

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

## Social Security Scotland Statistics

# Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 31 December 2023

### Key figures

- In the 2023/24 financial year to date, covering April 2023 to December 2023:
- 38,725 applications were received for Scottish Child Payment. 51,125 applications were processed, of which 70% were authorised, 28% were denied and the remaining 2% were withdrawn **[Table 1]**.
- the average (median) processing time was 14 working days **[Table 5]**.
- £324.6 million had been paid to clients by 31 December 2023 for Scottish Child Payment, taking the total value issued to clients since the benefit launched on 15 February 2021 to £573.2 million **[Table 6]**.
- As of 31 December 2023, 327,650 children aged 0-15 years were actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment **[Table 9]**. This is an increase of 4,335 from the previous figure (323,315) as of 30 September 2023, which was driven by a rise in the number of children aged six to 15.

### Frequency of publications

The next publication, covering up to 31 March 2024, will be released in May 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 is found online at: <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

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

# Introduction

Scottish Child Payment was initially introduced for low-income families with children aged under six. The payment was extended to eligible low-income families with children aged under 16 on 14 November 2022. It is intended to provide regular, additional financial support for families already in receipt of qualifying benefits to assist with the costs of caring for a child.

This publication includes statistics on applications and payments for Scottish Child Payment from 9 November 2020 to 31 December 2023. This publication also provides information on the number of clients and children in receipt of Scottish Child Payment.

As part of the continuous improvement of our outputs, a new table (Table 13) have been added. Table 13 reflects the number of children actively benefitting on 31 December 2023 by both local authority area and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 (quintile).

The number of children actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment broken down by intermediate zone (2011) and child age-band (0-4; 5-11; 12-15; overall) is available on [Scottish Government's Open Data Platform](#).

If you have any comments or suggestions that you would like to provide us around these changes or other developments, please email [MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot](mailto:MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot).

All tables and charts referred to within this publication can be found at <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications/statistics/statistics-collections>

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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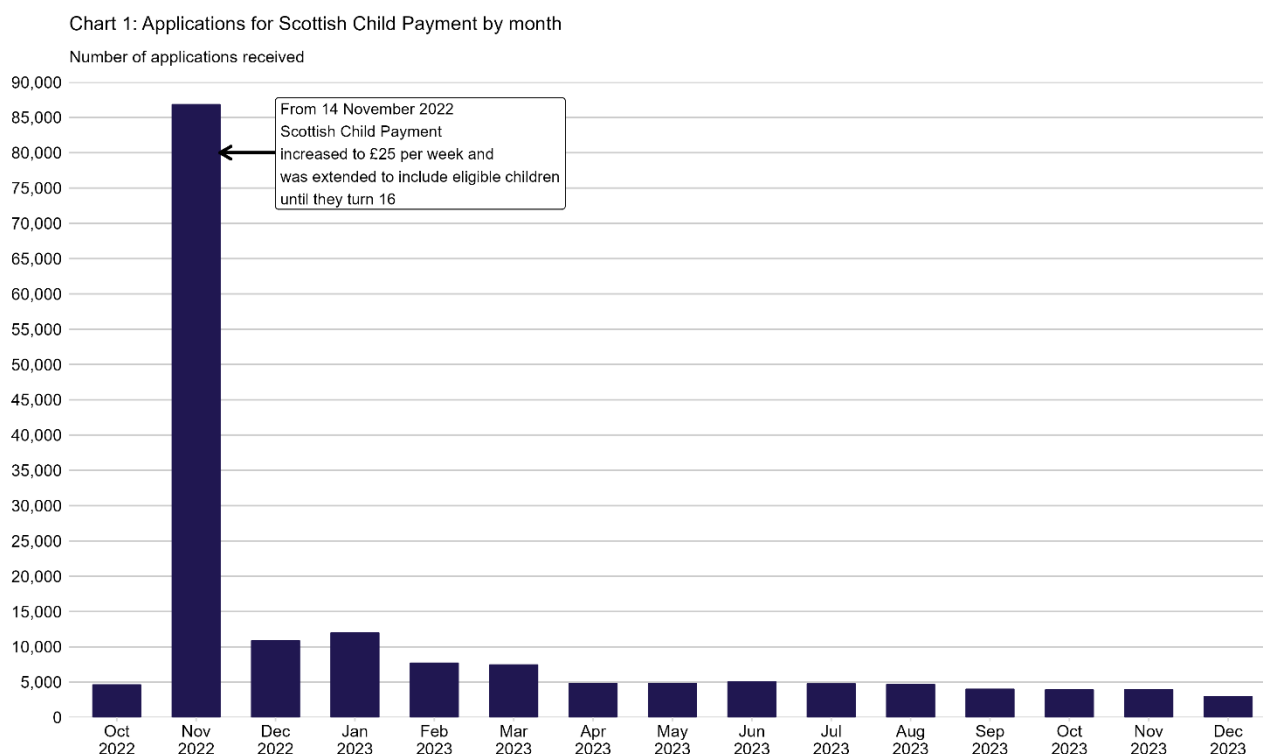
<sup>3</sup> For more information on official statistics in development please see:

