



Social Security Scotland  
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

# Measuring Our Charter 2020/21

How Social Security Scotland and the  
Scottish Government are delivering on  
Our Charter commitments.



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



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## What is the Charter Measurement Framework?

This framework is a co-designed list of measures relating to the commitments set out in [Our Charter](#). It was designed in 2019, and this is the second year it has been published with data. It has two purposes. First, it shows how Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government are getting on with delivering the commitments. Second, it helps Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government to constantly improve what they are doing.

Please note, the Charter Measurement Framework is not the only measurement being done for the social security system in Scotland. Statistics can be found at [Social Security Scotland - Statistics](#), and research publications at [Social Security Scotland - Social Research](#).

## Who developed the framework?

The Charter Measurement Framework (the framework) was co-designed in 2019. The Scottish Government worked together with Social Security Scotland and a diverse group of people with lived experience of the social security system. Groups who represent people with lived experience (partner organisations) were also involved. And the Scottish Commission on Social Security gave valuable advice and input to the framework.

Social researchers then analysed the information and used it to produce the framework. The original Charter Measurement Framework containing only the list of measures can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/measuring-charter-social-security-scotland-scottish-government-delivering-charter-promised/documents/>.

## What does the framework measure?

The framework has four sections that match up with Our Charter. The first three sections are about how Social Security Scotland operates and delivers benefits. These measures are designed to tell us how the organisation treats clients, if staff are well supported, how the systems are working and how clients are experiencing the systems. The final section is about Scottish Government commitments, which relate to policy making about benefits and what the system as a whole should do. The measures in that section are designed to tell us what is being achieved over the longer term.

## When is the framework filled in and published?

We publish the framework annually alongside Social Security Scotland's annual report and accounts. Where possible, data in the report will relate to the previous financial year.

Some of the measures will not be relevant until all the benefits coming to Scotland are rolled out. This is noted in the document.

The information needed to fill in the framework (data) comes from a variety of different research and statistics sources. The main ones for the first three sections are:

- **The Client Survey 2018-2021** – this is the second [Client Survey publication](#) but covers all responses to date, as it is the first time the data will be reported in this framework. All references to Client Survey respondents in this report are from this publication. The first round of the survey ran from 17 August to 25 September 2020, and the second from 10 May to 20 June 2021. It was open to everyone who had received a payment from Social Security Scotland. 3,253 people responded to the first round of the survey (around 2% of those who were sent invites) and 7,322 to the second round (around 8% of those who were sent invites).
- **Charter research 2020/21** – research conducted for this year's framework. It involved 35 interviews with clients on the Client Panels, a survey of staff on our People Panel (92 responses), and a survey of partner organisations (13 responses). The research also asked questions that were related to but are not directly Charter Measurement Framework measures. For example, staff were asked about their awareness and use of the Charter. References to client interviewees, staff respondents and partner organisation respondents in this report refer to this research.
- **People Survey** – an annual survey of all Social Security Scotland staff. The 2020 People Survey ran from 1 October to 3 November. 741 people responded, and this was a 77% response rate.
- **Statistics** – Social Security Scotland routinely publish information as part of quarterly Official Statistics releases. These releases include, for example, information on benefit applications and payments that have undergone detailed quality assurance and are produced in line with the standards set out of the Code

of Practice for Statistics. All Official Statistics in this framework cover the financial year 2020-21.

- **Management information** - In addition, Social Security Scotland collect and utilise management information in order to support business processes and monitor how well systems are working, for example call response times. Management information has not been quality assured to the same standard as Official Statistics.

More detail on all these sources can be found at Annex A.

The fourth section describes relevant activity undertaken by the Scottish Government which supports the Charter commitments.

Due to COVID-19, some data and information were not available for last year's Charter Measurement Framework report. This included the Client Survey, Client Panels research, and research with partner organisations. Data from these sources appears for the first time in this report.

For more information on the data sources for the measures in this framework, including links to full reports, see Annex A.

Please note, wherever possible we will analyse the data we collect for the framework by protected characteristics (and other demographic characteristics). This is essential in order that we can assess whether Our Charter is being delivered comprehensively to all groups.

Such breakdowns are provided in this report only when there is a notable difference between groups. For the Client Survey, full breakdowns for all characteristics are provided in the [supplementary document](#). Other statistics in the report are either not linkable to characteristics, or numbers were not high enough to do so.

## Reading the framework

The next page gives an ‘at a glance’ overview of how Social Security Scotland is performing in each section, presented with a few important pieces of data and information.

Each section of the framework represents a section of Our Charter. Within each section are questions that will be answered about that section. For example, ‘Are clients experiencing a service that reflects the human rights values as set out in Our Charter when interacting with Social Security Scotland?’

Below this, a heading sets out the ideal situation we want to achieve, for example, ‘Clients receive good service’.

Finally, the measures contain data and information that addresses the questions and demonstrates whether, or not, the ideals are being achieved.

The measures in the first three sections which ask for ‘examples’ rather than statistics appear in text boxes in this document. The heading in these boxes is the measure as it appears in the original framework. The content in these boxes is all from the Charter research.

We have avoided acronyms throughout this document to make it easy to read. This includes replacing acronyms with the full words in quotations. This does not affect the meaning of the quotes.



## A People's Service

Social Security Scotland's Service is Person-Centred

94% of Client Survey respondents who had been in contact with staff 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were treated with kindness.



98%

of People Survey respondents said they understand customers' or service users' needs.

## Processes That Work

Social Security Scotland involves clients in designing services that are supportive, accessible, simple, quick and flexible



94% of Client Survey respondents who had applied for a benefit 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the application process was clear.

Clients requested a re-determination or internal review in fewer than 3% of applications.

## Is Social Security Scotland delivering what the Charter promised?

74%

of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland was an open organisation.

## A Learning System

Social Security Scotland's service evolves in response to the needs and preferences of its clients

83% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland was an honest organisation.



The new social security system is helping tackle poverty in Scotland and is designed with the people of Scotland on the basis of evidence and with the respect and dignity of individuals at the heart of it.

## A Better Future

The Scottish Government will develop and maintain social security policy so that it is as fair as possible





## A People's Service

### Are clients experiencing a service that reflects the human rights values as set out in Our Charter when interacting with Social Security Scotland?

#### Staff attitudes reflect an understanding of and values dignity and respect as set out in Our Charter

41% of Client Survey respondents said they had been in contact with a member of staff. Of those:

- **Measure 1:** 94% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were treated with kindness. Men were slightly less likely to agree than women (90% compared to 95% of women).
- **Measure 2:** 88% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they felt trusted by staff. Men were slightly less likely to agree than women (84% compared to 90% of women).
- **Measure 3:** 92% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff listened to them.
- **Measure 4:** 91% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff made them feel comfortable. Men were slightly less likely to agree than women (87% compared to 92% of women).

**Table 1: Client Survey respondents' views on staff attitudes by benefit<sup>1</sup>**

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had been in contact with staff; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'; row percentages.

Benefit Experience	I was treated with kindness	I felt trusted	Staff listened to me	Staff made me feel comfortable
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=1,372-1,394)	91%	84%	90%	89%
Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=2,386-2,434)	96%	91%	94%	93%
Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=301-306)	95%	89%	93%	92%
Young Carer Grant applicants (n=103-105)	96%	96%	97%	96%
Scottish Child Payment applicants (n=2,147-2,182)	96%	93%	95%	94%
Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients (n=301-306)	95%	89%	92%	91%

<sup>1</sup> The number of respondents with Job Start Payment experience was too low to be included here.



## **Measure 5: Examples of treatment that made clients feel comfortable, kindness, trust, listening AND examples of treatment that was less so AND Social Security action taken**

### **Comfortable**

Most client interviewees said staff made them feel comfortable. They highlighted staff manner as one of the main reasons for this. Several interviewees said staff were polite, sensitive, respectful and friendly during their interaction. They said they felt comfortable expressing themselves to staff. A couple of interviewees said they felt more confident to contact Social Security Scotland staff again in future as a result of feeling comfortable during their initial interaction.

*"[I was treated by them] really well. I just felt like everybody was well trained, friendly, personable, understanding. They focused on confidentiality and understood the sensitivity of the conversation. It's just been a really good experience when talking to someone. [...] I felt comfortable to approach the organisation every time I've had an issue. I feel respected and valued and just really positive about it. I feel it's an organisation I can trust."* **Client interviewee**

### **Kindness**

Most interviewees said they were treated with kindness by staff. Interviewees thought that staff were patient and empathetic. They felt staff were understanding and genuinely cared about their query. Several appreciated not feeling rushed by staff.

*"I have to admit I went on that phone [call] a wreck but when I came off the call I felt a lot better. The call was simple. It was not in any way threatening, it did not make me feel distressed. [The advisor] would stop me at any time to make sure that I was all right. The call took half an hour but I would say only 10 minutes was about the thing I phoned for itself. The rest was them chatting to me, taking me through things, being empathetic. It was good, quite lovely."* **Client interviewee**



## **Examples of treatment that made clients feel comfortable, kindness, trust, listening AND examples of treatment that was less so AND Social Security action taken (continued)**

### **Trust**

Interviewees said they felt trusted by Social Security Scotland staff. They noted staff manner and using a first name basis as reasons for feeling trusted. Some felt staff were open and honest with them which helped to build a sense of mutual trust. A few said they felt more confident to talk openly and candidly with staff as a result of feeling trusted.

*“There was absolutely never a feeling that she was trying to catch me out. Nothing like that. I didn’t feel like there was any underhanded-ness or agenda other than helping me.”* **Client interviewee**

### **Listened**

The majority of interviewees said Social Security Scotland staff listened to them during interactions. They felt staff listened carefully to and understood their needs. A couple of interviewees also mentioned that staff let them express themselves and took care to understand what they were saying.

As well as feeling listened to, some interviewees felt Social Security Scotland staff had been particularly helpful and had adapted to meet their needs.

*“I always find it easy expressing myself but people don’t always understand me. They don’t understand what I mean and what they take from that are two completely different things normally. But they were really clear and really helpful.”* **Client interviewee**

### **Other Experiences**

No client interviewees gave specific examples of being treated badly by staff, or of action then taken by Social Security Scotland. Although there hadn’t been many complaints about staff manner, one Client Experience staff participant mentioned a case where a client had complained following an interaction with staff. In this instance, the client was unhappy with how they had been spoken to by the staff member and felt they had been treated badly during the call.

**Examples of treatment that made clients feel comfortable, kindness, trust, listening AND examples of treatment that was less so AND Social Security action taken (continued)**

*“We rarely see this type of complaint, but there was one instance where the client advisor was outright rude to the client. The client was quite distressed at that point anyway and ended up in tears on the call because of the way the advisor spoke to them. The client was mortified and upset. We managed to resolve the complaint for the client and they were happy in the end, but that was one example where a client complained about their interaction with staff.”* **Client Experience staff participant**

A few client interviewees had mixed experiences when interacting with Social Security Scotland staff. Some said that while they had been treated well by staff, they were unhappy about other aspects of their interaction. Examples of this included long call waiting times, dealing with an automated service at the start of a call, and poor sound quality on the call itself.

**Clients do NOT experience discrimination**

**Measure 6:** 95% of Client Survey respondents said they did not feel discriminated against at any point during their experience with Social Security Scotland. 2% of respondents said they had been discriminated against during their experience with Social Security Scotland, and 3% preferred not to say.

**Table 2: Client Survey respondents' experience of discrimination by benefit experience**

All respondents with experience of each benefit; Row percentages

Benefit experience	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=4,342)	2%	96%	2%
Best Start Grant/Foods applicant (n=4,920)	2%	96%	3%
Funeral Support Payment applicant (n=501)	3%	95%	2%
Young Carer Grant applicant (n=213)	2%	94%	3%
Job Start Payment applicant (n=31)	10%	90%	-
Scottish Child Payment applicant (n=4,612)	2%	96%	2%
Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients (n=828)	3%	96%	2%

Of Client Survey respondents who said that they had been discriminated against:

- **Measure 7:** 24% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'I felt I could challenge it'.
- **Measure 8:** 28% said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination they faced.

Numbers were too low to provide further breakdowns.





### **Measure 9: Examples of good practice AND examples of discrimination (if any) AND Social Security Scotland action taken**

Client interviewees said they had never felt any discrimination at any point. There was a general feeling that people were being treated fairly and equally by Social Security Scotland.

*“Absolutely not, I’ve not felt discriminated at all. In fact I’ve actually felt quite welcomed. I don’t feel like I’m going ‘cap in hand’. I’m dealt with as an individual and one fine individual. Someone who has a right to a benefit. Whereas sometimes with the Department for Work and Pensions, as I’ve said, they don’t care. They really don’t care.”* **Client interviewee**

Client Survey respondents gave similar positive comments about discrimination. However, there were also comments about negative experiences of discrimination. Negative comments on discrimination related to themes of disagreement with eligibility criteria, feeling mistreated as a benefit claimant, and issues with the general process.

*“My daughter was discriminated against due to her age and situation - there was obviously no process for staff to follow and we were simply ignored.”* **Client Survey respondent**

### **Clients experience good service**

61% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of these:

- **Measure 10:** 76% ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they got enough updates during the application process.
- **Measure 11:** 95% ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they agreed with the decision made on their application.

**Table 3: Client Survey respondents' views on updates and decisions**

All respondents who had applied for each benefit; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'/% who said 'yes', column percentages.

