☐ 1 – Very poor   2 ☐ 2 – Poor   3 ☐ 3 – Neither poor nor good

4 ☐ 4 – good   5 ☐ 5 – Very good

11 Is there any further feedback you would like provide?

10. Annex B – Calls handled, in-bound and outbound

In-bound calls handled between July 2020 to March 2021									
Queue	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Best Start Grant	7,786	7,730	8,484	6,728	6,974	5,334	5,084	4,830	4,438
Carers Allowance Supplement	1,471	697	695	746	1,615	3,813	1,575	768	600
Child Winter Heating Assistance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	146	1,314	259	188	66
Funeral Support Payment	1,487	1,595	1,634	1,496	1,957	1,683	1,803	2,025	2,120
General Enquiries	32	25	24	95	175	158	137	102	103
Job Start Payment	n/a	224	511	370	456	249	199	255	284
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,525	1,678	2,348	5,450	7,047
Young Carer Grant	215	212	207	157	312	391	272	258	246

Out-bound calls handled between July 2020 and March 2021									
Queue per benefit	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Best Start Grant	967	2,521	3,741	5,159	4,806	2,375	595	952	1,202
Carers Allowance Supplement	12	3	4	4	n/a	3	8	4	23
Child Winter Heating Assistance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	417	113	23	n/a
Funeral Support Payment	1,485	2,073	2,128	2,068	2,091	1,849	2,433	2,360	2,589
General Enquiries	1,335	1,957	1,562	110	1,109	3,837	6,985	9,024	11,664
Job Start Payment	n/a	188	393	449	553	493	445	336	496
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Young Carer Grant	171	186	44	25	8	6	5	1	4

In-bound calls handled between July 2020 to March 2021 for Child Winter Heating Assistance, Funeral Support Payment, General Enquiries and Job Start Payment

Legend: Child Winter Heating Assistance, Funeral Support Payment, General Enquiries, Job Start Payment
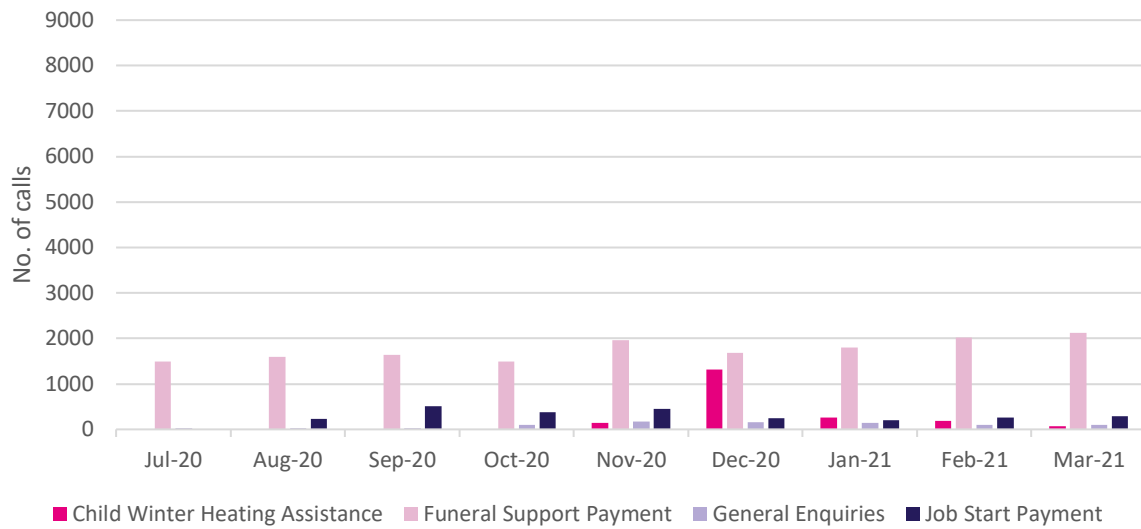
In-bound calls handled between July 2020 to March 2021 for Young Carer Grant, Best Start Grant, Carers Allowance Supplement and Scottish Child Payment

