



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Measuring Our Charter 2022-23

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 fourth year it has been published with data. It has two purposes. First, it shows how Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government are delivering the commitments. Second, it helps Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government improve.

Please note, the Charter Measurement Framework is not the only data published by Social Security 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. This means that the Scottish Government worked together with Social Security Scotland and a diverse group of people with lived experience of the social security system to write the framework. 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](#) document provides an overview of the measures included in the framework.

What does the framework measure?

The framework has four sections that match up with the sections of 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 framework covers the previous financial year. This year that means from the beginning of April 2022 to the end of March 2023.

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 2022-2023

All references to Client Survey respondents in this report refer to the [2022-23 Social Security Scotland Client Survey](#). The Client Survey offers Social Security Scotland's clients the chance to share their views and experiences of the service they received.

Survey data was collected across nine rounds of fieldwork in total, together inviting all clients who had received a decision or a payment (where no application was required) for a specific benefit for the first time between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 to take part. A total of 285,013 invites were sent for the Client Survey in the 2022-23 financial year. A total of 34,070 responses were received once the data had been cleaned and duplicate checks performed. This represents around 12% of the number of invites issued.

The survey results provide rich insight into some of the experiences of Social Security Scotland clients. However, we cannot assume that the results represent the views of Social Security Scotland's clients as a whole. It is reasonable though, given the number of responses, to treat the findings as indicative of the general view of clients. This includes when results are shown by benefit experience and demographic group.

The framework report does not compare results relating to 'all Client Survey respondents' from 2021-22 to 2022-23. This is because applying for or receiving certain benefits is associated with higher or lower levels of satisfaction across a range of survey measures, and the proportion of respondents who applied for or received each benefit differs across the two years. Relatedly, the 2022-23 findings include respondents with experience of an Adult Disability Payment application or case transfer for the first time.

However, the framework does provide 2021-22 Client Survey data¹ alongside this year's data when outlining results based on benefit experience, where relevant and

¹ Changes to the design and analysis of the Client Survey from 2021-22 onwards mean that results prior to this are not comparable with data collected since this point. Further information on this is provided [2021-22 Charter Measurement Framework](#).

possible. Comparisons at this level are considered to be more robust. That said, consideration should be given to changes to the delivery of each benefit across the two years which may have influenced experiences or views. This includes, for example, the increase in the value of Scottish Child Payment and the expansion of eligibility. Results are only included in tables for years where the benefits were live and there was enough data to report.

Please note, this year's framework also includes some changes to how certain findings based on benefit experience are presented, reflecting developments in the way benefits are delivered. These are summarised below.

- The application for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods is combined. It is also now possible to complete a joint application for Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment using a single form. It is still possible to apply for Scottish Child Payment as a single benefit, without applying for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods at the same time. Therefore, findings for 2022-23 relating to the application process are presented by the type of application made for these three benefits. This allows for assessment of whether the different application processes were associated with different views or experiences. Data for previous years is provided for those applying for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods only, and Scottish Child Payment only.
- This year is also the first time that results for Client Survey respondents with experience of Adult Disability Payment have been included in the Charter Measurement Framework. Findings drawing on experience of the benefit are presented separately for clients who applied for Adult Disability Payment and those completed a case transfer, unless otherwise stated. The same approach has also been applied to respondents with experience of Child Disability Payment this year. This is a change from the approach in the 2021-22 report where Child Disability Payment applicants and case transfer clients were grouped together when looking at overall experience. This means some comparisons to last year cannot be made for this benefit. To avoid confusion, we have only reported figures for this financial year (2022-23) where this applies.

To keep the tables concise, the number of respondents to each Client Survey question is not listed in the framework. These can be found in the Client Survey report. We do, however, highlight where the number of respondents to a question was fewer than 100 for a particular benefit or demographic breakdown.

Lastly, '#' in a table showing Client Survey results indicates that a value is suppressed due to a small number of respondents in a group. To reduce risk of disclosure, the minimum base size for a variable to be included in a cross break was set at 25. Please note in particular that fewer than 25 respondents to the 2022-23 survey told us that they had experience of Job Start Payment. As a mitigation for risk

of disclosure, Client Survey findings for 2022-23 are not presented by experience of Job Start Payment throughout the framework. Responses from these respondents are included in overall figures for each measure.

Charter research 2022-23

Research was conducted for this year's framework with clients, staff and partner organisations. The research took a primarily qualitative approach in order to understand participants' experiences of Social Security Scotland in 2022-23. We conducted 40 interviews with clients on the Client Panels. We also invited all Social Security Scotland staff to take part in a survey. This resulted in 1,568 survey responses (approximately 36% response rate). Separately, we conducted focus groups with 6 Client Experience staff who work on reviews, re-determinations, appeals, complaints, compliments and suggestions. Finally, we invited partner organisations to a survey, which got 101 responses. The findings provide rich insight into and examples of specific participants' experiences but should not be taken as representative of all Social Security Scotland clients, staff and partners. References to 'client participants' and 'staff' or 'partner respondents' in this report refer to this research. Full analysis of this research can be found in the [Charter Research 2022-23 report](#).

Other sources for the first three sections are:

- **People Survey** – an annual survey of all Social Security Scotland staff. The 2022 People Survey ran from 22 September to 21 October. 2,763 people responded, and this was a 71% 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 financial years, except where a benefit went live part way through a financial year. Statistics included in the framework each year draw on the latest available published data. This includes updates to data for previous financial years where applicable.
- **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.

Where possible, the data we collect for the framework is analysed by protected characteristics. This is essential so we can assess whether Our Charter is being delivered comprehensively to different groups.

Such breakdowns are provided in this report only when there is a notable difference between groups. For the Client Survey, the Supplementary Tables publication released alongside the 2022-23 Client Survey report provides additional results and breakdowns not presented in the framework report for key survey measures. The demographic background of Client Survey respondents did differ across each benefit group. For example, we know that respondents with experience of Adult Disability Payment or Funeral Support Payment were more likely to be older and living with a disability or long-term health condition. Therefore, trends showing variations in responses by benefit experience may be a factor behind some differences in results seen across demographic groups.

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. It gives a few important pieces of data and information.

Each section of the framework represents a section of Our Charter. Each section has questions that will be answered by the data measures. 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. Where possible, figures are provided for previous years for context.

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 from the Charter research unless stated otherwise.

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

A People's Service

Social Security Scotland's Service is Person-Centred

93% of Client Survey respondents who had been in contact with staff 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were treated with kindness.



97%

of 2022 People Survey respondents said they understand their customers' or service users' needs.

Processes That Work

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

88% 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 5% of applications.

Is Social Security Scotland delivering what the Charter promised?

81%

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

A Learning System

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

78% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland was an open 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:** 93% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were treated with kindness.
- **Measure 2:** 86% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they felt trusted by staff.² Some groups were less likely to agree or strongly agree, these were:
 - respondents aged 16-24 compared to some other age groups (84% compared to 88% for 35-44 year olds and 89% for 25-34 year olds)
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (85% compared to 89% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - white respondents (86% compared to 91% of ethnic minority respondents)
 - gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents (83% compared to 87% of heterosexual or straight respondents).
- **Measure 3:** 90% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff listened to them. Some groups were less likely to agree or strongly agree, these were:
 - respondents aged 16-24 (85% compared to 89% or above for all other age groups)
 - white respondents (90% compared to 96% of ethnic minority respondents).
- **Measure 4:** 89% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff made them feel comfortable. Some groups were less likely to agree, these were:
 - respondents aged 16-24 (85% compared to 89% or 90% for all other age groups)
 - white respondents (89% compared to 95% of ethnic minority respondents).

Tables 1-4 show measures 1-4 for each benefit, including previous years' findings where possible.

² The measure is based on whether clients felt trusted by Social Security Scotland staff as can be seen in the original outline of the [Charter Measurement Framework](#) so that is shown here. The [2022-23 Client Survey report](#) contains further findings on whether clients trusted Social Security Scotland staff and the organisation as a whole.