<https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/types-of-official-statistics/>

# Main findings

## Applications by month

- Overall, 357,730 applications were received up until 31 December 2023, with 38,725 of these being received in the 2023/24 financial year to date [Table 1].
- Within the latest three months, 3,885 applications were received in October 2023, 3,925 in November and 2,930 in December [Table 1, Chart 1].
- In total, 355,395 applications had been processed as of 31 December 2023, of which 51,125 were processed within the 2023/24 financial year to date. Of the applications processed in the latest financial year, 70% were authorised, 28% were denied and the remaining 1% were withdrawn [Table 1].
- For more information on how applications were handled before the official launch of Scottish Child Payment, see the [Application authorisation and payment](#) section of the background notes.



## Application by channel (method of application)

- Around 92% of applications received by 31 December 2023 were made online and 7% were made through a telephone application. A small proportion of applications were made through paper application and other channels [Table 2].

## Applications by age of applicant

- Around 86% of applications were made by people aged 18 to 44 in the 2023/24 financial year to date. Around 12% of applications were made by people aged 45 or over, and 1% were made by people under 18 **[Table 3]**.

## Applications by local authority area

- In the 2023/24 financial year to date, applications were received from people living in all 32 local authority areas in Scotland. The highest number of applications were 6,300 from Glasgow City, 3,025 from North Lanarkshire, and 2,905 from Fife. **[Table 4]**.
- While the percentage of processed applications authorised in 2023/24 to date was 70% overall, this varied between local authority area, ranging from the lowest at 59% in Na h-Eileanan Siar to the highest at 76% in Clackmannanshire **[Table 4]**.
- More information on deriving the local authorities for applications can be found in the [Geography](#) section.

## Processing Times

- The median average<sup>4</sup> processing times remained 6 working days in December 2023 from September 2023. For the applications processed in the 2023/24 financial year to date, the median average processing time was 14 working days **[Table 5]**.
- Processing times were calculated by determining the time between an application being received and a decision being made or the application being withdrawn. This includes the time spent waiting to receive evidence from clients, but does not include additional time to make payments.
- 'Straight-through Processing' was introduced on 14 November 2022. This allows certain applications which meet a specific set of criteria to be automatically passed to the payment approval stage.
- For more information on Straight-through processing and how processing times for any applications processed are calculated, see the [Processing time](#) section of the background notes.

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<sup>4</sup> The median average is the middle value of an ordered dataset, or the point at which half of the values are higher and half of the values are lower.

## Payments and clients (parents or carers) paid

- Between 15 February 2021 and 31 December 2023, the value of Scottish Child Payments issued was around £573.2 million, with £324.6 million paid out in the 2023/24 financial year to date **[Table 6]**.
- At local authority area level, the highest total value of payments made to clients in the 2023/24 financial year to date was in Glasgow City at £52.3 million, followed by Fife at £24.9 million and North Lanarkshire at £24.4 million **[Table 7]**.
- By the end of December 2023, Social Security Scotland had issued almost 4.4 million payments to 209,960 individual clients **[Table 6, Table 8]**.
- In the 2023/24 financial year to date, 198,890 individual clients received at least one Scottish Child Payment **[Table 8]**.