Legend: Young Carer Grant, Best Start Grant, Carers Allowance Supplement, Scottish Child Payment
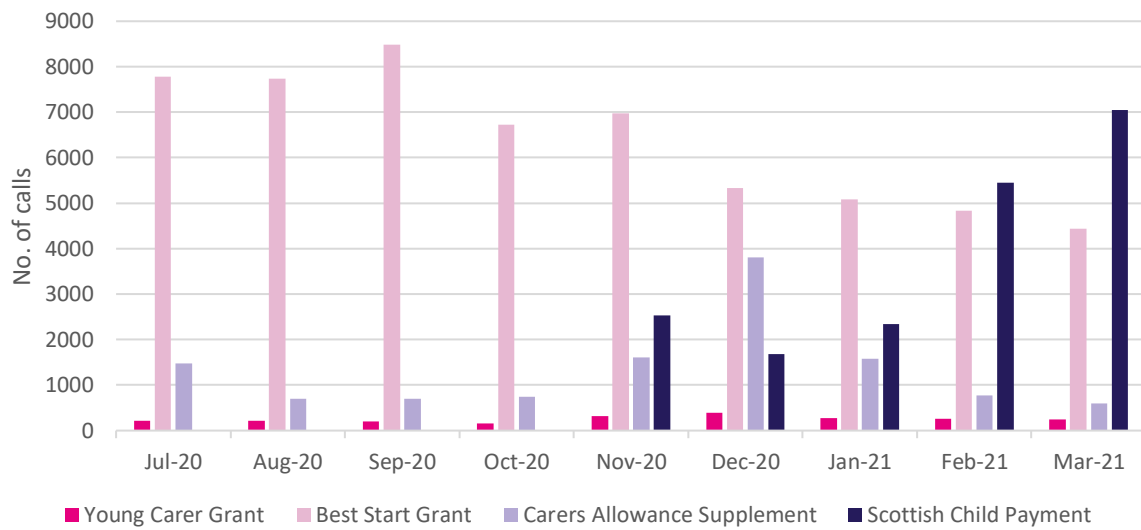
Out-bound calls handled between July 2020 to March 2021 for Best Start Grant, General Enquiries and Funeral Support Payment
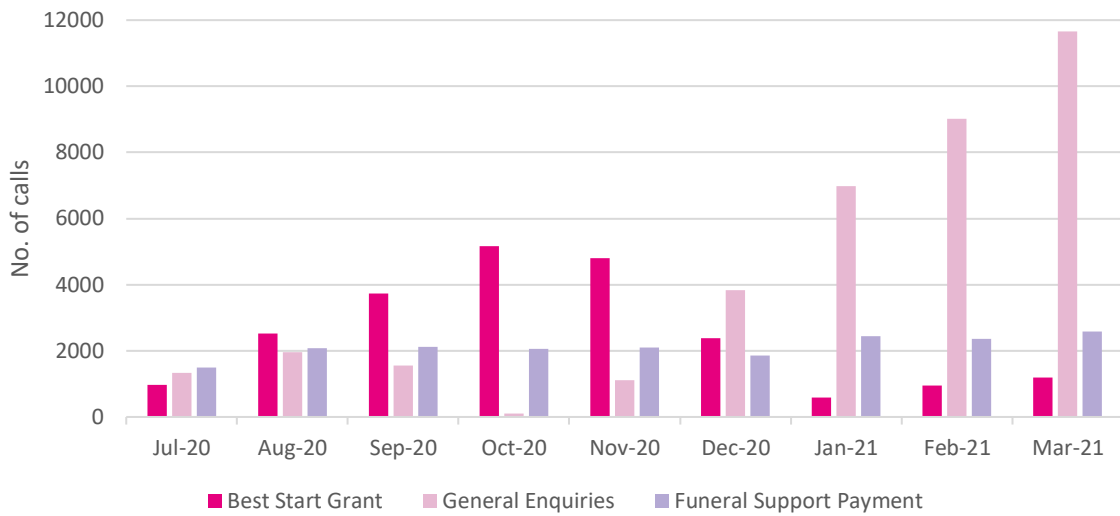