Table 1: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they were 'treated with kindness', by benefit experience

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

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	93%	90%
Best Start Grant	95%	94%
Best Start Foods	95%	93%
Funeral Support Payment	94%	94%
Young Carer Grant	94%	89%
Job Start Payment*	86%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	97%	91%
Scottish Child Payment	96%	94%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	94%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	95%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	93%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	92%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (56)

Table 2: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they 'felt trusted', by benefit experience

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

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	85%	82%
Best Start Grant	90%	87%
Best Start Foods	90%	87%
Funeral Support Payment	88%	89%
Young Carer Grant	93%	82%
Job Start Payment*	83%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	88%	87%
Scottish Child Payment	91%	88%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	88%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	89%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	84%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	84%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (52)

Table 3: Client Survey respondents' views on whether 'staff listened to them, by benefit experience

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

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	93%	89%
Best Start Grant	93%	90%
Best Start Foods	93%	89%
Funeral Support Payment	92%	93%
Young Carer Grant	96%	84%
Job Start Payment*	85%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	94%	92%
Scottish Child Payment	94%	91%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	89%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	92%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	88%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	92%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (54)

Table 4: Client Survey respondents' views on whether 'staff made them feel comfortable', by benefit experience

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

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	89%	84%
Best Start Grant	92%	90%
Best Start Foods	92%	89%
Funeral Support Payment	91%	92%
Young Carer Grant	94%	82%
Job Start Payment*	82%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	90%	93%
Scottish Child Payment	93%	91%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	90%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	92%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	88%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	88%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (56)

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

Many client participants had experiences of communicating with staff. This included over the phone, via web chat, and some in-person meetings. Overall, feedback about interactions with staff was positive. Many praised the attitude of the staff they had talked to. Participants said staff were friendly, polite, and helpful. They said staff listened to them, made them feel trusted and treated them with empathy.

“I found her really friendly, really helpful. I was actually surprised at how nice and how calm she was and how easy it was to talk to her, given their phones were ringing off the hook at that time.” **Client participant**

“Social Security Scotland [staff were] really friendly and [I] felt they genuinely wanted to help you and would go out of their way... I feel valued and that I'm important and they want to do the right thing for me, which builds a lot of trust.” **Client participant**

“She listened to what I had to say about the issues I had, and she certainly sounded really empathetic. It was quite relaxed, she gave me a lot of reassurance.” **Client participant**

Some client participants had less positive experiences with staff members. Two participants described the attitude of the staff they spoke to as “frustrated” and “miserable”.

“Some [information] was missing to tell me that the payment [date] was changed to a [different] day. I could tell by his voice he was frustrated. Sometimes you can't keep that out of your voice.” **Client participant**

“I only ever phoned once and got someone miserable. Everyone else I spoke to was great [...]” **Client participant**

Clients do NOT experience discrimination

Measure 6: 93% of Client Survey respondents said they did not feel discriminated against at any point during their experience with Social Security Scotland. 4% of respondents said they had been discriminated against, and 4% preferred not to say.

Respondents aged 45-54 were more likely to say they did not feel discriminated against than respondents aged 16-24 (94% compared to 90%).

White respondents were more likely to say they did not feel discriminated against than ethnic minority respondents (94% compared to 87%). For ethnic minority respondents, 5% said they had been discriminated against (compared to 3% of white respondents), and 8% said they preferred not to say (compared to 3% of white respondents).

Women were more likely to say they did not feel discriminated against than men (94% compared to 90%).

Table 5: Client Survey respondents who did not feel discriminated against, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit; row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	96%	94%
Best Start Grant	91%	89%
Best Start Foods	91%	88%
Funeral Support Payment	92%	90%
Young Carer Grant	92%	90%
Job Start Payment	87%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	95%	96%
Scottish Child Payment	93%	93%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	94%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	96%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	90%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	94%

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

- **Measure 7:** 32% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'I felt I could challenge it'. Some groups were less likely to agree they could challenge discrimination, these were:
 - respondents aged 45-54, 45-64 and 65+ (27%, 25% and 24% (n=34) respectively, compared to at least of 32% of respondents in younger age groups)
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (27% compared to 38% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - white respondents (27% compared to 58% of ethnic minority respondents)
 - women (30% compared to 36% of men)
 - gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents (21% (n=47) compared to 29% of heterosexual or straight respondents).
- **Measure 8:** 26% said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination they faced. Some groups were less likely to say they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination, these were:
 - respondents aged 25-34 (21% compared to at least 27% for all other age groups)
 - respondents without a disability or long-term health condition (22% compared to 29% of those with a disability or long-term health condition)
 - women (24% compared to 29% of men)
 - heterosexual or straight respondents (24% compared to 34% (n=47) of gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents).

Tables 6 and 7 show measures 7 and 8 for each benefit. The number of respondents experiencing discrimination in previous years was too small to provide benefit breakdowns.

Table 6: Whether Client Survey respondents felt they could challenge discrimination, by benefit experience, 2022-23

All respondents with experience of each benefit who experienced discrimination; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'; row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement*	19%
Best Start Grant	41%
Best Start Foods	38%
Funeral Support Payment	#
Young Carer Grant	#
Job Start Payment	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	#
Scottish Child Payment	38%
Child Disability Payment applicant*	32%
Child Disability Payment case transfer*	48%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	25%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer*	28%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Carer's Allowance Supplement: 32; Child Disability Payment applicant: 44; Child Disability Payment case transfer: 50; Adult Disability Payment case transfer: 72)

Table 7: Client Survey respondents who told Social Security Scotland about discrimination, by benefit experience, 2022-23

All respondents with experience of each benefit who experienced discrimination; row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement*	36%
Best Start Grant	25%
Best Start Foods	24%
Funeral Support Payment	#
Young Carer Grant	#
Job Start Payment	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	#
Scottish Child Payment	21%
Child Disability Payment applicant*	32%
Child Disability Payment case transfer*	41%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	29%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer*	35%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Carer's Allowance Supplement: 39; Child Disability Payment applicant: 53; Child Disability Payment case transfer: 54; Adult Disability Payment case transfer: 79)

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

Most client participants felt they had been treated fairly by Social Security Scotland and that staff had been supportive. Participants said Social Security Scotland had a positive culture. They felt a sense that Social Security Scotland genuinely wanted to help clients. Some mentioned that they had been treated with respect and dignity. Almost all said they had not been discriminated against by Social Security Scotland processes or staff.

“They treat people with respect and dignity, I remember the motto. That’s very important because that’s how they treat people.” **Client participant**

“All the people I’ve spoken to have tried to reassure me, they’ve been understanding, they’ve put across not to worry, we’ll get in touch. There’s been no discrimination there.” **Client participant**

Two participants mentioned examples of unfair treatment or discrimination relating to communication barriers. One participant said Social Security Scotland’s opening hours made it difficult for clients who work during the day to get in touch and felt this was discriminatory. Another participant said communicating with Social Security Scotland had made her feel stressed. The participant explained that although her first language isn’t English, the client adviser she spoke with hadn’t offered an interpreter.

“I said how difficult it was for me contacting them without a direct number or email. I said they were discriminating against people working the same hours as them. They offered a letter but I hadn’t been getting those so I didn’t think that was a good idea... I’m going to have to contact them at some point in the next couple of months. And to be honest that makes me anxious.”

Client participant

“It was a bit stressful because I don’t understand English very well and it would be beneficial if they emailed it or if there was an interpreter on the line. That would have avoided the stress.” **Client participant**

Clients experience good service

70% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of these:

- **Measure 10:** 66% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they got enough updates during the application process. Groups less likely to agree they got enough updates included:
 - respondents aged 16-24, 55-64 and 65 plus (56%, 57% and 58% compared to at least 63% of respondents in other age groups)
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (59% compared to 73% of respondents without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - white respondents (65% compared to 80% of ethnic minority respondents).
 - gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents (55% compared to 66% of heterosexual or straight respondents).
- **Measure 11:** 83% said they agreed with the decision(s) on their application(s).³ Groups less likely to agree with the decision(s) on their application(s) included:
 - respondents aged 16-24, 55-64 and 65 plus (77%, 77% and 65% compared to 81%-87% of respondents in other age groups)
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (79% compared to 87% of respondents without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - white respondents (83% compared to 88% of ethnic minority respondents).
 - men (77% compared to 85% of women).

Tables 8 and 9 show measures 10 and 11 for each benefit, including previous years' findings where possible.

³ For this figure and demographic breakdowns, the small proportion of respondents who said they had applied for more than one benefit during the financial year are only counted as agreeing with the 'decision(s) on their application(s) if they agreed with all decisions received. Benefit data in Table 9 relates to agreement with decisions on each benefit application separately.

Table 8: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they 'received enough updates during the application process', by benefit experience

All respondents who had applied for each benefit; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant / Foods and Scottish Child Payment	n/a	66%
Best Start Grant / Foods	69%	55%
Funeral Support Payment	74%	71%
Young Carer Grant	76%	61%
Job Start Payment*	65%	#
Scottish Child Payment	72%	77%
Child Disability Payment	62%	53%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	46%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (94)

Table 9: Whether Client Survey respondents agreed with the decision received, by benefit that the decision was received for, 2022-23⁴

All respondents who had applied for each benefit; % who said they agreed with the decision received on each individual benefit, row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2022-23
Best Start Grant	88%
Best Start Foods	84%
Funeral Support Payment	85%
Young Carer Grant*	91%
Job Start Payment	#
Scottish Child Payment	95%
Child Disability Payment	89%
Adult Disability Payment	81%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (88)

82% of Client Survey respondents said they had received one or more benefit payments from Social Security Scotland. Of these:

- **Measure 12:** 97% of Client Survey respondents who had received a payment said they were paid when Social Security Scotland told them they would be paid. Respondents aged 16-24 were less likely to say they got the payment(s) when expected than those aged 55-64 (95% compared to 99%).
- **Measure 13:** 97% of Client Survey respondents who had received a payment said they were paid the amount Social Security Scotland told them they would get the first time. Respondents aged 25-34 were less likely to say they got the right amount than those aged 45 and above (94% compared to 98%).