## Children and client caseload

- In total, 327,650 children aged 0-15 years were actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment as of 31 December 2023. Of those children, around 70% were aged six to 15 and the rest were aged under six **[Table 9, Table 11]**.
- At local authority area level, the highest number of children as of December 2023 was in Glasgow City at 52,900 (16%), followed by Fife at 25,200 (8%) and North Lanarkshire at 24,720 (8%) **[Table 10]**.
- As of 31 December 2023, a total of 189,005 clients were actively in receipt of Scottish Child Payment. Of those 189,005 clients, around 84% were aged 18 to 44, 17% were aged 45 or over, and less than 1% were made by people under 18 **[Table 14]**.
- Information on how caseload figures are calculated can be found in the [Methodology and definitions](#) section of the background notes.

## Re-determinations and appeals

- In the 2023/24 financial year to date, 1,355 re-determinations were requested by 31 December 2023. **[Table 15]**.
- By 31 December 2023, 3,105 re-determinations requests were received since the launch of Scottish Child Payment. This represents around 0.9% of all applications processed. In total, 2,990 re-determination requests had been decided. Of these, 1,605 (54%) were allowed or partially allowed, 1,250 (42%) were disallowed, and 135 (4%) were withdrawn **[Table 15]**.

- The median average response time for re-determinations that were completed in the 2023/24 financial year to date was 11 working days **[Table 15]**.
- In total, around 105 appeals were received by 31 December 2023, and 50 appeals were completed by 31 December 2023. Of the appeals the tribunal have considered, 30 (65%) cases were not upheld in the clients' favour, whilst 15 (35%) cases were upheld in the clients' favour **[Table 16]**.

# Background to Scottish Child Payment

As a result of the Scotland Act 2016 a wide range of powers, including welfare powers, have now been transferred to the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament.

Scottish Child Payment was introduced through secondary legislation, using the powers to top up a reserved benefit contained in section 79 of the Social Security Scotland Act 2018.

Social Security Scotland is the executive agency of Scottish Government responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland.

Further details about the benefit can be found at <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment/>.

## Scottish Child Payment

Scottish Child Payment is a benefit which has been introduced to tackle child poverty in Scotland. It is intended to help low-income families with the costs of raising a child and is available to parents or carers with one or more children under the age of sixteen.

There are no limits on the number of eligible children supported by Scottish Child Payment and since 14th November 2022 eligible families receive £25 per child, per week. Between April 2022 and 13th November 2022 the rate was £20 per child per week and before that the rate was £10 per child, per week.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, Scottish Child Payment will be increased to £26.70 from April 2024, in line with inflation.

Scottish Child Payment is administered by Social Security Scotland through an application-based process, and is paid on a four-weekly basis.

Scottish Child Payment does not count as earned income in the calculation of any other UK or Scottish Government benefits that the applicant, or any person in their household, currently receive.

The payment can be used for any purpose by the recipient and for example could help with the cost of childcare, nappies, activities or other essentials.

## Eligibility

A person may be eligible for Scottish Child Payment if all of the following apply:

- They live in Scotland
- They or their partner are getting certain benefits or payments

- They or their partner are the main person looking after a child who's under 16 years old.

The main person looking after the child (if any) might want to complete the application form, and use their bank details for payment.

The qualifying benefits are:

- Child Tax Credit
- Income Support
- Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

## **Application and decision making process**

Applications can be made online, by phone, and by paper form ('application channel').

At the beginning of the application process, applicants are asked whether they would like to also apply for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods at the same time as they apply for Scottish Child Payment. To keep things as simple as possible for the client, if they choose to also apply for Best Start Grant and Best Start foods they are required to complete only one application form. Applicants can also apply for Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods separately should they wish to do so.

From the 28th November 2022, the Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment was paid automatically to eligible individuals in receipt of Scottish Child Payment, without the need to apply. Where an individual advises that they do not want to receive payment automatically, an automatic payment will not be made and the client can apply for the Payments manually.

In terms of processing and the subsequent reporting of Official Statistics, the joint application can be thought of as two separate applications; one for Scottish Child Payment and one for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. For this reason, only Scottish Child Payment applications are reported on in this publication. Official Statistics on Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications can be found at: <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications>.

Social Security Scotland processes each application received and makes a decision whether to approve or deny the application. An application will be denied if the client is not eligible to receive Scottish Child Payment. An application will be authorised if the client is eligible and provides the appropriate evidence to receive Scottish Child Payment. Applicants may also withdraw their application before a decision is made.