Agreed or strongly agreed that:	Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=4870-4,891)	Young Carer Grant applicants (n=210-212)	Scottish Child Payment applicants (n=3872-4593)	Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=472-491)	Job Start Payment applicants (n=31)
I got enough updates on the progress of my application	76%	77%	78%	76%	74%
I agree with the decision made on my application	95%	99%	96%	94%	- <sup>2</sup>

91% of Client Survey respondents said they had received one or more benefit payments from Social Security Scotland. Of these:

- **Measure 12:** 91% of Client Survey respondents who had received a payment said they were paid when Social Security Scotland told them they would be paid.
- **Measure 13:** 93% of Client Survey respondents who had received a payment said they were paid the amount Social Security Scotland told them they would get on the first time. 92% said they got the right amount 'every time'.

Ethnic minority respondents (84%) were less likely to say they had received their payment when expected compared to white respondents (93%). However, this difference was driven by a greater proportion saying they could not remember whether this had been the case (14%, compared to 5% of white respondents).

The likelihood of having received payment on time also differed by age of respondent. For example, 85% of 16-24 year olds said they had received payment when Social Security Scotland said they would, compared to 96% of those aged 55 and over.

<sup>2</sup> The number of respondents with Job Start Payment experience were too low to be reported for this question.

**Table 4: Client Survey respondents' views on whether payments were on time and accurate**

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit; % who answered 'yes'.

Benefit experience	Received payment when Social Security Scotland said they would	Received right amount first time	Received right amount every time
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=3,796-4,006)	94%	95%	94%
Best Start Grant recipients (n=3,342-3,567)	90%	92%	91%
Best Start Foods recipients (n=2,419-2,455)	89%	90%	89%
Funeral Support Payment recipients (n=191-373)	92%	93%	90%
Young Carer Grant recipients (n=65-120)	88%	98%	95%
Job Start Payment recipients (n=25)	92%	100%	<sup>3</sup>
Scottish Child Payment recipients (n=4,337-4,407)	91%	92%	92%
Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients (n=707-797)	92%	93%	92%

<sup>3</sup> Less than 25 Job Start Payment recipients answered whether they received right amount every time, so data is not provided.

## How well are Social Security Scotland staff delivering the Charter commitments?

### Clients find staff knowledgeable and approachable

41% of Client Survey respondents said they had been in contact with a member of staff. Of those:

**Measure 14:** 90% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits.

61% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of those:

**Measure 15:** 92% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the decision on their application was 'explained clearly'. Men were less likely to say that the decision was explained clearly (88%, compared to 92% of women).

**Table 5: Client Survey respondents' views on whether staff were knowledgeable and decisions were explained clearly**

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had been in contact with Social Security Scotland staff/All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit, % who answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Benefit experience	Staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits	The application decision was explained clearly
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=1,394)	88%	n/a
Best Start Grant/ Foods applicants (n=2,386-4,862)	92%	92%
Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=301-490)	89%	89%
Young Carer Grant applicants (n=105-210)	93%	93%
Scottish Child Payment applicants (n=2,182-4584)	93%	93%
Job Start Payment applicants (n=31)	<sup>4</sup>	81%
Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients (n=306)	90%	n/a

**Measure 16:** Of the 5% of Client Survey respondents who disagreed with a decision on their application, 26% said they felt able to challenge it.

<sup>4</sup> The number of Client Survey respondents with Job Start Payment experience was too low to report for this question.



**Measure 17: Examples of when staff were knowledgeable, of how they explained decisions well, of clients feeling able to challenge and examples of not understanding decisions, examples of why clients felt unable to challenge and Social Security Scotland action taken**

**Staff knowledge**

The majority of client interviewees said that they found staff very knowledgeable and helpful. Most noted that staff had been able to answer their queries, and that they got the answers and information that they were looking for. Client interviewees noted that staff were knowledgeable of Social Security Scotland's benefits and also offered them information that they did not ask for. They were able to tell them about other benefits they may have been entitled to or will be available through Social Security Scotland in the future.

*"The people I spoke to were amazing. They knew what I needed the answers for. And it was like, how did you know that much?"* **Client interviewee**

*"They were able to tell me to apply for Best Start Foods. I didn't know anything about that and when I phoned someone was able to tell me I was eligible. [How were they at explaining things?] Brilliant. When I called I got the answers I needed."* **Client interviewee**

However, a couple of interviewees said they wanted more information about Social Security Scotland's benefits or other support but were not offered this by staff.

One client interviewee recalled a negative experience of interacting with Social Security Scotland staff. The client was put through to a new member of staff who was not able to answer their questions or help with their query. They phoned back a second time but got the same member of staff who was still unable to help and who did not pass them onto another member of the team. Though the member of staff was apologetic and honest, this left the client feeling frustrated and the issue unresolved.





**Examples of when staff were knowledgeable, of how they explained decisions well, of clients feeling able to challenge and examples of not understanding decisions, examples of why clients felt unable to challenge and Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)**

**Understanding decisions**

Most interviewees described straightforward decisions on their applications and felt they understood the decision. Most found out about a decision by letter. Some spoke about finding out or speaking to staff about the decision. These interviewees felt that staff explained decisions clearly and compassionately.

*“They could tell me why I was rejected. I was like ‘I got the money last year though’. And they’re like ‘Yeah, we can see that but you applied too early this time.’ And I was like ‘oh I didn’t know that’. I think it’s just common sense when exactly you reapply but [I] didn’t think that.”* **Client interviewee**

*“It was understandable. There was no problems with the communication. It was clear and effective. [...] I didn’t need to ask for additional help. If the communication wasn’t clear then I would have asked somebody or telephoned the department that sent the letter. As everything was clear and easy to understand there was basically no need to disturb anybody else.”* **Client interviewee**

A few client interviewees said the decision or information they received was not clear. One interviewee described being confused about a benefit decision letter because they had made multiple applications. The letter was not clear about which application it was about. The same interviewee said they received a payment for Scottish Child Payment but did not receive a letter telling them that this would happen. Another interviewee said they were confused when they received a letter about Carer’s Allowance Supplement. The client felt unsure about why they were receiving the benefit and when. A couple of interviewees said they received a benefit payment before getting their decision letter and felt this was confusing.



**Examples of when staff were knowledgeable, of how they explained decisions well, of clients feeling able to challenge and examples of not understanding decisions, examples of why clients felt unable to challenge and Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)**

**Challenging decisions**

Some interviewees spoke of feeling unable to challenge decisions. One interviewee for example, felt that their payment for Funeral Support Payment had been calculated incorrectly. They did not feel able to challenge the decision because they were going through a bereavement and were grateful and relieved to be getting any payment.

*“That was a worry for me. I calculated the Funeral Grant I received, and I should have gotten more help. I wasn’t angry but relieved when I got the help. [So you didn’t receive an explanation as to why you got less?] At that point I was just relieved that the payment came through.”* **Client interviewee**

**Staff are well trained**

**Measure 18a:** 80% of staff respondents said their knowledge of social security in Scotland was ‘good’ or ‘very good’.

**Measure 18b:** 75% of People Survey respondents said they have the information they need to do their job well.

53 of the staff survey respondents said that they either currently interact with clients as part of their job or will do so in future. Of these:

- **Measure 19:** 74% of current and future client-facing staff respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that ‘I know about a range of advice and advocacy services that were convenient for clients’.
- **Measure 20:** 60% of current and future client-facing staff respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that ‘I know how to refer people to advice and advocacy services’.
- **Measure 21:** 57% of current and future client-facing staff respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that ‘I know enough about the re-determinations process to explain it clearly to clients’. 47% of staff respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that ‘I know enough about the appeals process to explain it clearly to clients’.

**Measure 22:** 96% of staff respondents said they were 'confident' or 'very confident' that they could deliver a service without discrimination.

**Measure 23:** 98% of People Survey respondents said they understand customers' or service users' needs.



## **Measure 24: Examples of knowledge (including knowledge of how not to discriminate) and training AND examples of more support needed by staff AND Social Security Scotland action taken**

### **Knowledge**

Most staff respondents felt confident in their job knowledge and skills. They said that training, job shadowing, having access to guidance, and receiving regular updates had helped them to feel knowledgeable and confident. They mentioned the importance of ongoing learning for having the right knowledge to do their job. Many highlighted the support they had received from colleagues and line managers in building their job knowledge.

*“Time spent in this role has helped me to build up my knowledge and skills. Support from colleagues and knowing where to seek advice and guidance when required.”* **Staff respondent**

### **Knowledge of how not to discriminate**

Staff respondents talked about receiving training sessions on discrimination and how to avoid it, as well as of developing self-awareness of their behaviours. Respondents also spoke of looking to colleagues and managers for guidance and support.

*“I have been given great training and refreshers so that I am mindful of differences [...] I always keep in mind who I work for and who I am helping. Both answers are the same: people in need. I realize the applications I either process or approve are actually people and I have to do the best I can for them. I keep in mind what I was taught on the very first day which is Dignity, Fairness and Respect. Most of my confidence comes from treating others as I would want to be treated in similar circumstances.”* **Staff respondent**

*“I have had sufficient training e.g. Unconscious Bias and I'm experienced and fully aware that no one should be discriminated against.”* **Staff respondent**



**Examples of knowledge (including knowledge of how not to discriminate) and training AND examples of more support needed by staff AND Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)**

*“Particularly my line manager who is a great example of how to treat others with dignity, fairness and respect. My wider colleagues also convey this in their day to day approach to their roles.”* **Staff respondent**

**Training**

Most staff respondents had taken part in a range of training and support activities since joining Social Security Scotland. These included: online learning courses; self-directed learning; support from colleagues and managers; demonstrations; and seminars. Training provided by Social Security Scotland covered things like understanding benefits and Our Charter. Other internal training included: how to communicate in an inclusive way; how to successfully manage other staff; and understanding diversity and discrimination. Staff respondents also mentioned training for using IT systems, security best practices, and health and safety. Some said Social Security Scotland had supported them to receive training delivered by other organisations including certified training like Modern Apprenticeships.

*“I have completed various eLearning, attended seminars and used the resources available on [the intranet] to obtain information to help me do my job more effectively.”* **Staff respondent**

**More support needed**

A couple of staff respondents said they had limited or no training for their role. Others highlighted a lack of training or support when they first joined Social Security Scotland or moved into their role. Some felt that the training they had received had been inadequate. A number of staff respondents who support clients said guidance could be improved. Some said guidance was incomplete, out-of-date or difficult to navigate.



**Examples of knowledge (including knowledge of how not to discriminate) and training AND examples of more support needed by staff AND Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)**

A few staff respondents mentioned it would be helpful to have more in-depth training to understand how Social Security Scotland operates and what different teams do. Others mentioned a need for further training and support for staff who interact with clients and are new to their role. Other needs included more training on communicating inclusively, applying Our Charter, managing change, and understanding discrimination and bias.

*“I received very general training in the first weeks but nothing that felt specific to our clients, and very little training on telephony (someone in my team explained how to do outbound calls) and web chat.”* **Staff respondent**

*“Although I have awareness of what it is, I would like to receive training on how best to communicate inclusively to as wide an audience as possible.”* **Staff respondent**

**Staff are well supported**

**Measure 25:** 82% of People Survey respondents said they had the tools they needed to do their job well.

**Measure 26:** 96% of staff respondents said they had ‘good’ or ‘very good’ support from their line manager.

**Measure 27:** 98% of staff respondents said that they ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement ‘I would speak up if I saw something that wasn’t working, or something I thought was wrong, in Social Security Scotland’.

**Measure 28:** 96% of staff respondents said they felt ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’ to deliver a service that reflects the values of a human rights-based system as set out in Our Charter.





**Measure 29: Examples of good support for staff and staff confidence AND examples of any additional staff needs, and why, those who do, lack confidence AND Social Security Scotland action taken**

**Good support for staff**

Staff respondents referred to a culture of support within Social Security Scotland. They said support was readily available and often given with kindness and a care for wellbeing. Many highlighted support from managers and felt comfortable asking for help. Support from other colleagues was also mentioned and included helping with work-related questions and monitoring wellbeing. Others said managers had been understanding about personal challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some respondents had discussed health and wellbeing needs, usually with their manager. They mentioned a range of support given including: changes to duties or working hours; medical leave; and support services such as Occupational Health and counselling. Frequent communication with colleagues and managers, and organisation-wide messages, had also helped some to feel supported during the pandemic.

*“I can be honest and open with my line manager and colleagues around me. People have reached out when they felt I was maybe not ok, or just not my usual self.”* **Staff respondent**

*“I joined Social Security Scotland shortly after the first lockdown was imposed. I was immediately welcomed by my team manager and invited to all-colleague conference calls. I had contact with my team leader every day who asked about my mental wellbeing and made sure I had all the equipment I needed to do my job.”* **Staff respondent**

**Staff confidence**

Staff respondents said they had gained confidence through the training and support they had received as part of their role. A number of respondents mentioned support from managers and colleagues had helped them to feel confident. Some respondents noted the benefits of receiving positive feedback on their performance. Others mentioned their job experience, both within Social Security Scotland and from previous employment, had helped them to feel confident in their current role.