97% of respondents receiving relevant benefits⁵ said they got the right amount 'every time'. Respondents aged 16-34 were less likely to say they got the right amount 'every time' than those aged 45 and above (95% compared to 99%).

⁴ This data shows agreement with decisions for each benefit applied for individually regardless of whether respondents agreed or disagreed with decisions about any other benefits applied for. This data is not comparable with data collected in 21/22 due to a change in the way the data was collected. In 21/22 respondents were asked whether they disagreed with any decisions they received across all applications made, whilst in 22/23 respondents were asked specifically and individually for each benefit they applied for.

⁵ Funeral Support Payment and Job Start Payment are one-off payments, and so this measure is not applicable. Whilst Young Carer Grant, Best Start Grant, Carer's Allowance Supplement and Child Winter Heating Assistance are recurring benefits, they are only paid once a year (or twice for Carer's Allowance Supplement) and so survey respondents should have only received one payment.

Tables 10-12 show measures 12 and 13 for each benefit, including previous years' findings where possible.

Table 10: Whether Client Survey respondents received payment when Social Security Scotland said they would, by benefit experience
All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit; % who said 'yes', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	98%	97%
Best Start Grant	96%	94%
Best Start Foods	96%	93%
Funeral Support Payment	95%	96%
Young Carer Grant	98%	91%
Job Start Payment*	93%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	97%	97%
Scottish Child Payment	97%	96%
Child Disability Payment	95%	98%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	99%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (55)

Table 11: Whether Client Survey respondents received the right amount first time, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit; % who said 'yes', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	98%	97%
Best Start Grant	97%	94%
Best Start Foods	95%	92%
Funeral Support Payment	94%	97%
Young Carer Grant	100%	95%
Job Start Payment*	98%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	98%	99%
Scottish Child Payment	96%	95%
Child Disability Payment	98%	99%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	99%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (56)

Table 12: Whether Client Survey respondents were paid the right amount every time, by benefit experience⁶

All respondents with experience of receiving payments for each benefit; % who said 'yes', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Foods	93%	90%
Scottish Child Payment	95%	97%
Child Disability Payment	98%	99%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	99%

⁶ The 2021-22 Client Survey asked if respondents were paid the right amount every time in relation to all payments received from Social Security Scotland as a whole in the year. In 2022-23, the approach was updated so respondents were asked about experiences of payments for individual benefits separately, with the 'every time' question omitted for non-recurring payments. As a result, caution should be used when comparing results between years.

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:** 85% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits. Some groups were less likely to agree with this, including:
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (83% compared to 88% of respondents without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - white respondents (85% compared to 93% of ethnic minority respondents)
 - gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents (81% compared to 86% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

Table 13: Client Survey respondents' views on whether staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits, by benefit experience

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

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	87%	84%
Best Start Grant	91%	86%
Best Start Foods	91%	86%
Funeral Support Payment	88%	91%
Young Carer Grant	96%	82%
Job Start Payment*	84%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	91%	93%
Scottish Child Payment	92%	87%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	86%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	86%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	84%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	81%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (55)

70% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of those:

- **Measure 15:** 88% ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that the decision on their application was ‘explained clearly’. Respondents aged 16-24 were less likely to agree or strongly agree than those in other age groups (77% compared to 85% or over for other age groups). Men were also less likely than women to agree or strongly agree (84% compared to 88%).
- **Measure 16:** 17% disagreed with at least one decision received on an application.⁷ 31% of them said they asked Social Security Scotland to look at a decision they disagreed with again.⁸⁹ Some groups were more likely to have asked Social Security Scotland to look at a decision they disagreed with again, including:
 - respondents aged 45-54 and 55-64 (35% and 37% compared to a maximum of 30% of respondents in other age groups)
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (34% compared to 25% of respondents without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - ethnic minority respondents (34% compared to 30% of white respondents)
 - gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents (36% (n=81) compared to 30% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

Tables 14-16 show measures 15 and 16 for each benefit, including previous years’ findings where possible.

⁷ This figure includes respondents who had applied for more than one benefit and agreed with one (or more decisions) but also disagreed with one (or more decisions).

⁸ The original Charter Measurement Framework measure was ‘X percentage of clients (who disagreed with a decision) said they felt able to challenge it’. The Client Survey previously asked if people ‘felt they could’ challenge a decision, and if they did. Since 2021-22 it just asks respondents if they did challenge the decision, not if they felt they could. So that is what has been reported against this framework measure since 2021-22.

⁹ Benefit data in Table 15 shows the proportion disagreeing with decisions on each benefit application separately. Table 16 shows the proportion who disagreed with a decision on each benefit individually who then asked Social Security Scotland to look at their application again for that benefit.

Table 14: Client Survey respondents' views on whether decisions were 'explained clearly', by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of applying for each benefit, % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant / Foods and Scottish Child Payment	n/a	81%
Best Start Grant / Foods	86%	71%
Funeral Support Payment	86%	86%
Young Carer Grant	91%	92%
Job Start Payment*	85%	#
Scottish Child Payment	88%	92%
Child Disability Payment	88%	89%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	80%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (88)

Table 15: Client Survey respondents who felt Social Security Scotland got the decision on their application wrong, by benefit experience, 2022-23¹⁰

All respondents with experience of applying each benefit, % who said they disagreed with the decision received on each individual benefit, row percentages.

Benefit experience	2022-23
Best Start Grant	12%
Best Start Foods	16%
Funeral Support Payment	15%
Young Carer Grant*	9%
Job Start Payment	#
Scottish Child Payment	5%
Child Disability Payment	11%
Adult Disability Payment	19%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (88)

¹⁰ This data is not comparable with data collected in 2021/22 due to a change in the way the data was collected. In 2021/22 respondents were asked whether they disagreed with any decisions they received across all applications made, whilst in 2022/23 respondents were asked specifically and individually for each benefit they applied for. Data shown in Table 9 (agreement with decision by benefit) is the opposite of data shown in Table 15 (disagreement with decision by benefit).

Table 16: Client Survey respondents who asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision they disagreed with again, by relevant benefit

All respondents who applied for each benefit and felt Social Security Scotland got the decision wrong, % who asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision again, row percentages.

Asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision again for:	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant	28%	21%
Best Start Foods	24%	19%
Funeral Support Payment*	26%	18%
Young Carer Grant	#	#
Job Start Payment	#	#
Scottish Child Payment	27%	27%
Child Disability Payment	47%	36%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	39%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 and 2022-23 fewer than 100 (58 and 51)

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

Client participants were asked if the staff they talked to were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland's benefits and processes. Overall, feedback was positive with most participants saying staff were able to answer their questions and give them the information they needed. A few participants highlighted that staff were able to signpost them to other forms of support. This included other Social Security Scotland benefits they might be eligible for and support from other organisations.

“Just the way they spoke on the phone, they were efficient and knew what they were talking about. I came off the phone thinking that I had spoken to someone that was knowledgeable, they weren't humming or hawing, or having to put you on hold. They just spoke very well.” **Client participant**

“[The staff member] went above and beyond. He explained other benefits that may be applicable, like the Blue Badge scheme. He said speak to your local council about your Council Tax... he was absolutely right because I applied for the Blue Badge and got that. I now have safe parking, I'm close to wherever I'm going. It changed my life for the better.” **Client participant**

Some client participants and partner respondents thought staff could have been more knowledgeable. One client participant said she received conflicting information from different staff members and thought staff needed more training. Some partner respondents felt that staff were friendly and polite but lacked knowledge and training about things like benefits, processes, and dealing with vulnerable clients. A few partner respondents appreciated when staff were honest about not knowing the answer to a query and went to find the answer, but many found this frustrating and time-consuming.

“ [...] I didn't think everyone in the call centre was clear about what was happening. The training wasn't quite what it should be... I was told one story from one person and one story from another person.” **Client participant**

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 (continued)

“Staff do not seem to be very knowledgeable and have no concept of vulnerabilities within the community. I do not blame staff, I believe it is a lack of training to explain the difficulties people experience.” **Partner respondent**

Understanding decisions

Client participants gave positive feedback about decision letters. Many said the letter was clear and easy to understand. Participants who applied for a disability benefit said it was clear which rates had been awarded. A client participant who made an application for Job Start Payment said the letter made it clear why their application had been denied.