Applicants can choose to provide supporting evidence when making an application by post or through online document upload. If an applicant does not provide all the evidence required for an application, they will be contacted by a client advisor and asked to provide this. Once this evidence has been received, Social Security Scotland aims to make a decision as soon as possible with payments following soon thereafter.

To help manage the demand expected when Scottish Child Payment officially launched on 15 February 2021, Social Security Scotland enabled clients to apply in advance of the benefit being introduced, from 9 November 2020. Anyone applying for Scottish Child Payment in this application window was made aware that they would not receive a decision until after 15 February 2021, and that the first payments would be made to clients from the end of February 2021 onwards.

Social Security Scotland processed applications throughout the application window, where the outcomes were temporary and subject to change until a final eligibility check on 15 February when the benefit officially launched. During this time if a client advisor assessed an application as authorised – subject to this check – the month of decision recorded would reflect the month the client advisor initially processed the application.

Due to the design of Social Security Scotland's case management system, denials were not processed during the application window and were instead flagged and set aside to be processed after the final eligibility check. Client advisors began formally denying these applications after the official launch of the benefit and had completed this undertaking by the end of March 2021.

## **Re-determinations and appeals**

Scottish Child Payment applicants can ask Social Security Scotland to look again at what they have decided if their application is denied, or if they think the amount they are going to be paid is wrong. This is known as a re-determination. A request for a re-determination should be made within 31 calendar days of being notified of the determination. This is extended to up to 1 year under extenuating circumstances. Social Security Scotland then has 16 working days to make the new determination. Scottish Child Payment applicants also have the right to appeal to a Tribunal if they do not agree with Social Security Scotland's re-determination, or if Social Security Scotland is not able to make a re-determination within 16 working days.

Social Security Scotland has a working agreement that allows it to offer an extension of 5 days to clients should they be waiting on documentation/evidence being sent in. This is to allow Social Security Scotland to process a client application rather than make a decision without any evidence.

## **Coronavirus and Re-determinations**

On 1 April 2020, the Scottish Parliament approved emergency legislation to help businesses, public services and people through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Measures included helping to ensure that Social Security Scotland clients were not disadvantaged as a result of the coronavirus outbreak and were able to claim assistance to which they were entitled and which they may have missed out on if late applications were not allowed.

Changes, which came into force on 7 April 2020, include temporarily relaxing certain time limits. Where original time limits have not been met directly as a result of Covid-19, the measures temporarily relax time limits in relation to:

- making an application for assistance
- a request by a client for a re-determination
- a decision on a re-determination
- appealing to the First tier Tribunal.

Additionally, the Coronavirus (Scotland) 2020 Act provided Social Security Scotland extra time to complete a re-determination. Social Security Scotland endeavor to make all re-determinations as quickly as is possible under the circumstances. The Act required Social Security Scotland to make the re-determination as soon as reasonably practicable within a new extended timescale of an additional 9 weeks on top of the current 16 working days. The temporary extension to the deadline for Social Security Scotland to process re-determinations expired for new re-determination requests on 30 September 2021. The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 expired on 30 September 2022, however the provisions relating to Scottish Child Payment were integrated permanently via the Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendment and Transitional Provision) (Scotland) Regulations 2022.

## About the data

### How the data is collected

The data in this publication is sourced from Social Security Scotland's case management system. The system holds information on all applications received, decisions and payments. Data about the applicant, their partner, and their children is collected through the online application form or is entered by client advisors during telephone applications or processing of paper applications. Information about the application outcome and payments is created in the case management system as an application is processed.

The information is held across multiple tables within the system. 100% extracts of administrative data are taken from this system every day for internal reporting purposes. Data cuts combine information from the different tables in the system into one daily extract which includes details of all Scottish Child Payment applications made since 9 November 2020. A payments extract which contains information on the financial aspects of applications is used for calculations in this publication. As of June 2023, a new caseload data extract which contains live

information on clients' and children's eligibility has been used for determining the caseload in this publication.

When Social Security Scotland extended the eligibility to children under 16, a decision was taken when designing the application process to minimise the information that clients presently receiving Scottish Child Payment for children under six had to provide in order to add older children to their existing case.

As a consequence, the case management system does not generate a full application case in this instance. Instead, any incoming requests to add children to existing cases generate a 'task' within the case management system. As the data source which underpins the application numbers in this publication contains information for each application case, this publication reports on full applications received only.