**Examples of good support for staff and staff confidence AND examples of any additional staff needs, and why, those who do, lack confidence AND Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)**

*“The training I received when I started and the support I get from colleagues and bosses makes me feel confident to deal with anything.”* **Staff respondent**

**Additional staff needs**

Of the staff respondents who had additional needs in the past year, almost all told someone about it. Respondents described needs in three main categories: equipment to aid working from home; needs related to caring responsibilities; and needs related to health and wellbeing. Many had needed additional equipment to allow working from home including desks, chairs and monitors. A number of respondents had raised additional needs or requirements relating to caring responsibilities. Some mentioned taking care of children and providing home-schooling. A couple of respondents also mentioned caring for relatives, such as parents. Respondents were positive about the support they had received to accommodate these needs. The few who chose not to tell anyone about their needs said this was due to preferring to keep personal matters private or not feeling able to talk about it.

*“I have been grateful to have reasonable adjustments. I suffer from a chronic condition which can be exacerbated by sitting at the screen for too long. I am grateful that I have been able to work flexibly and take frequent breaks since the nature of my job has changed since being home based.”* **Staff respondent**

*“I have two young children. This impacted me and my availability for work greatly. I required adjustments to my working pattern and every request was fully accommodated.”* **Staff respondent**

*“I felt isolated working from home and unable to voice my worries and needs, mainly due to feeling like everyone is struggling so why should I be special or different or unable to cope.”* **Staff respondent**



**Examples of good support for staff and staff confidence AND examples of any additional staff needs, and why, those who do, lack confidence AND Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)**

**Lacking confidence and support**

Some staff respondents reported not feeling confident at work. Some respondents mentioned issues related to training which have been covered above in 'Staff are Well Trained'. Things that would help to make them more confident included further training, guidance and support. Some respondents felt that managers could have provided further support to help staff feel confident and supported. A couple of respondents mentioned a need for better communication about what is happening in Social Security Scotland and in the Scottish Government. Others mentioned issues about workload and an expectation to work long hours.

*"I've not had very much [training or guidance]. I feel at a loss to my duties. I feel I'm getting training a bit late and if I had had it at the beginning I would feel much more positive and confident in my job."* **Staff respondent**

*"The lack of action with long hours culture and how immediate responses need to be. The level of expectation has increased for you to be available long past what would have been normal working hours and this is being allowed to grow."* **Staff respondent**

*"Some changes/deadlines are communicated at very short notice when it is clear that they had been in the planning for a long time. It would be nice to have better sight of timelines so we can plan and signpost staff accordingly."* **Staff respondent**

## Processes that Work

### Do processes work?

#### Processes work well<sup>5</sup>

When a client has been denied a benefit and they feel they should have received it, they can request a re-determination or internal review. Job Start Payment and Best Start Foods have internal reviews, other benefits have a re-determination process. In this process, the application is assessed again by a separate team. Table 6 below shows the percentage of applications where clients requested a re-determination or internal review. This is shown as a proxy for:

**Measure 30a:** percentage of decisions deemed accurate from the first time.

**Table 6: Percentage of re-determinations/internal reviews requested by clients by benefit**

Benefit	% of re-determinations/ internal reviews 2019/20*	% of re-determinations/ internal reviews 2020/21**
Best Start Grant	0.9%	<b>1.0%</b>
Funeral Support Payment	4.1%	<b>2.7%</b>
Young Carer Grant	0.8%	<b>2.0%</b>
Job Start Payment	N/A	<b>2.7%</b>
Scottish Child Payment	N/A	<b>0.1%</b>
Best Start Foods	0.3%	<b>0.3%</b>

\*Source - [Measuring Our Charter 2019/20](#).

\*\* Source - Official Statistics, see Annex A for more details.

<sup>5</sup> This section of the Charter Measurement Framework also included “X percentage of clients paid on time from the first time” and “X percentage of clients paid correct amount from the first time.” These were both covered above in the ‘A People’s Service’ section.

**Measure 30b:** percentage of re-determinations allowed is in the table below:

**Table 7: Outcomes of re-determinations by benefit 2020/21**

Benefit	2019-20*			2020-21**		
	Disallowed	Allowed/ Partially allowed	Withdrawn	Disallowed	Allowed/ Partially allowed	Withdrawn
Best Start Grant	55%	26%	18%	38%	<b>18%</b>	44%
Funeral Support Payment	49%	46%	5%	44%	<b>43%</b>	13%
Young Carer Grant	36%	27%	36%	32%	<b>52%</b>	15%
Job Start Payment	N/A	N/A	N/A	64%	<b>27%</b>	9%
Scottish Child Payment	N/A	N/A	N/A	25%	<b>25%</b>	49%
Best Start Foods	43%	50%	7%	40%	<b>38%</b>	22%

\*Source - [Measuring Our Charter 2019/20](#).

\*\* Source - Official Statistics, see Annex A for more details.

A disallowed re-determination request is one that is accepted as valid, but payment has been rejected as the criteria for a payment has not been met. Allowed means that the client has been awarded the payment as they requested. Partially allowed means that the client was awarded part of what was requested in the re-determination. Withdrawn means that the client withdrew the re-determination request and decided not to escalate further. Any requests judged to be invalid requests are not included in the statistics.

**Measure 31a:** percentage of applications processed within 10 working days is in the table below<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 8: Percentage of applications processed within 10 working days**

Benefit	% of applications processed within 10 working days	
	2019-20*	2020-21**
Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods	57%	<b>23%</b>
Funeral Support Payment	61%	<b>52%</b>
Young Carer Grant	30%	<b>41%</b>
Job Start Payment	n/a	<b>74%</b>
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	<b>6%</b>

\*Source - [Measuring Our Charter 2019/20](#).

\*\* Source - Official Statistics, see Annex A for more details.

Please note that these processing times include time spent waiting to receive evidence requested from clients, but does not include additional time to make payments.

**Measure 31b:** percentage of clients paid on time from the first time and **Measure 32:** percentage of clients paid correct amount from the first time were covered by measures 12 and 13 above.

**Measure 33:** percentage of re-determinations completed on time is in the table below:

<sup>6</sup> Funeral Support Payment is the only one of these benefit where Social Security Scotland have said it should be paid within 10 days of application.

**Table 9: Percentages of re-determinations/internal reviews processed within 16 working days<sup>7</sup>**

Benefit	% of re-determinations/internal reviews processed within 16 working days	
	2019-20*	2020-21**
Best Start Grant	97%	<b>93%</b>
Funeral Support Payment	95%	<b>83%</b>
Young Carer Grant	100%	<b>91%</b>
Job Start Payment	N/A	<b>93%</b>
Scottish Child Payment	N/A	<b>97%</b>
Best Start Foods	87%	<b>84%</b>

\*Source - [Measuring Our Charter 2019/20](#).

\*\* Source - Official Statistics, see Annex A for more details.

### Measure 34: Call waiting times

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.

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 Carer's Allowance Supplement to an average of 15 minutes and 30 seconds for Scottish Child Payment.

<sup>7</sup> Where a re-determination was not closed within 16 working days, a further 5 day extension was agreed with the client or it was subject to a Coronavirus related extension permitted under the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 legislation that came into force on 7 April 2020.

**Table 10: 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
<b>All Queues</b>	<b>00:10:58</b>

\*Source - Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings April 2020 to the end of March 2021





### **Measure 35: Examples of reasons for re-determination and why or why not decision was changed, examples of re-determination process from client and staff points of view**

#### **Reasons for re-determinations**

Client Experience staff participants were asked about the reasons why clients wanted their decision to be looked at again. Participants said the reasons differed by benefit type. Reasons for Best Start Grant and Foods re-determinations included clients having applied outside of the application time window, or a lack of evidence that the client was the main carer of the child. Some clients were confused about Best Start Grant and Foods being combined in one application and had asked for a re-determination where part of the application was denied. Other reasons for Best Start re-determinations included clients being over the income threshold at the point of application due to a one-off financial situation, such as being mistakenly paid twice by their employer.

Reasons for Funeral Support Payment re-determinations included the client not meeting the eligibility criteria as the closest relative of the deceased, or applying for ineligible funeral costs. Some clients felt the payment was too low in comparison to the total cost of the funeral. Others challenged the decision where a denial had been made on the basis that other funds were already in place to help pay funeral costs.

A common reason for Job Start Payment re-determinations was clients not stating their care-leaver status in the initial application and not realising that this would help to clarify their eligibility for the benefit. Other reasons included the client not being out of work for 6 months at the time of the job offer, or looking like they had an income on paper due to a one-off financial situation.

Client Experience staff participants said re-determinations are often withdrawn by the client before Social Security Scotland has a chance to complete a review. They cited clients having made more than one application for the same benefit as one of the main reasons for withdrawing a re-determination.

*“For Best Start Foods, clients were over the threshold income when they applied and it turns out that sometimes they’re not [over the threshold]. It’s been a redundancy payment that has been taken off them again or they’ve been paid twice by their employer and it’s been taken back from them.”* **Client Experience staff participant**



### Examples of reasons for re-determination and why or why not decision was changed, examples of re-determination process from client and staff points of view (continued)

*“Clients will say things like ‘You’ve given me £3000 but the funeral cost £6000’. Or the request could be relating to costs that we don’t cover like flowers or a memorial stone. Things like that, that are outwith what we can help them to pay for. So clients will come back after a decision and say ‘I’ve incurred far more costs than what you’re willing to pay so I’d like you to look at the decision again.’”* **Client Experience staff participant**

#### Why decisions were or were not changed

Client Experience staff participants spoke of several instances where a decision was changed following a re-determination. These included cases where staff had overlooked an evidence attachment; where there had been a misunderstanding about a client’s financial situation; and where clients started to receive qualifying benefits soon after submitting their application thus becoming eligible for the payment. Reasons for not changing a decision after a re-determination included clients not meeting the eligibility criteria for the benefit. Decisions were also upheld where a client had applied outside of the application window. In these cases, Client Experience staff participants said that the majority of clients were happy to be told to make another application within the right timeframe.

*“Usually it’s down to a backdated award. So they’ve applied for the qualifying benefit but they just haven’t received it at the time of the application.”* **Client Experience staff participant**

#### Examples of the re-determination process

Client Experience staff participants felt the re-determinations process had been reasonably smooth and efficient from an operational perspective. However, they said internal systems, such as those used to manage client cases, sometimes made the process more complicated for staff. They also highlighted the comprehensive nature of the re-determinations process from a staff point of view. This included checking clients’ eligibility for other Social Security Scotland benefits when new evidence emerges during a re-determination. Participants felt that this was a positive part of the process that could serve to help clients.



### **Examples of reasons for re-determination and why or why not decision was changed, examples of re-determination process from client and staff points of view (continued)**

Client Experience staff participants said the re-determinations process has been designed to make things simple and straightforward for clients. For example, clients receive the re-determinations form with their decision letter and are encouraged to challenge the decision if they disagree with it. However, this has occasionally caused confusion amongst clients with some completing the form even if they agree with the decision as they believe the form is mandatory.

Other examples of making the process easy and comfortable for clients included the option for clients to request a re-determination by telephone rather than paper form, and providing updates and new decisions by telephone during the re-determination process. Participants felt that being able to deliver the new decision to the client over the phone helped make the service more courteous and personal. One respondent mentioned that online communication options were not yet available for re-determinations but were in development for future use.

*“From a staff point of view, the processing of re-determinations is not always a bed of roses with [the internal system] and the processes we have in place are not the simplest sometimes. But as far as putting them through and getting them done, there’s very few that we have missed the target of 16 days on.”*

**Client Experience staff participant**

*“In terms of passing outcomes back to clients, in Client Experience we’re quite privileged because we have time to be able to communicate with clients. So it’s really on a one to one basis. We send letters out to give them a decision but depending on the circumstances we can also phone them about their decision as well as sending a letter. We might also do an additional phone call just depending on whether you’ve spoken to a client and how the conversation has gone. If they were distressed about a payment, for example, or concerned. Rather than them just getting a letter we often phone the client as well to give them the decision as soon as it’s been made.”* **Client Experience staff participant**



**Examples of reasons for re-determination and why or why not decision was changed, examples of re-determination process from client and staff points of view (continued)**

However, one client interviewee had a negative experience when they asked for their Best Start Grant School Age Payment decision to be looked at again after their re-determination. The interviewee described the experience as stressful and said they did not know what to expect from this process.

*“I spoke to people that said that I ... I can’t remember... that there would be a judge or something [...] I don’t actually think I got any information from [Social Security] Scotland. I think it was like ‘you can have a tribunal if you like’, but I don’t think it was how we would have a tribunal. [...] After that I just left it, I didn’t really see there was any point because I got everything across that I wanted to before the tribunal anyway. So I wish they’d told me how it would’ve went, if not for me then for other people who have to apply through third parties.”* **Client interviewee**

**Measure 36: Appeals upheld or rejected**

(Source - Official Statistics, see Annex A for more details.)

In 2020-21, 15 appeals were received for Funeral Support Payment and 20 appeals were completed. Of these completed appeals, 61% were not upheld.

In 2020-21, 20 appeals went to hearing for Best Start Grant. Of these, the original decision was upheld in the vast majority of cases. In fewer than 5 cases, the original decision was not upheld. Exact information on appeal outcomes has been suppressed to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

In 2020-21, a small number of appeals were received for Scottish Child Payment and Young Carer Grant. This number has not been published to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

Job Start Payment and Best Start Foods do not have a statutory right of appeal. This means that they do not have a re-determination or appeal process and only internal reviews are conducted.