“It was by post, a letter. It was easy to understand, it explained about the amount of money that will be in your account every month.” **Client participant**

“It said that I hadn’t been out of paid work for more than six months. You have to be unemployed before you can apply for Job Start Payment. It said I can apply for an internal review and it was very clear how to do that, so yeah I’d say it was clear.” **Client participant**

Some client participants found their decision letters less clear. Two participants felt their letters were “generic” and not personalised to them. One participant who mentioned this had been denied and wanted more information specific to her circumstances to understand why she wasn’t eligible for the benefit. The participant suggested this information could also be provided over the phone.

“It was just a generic letter, your application has been successful, you’ll get these payments and this is how much you’ll receive. Not much else in it.” **Client participant**

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 (continued)

“I understand that you need to send a general letter that applies to everyone to save time. I personally would have liked to know [why I wasn’t eligible], like if there’s a threshold you earn, or my husband earned. This is the maximum money or the minimum money you should be earning to get this benefit. Then you see clearly.” **Client participant**

Two client participants mentioned confusion about payment dates to do with their decision letter. One participant needed help to work out specific payment dates to know when to expect the money to arrive. A participant who applied for Scottish Child Payment said the decision letter didn’t make it clear how the payment amount was worked out. The participant said she decided not to query the sum.

“[The letter was] really straightforward and easy to understand. It set out that I would get enhanced daily living for five years. It said every four weeks but I had to get my mum to help me work out the dates when it would go in.”
Client participant

“The only thing I didn’t find clear, it said this amount per month, then I get an amount in December, then in January as expected. I was a bit confused about how they worked it out, but I didn’t phone to ask about it. I just assumed they got my application part way through a month and they worked it out from that.”
Client participant

Challenging decisions

Most client participants agreed with the decision on their application. Only one participant had challenged their decision. Their experience of the re-determination process is covered in Measure 35. Two participants said Social Security Scotland should make it easier for clients to request re-determinations. One participant was unhappy with the decision on her application but felt the form to request a re-determination was off-putting. The participant was reluctant to ask for the decision to be looked at again in case there were consequences due to her status as a migrant. The participant said she might have called to request a re-determination if the decision letter had a reference she could quote about her application.

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 (continued)

“There was no easy way to do it, it was a form, a few page form... this is the worst thing, if you don’t want people to get back to you, just send them this [form]. Nobody is going to take the time to write down on paper why they disagree... I’m not going to create trouble with them because I just don’t know what will be the consequence of it... If there was something as simple as a case number or reference, and you can call this number and quote your reference then someone will see you and give you some feedback and answer your question, then okay I thought I would do this.” **Client participant**

Another participant said clients should be able to get in touch via email to request an internal review.

“It’s not always easy to get to a post box or you might not be able to call someone because of communication difficulties so it would be good to have email as an option to submit the internal review.” **Client participant**

Staff are well trained

Measures 18 to 29 are about whether Social Security Scotland staff are well trained and supported. Data for these measures is taken from the People Survey and the Charter Research survey of staff.

Measure 18a: 73% of staff respondents who interact with clients (or will in the future) said their knowledge of social security in Scotland was 'good' or 'very good'. This compares to 71% in the 2021-22 survey of staff.

Measure 18b: 73% of 2022 People Survey respondents said they get the information they need to do their job well. This compares to 76% in the 2021 People Survey and 75% in the 2020 People Survey.

Measure 19: 69% of staff respondents who interact with clients (or will in the future) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that 'I know about a range of advice and advocacy services that are convenient for clients'. This compares to 71% in the 2021-22 survey of staff.

Measure 20: 60% of staff respondents who interact with clients (or will in the future) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that 'I know how to refer people to advice and advocacy services'. This compares to 62% in the 2021-22 survey of staff.

Measure 21: 53% of staff respondents who interact with clients (or will in the future) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that 'I know enough about the re-determinations process to explain it clearly to clients'. This compares to 55% in the 2021-22 survey of staff. 40% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that 'I know enough about the appeals process to explain it clearly to clients'. This compares to 48% in the 2021-22 survey of staff.

Measure 22: 93% of staff respondents said they were 'confident' or 'very confident' that they could deliver a service without discriminating against others. This compares to 96% in the 2021-22 survey of staff.

Measure 23: 97% of 2022 People Survey respondents said they understand their customers' or service users' needs. This compares to 95% in the 2021 People Survey and 98% in the 2020 People Survey.

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 and training

In open-text comments, staff respondents said training, self-directed learning, support from colleagues, and previous experience had helped them to feel confident in their skills and knowledge. Some respondents left positive comments about the training they'd received and said ongoing learning provided them with the skills and knowledge to do their jobs. They said training had covered topics like: Our Charter and human rights, discrimination, inclusive communication, and understanding benefits and internal processes.

"I have extensive experience in my area, but also I am constantly upskilling and keeping my knowledge up to date with all upcoming changes. I think that the variety of training sessions offered by the organisation is helping with achieving this." **Staff respondent**

"Learning and development and continuous improvement are actively encouraged in our team. Information sharing and collaborative workshops provide plenty of opportunity to share and learn from each other." **Staff respondent**

Knowledge of how not to discriminate

Staff respondents said in open-text comments that training had helped them to feel confident about not discriminating, especially training received as part of onboarding. Many said they felt a personal commitment to not discriminating against others and to challenging discriminatory behaviour.

"I feel it was made very clear in training about the Charter: dignity, respect of clients, learning more about discrimination. That has stayed with me, especially that social security is a human right." **Staff respondent**

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 (continued)

More support needed

In open-text comments, some staff respondents mentioned issues with training and guidance. Some felt that training had gaps, didn't cover all relevant topics, or wasn't delivered in a format that suited their needs. Others said they hadn't been trained in new elements of their job role. There were calls for more training on specific things like handling challenging situations and using internal systems.

Staff respondents also mentioned a need for improved guidance. They said guidance was hard to navigate, incomplete or inaccurate, had conflicting messages, and changed often. This had affected staff confidence and made it difficult to follow processes effectively. Respondents felt guidance could be compiled and shared in a more systematic way.

“More training is needed on systems. Staff are left to work it out. The guidance is not accessible or easy to find.” **Staff respondent**

“I do not feel that I was adequately supported by Social Security Scotland to fulfil my role. However, due to experience and training I have taken from other jobs I have been able to do my job well. There was no specific training for my role and I am aware that others have left the organisation as they were not as lucky as I was to have had previous experience in similar roles.”

Staff respondent

“The guidance system needs a major overhaul. It's difficult to search for things and it's difficult to understand the guidance as it doesn't match our systems or [hasn't] been tailored for [specific benefits].” **Staff respondent**

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 (continued)

In open-text comments, many staff respondents who interact with clients as part of their job, or will do so in future, said they felt knowledgeable about their own area of work but less so about other areas or benefits. Some felt they could better help clients if they had broader knowledge of other benefits and processes. They said specific training or protected time for self-directed learning could help with this. Many said they knew where to look for internal guidance as needed on support services, re-determinations, and appeals, but some said refresher training would be helpful.

“I have a strong understanding of the benefit which my work role centres around, but do not have much knowledge of other benefits. I would not feel overly confident discussing other benefits with clients because of this.”

Staff respondent

“I feel like I could know a lot more as there are a lot of benefits and services available. Perhaps a more interactive workshop on how to access various different benefits and services not necessarily administered by Social Security Scotland would be of benefit so we can better signpost our clients to things that may help them.” **Staff respondent**

Staff are well supported

Measure 25: 75% of 2022 People Survey respondents said they had the tools they needed to do their job effectively. This compares with 81% in the 2021 People Survey and 82% in the 2020 People Survey.

Measure 26: 82% of staff respondents said they had ‘good’ or ‘very good’ support from their line manager¹¹.

Measure 27: 86% 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’. This compares to 94% in the 2021-22 survey of staff.

Measure 28: 89% 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. This compares to 93% in the 2021-22 survey of staff.

¹¹ The answer options for this question were changed between 2021-22 and 2022-23, based on feedback from colleagues. The middle category in the options was changed from ‘neither good nor poor’ to ‘sometimes good, sometimes poor’. This means the results are not comparable between the two years (92% said they had ‘good’ or ‘very good’ support from their line manager in the 2021-22 survey of staff when the options were different).

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 were asked about how supported they felt at work. In open-text comments, respondents said line managers were often approachable, reliable and responsive. Effective communication and regular opportunities to check in with line managers had helped them to feel supported. Respondents said managers were often understanding of work-related or personal issues. Some said that they were made to feel trusted, valued and listened to, and had autonomy to manage their own workloads. Some respondents said they felt supported in their career goals and professional development.

“My manager has been excellent. She's very supportive and has always made it clear that we can go to her for anything and that no question is a silly question. She has made me feel so welcome and comfortable and always ensures that she updates us as soon as possible with new information.” **Staff respondent**

Staff confidence

Staff respondents were asked about their confidence to deliver a service free from discrimination and in line with the values set out in Our Charter. Staff respondents left positive open-text comments about Social Security Scotland's values and principles. Many felt the Charter commitments aligned with their own personal beliefs and said they worked hard to uphold these principles in their behaviour and their work.