Whilst the case management system was being monitored in the period immediately after the benefit eligibility was extended, information was temporarily manually recorded on the number of tasks generated. The temporary availability of this information meant the management information releases published on 16 November 2022 and 20 December 2022 included both full applications and applications from existing clients requesting to add children over six to the existing Scottish Child Payment awards.

There was no provision to continually manually record this information beyond the post-extension monitoring period, meaning the last available date there was information total number of requests to add children to existing cases was 11 December 2022. As a result, a decision was made to continue to report on full applications only within this publication.

The management information release on 20 December 2022 indicated that approximately 123,000 applications in total had been received between 14 November and 11 December 2022. Of these approximately 85,500 (70%) were full applications and are reported on within this publication.

The remaining 37,500 (30%) were requests from existing Scottish Child Payment clients looking to add children to their existing payment cases. These requests are not included in any application counts reported in this release.

Whilst these requests are not reflected in the application counts, the clients and the payments they have received are reflected in the wider payments and caseload information presented.

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, a data cut from 1 February 2024 has been used to produce statistics on applications received and decisions made up to 11.59 pm on 31 December 2023. Later data cuts may include retrospective changes to application details, including corrections to details in the case management system, and changes that have resulted from re-determinations and appeals.

When a re-determination or appeal is requested, the data in this publication will show the decision date, outcome, payment date and payment value after a re-determination or appeal has been decided. Where a re-determination or appeal has been requested but not decided, decision date, outcome, payment date and payment value will be updated to reflect information about the re-determination or appeal, rather than the original application.

Until March 2022, re-determinations and appeals were reported based on management information manually collected by the Client Experience team at Social Security Scotland. From April 2022 onwards, the figures reported in Table 15 for re-determinations are based on data extracted from the case management system. Similarly, while information on appeals are still manually collected, from October 2023 onwards the figures reported in Table 16 for appeals are based on data extracted from the case management system. This is part of an ongoing piece of work to improve the reporting of re-determinations and appeals across all benefits. As such the data source and resulting outputs are currently being reviewed and figures from April 2022 onwards may be subject to change.

Within our statistical reporting, key dates are used to assign applications received, applications processed and payments issued to time periods. This is a different methodology to that used in financial reporting and, as a result, there may be differences in the values reported for a given time period.

## Quality assurance

The data used to produce official statistics are the same as the data extracted from the case management system on a daily basis that is used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland. As such, the data is checked routinely for consistency with previous extracts (i.e. do applications, decisions and payments figures increase as expected over time, and are they in proportion to each other) and compared to other sources of information such as the number of payment instructions reported by the finance team.

Additional quality assurance and cleaning has been carried out on the variables used in the official statistics to:

- check for duplicate and missing application references
- check application dates, processing times and payment times are within the expected ranges
- check that payment date is present where a payment value is present
- check applicant dates of birth are within the expected range – see [Age of applicant](#) section
- check postcodes that do not match to local authorities – see [Geography](#) section

- remove of a small number of test applications which were used to test the case management system.

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 lead statistician checks the final documents.

## Revisions

Each updated publication of Scottish Child Payment statistics can include revisions of numbers of applications received, processed, processing times and payment values going back to November 2020. This is because each time figures are published they will be based from a new 100% data cut from the case management system, which can include retrospective changes to data going back to November 2020 as described in the [How the data is collected](#) section. Months that are more recent tend to be subject to a greater degree of revision than more distant ones.

Compared to the previous publication, there has been minor revisions in number of applications received and processed since November 2022 which is reflected in Table 1 and Table 2 of the publication tables. At the time of this publication, there were around 50 applications processed after November 2022 with known outcome and unknown decision date. Until the investigation on confirming the decision date for those applications is completed, those are excluded from all tables reporting statistics on processed applications within this publication. Additionally, there are minor revisions since November 2020 relating to processing times, which can be seen in Table 5.

A new data source is currently being used for Scottish Child Payment re-determinations as part of an ongoing piece of work to improve the reporting of re-determinations and appeals across all benefits. This data source and the resulting outputs are currently being reviewed, and figures from April 2022 onwards may be subject to change.