**Measure 37: Examples of reasons for appeals and why or why not upheld, examples of appeals process for positive and negative (if any) outcomes AND Social Security Scotland action taken**

In their responses, Client Experience staff participants focused on re-determinations and internal reviews rather than on appeals. The low volume of appeals in 2020-21 meant that clients could have been unintentionally identified in examples. Evidence on appeals will be revisited in future when the volume of appeals has increased to a high enough level.

**Measure 38: Positive AND negative (if any) feedback from organisations who work with client groups on how they think the service is working AND Social Security Scotland action taken**

Partner organisation respondents were asked a series of questions about Social Security Scotland's service. Most respondents were positive about the service in general, with ten out of twelve rating the service as good or very good.

Partner respondents were asked if they had ever supported clients to apply for Social Security Scotland benefits. Eleven respondents stated that they had, and were asked a series of more specific questions about their experience of this. Of those eleven, nine said that looking up or making contact with Social Security Scotland with or for clients was easy or very easy. Ten respondents rated going through the application process with or for clients as easy or very easy.

When asked to make further comments about what Social Security Scotland had done well when delivering the service, respondents felt that the benefit application process was quick and easy. Other respondents felt that Social Security Scotland had done well in providing up to date and accessible information about the service to both potential clients and partner organisations. This was particularly in relation to the roll out of new benefits. Respondents also thought Social Security Scotland had done well by putting the principles of dignity, fairness and respect into the service, as felt through interactions with clients and partners.

*"Easy literature and easy claiming process"* **Partner organisation respondent**

**Positive AND negative (if any) feedback from organisations who work with client groups on how they think the service is working AND Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)**

Respondents were then asked to make comments about what Social Security Scotland could have done better when delivering the service. Of seven responses, a few said Social Security Scotland could improve advertising and raise awareness of the benefits and service they provide. This was to improve uptake among potential clients. Other respondents commented on the need to speed up the service delivery, by rolling out all disability benefits. One respondent felt that Social Security Scotland lacked presence in the Highlands and other rural areas.

*“Better circulation of their publications including third sector organisations websites and places like Mumsnet.”* **Partner organisation respondent**

## **How accessible are services and places?**

### **Services are accessible**

61% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of those:

- **Measure 39:** 94% ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that application process was clear.
- **Measure 40:** 92% ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the application form asked only relevant questions.

**Table 11: Client Survey respondents' views on application, by benefit**

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit; % who answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Benefit experience	The application process was clear	The application asked only relevant questions
Best Start Grant/ Foods applicants (n=4,891-4,921)	94%	92%
Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=472-485)	90%	88%
Young Carer Grant applicants (n=212-214)	92%	91%
Scottish Child Payment applicants (n=4,593-4,623)	95%	93%
Job Start Grant (n=31)	77%	74%

**Measure 41:** 100% of Social Security Scotland documents are available on request in accessible formats (braille, Easy Read, large print, non-English languages including British Sign Language and audio recordings) and marketing and communication materials and the Charter are produced in ten languages. (Source: Social Security Scotland communications team)

7% of Client Survey respondents said they had experienced some sort of barrier when getting help from Social Security Scotland. Just over half of those who experienced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland about them (53%).

**Measure 42:** ("percentage of clients say staff adapted to enable them where they faced barriers to accessing services") Where respondents had told Social Security Scotland about the barriers they experienced, around two-in-five 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland 'understood them' (38%). A similar proportion 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland 'supported [them] in overcoming them' (35%) (these numbers are too small to break down by benefit).

**Measure 43:** (percentage of clients said that staff addressed the communication barriers they faced) – this is covered in part by measure 42. In future years we will



be able to look at these findings for Client Survey respondents who have said they have a communication barrier. The first Client Survey asked an open question on type of barrier. This is being used to develop a list of types of barriers for respondents to choose from in future. This will allow separate analysis of communication barriers. We are currently testing questions on this for the next Client Survey.

**Measure 44:** 85% of Client Survey respondents who had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that their application was handled within a reasonable time frame. Respondents aged 55 and over were more likely to say their application was handled in a reasonable time frame (92% compared to 86% of respondents aged 16-54).

**Measure 45:** 89% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that their time was not wasted.

**Table 12: Client Survey respondents' views on use of their time, by benefit**  
All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit/  
All respondents with experience of each benefit; % who answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Benefit experience	My application was handled within a reasonable time frame	Social Security Scotland did not waste my time
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=4,050)	n/a	87%
Best Start Grant/ Foods applicants (n=4,891-4,921)	85%	91%
Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=472-485)	90%	90%
Young Carer Grant applicants (n=212-214)	88%	95%
Scottish Child Payment applicants (n=4,593-4,623)	86%	92%
Job Start Grant applicants (n=30-31)	81%	94%
Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients (n=769)	n/a	88%



**Measure 46:** (percentage of clients that required extra support said they were referred to relevant support) Respondents who had been in contact with a member of staff were asked whether they were told about other benefits they might have been entitled to or other sources of additional help. Of these:

- 44% said staff had told them about other benefits they might have been entitled to. 38% said that they would have liked to have been told about other benefits by staff but were not.
- 41% said staff had told them about other sources of additional help (for example Citizens Advice Scotland, etc.). 36% said that they would have liked to have been told about other sources of help by staff but were not.

**Measure 47:** 89% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they had enough choice in how they communicated with Social Security Scotland. Respondents who said they had a long term health condition were less like to agree (86%) than people without a long term health condition (91%).

**Measure 48:** 88% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they had enough choice of how the agency communicated with them. Older age groups less often agreed with this than younger age groups, from 80% for those aged 65 and over, to 91% for 16-34 year olds.

**Table 13: Client Survey respondents' views on communication, by benefit\***

All respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; % who answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree'

Benefit experience	I had enough choice about how I communicated with Social Security Scotland	I had enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with me
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=1,943)	86%	85%
Best Start Grant/Foods applicants (n=3,378)	91%	91%
Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=343)	86%	90%
Young Carer Grant applicants (n=130)	92%	92%
Scottish Child Payment applicants (n=3,135)	92%	91%
Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients (n=421)	87%	85%

**Measure 49:** 'X percentage of clients that challenge a decision who already have payments continue to receive their payments.' This measure refers to Short-term Assistance, which clients can apply for whilst challenging a determination which reduced or stopped their ongoing payments. The value payable of Short-term Assistance is the difference between the level of a benefit paid under an earlier decision and the level of a benefit paid after review. Short-term Assistance was not yet available in 2020-21. It will be available for the first time with Child Disability Payment.



**Measure 50: Examples of positive AND negative (if any) experiences of accessibility (how clients were enabled) AND Social Security Scotland action taken**

**Positive experience of accessibility and how clients were enabled**

Many client interviewees talked positively about communicating with or receiving communications from Social Security Scotland. They said letters and the website were easy to understand and described the language and layout as simple and straightforward. One interviewee said they received communications that had been tailored to meet their particular accessibility needs.

*“In comparison to correspondence I’ve had from, say, Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs and things that are outwith Scotland, where you get a letter and you read the letter and you don’t really understand where the stuff has come from and you end up having to make a phone call off the back of it because you don’t understand it. Whereas all the stuff from Social Security Scotland is different. Everything is explained really clearly and it’s... it’s just plain language but also they’re explaining why they’re doing something and here’s [what to do] if you have questions, but you never do. I think it’s just a more modern approach to communication even though it’s a huge big organisation, but it doesn’t come across as one compared to the likes of Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs which is a bit intimidating.”* **Client interviewee**

*“Anything that I’ve put forward, like if you need an interpreter, it’s available. If you need British Sign Language it’s available. We’ve had Easy Read forms, we’ve had information if you need it in a larger print. So from an accessibility point of view, no problems. The video, we have a slow connection but we’re still able to communicate. And if video conferencing is the way forward then great, and I hope it is.”* **Client interviewee**

*“The website and online form are really user friendly. It’s laid out in a really simple straightforward way so that there’s nothing confusing about it.”* **Client interviewee**



### **Examples of positive AND negative (if any) experiences of accessibility (how clients were enabled) AND Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)**

Client interviewees also spoke about the ease with which they were able to access information about Social Security Scotland's services. Some described the website as being informative and easy to use. This enabled clients to access other parts of the service such as finding a contact number or applying for a benefit.

Interviewees also said the application process was 'straightforward' and 'easy', whether it was online, paper or over the phone.

A few client interviewees talked about finding out information and communicating with Social Security Scotland through social media. This was helpful because it allowed them to be kept about to date about benefits on platforms they already use.

*"I found it online, it was easy enough. They've also got a Facebook page which helps. I think that was where I first saw it. It was the Scottish Child Payment and I'm sure they had a link on the Facebook page to apply for it there which helped. [...] It's handy, especially for somebody like me. I communicate to some of my family through Facebook. So if I'm scrolling through and it comes up, I go 'Oh yeah, that's right' and it's a reminder."* **Client interviewee**

Most partner organisation respondents (nine out of eleven) said they thought the service provided by Social Security Scotland had been accessible for clients. Respondents said that clear, accessible information provided on the website and the ability to apply for a benefit online were positive examples of accessibility.

*"Majority of clients so far have been accessing the Young Carer's Grant and have applied online with guidance. There have been no significant issues reported which is suggestive that in general things are working well."* **Partner organisation respondent**



## Examples of positive AND negative (if any) experiences of accessibility (how clients were enabled) AND Social Security Scotland action taken (continued)

### Negative experiences of accessibility

One client interviewee expressed difficulty with understanding the information in guidance, letters and application forms. The interviewee felt this was a barrier to them accessing Social Security Scotland's services.

*"Basically I couldn't understand a word of it, because of my [condition]. And my Mum, I normally delegate filling out all the forms to her but this one I kind of wanted to do myself. And I had to get her help because some of the words were not as easy to understand as others. So maybe making the words easier to understand."* **Client interviewee**

When client interviewees were asked if they had been able to communicate with Social Security Scotland using their preferred method, the most common feedback was that it would be helpful to receive information via email rather than post (more on this below). There was also an appetite for video calls and web chat.

*"It's about time we did video calls and email contact. Or WhatsApp messaging or other messaging services. It's how people with disabilities are more able to contact. Some people can't fill in the form. Some people have difficulties in using the telephone and we should have all methods available for them and I feel Social Security Scotland has the ability to contact by email. Even the [web] contact form is better."* **Client interviewee**

Staff respondents felt that the service could be made more accessible and inclusive for clients. This was because particular services were not available to staff to help meet clients' needs or because staff weren't confident using the services which were available. Some of these respondents said interactive, practical and more localised training would provide them with greater confidence to communicate with and enable clients in line with their needs.

One example of staff respondents feeling unsure or unable to meet clients' accessibility needs was the translation processes for clients whose preferred language is not English. While one staff respondent felt the service was 'easy to use', others said that processes were misunderstood among staff. There also

appeared to be some confusion among respondents about what letters could be translated into other languages.

Two partner organisation respondents rated the service as 'not at all' accessible. Respondents noted occasions of digital exclusion as negative examples of accessibility. Respondents were asked if Social Security Scotland had addressed this accessibility issue. On both occasions, the respondent said they or their organisation addressed the situation themselves.

*"I contacted [Social Security Scotland] regarding completing a paper form at a house visit and the person on the phone kept saying it would be better if the client did it online even though I had explained several times that the client had no access to the online form and had learning difficulties [...] I obtained a paper form, completed it, and it was processed and paid."* **Partner organisation respondent**

### Places are accessible and convenient

These measures will become relevant with the launch of local delivery services. We will be able to report on this from next year:

- **Measure 51:** X percentage of social security offices pass the accessibility checklist (Checklist to be agreed by disabled people with lived experience).
- **Measure 52:** X percentage of clients said it was convenient to get access to social security places and services.

## How is the consultation<sup>8</sup> process for benefits for disabled people (and people with health conditions) working for clients?

### The consultation process for benefits for disabled people (and people with health conditions) minimises stress for clients

These measures will become relevant with the launch of Adult Disability Payment. We will begin reporting on this when enough Adult Disability Payment clients have responded to these questions in the Client Survey:

- **Measure 53:** X percentage of people who needed a consultation for benefits for disabled people (and people with long term health conditions) said they felt the assessment was necessary because the information needed to find out if they were eligible was not otherwise accessible to Social Security Scotland.
- **Measure 54:** X percentage of people who had a consultation for disabled people's benefits said the assessment was carried out by appropriately qualified staff.
- **Measure 55:** Case studies on all aspects of the consultation process and results of the process; including in-depth assessment of how client wellbeing was protected and prioritised.

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<sup>8</sup> This section referred to 'face to face assessments' in the original Charter Measurement Framework. This is the language used by the Department of Work and Pensions for Personal Independence Payment. When Adult Disability Payment launches in Scotland to replace Personal Independence Payment, there will not be face to face assessments, but some applicants will be asked to a consultation.

## A Learning System

### To what extent is Social Security Scotland a learning organisation?

#### Social Security Scotland uses feedback to improve performance

##### Measure 56: Qualitative evidence on any additional support Social Security Scotland can put in place for clients

###### Process suggestions

Some interviewees said that email was their preferred communication method and would make it easier for them and others to interact with Social Security Scotland. Staff respondents made similar comments.