“My beliefs align with Our Charter and I strive to be inclusive and adhere to the Charter in my work and behaviour.” **Staff respondent**

“I am not widely familiar with the commitments set out in the Charter, but do regularly look to adhere to the principles of dignity, fairness and respect when carrying out my working role.” **Staff respondent**

Training plus internal tools and processes, such as the ability to offer interpretation and translation services to clients, made staff respondents feel confident about not discriminating and to challenge discrimination when they see it.

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 (continued)

“The Charter and its values align with my own personal values, so it is easy to follow. I feel comfortable and feel like I have the tools to challenge discrimination when I see it.” **Staff respondent**

Additional staff needs

In open-text comments, staff respondents described how their additional needs and accessibility requirements had been met at work. Examples of support included getting the equipment they needed, adjustments to their work role, time off or special leave, and adjustments around working location. There were a few examples where staff respondents’ additional needs or accessibility requirements weren’t met. Examples included not being supported or understood by line managers, issues with processes and policies, and delays in getting what they needed.

“I have assistive technology which is great but I also need time off for medical appointments and I have received great support to enable me to do this.”
Staff respondent

“I was told my adjustment needs were not practical and that I could consider using items which would ultimately draw attention to me and single me out. I was not prepared to do this. I feel my [condition] and needs were utterly dismissed and the alternative suggestions were both ridiculous and unfair.”
Staff respondent

Lacking confidence and support

In open-text comments, staff respondents who reported not feeling confident at work mentioned issues including: complicated processes, systems and policies that changed often; high workloads; understaffing; and difficulties communicating with clients and colleagues using their preferred channels. They said these issues made it challenging to deliver a service in line with the commitments in Our Charter. There was concern that these issues were leading to discrimination against clients and staff, especially around communication needs or gender. Some raised the need for more training on Our Charter and discrimination. Some expressed concern about the treatment of staff members and felt that Social Security Scotland’s values weren’t always applied to staff.

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 (continued)

“Insufficient training provided for dealing with minority groups, in particular for transgender clients – next to no guidance on how to treat cases where the client is transgender as this falls within other generic guidance such as 'documents required when a client has changed their name' with no room for dignity, fairness and respect. [...] I believe there needs to be mandatory and regular equality and diversity refresher training for all staff so they are aware of how to treat vulnerable groups. I have been in the agency for 16 months and am yet to receive any mandatory training further to that which I received when joining.”

Staff respondent

Some respondents left open-text comments about feeling less supported by their line manager. They mentioned issues like poor communication and infrequent meetings. Other respondents said their line managers did not have the required knowledge, experience or resources to help them with their roles. Some said they relied more on peers for support. A few spoke of experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment from their line managers.

“My line manager is very approachable, will listen to concerns and act on them and makes themselves available when needed. The only down side is that they don't have the client-facing experience and therefore, is not always able to answer operational questions, therefore, I will go to peers for advice rather than my line manager.” **Staff respondent**

“I've had a mostly poor experience. I've had to contact the union due to mental health discrimination and had push-back [on] adjustments.” **Staff respondent**

Processes that Work

Do processes work?

Processes work well

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

When a client disagrees with a decision made by Social Security Scotland, they can request a re-determination or internal review. For example, this includes if they have been denied a benefit and they feel they should have received it, or if they feel they are entitled to a higher level of award for Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment. Job Start Payment and Best Start Foods have internal reviews, other benefits have a re-determination process. In the re-determination process, the application is assessed again by a separate team.

Table 17 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. For wider context about views on decisions, measures 11 and 16 provide data on the percentage of Client Survey respondents who agreed and disagreed with their decision, respectively. Measure 16 also shows what proportion of Client Survey respondents who disagreed asked Social Security Scotland to look at their application again.

Table 17: Percentage of cases where re-determinations/internal reviews were requested by clients, by benefit

Benefit	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant	0.9%	1.0%	0.7%	0.7%
Best Start Foods	*0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Funeral Support Payment	*4.1%	2.7%	2.3%	2.6%
Young Carer Grant	*0.9%	2.1%	2.0%	2.2%
Job Start Payment	n/a	*3.1%	2.4%	2.5%
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	*0.1%	0.7%	0.8%
Child Disability Payment**	n/a	n/a	*4.2%	4.8%
Adult Disability Payment**	n/a	n/a	n/a	***6%

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

* Part year figures because the benefits went live during the financial year.

** Please note that these figures relate only to re-determination requests for new applications, and do not include re-determination requests where a client has transferred to the benefit.

*** Does not include decimal places in line with the relevant statistics publication.

Measure 30b: percentage of re-determinations allowed are outlined in the tables below. 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. From October 2021 onwards, Social Security Scotland were not able to withdraw re-determinations. All re-determinations or internal reviews require a determination unless invalid. Any requests judged to be invalid requests are not included in the statistics.

Table 18: Outcomes of re-determinations: Best Start Grant

Year	Disallowed	Allowed / Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2019-20	55%	26%	18%
2020-21	38%	18%	44%
2021-22	51%	22%	28%
2022-23	83%	17%	0%

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

Table 19: Outcomes of reviews: Best Start Foods

Year	Disallowed	Allowed / Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2019-20	43%	50%	7%
2020-21	40%	38%	22%
2021-22	39%	44%	17%
2022-23	71%	29%	0%

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

Table 20: Outcomes of re-determinations: Funeral Support Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed / Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2019-20	50%	45%	5%
2020-21	44%	43%	13%
2021-22	56%	34%	9%
2022-23	54%	46%	0%

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

Table 21: Outcomes of re-determinations: Young Carer Grant

Year	Disallowed	Allowed / Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2019-20	36%	27%	36%
2020-21	32%	52%	15%
2021-22	32%	59%	9%
2022-23	37%	63%	0%

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

Table 22: Outcomes of reviews: Job Start Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed / Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2020-21	67%	21%	12%
2021-22	63%	31%	6%
2022-23	61%	39%	0%

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

Table 23: Outcomes of re-determinations: Scottish Child Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed / Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2020-21	25%	25%	49%
2021-22	29%	49%	22%
2022-23	48%	52%	0%

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

Table 24: Outcomes of re-determinations: Child Disability Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed / Partially allowed	Invalid
2021-22	#	84%	#
2022-23	12%	84%	4%

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

indicates that figures are suppressed for disclosure control.

Table 25: Outcomes of re-determinations: Adult Disability Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed/ Partially allowed	Invalid
2022-23	32%	61%	7%

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

Measure 31a: percentage of applications processed within x working days are outlined in the tables below¹². Processing time data is presented by the year of decision, rather than the month the application was received. Processing time is calculated in working days, and public holidays are excluded, even if applications were processed by staff working overtime on these days. Applications that have a re-determination request have been excluded. Please note that these processing times include time spent waiting to receive evidence requested from clients, but do not include additional time to make payments.

Table 26: Percentage of applications processed within x working days: Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

Applications processed in:	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
0-10 days	55%	56%	23%	28%	6%
11-20 days	31%	28%	33%	21%	7%
21-30 days	8%	10%	20%	21%	13%
31-40 days	4%	3%	9%	11%	29%
41 days +	2%	3%	15%	19%	44%

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

Table 27: Percentage of applications processed within x working days: Funeral Support Payment

Applications processed in:	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
0-10 days	61%	52%	27%	6%
11-20 days	27%	32%	48%	16%
21-30 days	7%	9%	14%	37%
31-40 days	3%	3%	6%	22%
41 days +	2%	4%	5%	18%

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

¹² The way these figures are reported in the statistics publications has changed in 2022-23, and these changes are reflected here.

Table 28: Percentage of applications processed within x working days: Young Carer Grant

Applications processed in:	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
0-10 days	30%	41%	20%	4%
11-20 days	40%	27%	37%	26%
21-30 days	15%	11%	22%	31%
31-40 days	6%	6%	9%	17%
41 days +	10%	15%	12%	21%

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

Table 29: Percentage of applications processed within x working days: Job Start Payment

Applications processed in:	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
0-10 days	74%	36%	30%
11-20 days	11%	33%	30%
21-30 days	4%	10%	14%
31-40 days	2%	8%	7%
41 days +	8%	13%	19%

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

Table 30: Percentage of applications processed within x working days: Scottish Child Payment¹³

Applications processed in:	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
0-10 days	6%	22%	17%
11-20 days	19%	18%	26%
21-30 days	15%	20%	9%
31-40 days	18%	18%	17%
41 days +	42%	21%	31%

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

¹³ In November 2022 'Straight-through Processing' was introduced. This allows certain applications which meet a specific set of criteria to be automatically passed to the payment approval stage. More information is available in the statistics publication. See Annex A for more details.