## Methodology and definitions

*Number of clients who have received at least one Scottish Child Payment by the financial year of the payment issued date*

The number of clients to have benefitted from at least one Scottish Child Payment issued is calculated by summing up the number of unique individual clients who have received at least one Scottish Child Payment issued during each financial year.

*Number of clients and children actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment (client caseload and child caseload)*

In order to accurately reflect the active caseload for Scottish Child Payment, it is important to take into account the flows in both directions, i.e. include any new

clients and children who are receiving the benefit, and exclude those who are no longer eligible.

The methodology first introduced in 'Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 30 June 2023' uses a caseload data extract containing live information on client's and children's eligibility, which makes it possible to identify all clients (and, in turn, children) who are in receipt of, or have been approved for a payment as of the latest reporting point in time, even if they have not been paid yet. Importantly, this new data extract enables additional breakdowns of the total caseload counts to be produced e.g. by age of child, or by local authority area.

This methodology is broadly outlined below:

- The client is actively in receipt of Scottish Child Payment as of the latest reporting period if their case remains active, and has any payment issued in the last 28 days to the latest caseload period. Additionally, if there is no payment issued because the case has only recently been approved, then the client would be deemed to be actively in receipt of Scottish Child Payment as long as the activation date is within the 7-day period to the latest reporting point in time.
- The child is deemed to be actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment if their parent or carer (client) is in receipt of Scottish Child Payment and their eligibility remains valid for Scottish Child Payment (including the age criteria).

A data cut from 1 February 2024 has been used to produce statistics on the number of clients and children actively benefitting from, or have been approved for Scottish Child Payment up to 11.59 pm on 31 December 2023.

There are however a few limitations with this methodology:

- The caseload data extract is a snapshot of live information on both client's and children's eligibility. Consequently, as new payment cases for clients have been established once their applications are approved, or Change of Circumstance forms were submitted from existing clients, this can retrospectively add more children or update the existing information we hold on them. Thus, applying this methodology to caseload data extracts obtained at different points in time would yield different caseload counts for the same point in time.
- In related to the limitation mentioned above, although a client may be identified as 'active', this does not necessarily mean all children this client is responsible for are actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment at the latest reported point in time. It is possible that some of the children are no longer eligible if, for example, they have turned 16. Similarly, it is possible for some children to be approved for the benefit shortly after the reported point in time – and while the client would receive payments in

arrears for these children, these children won't have actively benefitted as of the latest reported point in time.

As a result, for each publication this methodology will be applied to calculate a caseload count for the latest reported point in time only i.e. no retrospective revisions to previous counts will be made unless a methodological error is discovered. For example, in the publication 'Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 30 June 2023', the snapshot taken on 1 August 2023 was used to report the caseload count as of 30 June 2023, but was not used to update the caseload count for previous reporting periods (31 March 2023 etc.)

The table below includes a comparison between the new methodology and the methodology used in previous publication releases to produce the number of children actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment as of 31 March 2023 and as of 30 June 2023. Note, because of the limitations of the new methodology above, a data cut from 1 May 2023 was used to produce the caseload figure for 31 March 2023.

<b>As at which financial quarter</b>	<b>Previous methodology</b>	<b>Current methodology</b>
31 March 2023	303,000	299,710
30 June 2023	319,000	316,910

*Previous methodology used to estimate the number of children actively benefitting from Scottish Child Payment (child caseload)*

Prior to the 'Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 30 June 2023' publication, an estimate of caseload, or number of children receipt of Scottish Child Payment, had been reported in this publication series since August 2021 using a consistent methodology. For the caseload estimate as at 31 December 2022 and 31 March 2023, a minor change was made to this methodology.

The estimate was derived by calculating the total value of payments made in the final 28-day interval of the current reporting period, and dividing by the value paid to cover a four-week period for one child – currently this would be £100. A 28-day period was chosen because payments are made to clients every four weeks from the day they receive their first Scottish Child Payment. This choice ensured that the total value of payments did not include more than one payment being made to any given client.