Out-bound calls handled between July 2020 to March 2021 for Child Winter Heating Assistance, Job Start Payment, Carers Allowance Supplement and Young Carer Grant
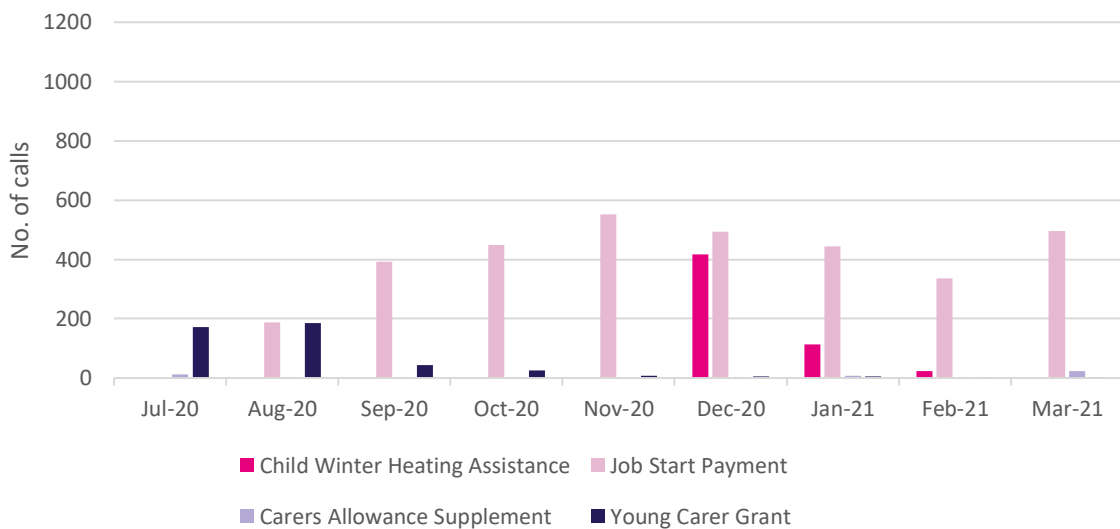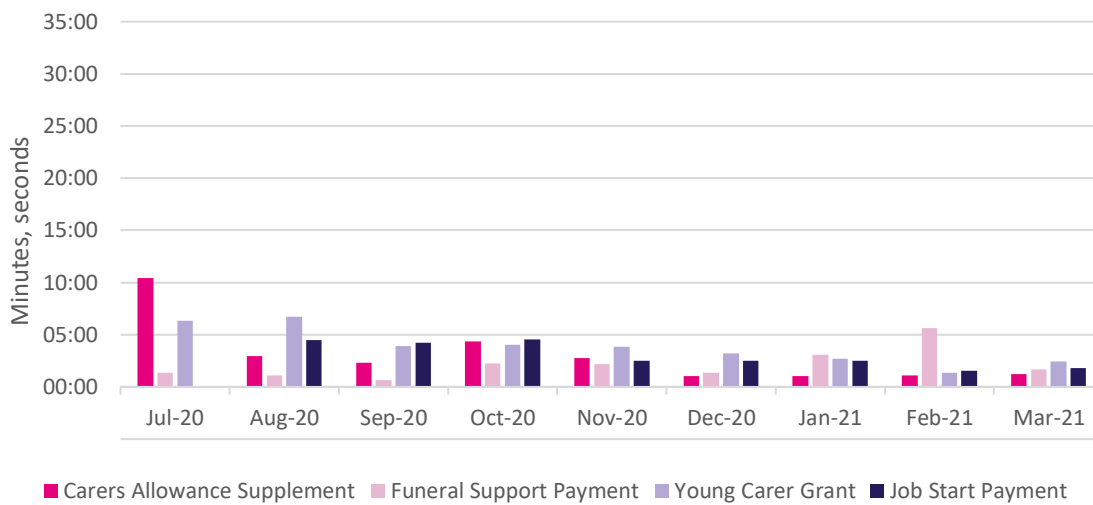
11. Annex C – Average call wait times, per month per benefit