Table 31: Percentage of applications processed within x working days: Child Disability Payment¹⁴

Applications processed in:	2021-22	2022-23
0-20 days	18%	1%
21-40 days	51%	9%
41-60 days	23%	20%
61-80 days	6%	24%
81-100 days	1%	20%
101-120 days	0%	13%
121-140 days	0%	6%
141 days +	#	6%

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

indicates that figures are suppressed for disclosure control.

Table 32: Percentage of applications processed within x working days: Adult Disability Payment¹⁵

Applications processed in:	2022-23
0-20 days	2%
21-40 days	10%
41-60 days	21%
61-80 days	26%
81-100 days	22%
101-120 days	12%
121-140 days	5%
141 days +	1%

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

¹⁴ Processing times for Child Disability Payment are counted from the date the part 2 form is received to decision date. Processing times for applicants applying under the special rules for terminal illness have not been included due to not having a part 2 date.

¹⁵ Processing times for Adult Disability Payment are counted from the date the part 2 form is received to decision date. Processing times for applicants applying under the special rules for terminal illness have not been included due to not having a part 2 date.

Measure 31b: percentage of clients paid on time from the first time. This measure is available as a percentage of payments rather than of clients. 99.25% of payments in 2022-23 were on time. Where they were not on time, this was either because of client error, operator error, system error or the death of a client or appointee. In April 2022 there were issues around the Easter bank holiday dates, which caused payment delays. This affected multiple benefits. This made up a large proportion of the late payments across the financial year. All were paid the next working day.

The method used to calculate the percentage of payments paid on time was improved for 2022-23 for Best Start Grant and Child Disability Payment. Single transactions for these benefits could previously have been broken into more than one payment in the data held due to the different components of these benefits. These multiple payments were then included in the overall figure on payments made on time for 2021-22 as well the figures for the specific benefits. For 2022-23, each transaction is only counted as one payment across all benefits. This means the 2021-22 figures on payments paid on time overall, for Best Start Grant and for Child Disability Payment presented in last year's framework are not directly comparable to the 2022-23 figures. Outside of the overall figure and the two benefits affected, all other benefits can be compared between years, as shown in Table 33.

Table 33: Percentage of payments paid on time¹⁶

Benefit	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant	*	99.50%
Funeral Support Payment	98.23%	97.35%
Young Carer Grant	99.54%	97.55%
Job Start Payment	99.77%	96.97%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	99.33%	99.89%
Scottish Child Payment	99.99%	98.80%
Child Disability Payment	*	99.76%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	99.95%
Winter Heating Payment	n/a	99.97%

Source: Social Security Scotland management information

* Figures not comparable for 2021-22 due to improvement in the method used to calculate payments paid on time for these benefits for 2022-23.

¹⁶ This table does not include Best Start Foods because payments to Best Start Foods cards go through a different system.

Measure 32: percentage of clients paid the correct amount from the first time is not currently centrally collated. Please see Measure 13 above which covers whether Client Survey respondents said they were paid the right amount.

Measure 33: percentage of re-determinations completed on time can be found in Tables 34 and 35.

Table 34: Percentages of low income benefit re-determinations/internal reviews processed within 16 working days¹⁷

Benefit	% of re-determinations/internal reviews processed within 16 working days			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant	97%	93%	92%	96%
Funeral Support Payment	95%	83%	93%	92%
Young Carer Grant	100%	90%	88%	95%
Job Start Payment	n/a	92%	88%	81%
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	97%	85%	96%
Best Start Foods	87%	84%	88%	93%

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

Table 35: Percentages of Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment re-determinations processed within 56¹⁸ working days

Benefit	2021-22	2022-23
Child Disability Payment	97%	97%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	99%

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

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ A request for a re-determination should be made within 42 calendar days of being notified of the determination. Social Security Scotland then has 56 calendar days to make a re-determination.

Measure 34: call waiting times. From 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, Social Security Scotland handled approximately 438,920 calls. In 2022-23, the average time a caller waited before a call was answered was 22 minutes and 17 seconds across all phone lines. This is up from 5 minutes and 51 seconds in 2021-22. Waiting times ranged from under two minutes for each of the Disability Payment case transfer lines to an average of 46 minutes and 40 seconds for the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment (Adult Disability Payment) line.

The average waiting time for each phone line is shown in Table 36. More detailed breakdowns, including the distribution of waiting times for each phone line, are provided in the [Insights Research publication](#).

Table 36: Average call wait time by phone line (hours:minutes:seconds)¹⁹

Phone line	2020-21 ²⁰	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant / Foods	00:14:21	00:07:11	00:29:39
Carer's Allowance Supplement	00:02:50	00:08:55	00:23:20
Child Winter Heating Assistance	00:07:42	00:03:53	00:06:29
Funeral Support Payment	00:02:14	00:01:46	00:04:11
General Enquiries	00:08:59	00:07:09	00:07:07
Job Start Payment	00:03:10	00:02:18	00:03:30
Scottish Child Payment	00:15:30	00:07:05	00:30:50
Young Carer Grant	00:03:41	00:02:56	00:03:47
Child Disability Payment general	n/a	00:00:46	00:33:07
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	00:00:30	00:01:51
Adult Disability Payment general	n/a	*00:00:55	00:17:29
**Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer (Personal Independence Payment)	n/a	n/a	00:01:42
**Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer (Working Age Disability Living Allowance)	n/a	n/a	00:01:35
***Accessible Vehicles and Equipment (Adult Disability Payment)	n/a	n/a	00:46:40
***Accessible Vehicles and Equipment (Child Disability Payment)	n/a	n/a	00:30:27
Winter Heating Payment	n/a	n/a	00:05:01
All phone line	00:10:58	00:05:51	00:22:17

Source - Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings

* This phone line launched on 21 March 2022, so this figure is for only 12 days of calls.

** These phone lines launched during 2022-23: Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer (Personal Independence Payment) – May 2022; Adult Disability Payment Case Transfer (Working Age Disability Living Allowance) – August 2022; Winter Heating Payment – January 2023.

*** In August 2022 the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment phone line was updated so callers could select either Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment. Wait times are shown for these two lines individually and the previous single Accessible Vehicles and Equipment phone line is no longer shown in the table.

¹⁹ Please note that Social Security Scotland moved to a new telephony system on 30 March 2021.

²⁰ 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.

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 and why decisions were changed

During a focus group, Client Experience staff participants were asked to describe some of the main reasons why clients had asked for their decision to be looked at again. For Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant, re-determinations were commonly requested where applications were denied due to a lack of information about the receipt of qualifying benefits. For Scottish Child Payment, decisions had been changed in competing claims cases where it became apparent at the re-determination stage that the applicant had responsibility for the child. Staff were able to award the benefit based on evidence such as court orders or from social work departments.

“With [qualifying benefits like] Universal Credit – we get it on the [internal] system but it shows as zero credit. But sometimes on a re-determination the client submits a statement and we can see it’s being paid.”

Client Experience staff participant

“Competing claims for Scottish Child Payment where someone is already in receipt then another client applies and is denied because they say they are responsible [for the child]... We have asked for more evidence, like court orders or from social work, then I’ve received that and over-turned [the first decision] based on that evidence.” **Client Experience staff participant**

For Funeral Support Payment, re-determinations were requested by clients who were unhappy with the payment amount or had their applications denied due to lack of clarity about who was responsible for the funeral.

“For Funeral Support Payment it’s about responsibility for who’s paying for the funeral and the amount, if we’ve deducted money from the deceased’s estate.”

Client Experience staff participant

Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment clients had commonly asked Social Security Scotland to look at their decision again because they felt they should have been awarded a higher rate of benefit. Decisions were changed where further detail or supporting information was received at the re-determination stage. These clients were either awarded the benefit or had their existing rate of payment increased.

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 (continued)

“A client said they could do everything on their application – no issues with mobility or daily living. They sent a re-determination which was completed by someone giving support. It turns out that the person had a cognitive impairment so they thought they could do everything, but when all the supporting information came through they went from having 0-0 scores to enhanced-enhanced. They said they could do everything but that wasn’t the case.” **Client Experience staff participant**

Why decisions were not changed

Client Experience staff participants were asked about the main reasons why decisions had not been changed following re-determinations. For Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment, this was common where a client’s condition or needs didn’t meet the eligibility criteria. For Funeral Support Payment, decisions stayed the same if the client didn’t have clear responsibility for the funeral. Decisions also stayed the same in cases where supporting information wasn’t received at the re-determination stage, or where clients weren’t in receipt of a necessary qualifying benefit.

“A broken leg should hopefully heal so that won’t meet the test. There’s a lot of that coming through. Clients think they’re eligible because they do have a health condition but it’s not just that, it’s how it affects their daily life.”

Client Experience staff participant

“It might be something as simple as supporting information – they still haven’t given us the correct information. That happens quite a lot.”