*"I think the way forward would be an email avenue for sending emails back and forward. It's quicker and it's secure as can be. It can be done anywhere in the world, or anywhere in Scotland. So if I do go on a small break or I get a respite, I don't need to be in the house to receive it. I can answer it on my email. But if I'm away the letter would sit unread and that might bypass a date or a response. Whereas if I got an email I can do it right away. If I've got a question someone can pick the email up. [...] How I would know it's Social Security Scotland [emailing me]? I would know because of the logos and because of the email address."* **Client interviewee**

*"Clients would prefer an email address to send documents to Social Security Scotland rather than downloading. Some clients only manage to send one page of a document rather than several that are required."* **Staff respondent**

Other interviewees had specific improvement ideas for the online application process. Suggestions included web chat support specifically for completing the form, and a reference number after submitting. One interviewee suggested an online portal for clients to provide updated personal information and find out more about their specific eligibility. This could include prompts to encourage people to apply for benefits they are entitled to.





### Qualitative evidence on any additional support Social Security Scotland can put in place for clients (continued)

*"I'll say the only thing when I completed the application online and submitted it, I didn't get a reference number or a confirmation email or anything like that. So, although you get the screen saying it's been submitted I had nothing to take a note of, or a reference number or a confirmation email or even a text message...I wasn't too worried about it but I suppose I would've preferred to have something that if I had needed to phone up about it I could have given, like say a reference number."* **Client interviewee**

#### Information

A few client interviewees and staff respondents suggested providing clients with additional support through clearer information on eligibility, specifically criteria and key dates.

*"I got a letter last month saying it will be stopping, but they don't say how long you'll get and whether it includes the day of the birthday. That would be something [to add] if that makes sense. Because the way some of the birthdays fall, my [daughter's] is kind of at the end of August and you don't know if you're going to be paid for the week of the sixth birthday or if you get it for the week before."* **Client interviewee**

#### Support for particular groups

Some client interviewees suggested that additional support could be put in place for particular groups of clients. This could involve targeted communications and extra information for people in vulnerable positions for example, elderly people and people whose preferred language is not English. As discussed, staff respondents raised the need to improve the translation service for clients and internal processes for staff.

*"They have quite a lot of options on the website. They do say on the website that if English is not your first language you can get an interpreter. But if someone doesn't understand English at all and can't read English it's not that much of a difference. If you can't read English they won't know what that one was for."* **Client interviewee**



### Measure 57: Examples of You said: We did

Some staff respondents provided clear instances of times when feedback led to an improvement. This included suggestions about internal staff processes as well as ways to improve the service for clients. For example, one respondent talked about making a suggestion to improve data security, whilst another described improvements to staff working patterns.

*“As the area of work I am involved in is relatively new there have been several times over the past year where suggestions have been made involving security checks [...] A more robust checking regime was required. This was devised and incorporated into the client advisor role [...] There are more robust checks now in place and security around clients’ personal details.”* **Staff respondent**

Other staff respondents talked about providing suggestions to improve the client experience, for example, working with other colleagues to review information and policy, as well as improve benefit take up.

*“Young carers are often too frightened to claim Young Carer Grant in case their cared for person will lose their Department for Work and Pensions benefits [...] I spoke to the Communications Team who immediately took this forward and issued a clear message on social media. I spoke with colleagues in Operations who advised the clients / stakeholders to ensure applications were submitted. If any information was missing then they would investigate any missing evidence. As a result of this, 3 young carers received their Young Carer Grant which was amazing.”* **Staff respondent**

*“I realised that Cold Weather Heating Allowance was not helping some families with very disabled young people as they were receiving Personal Independence Payment not Disability Living Allowance. I took this to Scottish Government Legal Directorate and Policy. Many meetings were held, and outside Counsel's opinion was sought. A review of the Policy and Regulations is underway. I have been kept informed.”* **Staff respondent**



### Examples of You said: We did (continued)

*“Clients will sometimes suggest that guidance on our website or the MyGov site should be improved when providing benefit specific information. These would be [fed back] to our policy and communication colleagues. In some cases action has been taken to improve the guidance, where the information is not clear or causing confusion.” Staff respondent*

Some staff respondents provided examples of times when they provided feedback but were not clear on whether this led to an improvement.

*“I have had a couple of clients ask me for letters to be sent in formats that are easier to read for dyslexic people. I told my line manager in a discussion session on improvements that could be made. He reported it to a performance manager. To my knowledge nothing has been done.” Staff respondent*

*“A client advisor raised problems with the introduction of policy changes in a senior management call [...] Senior management listened to the client advisor and arranged a meeting with them to go over the issues and produce a plan of action [...] [There have been] no immediate improvements as of yet but the issues were large and wide-ranging. Management did agree to start a consultation into them and get back to the client advisor when they had concrete proposals.” Staff respondent*

*“Q. Have you been aware of any situations where a client, staff member or stakeholder had a suggestion about how Social Security Scotland could improve?*

*Wrong information in guidance, contradictory and misleading for client advisors.*

*Q. Who was told and what was done about it?*

*Feedback left and escalated through management.*

*Q. Can you tell us whether anything has improved as a result?*

*Still awaiting guidance amendments.” Staff respondent*

### Examples of You said: We did (continued)

A few staff respondents similarly commented that their suggestions had not been actioned because there is a 'backlog' of improvements which take priority, or because they felt that the suggestions were not taken on board.

Eight out of eleven partner organisation respondents said they had given Social Security Scotland feedback about how they could improve. Two respondents said they did not know how to give feedback. Respondents were asked about the situation in which they had given feedback and about whether Social Security Scotland acted on this feedback. Most said they provided feedback on a range of different issues through the official stakeholder reference groups and felt that their suggestions had been acted on.

*"We have given feedback on a range of issues including accessible communications, staff recruitment and equalities training, mainstreaming, reporting and action planning [...] In all instances we have received acknowledgement of feedback and been updated on how this has been acted upon."* **Partner organisation respondent**

A few respondents noted their involvement in research and user testing.

*"I was involved in customer testing the website development [...] Accessibility tweaks were made."* **Partner organisation respondent**

Only one respondent said that they had provided feedback about Social Security Scotland's service and felt that the organisation had not acted on this feedback.

*"Inexperienced staff, unrealistic expectations about the potential service. Urban biased service design [...] Deflection and no recognition of the issue."* **Partner organisation respondent**

Client Experience staff participants were asked about examples where a suggestion or complaint had led to changes in the way Social Security Scotland operates. They said client feedback and complaints had led to changes to the website and updates to the telephony script with a shorter message and no duplication of information. They also mentioned more generally that feedback and

complaints can highlight training gaps among staff which are then dealt with by managers.

### Measure 58: Staff diversity statistics

The diversity characteristics of the Social Security Scotland workforce (directly employed only, source: Social Security Scotland quarterly workforce publications) are outlined in the following tables.

Some protected characteristics reported in the Official Statistics are voluntarily provided by staff. If staff have not yet updated this information on the HR system, where the Official Statistics are drawn from, it has resulted with staff being reported in the 'unknown' category within the statistics.

**Table 14: Gender of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland**

Gender	% of staff	
	2019-20	2020-21
Female	60.7%	57.7%
Male	39.3%	42.3%

**Table 15: Age of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland**

Age in years	% of staff	
	2019-20	2020-21
16-19	2.7%	0.9%
20-29	20.0%	21.5%
30-39	29.0%	27.5%
40-49	25.5%	26.3%
50-59	20.7%	21.0%
60-64	*	2.2%
65 and over	*	0.7%

\*Suppressed due to low numbers.

**Table 16: Disability of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland**

Disability	% of staff	
	2019-20	2020-21
Disabled	10.8%	10.7%
Not disabled	59.3%	58.5%
Prefer not to say	1.5%	2.1%
Unknown	28.4%	28.7%

**Table 17: Ethnicity of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland**

Ethnicity	% of staff	
	2019-20	2020-21
Ethnic minority	2.7%	3.3%
White	82.9%	77.2%
Prefer not to say	0.0%	0.7%
Unknown	14.4%	18.8%

**Table 18: Religion or belief of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland**

Religion or belief	% of staff	
	2019-20	2020-21
None	51.8%	46.9%
Church of Scotland	9.9%	10.0%
Roman Catholic	14.9%	14.2%
Other Christian	4.2%	4.1%
Other religion or belief	2.9%	2.9%
Prefer not to say	1.7%	2.9%
Unknown	14.7%	18.9%

**Table 19: Sexual orientation of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland**

Sexual orientation	% of staff	
	2019-20	2020-21
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, other	6.2%	6.5%
Heterosexual/straight	76.9%	71.5%
Prefer not to say	0.2%	2.9%
Unknown	14.9%	19.1%

**Table 20: Marital/civil partnership status of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland**

Marital/civil partnership status	% of staff	
	2019-20	2020-21
Married/civil partnership	19.5%	20.7%
Single	5.4%	7.0%
Other	5.3%	5.3%
Prefer not to say	0.2%	0.7%
Unknown	69.7%	66.4%





### Measure 59: Examples of acknowledgment of mistakes

One client interviewee described when she had been overpaid by Social Security Scotland. She felt it was open and honest that she was sent a letter stating that this had happened in Social Security Scotland's error. This interviewee also felt trusted, valued and respected.

*"It was all detailed in a letter. It said that I'd been paid something twice, and it clarified that it was an error on the part of Social Security Scotland and they won't be asking [me] to pay this back. So, yeah it was all really really clear in letting me know. [...] I just thought it was really well handled because obviously mistakes do happen. But I just really appreciated that it wasn't a situation that I was blamed for. You know like, there wasn't a suggestion that I had done anything wrong. It was just really straightforward like 'this happened but don't worry about it, this is our fault and there's no need for you to do something'. I did really appreciate that I wasn't asked to pay [it] back. [...] Yeah, it really confirmed the feeling that I had with all the interactions that I just sort of trust the organisation and I feel valued and respected. And I think you used the word 'trusted' which is a really good way of putting it because I think that's not always the case with benefits and that's a really good example of me being trusted and not being sort of blamed for having an overpayment or made to feel I had done something wrong. It just confirmed my positive experience with the organisation. It made me feel like I'm in good hands and if I need support in the future, it's going to be there. It's not going to be a grudge [...] I just feel I'm in good hands."* **Client interviewee**

Client Experience staff participants gave an example where a client had applied for Best Start Grant but was too late to apply. They were initially advised to follow up a different resolution which came to nothing. The client would have preferred to be told the truth that they were too late to apply for the benefit. At the end of the process, the client was angry and upset that the situation had been drawn out instead of being told the truth straight away. Social Security Scotland acknowledged the mistake and apologised to the client.



### Examples of acknowledgment of mistakes (continued)

*“I think the client had been told what they wanted to hear rather than what they needed to hear. The client said they would have appreciated being told the honest truth on day one that ‘unfortunately you’re too late to apply, we don’t have any leeway and I’m really sorry we can’t pay this to you’. The client felt they would have accepted that. But instead they had been encouraged by staff to keep pursuing a different resolution which unfortunately was never going to happen. In the end there was not much we could do for that client other than apologise and make sure going forward it doesn’t happen to them or another client in future. But the client didn’t want apologies and were past apologies by that stage. They were angry and disappointed.”* **Client Experience staff participant**

In another example, Client Experience staff participants mentioned that a client had uploaded the required evidence initially but Social Security Scotland staff had accidentally overlooked an attachment when reviewing the application. The application was denied due to missing evidence and the client asked for the decision to be looked at again. Staff checked the evidence and changed the decision upon realising their mistake. They then informed the participant of the error and new decision via telephone.

*“The reason we denied the application was because the client hadn’t provided any evidence to show that she was pregnant. When she asked for a re-determination she said she did provide evidence as attachments to her application. When I went in and checked the application, the attachment was there and it was all valid. So if someone had looked at the attachments at the application stage they would have seen the evidence. She got awarded after the re-determination. But that’s what it was. We hadn’t looked. It was there and she had provided evidence from day one. It had just been overlooked for whatever reason and we had denied her saying there was no evidence. So we changed the decision for her and she was happy with that. I phoned her up and let her know that ‘yeah you’re going to get this’. It’s just common courtesy and she was happy I’d taken the time to phone her. And I said a letter will come out explaining everything. I gave her my name and said to call the contact number on the letter and ask for me if she had any questions.”* **Client Experience staff participant**



### Examples of acknowledgment of mistakes (continued)

Partner organisation respondents were asked if they were aware of any mistakes made by Social Security Scotland. Two of twelve respondents said they were aware of a mistake. These respondents were asked what the mistake was, if they told Social Security Scotland that they had noticed a mistake and whether Social Security Scotland acknowledged the mistake. Only one respondent provided this additional information, describing an occasion when a benefit was disallowed by mistake. The application was looked at again and the benefit awarded.

*“Funeral Payment [was] refused in error [...] Decision was looked at again and payment awarded.”* **Partner organisation respondent**

### Measure 60: Qualitative evidence on client experience of the complaints and feedback process\*

Client interviewees were asked about their experiences of the feedback and complaints process. Very few interviewees said that they had experience of this. Interviewees explained that they had nothing to comment on, or that even when things did not work the way they had expected them to, they did not feel the need to feed this back to Social Security Scotland. Some of the reasons for this included the issue being minor, not wanting to get a staff member into trouble or not knowing the best way to give feedback.