Average monthly call wait times by telephony queue between July 2020 and March 2021									
Queue per benefit	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Best Start Grant	25:21	32:48	11:21	02:36	01:44	06:15	06:27	15:44	23:27
Carers Allowance Supplement	10:27	02:59	02:20	04:22	02:47	01:02	01:01	01:07	01:14
Child Winter Heating Assistance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	07:04	07:01	04:38	12:33	20:38
Funeral Support Payment	01:22	01:05	00:39	02:16	02:11	01:22	03:05	05:37	01:42
General Enquiries	27:00	33:33	09:29	02:11	02:13	04:34	05:53	15:09	19:41
Job Start Payment	n/a	04:31	04:13	04:35	02:30	02:32	02:32	01:34	01:50
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	02:41	05:23	06:18	17:53	23:44
Young Carer Grant	06:19	06:42	03:56	04:03	03:52	03:13	02:41	01:20	02:28

Monthly average call wait time for Best Start Grant, Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Assistance and General Enquiries


Legend: Best Start Grant, Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Assistance, General Enquiries
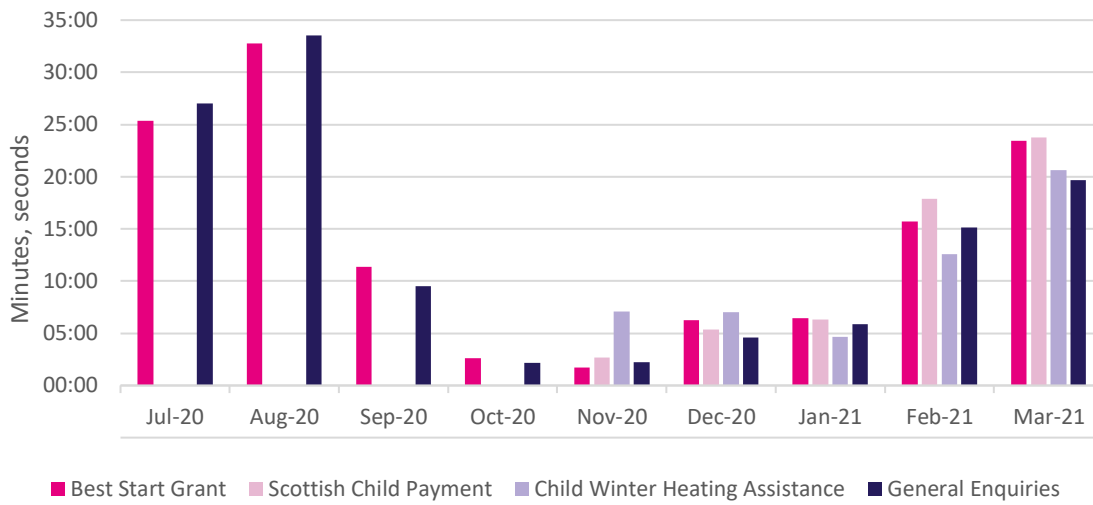
Monthly average call wait time for Carers Allowance Supplement, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant and Job Start Payment
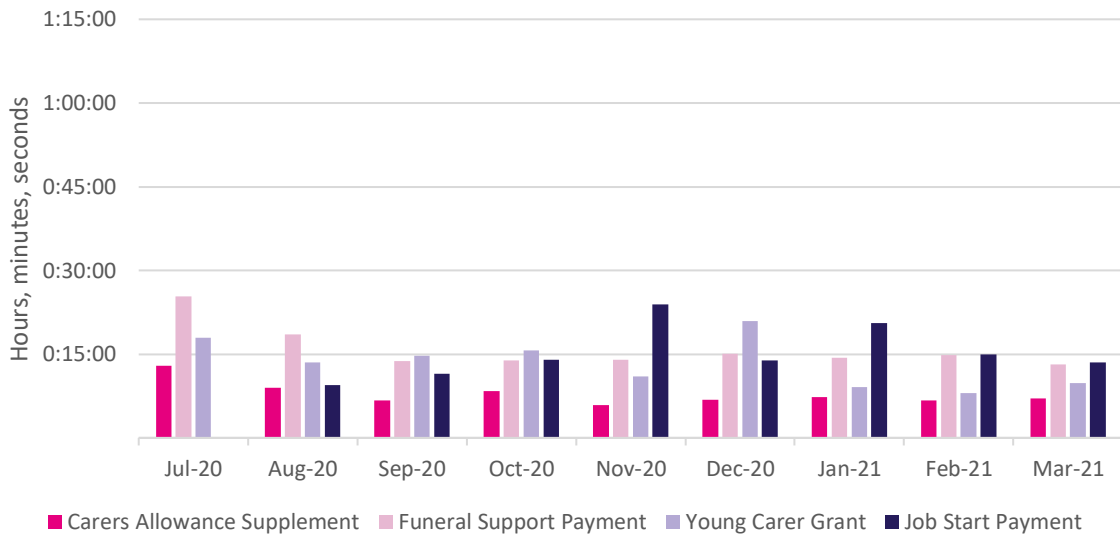