This measure provided users with a greater understanding of how many children were actively benefiting from Scottish Child Payment but did not enable any additional breakdowns of the caseload to be calculated. There were a few additional limitations with this approach:

- A true point-in-time measure of the number of children in receipt of Scottish Child Payment on the final day of the publication reporting period might differ to the derived published estimates. For example, it was possible that some of the children paid in the last 28 days were no longer eligible on the final day of the reporting period. Likewise, it was possible that some children may have recently been approved for the benefit but had not yet received their first payment by the end of the reporting period.
- By dividing by £100, it was assumed that all children being paid were eligible for the entire cover period of their latest payment, however it was possible that a child was due to turn six within the payment cover period and was therefore paid less than the full £100. Equally, new clients received a one off payment in arrears if their case was not approved with the first week ensuring the receive payment from the date their application was made, which could be greater than £100.

Due to the extension of the Scottish Child Payment eligibility, a notable number of new clients were being paid for the first time in the 28 day period used to estimate caseload as at 31 December 2022. This resulted in a significant number of payments for £25 (one week), £50 (two weeks) and £75 (three weeks) – the first payment to these clients settling into a regular four weekly cycle. This added strain to the assumption made that non-standard payments both more and less than £100 per child broadly balanced out.

To account for this, rather than divide through the total value of payments issued by £100, a change was made to the methodology to instead divide the value paid to each client by £25 multiplied by the length of the cover period for that payment. This ensured that, for example, where a client was paid £100 for a two week cover period this was correctly counted as two children, and not assumed to be a four week cover period for one child.

Because of the inherent uncertainty with these derived estimates, a decision was taken to round the figures to the nearest thousand.

## **Data Quality**

### *Rounding and disclosure control*

Application and outcome figures have been rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control. Data has been suppressed where it would disclose fewer than five applications or payments.

### *Incorrect application dates*



Quality assurance checks highlighted that a small number of cases (50) had an application date prior to the benefit opening for applications on 9 November 2020. These cases were confirmed by operational colleagues to be genuine applications with an application date entered in error. For the purpose of this publication, these cases have been reported as having been received in the month of November 2020.

### *Missing and duplicate applications*

The data comes from a 100% data cut of the case management system.

The data cut was checked for applications where the field relating to application date and the outcome and payment of the application was blank. These applications represent temporary 'prospect cases', which are created when clients contact Social Security Scotland without a National Insurance number, and are later replaced once a National Insurance number is received from the applicant. Any such applications are therefore duplicates and are excluded from the statistics.

### *Unverified information from application form*

Information about the client and their children is taken from the application form completed by the client or by a client advisor over the telephone. This information may contain errors because it has not been verified by comparison to other sources of information such as records held by the Department for Work and Pensions. This means for example that it is possible to have authorised applications where the original application form did not include details of any eligible children, because the date of birth of any children was originally incorrect but was later amended as the application was processed.

### *Application authorisation and payment*

To manage the anticipated demand, Scottish Child Payment opened for applications from 9 November 2020, ahead of its official launch on 15 February 2021. Anyone applying for Scottish Child Payment in this application window was made aware that they would not receive a decision until after 15 February 2021, and that the first payments would be made to clients from the end of February 2021 onwards.

Throughout the application window, client advisors began processing applications subject to an eligibility check on 15 February. The outcomes of all applications processed during this time were temporary and subject to change until the benefit officially launched and a final check was carried out to establish the entitlement for each case.

If a client advisor assessed an application and processed it as approved – subject to an automatic eligibility check on 15 February – then the month of decision would reflect the month the client advisor originally processed the

application. This is why there are applications attributed to the months before the official launch of the benefit throughout this publication.

If a client advisor assessed an application as a denial – subject to the final check on 15 February – then the application was flagged but not processed. Due to the design of Social Security Scotland’s case management system, these applications had to be formally denied on or after the 15 February to avoid denial letters being issued to clients before the final eligibility check had taken place. This is why there are no processed denials in the months before the official launch of the benefit.

For all applications, the date that applications were processed by client advisors is the date used to produce statistics of processed applications by month. After applications are authorised for payment by client advisors, a manager approves the decision, and then a payment is issued. In some cases, payments will be issued on the same day that payments are authorised by client advisors, however in other cases there can be a delay before payments are issued. Clients should receive money in their nominated account within four working days after payment is issued.

In this publication, we report on the value of payments that have been issued by the end of each month and not the payments successfully received by the applicants.

### *Application channel*

Application channel is automatically entered into the case management system for online applications, and manually entered for applications taken by phone or paper. If ever an application channel has been manually entered incorrectly, the application channel will be classed as ‘unknown’.