Clients are able to provide feedback or complain to Social Security Scotland online, over the phone or via post. A few interviewees explained that they had given feedback in other ways. One client interviewee made suggestions through a survey from Social Security Scotland because they did not feel a formal complaint was necessary. This was because a staff member was not able to answer their query over the phone on two separate occasions. Another respondent said that they had provided suggestions on an appeal form because they had not been aware there was a formal way to provide Social Security Scotland with comments or complaints. This interviewee provided feedback about eligibility rules.

*“I didn’t make a complaint but I got a questionnaire thing through, I think in an email or a text. I said [there] that after speaking to someone that they had no clue about the benefit that I had phoned up about and I had more knowledge than them. But I never made an actual complaint. [...] Because they were obviously new and it wasn’t her fault and there was no point in getting them in any trouble.”* **Client interviewee**



### **Qualitative evidence on client experience of the complaints and feedback process (continued)\***

Client Experience staff participants were asked about how the complaints process works for clients. Client Experience Officers often speak to clients directly during the complaints process. Participants said that clients have generally appreciated the personal contact with a Client Experience Officer during the complaints process and having a staff member listen to their complaint.

*“In Client Experience, when we start to speak to a client about their complaint most of the time they are really happy that you’re actually speaking to them directly. They’re happy that you’ve acknowledged why they’re complaining and you’ve told them what you’re going to do. You’ve given them the timeline of what will happen next and you’ve taken accountability for dealing with the complaint. I think that really does help the client in terms of restoring their faith in Social Security Scotland. Clients might have been passed from pillar to post and they’re just happy when someone eventually speaks to them.”* **Client Experience staff participant**

\*The original Framework had this listed as separate measures for feedback and complaints. These have been brought together into one box as not many clients who took part in the research had experience of either.

### **Clients and organisations that work with them see Social Security Scotland as a trustworthy organisation**

**Measure 61:** 74% of Client Survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that Social Security Scotland was an open organisation.

**Measure 62:** 83% of Client Survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that Social Security Scotland was an honest organisation.

**Table 21: Client Survey respondents' views on openness and honesty**

All respondents with experience of each benefit; % 'agree' or 'strongly agree', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	Social Security Scotland is an open organisation	Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation
Carer's Allowance Supplement recipients (n=4,050-4,241)	67%	79%
Best Start Grant/ Foods applicants (n=4,861-4,904)	81%	89%
Funeral Support Payment applicants (n=488-458)	76%	86%
Young Carer Grant applicants (n=209-213)	82%	88%
Scottish Child Payment applicants (n=4,557-4,601)	82%	89%
Job Start Payment applicants (n=30-31)	70%	80%
Child Winter Heating Assistance recipients (n=769-815)	71%	83%

**Measure 63: Organisations that support clients evidence on openness and honesty of Social Security Scotland**

Partner organisation respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with some specific statements about the openness and honesty of Social Security Scotland as an organisation. Respondents were generally positive, with nine out of twelve respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that Social Security Scotland is an open organisation. Nine out of twelve likewise agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation.

*"I have found them open, honest and willing to engage in my dealings/training events (both as a deliverer and as a recipient) with them."* **Partner organisation respondent**



#### **Measure 64: Examples of openness and honesty or otherwise (if applicable)**

The majority of client interviewees said that they had found Social Security Scotland to be open. Examples of this included Social Security Scotland providing clear information about processes and timescales, such as next steps, payments and regular updates on applications. Some interviewees noted that application forms, letters and general guidance used simple and straightforward language. They felt it was easy to get the information they needed.

*“[They are] very open, very honest, very transparent in what they’re doing. Treated me as a person, not as a number and kept me informed at the right time. [They] kept me informed of changes. Letters are clear and concise. I can read normal size writing like 14 which is the national standard. And the actual wording of it isn’t ‘gobbledygook’ unless you understand it. It’s all been clear and one or two pages, not 20 pages like you normally get. So yeah, again, I can’t fault it.”* **Client interviewee**

A few interviewees highlighted the Social Security Scotland website as being good, while others highlighted interactions with staff. These respondents said that staff gave them clear answers and told them about other benefits they may have been entitled to.

*“Yes, uh-huh, [for] everything I applied for I was told there would be a 6-week wait because there’s a backlog because it had just opened. And I didn’t know about the Best Start Foods thing and they were open and told me about it.”* **Client interviewee**

One interviewee felt that Social Security Scotland was open because they explained why they were doing certain things, alongside the what and the how.



### Examples of openness and honesty or otherwise (if applicable) (continued)

*“It’s just the wording in the letters. [...] I don’t know, just like sometimes with Disability Living Allowance I think you get like a £10 bonus at Christmas. So they just send you a letter saying ‘You’ll get a £10 bonus at Christmas’ [does robotic voice], just like a fact. Whereas Social Security Scotland was like ‘We’re going to give you this Carer’s Allowance bonus because we really value what you’re doing and you’re really important to the communities and blah blah blah’ and that’s just really nice. You don’t expect something nice from organisations. So it was less robotic. [...] Even the stuff that you see on social media, if it’s like a video or image about something to do with things they’re doing. Like the Best Start thing, the videos or whatever stuff that accompanies it all seems like ‘Oh here are real people that look a little bit like me and they’re explaining what this is for and why it will help’. You just don’t get that with other big organisations.”* **Client interviewee**

A few respondents, though they did not think Social Security Scotland had been intentionally dishonest or misleading with them at any point, felt there were times where the organisation could have been more open and clear about things. For example, one interviewee said that it had been difficult to communicate with Social Security Scotland during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Another interviewee felt there could be more awareness raising about Social Security Scotland’s services and benefits, particularly for those without access to the internet.

*“I think there could be more leaflet information about a lot of the [benefits], but during the pandemic it’s not really something that they could help. Maybe if it wasn’t in a pandemic, there would have been more information accessible. [...] But if you haven’t got the internet you’re not getting the notifications from them. But it’s a tough one ‘cause right now we have not been able to go out and be in different places and see the information. It might’ve been out there but I’ve not seen [it]. I don’t know if there are leaflets around. [...] I also don’t know whether people take the leaflets and it could have been a complete waste of paper but I don’t know. I just feel for people who do not have the internet, they miss out on a lot of things.”* **Client interviewee**





### Examples of openness and honesty or otherwise (if applicable) (continued)

A couple of interviewees felt that Social Security Scotland could have been more open because they did not receive a letter to tell them that their Carer's Allowance Supplement would be ending. This was in contrast to the clear and informative letter they received telling them they would receive the benefit.

*"I think I got 3 payments of that, before I didn't get it anymore. [...] I understood everything [in the letters] and I already knew about it from reading in the news. I knew that it was starting and roughly when it was starting. So when I got the letter it wasn't totally unexpected. I think I received a letter before every payment that I got. I suppose just thinking now the only thing...I didn't receive a letter at the end of it, when I no longer qualified for it. I did not receive a letter about, you know, not getting it anymore. [Would you have preferred to get one?] I suppose so because it just keeps you right and you know everything then."* **Client interviewee**

## Social Security Scotland works well with other organisations

**Measure 65:** 32 service level agreements are in place with external partners.

There are 12 formal service level agreements in place with external partners. There are also 20 local delivery agreements in place with external partners for the use of spaces in local buildings as base locations by Social Security Scotland's Local Delivery staff.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Base locations don't provide an area for face to face engagement with clients, rather they are an area for Local Delivery Advisors and Team Leaders to meet or work from should the need arise.





### **Measure 66: Qualitative evidence from organisations that work with clients on partnership working**

Partner organisation respondents were asked a series of questions about Social Security Scotland's performance as an organisation. They were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with some specific statements about working with Social Security Scotland. A majority of respondents (nine out of thirteen) agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland had worked well with their organisation in the year 2020-21. Of the four other respondents, two disagreed with this statement.

Respondents were then asked what Social Security Scotland had done well when working with their organisation. Ten stakeholders left responses. Some respondents commented on positive engagement through meetings, events and general communication. A few noted their involvement on a Social Security Scotland stakeholder group, or through discussing and setting up co-location, whereby local delivery staff will use existing local buildings to meet with Social Security Scotland clients.

### **Qualitative evidence from organisations that work with clients on partnership working (continued)**

Other respondents said that Social Security Scotland had worked well with their organisation through formal consultation, which had allowed them to feedback on a range of issues relating to Social Security Scotland's service.

*"[They] invited us around the table to discuss the needs and rights of disabled people and, largely, to then adapt service design and delivery to meet those needs and rights."* **Partner organisation respondent**

Respondents were then asked what Social Security Scotland could have done better when working with their organisation. Nine stakeholders left responses. A few said that they would like more regular and consistent communication from Social Security Scotland. These respondents said it was important that Social Security Scotland informed their organisation at an early stage of any changes to the service. These respondents also wanted communication from Social Security Scotland on particular issues, such as local community issues and advocacy.



*“Regular communication, timely updates on changes to services and help available.”* **Partner organisation respondent**

*“There has been no direct communication from local staff regarding local issues/clients.”* **Partner organisation respondent**

One respondent asked for more publicising and advertising of Social Security Scotland’s service, as well as information on benefit take up. Another respondent asked for formal updates on any feedback that they provide through the stakeholder groups.

*“During the Inclusive Communication External Stakeholder Reference Group, several stakeholders [...] expressed concern over the wording and consistency of questions, use of stock images, and appropriate alternative text within the Adult Disability Payment Application Form. Staff were responsive to comments and acknowledged the need to review each of these elements. We would welcome an update on these elements.”* **Partner organisation respondent**

One respondent called for greater consistency in terms of who in their organisation receives communications and invitations from Social Security Scotland and how these are delivered.

Partner respondents were invited to make any further comments about their overall experience with Social Security Scotland. These comments were mixed. Some respondents were wholly positive about their experience with Social Security Scotland, commending staff and the service. These respondents were looking positively to the full roll out of disability benefits.

*“Staff in a range of departments and roles have been professional, responsive and clearly committed to effective partnership working.”* **Partner organisation respondent**

A few respondents felt there was more to be done in improving partnership working between their organisation and Social Security Scotland. They noted how

they could provide Social Security Scotland with advice on how to improve the service through more regular and consistent communication.

*“I feel there is more work to be done in building stakeholder networks with advice workers. The advice sector has a specific role in both helping clients to access benefits, help Social Security Scotland to improve and to hold it to account. We need clear routes of communication and regular meetings where we can help Social Security Scotland to improve as the number of benefits being delivered begins to increase.”* **Partner organisation respondent**

## How is Social Security Scotland involving clients?

### Clients are involved in all areas of Social Security Scotland

**Measure 67:** The original Charter Measurement Framework contained the following measure – “X percentage of learning packages delivered to staff are informed by clients.” This proved difficult to define and measure in a meaningful way. We are continuing to explore how we can address this measure in one figure. This year, as a proxy measure, we explored what kinds of learning is being informed by clients and which staff are receiving this training.

There are modules in the induction for all client-facing staff that contain content to help staff understand the lives of the clients they’ll be supporting. Training is also run for all staff (not just client facing) that is informed by clients. The table below outlines 3 specific examples.

**Table 22: Examples of training that is informed by clients**

Module	Audience	Overview of Module	How it was informed by clients
Bereavement	Colleagues in Best Start Grants and Funeral Support Payments teams - all staff in these	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be aware that Best Start Grant clients may experience a child bereavement.</li> <li>To understand how this bereavement could affect eligibility.</li> </ul>	Informed by Held in Our Hearts Lothian and Children’s Hospice Association Scotland by sharing their experience of dealing with bereaved clients. Held in Our



	teams complete this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be aware of the different emotions a bereavement may elicit.</li> <li>• To be aware that there are different stages of grief and individuals may respond differently.</li> <li>• To reflect on the use of language with bereaved clients.</li> <li>• To reflect on how to start conversations by asking questions around difficult circumstances and how to obtain further evidence.</li> <li>• To understand how to use signposting effectively.</li> </ul>	Hearts Lothian also quality assured our learning.
Getting to know your clients	Colleagues in Scottish Child Payment teams - 191 new Advisors and 478 existing Advisors	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to become aware of the main objectives of Scottish Child Payment.</li> <li>• to become familiar with the clients we will support through Scottish Child Payment.</li> <li>• to gain an insight into the impact which poverty can have on children's lives.</li> <li>• to consider the impact which Scottish Child Payment may have on families in Scotland.</li> </ul>	Child Poverty Action Group contributed significantly to this module. We utilised the Child Poverty Action Group 'Poverty Matters' in the training module.



Intelligent Kindness	All Social Security Scotland Employees – 40 sessions and 1094 attendees.	Session based on the principles of Intelligent Kindness, the importance of person-centred care and active listening across all roles and sectors, reflecting on how you can make a difference through your service provision and practice.	Digital Intelligent Kindness sessions were delivered by Tommy Whitelaw. Tommy's talks take you on a personal journey: from his experience becoming a full-time carer overnight for his mum Joan who had Vascular Dementia, to the obstacles and challenges they faced in isolation to the interactions they had throughout their caring journey that made a difference to their health and wellbeing.
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### **Measure 68: Qualitative evidence on client involvement in testing processes**

The list below outlines testing undertaken with clients by user researchers in Social Security Scotland in 2020-21 for continuous improvement. It does not include testing undertaken by user researchers in the Scottish Government working on the design of the benefits yet to go live.

#### **Safety message**

Spoke to a range of clients to test a range of safety messages aimed at reducing scams. Insights from the client research were used to finalise the message which was added to all notifications.