Legend: Carers Allowance Supplement, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment

10. Annex D – Average call handling times, per month per benefit

Average monthly handling times by telephony queue between July 2020 and March 2021									
Queue per benefit	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Best Start Grant	00:17:31	00:23:40	00:23:31	00:27:11	00:16:45	00:12:53	00:11:38	00:12:16	00:11:15
Carers Allowance Supplement	00:12:56	00:09:00	00:06:45	00:08:21	00:05:50	00:06:53	00:07:16	00:06:44	00:07:03
Child Winter Heating Assistance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	00:07:13	00:10:50	00:15:04	00:15:44	00:08:57
Funeral Support Payment	00:25:18	00:18:30	00:13:44	00:13:54	00:14:02	00:15:04	00:14:24	00:14:52	00:13:10
General Enquiries	01:12:16	00:50:45	00:41:42	00:28:27	00:23:29	00:12:09	00:14:35	00:14:55	00:14:12
Job Start Payment	n/a	00:09:25	00:11:27	00:13:58	00:23:56	00:13:55	00:20:33	00:14:57	00:13:28
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	00:14:41	00:10:40	00:11:07	00:10:04	00:09:10
Young Carer Grant	00:17:58	00:13:28	00:14:45	00:15:40	00:11:01	00:20:58	00:09:04	00:07:58	00:09:51

Average call handling times by Telephony Queue for Best Start Grant/Foods, Scottish Child Payment, Child Winter Heating Assistance and General Enquiries
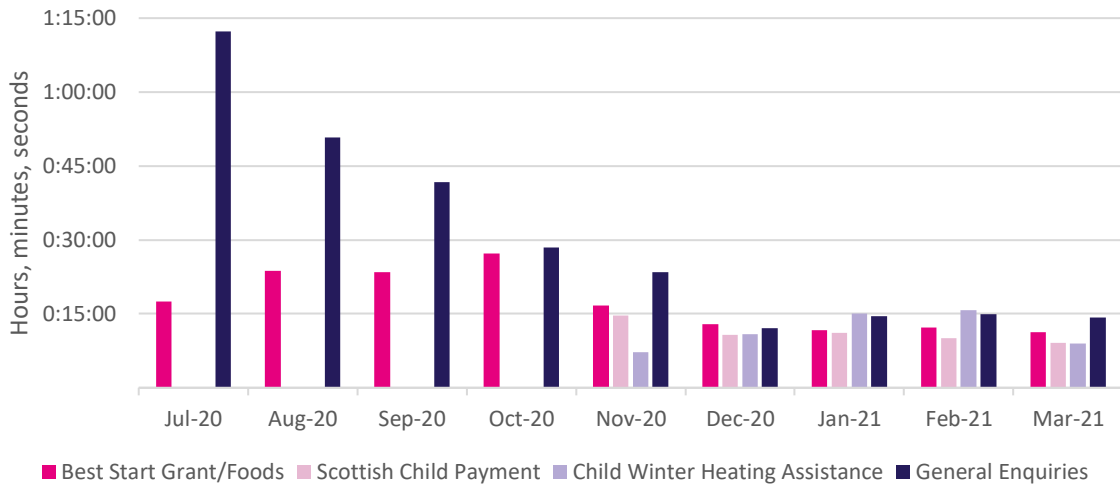
Average Handling Times by Telephony Queue for Carers Allowance Supplement, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant and Job Start Payment