### *Age of applicant*

In a small number of cases, the birth date of the child or the application date has been entered in the parent date of birth field in the case management system. In these cases, the date of birth of the parent has been changed to ‘unknown’. Further dates of birth of the parent showed very young ages. For these applicants, we have assumed that the dates contained typographical errors and have classed age as ‘unknown’, although we cannot be certain that their date of birth contained an error.

### *Geography*

Applications are assigned to local authority by postcode using a Scottish Government lookup file. For some applications, the postcode will not match to the lookup file. This can be because the postcode is not in a Scottish local authority, or because the postcode has been introduced too recently to appear on the lookup file, for example if a property is in a new development. For postcodes that could not be matched to a Scottish local authority, the postcode

area was used to check whether the postcode was in Scotland or elsewhere. Non-matching postcodes from Scottish border postcode areas (postcodes starting 'DG' and 'TD') were also checked individually and assigned to Scottish local authorities as 'non-Scottish postcodes' manually.

Postcodes are linked to client profiles and data extracts are automatically updated in the case of a client changing address. As a result, postcodes reflect the latest address of clients and may not be the same as the address at the time of application. Therefore a small number of addresses may not reflect the correct local authority at the time of application, decision or payment.

A small number of applications did not include address information and therefore could not be matched to a local authority or country.

### *Effect of re-determinations*

Application decision dates, outcomes and payment amounts are updated to reflect information about re-determinations and appeals as described in the [How the data is collected](#) section. Information in tables about decisions, outcomes and payments should therefore be viewed as the final decision, outcome and payment value, after a re-determination request or appeal has been received and/or decided. This excludes the processing times table, where applications with re-determinations and appeals have been removed from the processing times calculations.

### *Processing time*

Social Security Scotland enabled clients to apply in advance of Scottish Child Payment being launched on 15 February 2021 to help manage the expected demand and allow more time to process applications. Anyone applying during the application window was made aware that they would not receive a decision until after 15 February 2021, and that the first payments would be made to clients from the end of February 2021 onwards.

Processing time is the number of days from the application being received to a decision being made or the application being withdrawn. It includes time spent waiting to receive evidence from clients through online upload or by post, but does not include additional time to make payments. It is calculated in working days. Weekends and public holidays are excluded from calculations, even if applications were processed by staff working overtime on these days. The time of day that an application was received or processed is not taken into account.

Processing times for any Scottish Child Payment applications processed during the application window are calculated between the application date and the date the client advisor processed the application – meaning they do not include the final automatic eligibility check that was undertaken when the benefit officially launched on 15 February 2021.

On 14 November 2022 a new feature titled 'Straight-through Processing' was introduced which allows certain applications which meet a specific set of criteria to be automatically passed to the payment approval stage. This applies to Scottish Child Payment only applications and does not cover joint Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment applications. Straight through processing allows the case management system to automatically process certain applications through to a decision without the need for client advisor intervention.

Processing times data does not include any applications that are flagged as having had a re-determination request because the decision date for these applications will represent the re-determination decision date, which can be some time after the original decision date. The number of applications in the processing times table is therefore lower than the number of applications shown as processed or decided in other tables.

Re-determinations are a small proportion of the total applications processed, and the average processing times for applications that go on to re-determination or appeal compared to other applications should not differ from all other applications. Therefore, removal of these should not affect the average processing times shown in the table.

Processing time is only calculated for applications that were decided within the period being reported on. Data is presented by the month of decision rather than month the application was received.

## **Future Developments**

We will be seeking users' views on the content of this publication to ensure it best meets their requirements. If you have any comments or suggestions that you would like to provide us please email [MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot](mailto:MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot).

## **Related Social Security Scotland Publications**

Future research and statistics publications will be available through the Social Security Scotland 'publications' webpage at:  
<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications>.

Statistics on Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods are published by Social Security Scotland at:  
<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications/statistics/statistics-collections>.

Statistics on Scottish Child Payment feedback (complaints, compliments and suggestions) are due to be published in the next release of the Social Security Scotland feedback statistics published at:  
<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications/statistics/statistics-collections>

Information on client diversity and equality of application outcomes for clients applying to Social Security Scotland is published at:  
<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications/statistics/statistics-collections>.



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

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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](http://statistics.gov.scot)

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

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications/statistics/statistics-collections>.

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 [statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

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