#### **Website testing**

Tested a range of pages for the Social Security Scotland website with clients to make sure the information was clear and easy to understand. Client feedback was used to make changes to the website before it went live.

#### **Inclusive communication**

Tested different ways of showing information in documents to ensure all documentation is as inclusive as possible. A range of clients fed back on different versions of documents providing insight into which approach should be used.

#### **Email sender address**

Tested citizens reactions to a range of sender email addresses to identify which resonated the most and to identify potential barriers.

#### **Domestic abuse**

Conducted research to understand the challenges individuals in vulnerable situations face when applying for benefits and how Social Security Scotland can support individuals.

#### **Invite to apply**

Explored client and prospective client reactions to invite to apply letters, providing guidance on prospective changes in the future.



### Measure 69: Qualitative evidence on client involvement in measuring effectiveness

Clients are involved in measuring effectiveness in several ways. The Client Survey and Client Panels research programme are the two main ways. There are also short surveys at the end of application forms and telephone calls to seek immediate feedback, these can be found in the Insights Research publication (see Annex A for details).

The [Client Panels](#) research programme began in September 2020. When the research team have completed a number of projects they will start to seek feedback from panel members on their experience of taking part.

In the Charter research, there were no specific questions on this. However, a few client interviewees said they were pleased to take part in this type of research and wanted to contribute to Social Security Scotland's continuous improvement. They felt the research provided a chance to share their experiences and express their views. A few mentioned that it felt good to be involved in the research and that they would like to participate in future projects.

*"I've never been asked for my experiences, my opinions, anything by the Department for Work and Pensions or any other similar organisations. They're like 'we're gonna do what we're gonna do'...this feels sort of different. Being asked to engage in giving a response. It's like 'oh! Okay, this is nice'. [...] If I'd had a big grievance or if there was something that had gone wrong, this whole process would be an opportunity to tell someone which is nice, because otherwise you just wouldn't."* **Client interviewee**

*"I think it's great that you're looking to make sure that the services being offered are fair, reasonable and respectful. So anything that I can do with that. This is pretty much what I expected and I'm really happy to be a part of it, because I think if people know how much their efforts are appreciated by clients like me then it can only make them feel better to find out that they did really well."* **Client interviewee**



## A Better Future

### Did we have effective processes of policy making?

#### Policy making shows the Social Security principles at work

All aspects of the design, development and delivery of the new social security system are to adhere to the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 principles. Scottish Government have shown this in a number of ways as demonstrated elsewhere in this report, but some key highlights are:

- Undertaking a consultation on Adult Disability Payment, a new Scottish benefit which will replace Personal Independence Payment and be delivered by Social Security Scotland. This consultation sought the views of all people, including those with living experience. Feedback from the consultation is being used to adjust the draft regulations, as appropriate, and inform the implementation and delivery of Adult Disability Payment.
- Detailed user research with Social Security Experience Panels has been used to inform decisions about the design and development of different ways to support clients. This includes ongoing work to ensure services and information about the social security system are accessible to everyone, as well as the development of policy and legislation that underpins delivery of the social security system.
- The Scottish Government introduced emergency legislation within the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 to ensure that Social Security Scotland clients are not disadvantaged by the Coronavirus crisis and are able to claim assistance to which they are entitled and which they may otherwise have missed out on if late applications were not allowed.

The sections that follow show the specific impact of policymaking work to deliver the Social Security Principles, such as social security as an investment in people, and social policy to be designed to have an impact on fairness.

Prior to publication, the content of this report of policy activities and intentions was shared with stakeholders for review. We are acting on the comments received to continue to improve the work we do and the content of this report going forward.





### **Social Security fits well with other policies**

Social Security is designed to promote the [National Outcomes | National Performance Framework](#), in particular the outcome “We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally”. We have designed social security policies that address the greatest need, whether this is for carers, families, or households facing unexpected cost.

[The Government's Programme for Scotland 2020-2021](#) promoted equality and wellbeing, with decisive action on child poverty. At the head of the Programme was the Scottish Child Payment which, provides eligible families with £10 a week for each child, initially under the age of six and then when fully implemented up to the age of 16. Together with the support available through Best Start Grant the Scottish Child Payment is game changing in the Scottish Government’s fight against child poverty.

Social Security Scotland now delivers eight different benefits to people across the country. Four of these are new and don’t exist elsewhere in the UK and the other four are more generous than the UK benefits they replaced.

### **Policy making takes account of user experience**

The Scottish Government is becoming responsible for some of the benefits previously delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions. As part of the work to prepare for this change, in the summer 2017 the Scottish Government set up the [Social Security Experience Panels](#). The Experience Panels are made up of people who have experience of one or more of the relevant benefits. The Scottish Government works with panel members to inform key decisions in the design of social security in Scotland. Panel members are also helping to test and improve new systems and materials like application forms and benefit information, helping to ensure the service is easy to use and accessible to all.

All research was paused for a few months in March 2020 because of the pandemic and face to face (in person) research has not been possible because of COVID-19 restrictions. Research activities including surveys and both online and telephone interviews continued from July 2020 and we have published 21 reports and visual summaries over the last year, including on:

- Benefit take-up, where Experience Panel members told us that they were often unaware of benefits they are entitled to and that they would like us to work to re-balance the negative perceptions of people who claimed benefits.



- Meeting people's needs, some examples members told us about include providing additional support where clients have more complex needs such as alcohol abuse, ensuring that the agency buildings cater to the physical accessibility needs of people and that communication needs of clients should be taken into account in terms of accessibility as well as potential impact on mental health conditions.
- Others talking to Social Security Scotland for clients where participants made suggestions for additions to the list of professionals who can be an appointee.
- Ethnic minorities groups past experiences of social security and the barriers they face in accessing support.

Experience Panel members have helped to develop materials like information pages or leaflets, application processes and forms, processes for case transfer, appeals and re-determinations, and communication materials. Panel Members also took part in surveys and interviews on:

- The aims of Scottish Carer's Allowance
- Communication preferences before, during and after COVID-19
- Gathering supporting information
- Decision making and reviewing an award

Social Security Scotland are now delivering a range of benefits, and panel members and other citizens have been involved in shaping each of these:

- Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods
- Funeral Support Payment
- Young Carer Grant
- Carer's Allowance Supplement
- Job Start Payment
- Child Winter Heating Assistance.



### **Policy making promotes all groups in society**

Equality legislation covers the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation, and the Scottish Government conducts Equality Impact Assessments on all new benefit proposals and major policy and legislative changes.

In 2020-21, Equality Impact Assessments have been undertaken to consider the potential effects of the [Carer's Allowance Supplement](#), [Scottish Child Payment](#), [Job Start Payment](#) and the [Social Security Administration and Tribunals \(Scotland\) Bill 2020](#).

The evidence and data gathered from the Carer's Allowance Supplement Equality Impact Assessment indicated it should have a positive impact on carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance, and an indirect positive impact on the people they care for. No potentially negative impacts on any protected groups were found.

The Scottish Child Payment Equality Impact Assessment identified that the Scottish Child Payment is likely to have a positive impact across the protected characteristics, particularly where they intersect with the groups most at risk of poverty. Scottish Child Payment fulfils the equality duty to eliminate discrimination, create equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Island Communities Impact Assessments have also been undertaken for [Scottish Child Payment](#) and the [Social Security Administration and Tribunals \(Scotland\) Bill 2020](#). The need for flexibility, to meet the unique circumstances of those living in island communities was recognised throughout the Scottish Child Payment Islands Communities Impact Assessment. In particular recognition of the challenges regarding transport, higher costs of living and accessibility. The fact that Scottish Child Payment can be used in a flexible manner to best meet the needs of the child and the emphasis Social Security Scotland places on an accessible, multi-channel service is expected to result in positive impacts for those in island communities.

### **Government money is spent fairly**

The Scottish Government are committed to ensuring government money is spent fairly. We published the 2020-21 [Equality and Fairer Budget Statement](#). This highlights the consistent commitment of the Scottish Government to examine the



impact of the Scottish Budget on the diversity of Scotland's population. This approach supports our ambition for a fairer Scotland.

The statement provides an overview of equality budgeting, an overview of the Fairer Scotland assessment of the budget and an overview of the impact of the budget on child poverty targets.

The budget for Social Security is focused on the overarching aim of creating a fairer Scotland. We have continued to prioritise funding to support our devolved social security powers; accelerating the support we give to low income families to ensure that every child has the best start in life and increasing payments, eligibility and accessibility for this financial support; and mitigating the worst impacts of the UK Government's welfare cuts. Our number one priority is the safe and secure transfer of powers, thus ensuring that the 1.4 million people who rely on this support will continue to receive their payments on time and at the right amount.

## **Did the Government promote social security positively?**

### **Social Security is promoted as a human right**

Scotland's new, devolved social security system is founded on human rights principles and the implementation of international human rights commitments.

All aspects of the design, development and delivery of this new system are defined by adherence to the key principles set out in section 1 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018. These recognise the central importance of human rights in general, and the right to social security in particular.

The Scottish Government is committed to implementing these principles in full. Social security is not a just a human right in itself. An effective social security system that delivers for people across the whole of society is essential to ensuring that all human rights are fulfilled. Our approach recognises that social security provision is an investment in the people of Scotland.

We are therefore working to ensure dignity, fairness, and respect are at the heart of everything we do. At Social Security Scotland everyone is welcomed and everyone is entitled to be treated equally and in a way that ensures their rights are upheld. Our new system is as accessible as possible – removing barriers for people, not putting them in their way. That is because people come first - the system exists to fulfil human rights, not obstruct them.

An important feature of our new system is that it reverses the stigma traditionally associated with accessing assistance. We therefore support and encourage people to exercise their rights to the fullest possible extent.

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 established the first social security system in the UK which reflects the United Nations principle that social security systems should ‘be established under national law and ensure the right of individuals and organisations to seek, receive and impart information on all social security entitlements in a clear and transparent manner.’

A rights based approach is at the heart of everything we do as Scotland’s national government; from policy development and service design, to the day-to-day delivery of benefits and advice. The way that agency staff are recruited and trained, and the interaction between staff and the people who use the new service reflect that same ethos. Over 2,400 people with direct experience of the current system were recruited to co-produce a new and better social security model for Scotland.

In February 2021, the Scottish Government published a [position statement](#) in response to a joint letter to the UK from the UN Special Rapporteurs responsible for food and poverty. Within the statement, the Scottish Government confirmed that we are using limited powers to maximise incomes from social security through our new social security system that is founded on principles of dignity and respect, citing the Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods which provide support in the early years, and the Scottish Child Payment, available for families on low income benefits with children under 16, paying the equivalent of £10 a week for each eligible child, which will be increased to £20 a week by the end of this Parliament.

Within this position statement, the Scottish Government also indicated its desire to maximise incomes through social security, highlighting eight benefits introduced since 2018, five of which are brand new, three replacing previous UK benefits, and all of which are increase support or eligibility. Further, the Scottish Government noted within the statement that The Scottish Child Payment has been developed to directly tackle child poverty and is expected to have a positive impact on children’s rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in particular the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27) and to benefit from social security (Article 26).

One significant challenge for access to social security are those people who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). In March 2021, the Scottish Government,

partnered with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), published [‘Ending Destitution Together’](#), a strategy to improve support for people with NRPF living in Scotland. The strategy is guided by the three principles and takes a human rights-based approach, including recognising the fundamental right to an adequate standard of living – in particular the right to food, housing and social security. One of the strategy’s three action areas is ‘Inclusion’, which will ensure actions of the strategy will support inclusive approaches to the design and delivery of support, including through Scotland’s extended social security powers.

The strategy also indicates that whilst the UK Government retains control of the list of restricted public funds for immigration purposes, where possible, the Scottish Government has worked with the Home Office to ensure that some access to devolved benefits has been permitted for those restricted by NRPF. These are the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment, and the Young Carers Grant.

The strategy also confirms the Scottish Government’s commitment to will explore opportunities to ensure people restricted by NRPF are included in any new benefits developed through the extended social security powers, recognising that while these powers are limited, any new benefits should be made equally available to everyone living in our communities where possible.

### **Myth and stigma about social security is challenged**

Social barriers such as myths and perceived stigma about social security were identified as key barriers to the take-up of benefits. It is clear that stigma is an issue which is deeply engrained in society, and will not be changed overnight, but Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government are committed to reducing the stigma associated with receiving benefits. We have taken our lead here from people with lived experience of claiming benefits. All of our communication and marketing is informed by research and client insights, and our positive messaging highlights entitlement and encourages clients to apply for benefits they are due<sup>[1]</sup>.

We are proud to be working to change stigmatising narratives in Scotland, and our active commitment to maximising the take-up of Scottish benefits is clear evidence of this. To this end, we will publish our second Benefit Take-up Strategy in October, and this will further set out our approach to tackling stigma. Everything we do challenges stigmatising discourses, and there are a number of concrete steps we are taking to embed this approach in delivery of social security in Scotland.

<sup>[1]</sup> ["You've Earned It" benefit uptake campaign: evaluation report, October 2017 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\).](#)

Through our communication and national stakeholder engagement activity, we are telling the story that social security could be needed by any of us at any time. We regularly use case studies in our media and social media activity to illustrate people from different walks of life who have accessed this support. This has primarily been families and carers to date as we have only recently introduced our first two disability payments. As we introduce new benefits, we will continue to adopt this approach.