Client Experience staff participant

Examples of the re-determination process

One client participant had experience of the re-determination process. The participant requested a re-determination after his application for Adult Disability Payment was denied. The participant felt he had left out important information about his health condition and the impact it has on his life. He submitted more information and was happy that the re-determination awarded him the benefit.

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 (continued)

“When I did the [re-determination] someone phoned and said [it] could take some time. They asked are you okay to contact the doctor or will we? Not hearing back from the doctor held it up a bit. I just told them my good days and bad days and was extremely happy to get the payment. It’s made a big difference to my life.” **Client participant**

The participant said the re-determination process took around two months. A wait to receive supporting information from his GP had caused a delay. The participant was happy with the staff member who took him through the process. They answered his questions and supported him by collecting supporting information on his behalf.

“The lady was amazing. Asked all the questions and went through all that and said the doctors haven’t got back. I said it’s fine for them to contact the specialist and the doctor. They were really, really good... I think it took about two months... I just put it to the back of my mind so that it doesn’t annoy me and then the letter came in so it didn’t seem like a long time. I just got on with life as best I could. After I got the payment I was quite happy.”
Client participant

Client Experience staff participants were asked how the re-determinations process is working for clients and for staff. They felt the process was fair and open, and worked well for clients. They enjoyed being able to help clients and found this rewarding. The structured process and ability to request more information from clients had helped them to feel confident in their decision-making. They said the increased volume of re-determinations had helped them gain experience across a range of cases, but expressed some concern about increased workload as the organisation has grown.

“I find clients are generally positive regardless of your decision... Re-determinations are clear and structured, there’s information, we’re a named person... Clients are grateful for us taking the time to explain things to them.”
Client Experience staff participant

Measure 36: Appeals upheld or rejected

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

Tables 37 to 41 show data on the number of appeals received for each benefit each financial year and their outcomes. Please note, data in the tables has been rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control.

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. For Young Carer Grant, a very small number of appeals were received across each reporting year so the data has not been published to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

Table 37: Best Start Grant appeals (numbers)

Year	Number of appeals received	Appeals taking place	Appeals upheld	Appeals not upheld
2018-2019	5	0	0	0
2019-2020	60	60	0	60
2020-2021	35	20	#	15
2021-2022	15	15	#	10
2022-2023	10	10	0	10

indicates that figures are suppressed for disclosure control.

Table 38: Funeral Support Payment appeals (numbers)

Year	Number of appeals received	Appeals taking place	Appeals upheld	Appeals not upheld
2019-2020	5	0	0	0
2020-2021	15	20	5	10
2021-2022	10	5	0	5
2022-2023	15	15	5	10

Table 39: Scottish Child Payment appeals (numbers)

Year	Number of appeals received	Appeals taking place	Appeals upheld	Appeals not upheld
2021-2022	15	15	10	5
2022-2023	10	5	#	5

indicates that figures are suppressed for disclosure control.

Table 40: Child Disability Payment appeals (numbers)

Year	Number of appeals received	Appeals taking place	Appeals upheld	Appeals not upheld
2021-2022	#	0	n/a	n/a
2022-2023	40	15	10	5

indicates that figures are suppressed for disclosure control. A small number of appeals were received and the number has not been published to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

Table 41: Adult Disability Payment appeals (numbers)

Year	Number of appeals received	Appeals taking place	Appeals upheld	Appeals not upheld
2022-2023	65	0	0	0

indicates that figures are suppressed for disclosure control. A small number of appeals were completed and the numbers has not been published to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

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

Although the volume of appeals increased in 2022-23, this remained relatively low in comparison to the number of re-determinations. None of the Client Experience staff who participated in this year's Charter Research focus groups had worked directly on an appeal in 2022-23. However, they were aware that reasons for appeals tended to be the same as for re-determinations: that clients' circumstances had changed or more supporting evidence had become available. The reasons for upholding or changing a decision were also the same for appeals as for re-determinations, relating to eligibility and the availability of supporting information.

"The reasons are usually the same as re-determinations. We don't see a lot [of appeals] for Low Income Benefits. That is based on their income so it's easier to work out if the income means a client doesn't qualify. Whereas with disability applications, clients often answer the question but they don't talk about what they can or can't do... Sometimes that ends up with appeals as they're not giving the right information that we are looking for."

Client Experience staff participant

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

The survey of partners asked those who worked with Social Security Scotland or directly with clients to rate the service.

Table 42: How would you rate the overall service delivered by Social Security Scotland?

Number of respondents: 2021-22 = 74, 2022-23 = 98; column percentages.

Response options	2021-22	2022-23
Very good	16%	9%
Good	41%	46%
Neither good nor poor	19%	19%
Poor	14%	17%
Very poor	4%	4%
Don't know/not applicable	7%	4%

55% of partner survey respondents in 2022-23 rated the overall service as good or very good, while 21% said it was poor or very poor. This compares to 57% saying they rated the overall service as good or very good in 2021-22, with 18% saying it was poor or very poor.

In open-text comments, partner respondents who had used the service on clients' behalf said information was easy to find and understand. Many praised Social Security Scotland's website and said it was easy to access information on how to apply. A couple of respondents felt that the website was confusing and information could be clearer, especially for things like eligibility.

“Information online is easy to find but I do find the format of some information quite confusing to read and understand if you are a non-benefits adviser and/or reading the information for the first time. For example, Best Start Foods & Grants eligibility could be clearer than it is. I also think it should be made clear to people that they will have to reapply for Best Start Grant any time one of their children reaches a qualifying age.” **Partner respondent**

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 (continued)

Partner respondents were positive about having different ways to complete applications with or for clients. There was particular praise for online applications being easy to access and complete. Some described problems with paper forms getting lost or being delayed, and receiving multiple copies of the forms. Some said it was straightforward to apply on clients' behalf, especially for Best Start Grant. Some said the applications for Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment were easy to understand but were long, repetitive, and asked for too much detail.

"A client was told to submit an application online, [but] she has no digital skills. She asked for a paper form, it took three weeks to reach her."

Partner respondent

"I have assisted people with both the paper and online Adult Disability Payment applications and have found them relatively easy to complete. Although the applications are quite lengthy and some of the questions are repetitive. This can be difficult, especially if someone is sick."

Partner respondent

Some partner respondents were positive about contacting Social Security Scotland on behalf of clients. Many said staff were friendly, courteous and helpful. Partner respondents praised Local Delivery staff specifically and said they had listened to clients.

"Staff are very friendly, helpful. Most importantly they have a good manner/attitude towards our clients which puts them at ease."

Partner respondent

"The Local Delivery service have been amazing and clients feel they are getting listened to." **Partner respondent**

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 (continued)

Other partner respondents had negative or mixed experiences when contacting Social Security Scotland for a client. Wait times to get through on the phone was the most common issue. Some said web chat was easy to use but others experienced delays and didn't always get the help they needed. A couple of respondents had poor experiences to do with staff manner, where client advisers were rude, abrupt or ended the call without warning.

"It can be difficult to get in touch with someone from Social Security Scotland on the phone. The web chat is a good service but can also be a long wait."

Partner respondent

"Rude staff. Long waiting time. People hanging up the phone without warning. Inappropriate answer to a question. When asking for a timeframe for a decision on a specific application that had been pending for four months, I was told "you'll know when you'll know". I don't have the recollection of a positive interaction with the service." **Partner respondent**

Partner respondents reported some difficulties around acting on clients' behalf. Many found it frustrating that they couldn't talk to Social Security Scotland without the client or a third party consent form. They said consent forms were time-consuming and complicated to submit and sometimes took a long time to be registered.

"Having authorisation to speak on a client's behalf is long-winded – downloading a form, printing and posting – don't know how long it will take to get on the system before we can speak with an adviser." **Partner respondent**

A few partner respondents said they'd complained to Social Security Scotland in cases where applications had been stuck or delayed. They felt that submitting a complaint was their only option due to the lack of other ways to escalate issues. Many other partner respondents mentioned frustration with the lack of escalation route within Social Security Scotland and felt this should be improved.

"When things go wrong, there is no escalation route to resolve the issue." **Partner respondent**

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 (continued)

Other suggestions for improvement included: benefit-specific phone lines, audio notifications when a web chat adviser becomes available, and a secure email service or dedicated helpline for partners who support clients. There were also suggestions for Social Security Scotland to set up a database of approved providers, similar to the Apollo List used by the Department for Work and Pensions, so that partners can speak on clients' behalf after appropriate checks are made.

"There should be a line for agencies. I don't have time to wait on the phone for ages. If I call, it is because the person I am supporting is unable to do it."

Partner respondent

"If the client is not available for the call, Social Security Scotland staff will not give any information to their representative if they are not a named contact on file. It would be better to have something similar to the Apollo List that the Department for Work and Pensions has." **Partner respondent**

How accessible are services and places?