As we emerge from COVID-19 restrictions, and begin to deliver more benefits, Social Security Scotland continues work to co-locate with existing services – e.g. in local authorities, third sector and health centres. We hope this will reduce the stigma felt by people, since the reason for their visit will not be immediately obvious to other members of the community – an issue which has been particularly identified through engagement around Island Communities Impact Assessments.

Our commitment to fund welfare rights advisors embedded in 150 GP surgeries in Scotland's most deprived areas is expected to drive take-up of benefits through overcoming the stigma many feel accessing traditional advice services. We also continue to work closely with key contacts in marginalised and seldom-heard communities to challenge myths and stigma about claiming benefits, and to remove barriers to accessing social security.

Our benefits are designed with lived experience as a key informing factor, through the social experience panels, and user research during the course of benefit design to ensure the most effective processes, that maximise engagement throughout application. One way of assessing this, is by examining the outcomes and experiences of those who have applied for devolved benefits. During 2020/21, the Scottish Government published its first [evaluations](#) of the devolved social benefits. The evaluation of Best Start Grant found that payments were viewed very positively by interviewed recipients. The consensus was the application process was straightforward, it was not stigmatising to receive a payment and the use of the grant led to positive outcomes for children, their parents and carers alike. The respondents thought of the payments as an entitlement and not as a donation. This allowed them to spend it appropriately, increasing their confidence as parents and carers. This is an important finding, as Best Start Grant is a benefit that requires an application to Social Security Scotland, and to be eligible, an applicant must receive a low-income benefit (Universal Credit, or its predecessors) from the Department of Work and Pensions, having applied for this and undergone a means-test. Even though this is a benefit paid to those on lower incomes, there is evidence that recipients had a positive sense that they were entitled to Best Start Grant.



## **Scottish Government talks positively about social security and those who use it**

[Our Charter](#) is what citizens can expect from the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland. It was designed with people with lived experience of social security who jointly decided on the wording and phrases used.

The [Programme for Government 2020-2021 speech](#) made by the First Minister to the Scottish Parliament demonstrates Scottish Government's commitment to promoting Social Security positively. Statements made during the speech included "Social security is part of the social contract between government and citizen. It is an expression of our solidarity as a society" this displayed the Scottish Government's commitment to promote a positive view of social security, explaining it is a public service to be proud of – a human right there for all of us who need it.

The [Social Security Benefits update](#) statement made by Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People Shirley-Anne Somerville to the Scottish Parliament is a further example which highlights the consistent commitments of Scottish Government talking positively about Social Security Scotland and those who use it. Declarations including "Work has continued to ensure that we have respect, dignity and fairness built into how our disability benefits will look, feel and support people" confirm Social Security Scotland work on building a system founded on dignity, fairness and respect.

## **Did benefits make a difference?**

### **Our benefits counteract poverty and improve participation in society**

In accordance with our [evaluation strategy](#), we published [three evaluations](#) of devolved benefits during 2020-21. These were for Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant (interim), and Universal Credit Scottish choices. Each of these evaluations included an analysis of available statistical information, and bespoke research with recipients. The two direct payments, Best Start Grant and Carer's Allowance Supplement, were welcomed by recipients, who found that the money received was timely and ensured they had more ability to meet the costs associated with childcare and caring respectively. It is ensured that there was reduced worry about their finances, and improved wellbeing. This latter finding was also true of Universal Credit Scottish choices, which was a flexibility afforded to recipients of Universal Credit in Scotland. Those that found it was better to manage their finances with more frequent payments, or direct payments of rent to their landlord, were able





to avail themselves of these opportunities, and some found this ensured greater “peace of mind”. Verifying the impact of individual benefits on overall poverty levels, or participation in the labour market requires an understanding of other contributing causes, and longer-term perspective. However, there is encouraging evidence that these benefits have contributed to a more solid platform for individuals receiving benefits to effect more control in their lives for better outcomes.

During 2020-21 we also began commissioning for evaluations of Funeral Support Payment and the initial implementation of Scottish Child Payment, to report by Summer 2022. During 2021-22 we will also commission evaluations of the Job Start Payment and Child Winter Heating Assistance, and a review of the Scottish Welfare Fund. We are also publishing a strategy for the evaluation of disability benefits which are being devolved to Scotland and will also commission the first associated project - an evaluation of Child Winter Heating Assistance.

### **Benefit levels reviewed and uprated in line with inflation**

Our Charter states that the Scottish Government will review the payment levels of Scottish assistance every year and increase the value of disability, employment injury, carers and funeral expense assistance every year in line with inflation.

These commitments are delivered through section 77 and 78 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018. This places a duty on Scottish Ministers, under section 77 of the Act, to consider the effects of inflation on all devolved assistance that are being delivered and to report to the Scottish Parliament on what the Scottish Ministers intend to do as a result of the changes to inflation. Under section 78 of the Act there is also a duty to uprate by inflation Funeral Support Payment and Young Carer Grant each financial year.

[The section 77 report](#) was published on 29 January 2021. The Scottish Ministers recommended that the Best Start Grant, Child Winter Heating Assistance, Funeral Support Payment, Job Start Payment and Young Carer Grant were to be uplifted by 1% from 1 April 2021 which is 0.5% higher than the inflation-adjusted level of assistance. This was in response to the exceptional circumstances arising through COVID-19 in 2020 and the impact it has had on low income households. Carer's Allowance Supplement was to be increased by 0.5% as section 81 of the Act does not allow the payment to be increased higher than the rate of inflation.



The legislation to bring the uplift and uprate into effect in April 2021 was laid in the Scottish Parliament and scrutinised by the [Social Security Committee on 4 March 2021](#) and approved by the Scottish Parliament on 17 March 2021.

### **Fairer rules are designed and new benefits created**

The Scottish Government are making social security fairer where we can. For example, on disability benefits, we are working to introduce longer-term awards where people have a long-term condition. We are also significantly reducing the number of face to face assessments and will only ask someone to undertake a face-to-face assessment when it is the only practicable way to make a decision.

Scottish Child Payment is a new benefit introduced by the Scottish Government and is in addition to the UK wide Child Benefit. The new Scottish Child Payment is unique to Scotland and opened early for applications on Monday 9 November 2020. Social Security Scotland took applications ahead of its introduction on Monday 15 February 2021 to help manage the expected demand.

The new benefit gives eligible families on low incomes, with children under 6, an extra £10 per week for each child. It is anticipated that around 170,000 children in around 140,000 households will be eligible in this early delivery age group. It is planned to be fully rolled out to children under the age of 16 by the end of 2022. The Scottish Government committed to introducing this new payment in June 2019 as part of the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. Once fully rolled out, families with children under 16 will become eligible for Scottish Child Payment, benefitting up to 410,000 children, reducing child poverty by 3 percentage points and lifting 30,000 children out of relative poverty.

Child Winter Heating Assistance is the first form of disability assistance to be introduced by the Scottish Government using its new social security powers. This form of assistance recognises the additional hardships that winter can bring, particularly with rising fuel costs. Launched in winter 2020, this benefit provides families of the most severely disabled children with £200 per child to help with the cost of heating in the winter months.

### **Take-up improved**

The second Benefit Take-up Strategy was published on 21 October 2021, as set out in legislation.

Having developed and refined our methodology, this Strategy included estimates for all income-related benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland at the time of publication, Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Job Start Payment and Scottish Child Payment.

For income-related benefits it is easier to measure the eligible population, as eligibility is linked to more rigid criteria, such as income. In our first take-up strategy, published in October 2019, we discussed at length the limitations for estimating take-up, especially for the disability and carer benefits and provided evidence from existing research on how these limitations can be improved.

We have undertaken analytical work in this area to help us address the inherent limitations of estimating accurately eligible population for disability and carers benefits. Analysts have explored methods to improve the measurement of eligible population, including examining the feasibility of enhancing existing population surveys. Although the second Take-up Strategy did not provide best estimates of take-up for the disability and carer benefits, it did discuss the preparatory analytical work undertaken in detail.

## Annex A: Data Sources

Data Source	Description	Most Recent Publications	Frequency
Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings	Publication covers client experiences at point of contact with the organisation. Including telephony numbers, call waiting times, and feedback on application forms and telephone contacts.	Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings April 2020 to the end of March 2021 <a href="#">Social Security Scotland - Insights Research findings - April 2020 to March 2021</a>	Annual
People Survey	Social Security Scotland take part in the Civil Service People Survey which is a standardised annual survey of all staff members across Civil Service departments in the UK.	More information on the People Survey can be found at <a href="#">Scottish Government People Survey - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a> Data for 2020 is at <a href="#">Civil Service People Survey: 2020 results - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>	Annual
Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods Official Statistics	<p>This publication series provides information on applications and payments for Best Start Grant from 10 December 2018 and on applications and payments for Best Start Foods from 12 August 2019.</p> <p>The full publication includes further information on the numbers of applications, decisions, payments and re-determinations, and on processing times. Breakdowns include applicant age, application channel, local authority and first or subsequent births.</p>	Latest publication covers the period ending May 2021: <a href="#">Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods: high level statistics to 31 May 2021</a>	Quarterly



Funeral Support Payment Official Statistics	<p>This publication series provides information on Funeral Support Payments, including statistics on the number of applications received, processed and authorised, as well as the value of payments made from 16 September 2019.</p> <p>The full publication includes further information on the numbers of applications, decisions, payments and re-determinations, and on processing times.</p> <p>Breakdowns include application channel, local authority, age of deceased and payment recipients.</p>	<p>Latest publication covers the period to June 2021: <a href="#">Funeral Support Payment: high level statistics to 30 June 2021</a></p>	Quarterly
Job Start Payment Official Statistics	<p>This publication series provides information on Job Start Payments, including statistics on the number of applications received, processed and authorised, as well as the value of payments made from 17 August 2020.</p> <p>The full publication includes further information on the numbers of applications, decisions, payments and internal reviews, and on processing times.</p> <p>Breakdowns include application channel, local authority, age and care leaver status of payment recipients.</p>	<p>Latest publication covers the period to 30 June 2021: <a href="#">Job Start Payment: high level statistics to 30 June 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a></p>	Quarterly



Scottish Child Payment Official Statistics	<p>This publication series provides information on Scottish Child Payment, including statistics on the number of applications received, processed, and authorised, as well as the value of payments made from 9 November 2020.</p> <p>The full publication includes further information regarding applications, outcomes, payments, processing times, and re-determinations and appeals.</p>	<p>Latest publication covers the period to June 2021: <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-child-payment-high-level-statistics-on-applications-to-30-june-2021/pages/introduction.aspx">Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics on applications to 30 June 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a></p>	Quarterly
Young Carer Grant Official Statistics	<p>This publication series provides information on Young Carer Grant, including statistics on the number of applications received, processed, and authorised, as well as the value of payments made up to 30 April 2021.</p> <p>The full publication includes further information regarding applications, outcomes, payments, processing times, and re-determinations.</p> <p>Breakdowns include application channel, local authority, age of applicant, and number of cared for people.</p>	<p>Latest publication covers the period to April 2021: <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/young-carer-grant-high-level-statistics-to-30-april-2021/pages/introduction.aspx">Young Carer Grant: high level statistics to 30 April 2021</a></p>	Quarterly
Social Security Scotland Workforce Information Official Statistics	<p>This publication series provides a quarterly snapshot of the workforce, taken at the end of each of quarter, based on information recorded in the HR system. The statistics show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• numbers of directly employed staff by category</li><li>• numbers of non-directly employed workers by category</li></ul>	<p>Latest publication provides information on the workforce as at the end of March 2021: <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-workforce-information-march-2021/pages/introduction.aspx">Social Security Scotland - workforce information: March 2021</a></p>	Quarterly



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff sickness absence</li> <li>• staff diversity information</li> <li>• location information.</li> </ul>		
Client Survey	This is a survey of everyone who has applied for (and reached decision stage) or received a Social Security Scotland benefit. It asks about overall experiences with Social Security Scotland and specifically addresses many of the measures in this framework.	<a href="#">Social Security Scotland Client Survey 2018-2021</a>	Annual
Charter Research	The Client Panels will mirror the Experience Panels approach. They will involve a programme of research with clients who have agreed to take part in further research. Client Panels research began in Winter 2020/21	<a href="#">Social Security Scotland Charter Research 2020-2021</a>	Annual
Social security policy research and evaluation: publications	Published evaluations of Scottish social security benefits, examining impact on client finances, health and wellbeing	<p>In 2020-21 evaluations were published of Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant and Universal Credit Scottish choices. A further evaluation of Young Carer Grant was published in September 2021</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-policy-research-and-evaluation-publications/">https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-policy-research-and-evaluation-publications/</a></p>	Evaluations are published when complete



Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018: benefit take-up strategy - October 2021	Government's Take-up Strategy detailing measures to promote take-up, and estimates of take-up for devolved benefits implemented to date.	2021 take-up strategy published on 21 October 2021  <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-act-2018-benefit-take-up-strategy-october-2021/pages/9/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-act-2018-benefit-take-up-strategy-october-2021/pages/9/</a>  <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-act-2018-benefit-take-up-strategy-october-2021-approach-measuring-take-up-low-income-benefits/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-scotland-act-2018-benefit-take-up-strategy-october-2021-approach-measuring-take-up-low-income-benefits/</a>	Every five years  The next publication is due by October 2026
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Social Security Scotland  
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ISBN: 978-1-80201-564-5



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