Services are accessible

70% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of those:

- **Measure 39:** 87% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the application process was clear. Some groups were less likely to agree or strongly agree, these were:
 - respondents aged 16-24 (84%), 55-64 (81%) and 65 and over (80%) (compared to at least 88% of those aged 25-54)
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (84% compared to 91% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - white respondents (88% compared to 92% of ethnic minorities)
 - men (83% compared to 89% of women)
 - gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents (84% compared to 88% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

- **Measure 40:** 86% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the application form asked only relevant questions. Some groups were less likely to agree or strongly agree, these were:
 - respondents aged 55-64 and 65 and over (76% and 77% respectively compared to at least 85% of those in younger age groups)
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (81% compared to 92% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - white respondents (86% compared to 92% of ethnic minorities)
 - men (78% compared to 88% of women)
 - gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents (83% compared to 87% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

Tables 43 and 44 show Measures 39 and 40 for each benefit, including previous years' findings where possible.

Table 43: Client Survey respondents' views on whether the 'application process was clear', by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of applying for each benefit; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant / Foods and Scottish Child Payment	n/a	88%
Best Start Grant / Foods	91%	83%
Funeral Support Payment	91%	87%
Young Carer Grant	91%	88%
Job Start Payment*	90%	#
Scottish Child Payment	84%	94%
Child Disability Payment	87%	79%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	77%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (93)

Table 44: Client Survey respondents' views on whether the 'application asked only relevant questions', by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of applying for each benefit; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant / Foods and Scottish Child Payment	n/a	90%
Best Start Grant / Foods	90%	84%
Funeral Support Payment	87%	90%
Young Carer Grant	93%	91%
Job Start Payment*	86%	#
Scottish Child Payment	91%	94%
Child Disability Payment	83%	76%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	70%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (88)

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 are produced in twelve languages. (Source: Social Security Scotland communications team)

Measure 42: this measure is worded in the original Charter Measurement Framework as 'X percentage of clients say staff adapted to enable them where they faced barriers to accessing services'. 17% of Client Survey respondents said they had experienced some sort of barrier when getting help from Social Security Scotland. Some groups were more likely to experience barriers, these were:

- respondents aged 16-24 (23% compared to between 15% and 19% for all other age groups)
- respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (20% compared to 14% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
- men (20% compared to 16% of women)
- gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents (21% compared to 16% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

Table 45: Whether Client Survey respondents faced any barriers getting help from Social Security Scotland, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit; % who said 'yes', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	13%	14%
Best Start Grant	19%	23%
Best Start Foods	19%	24%
Funeral Support Payment	18%	17%
Young Carer Grant	22%	18%
Job Start Payment	20%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	15%	14%
Scottish Child Payment	16%	15%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	21%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	11%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	20%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	22%

Just under a third of those who experienced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland about them (30%). Some groups were less likely to have told Social Security Scotland about the barriers they experienced. This included:

- respondents aged 16-24 (23% compared to between 27% and 31% of those aged 25-64, and 35% of those aged 65 and older)
- respondents without a disability or long-term health condition (27%, compared to 33% of respondents with a disability or long-term health condition)
- ethnic minority respondents (22% compared to 32% of white respondents).

Table 46: Whether Client Survey respondents who experienced barriers told Social Security Scotland about them, by benefit experience, 2022-23²¹

All respondents with experience of each benefit who experienced barriers; % who said 'yes', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	27%
Best Start Grant	28%
Best Start Foods	29%
Funeral Support Payment*	36%
Young Carer Grant	#
Job Start Payment	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance*	45%
Scottish Child Payment	27%
Child Disability Payment applicant	40%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	37%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	34%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	31%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Funeral Support Payment: 74; Child Winter Heating Assistance: 42)

²¹ The number of respondents for these questions were too small to allow benefit breakdowns to be provided in previous years, so only the 2022-23 data is shown.

Where respondents had told Social Security Scotland about the barriers they experienced, 43% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland 'understood them'. A quarter (25%) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland 'supported [them] in overcoming them'.

Some groups were less likely to agree Social Security Scotland understood the barriers they experienced, including:

- white respondents (42% compared to 58% of ethnic minority respondents)
- men (38% compared to 44% of women)
- gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents (34% (n=53) compared to 43% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

Groups less likely to agree Social Security Scotland supported them to overcome the barriers they experienced included:

- respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (23% compared to 28% of respondents without a disability or long-term health condition)
- white respondents (24% compared to 43% of ethnic minority respondents)
- gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents (15% (n=53) compared to 25% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

Table 47 shows the proportion of respondents with experience of each benefit who agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland understood the barriers they faced and supported them to overcome them.

Table 47: Client Survey respondents who said Social Security Scotland understood the barriers they experienced and supported them to overcome them, by benefit experience, 2022-23²²

All respondents with experience of each benefit who experienced barriers and reported them to Social Security Scotland; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	Social Security Scotland understood [the barrier(s)]	Social Security Scotland supported client to overcome [the barrier(s)]
Carer's Allowance Supplement*	31%	20%
Best Start Grant	46%	35%
Best Start Foods	45%	33%
Funeral Support Payment*	35%	27%
Young Carer Grant	#	#
Job Start Payment	#	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	#	#
Scottish Child Payment	47%	32%
Child Disability Payment applicant	52%	23%
Child Disability Payment case transfer*	42%	17%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	40%	21%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	40%	24%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Carer's Allowance Supplement: 49-50; Funeral Support Payment: 26; Child Disability Payment case transfer: 89-91)

Measure 43: This measure is worded in the original Charter Measurement Framework as 'X percentage of clients said that staff addressed the communication barriers they faced'. 5% of Client Survey respondents said they could not communicate with Social Security Scotland when they wanted to, whilst 5% could not communicate how they wanted to. 36% of respondents who faced at least one of these communication barriers told Social Security Scotland about the barriers they experienced. 19% of this group who told Social Security Scotland about the barriers they faced strongly agreed or agreed that Social Security Scotland supported them to overcome them.

²² The number of respondents for these questions were too small to allow benefit breakdowns to be provided in previous years, so only the 2022-23 data is shown.

²³ These respondents could have also experienced other barriers, so they may not have only been referring to communication barriers in the next two sentences.

Measure 44: 69% 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. Some groups were less likely to agree, these were:

- younger and older age groups (for example 61% of 16-24 and 55-64 year olds compared to 72% of 35-44 year olds and 74% of 45-54 year olds)
- respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (64% compared to 74% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
- white respondents (68% compared to 80% of minority ethnic respondents)
- men (65% compared to 70% of women)
- gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents (61% compared to 69% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

Table 48: Client Survey respondents’ views on whether their ‘application was handled within a reasonable time frame’, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of applying for each benefit; % who ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’, row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Best Start Grant / Foods and Scottish Child Payment	n/a	65%
Best Start Grant / Foods	72%	55%
Funeral Support Payment	81%	71%
Young Carer Grant	81%	61%
Job Start Payment*	67%	#
Scottish Child Payment	75%	77%
Child Disability Payment	73%	50%
Adult Disability Payment	n/a	45%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (90)

Measure 45: 84% of Client Survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that their time was not wasted. Some groups were less likely to agree, these were:

- respondents in younger and older age groups (for example, 79% of those aged 16-24 and 80% of those 65 and over compared to 86% of those aged 35-44 and 85% of those aged 45-54)
- respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (81% compared to 87% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
- white respondents (83% compared to 90% of ethnic minority respondents)
- Men (80% compared to 85% of women)
- gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents (79% compared to 84% of heterosexual or straight respondents).

Table 49: Client Survey respondents who said ‘Social Security Scotland did not waste my time’, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit; % who ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’, row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	84%	84%
Best Start Grant	87%	83%
Best Start Foods	87%	82%
Funeral Support Payment	86%	86%
Young Carer Grant	88%	83%
Job Start Payment*	77%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	87%	86%
Scottish Child Payment	89%	88%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	81%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	84%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	78%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	76%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (97)

Measure 46: This measure is worded in the original Charter Measurement Framework as ‘X percentage of clients that required extra support said they were referred to relevant support’. Client Survey 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:

- 21% said staff had told them about other benefits they might have been entitled to. 34% said that they would have liked to have been told about other benefits by staff but were not. A further 33% said this question was not applicable or relevant to them, whilst 11% said they could not remember or did not know²⁴. Some groups were less likely to say they had been told about other benefits, these were:
 - respondents aged between 45 and 64 (18% compared to 22% or over for other age groups)
 - respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (19% compared to 25% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
 - white respondents (21% compared to 28% of ethnic minority respondents)
 - gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents (17% compared to 21% of heterosexual or straight respondents).
- 28% said staff had told them about other sources of additional help (for example Citizens Advice Scotland, etc.). 34% said that they would have liked to have been told about other sources of help by staff but were not. A further 24% said this question was not applicable or relevant to them, whilst 14% said they could not remember or did not know. The “No, not applicable / relevant” option was accidentally omitted for Child and Adult Disability Payment applicants and case transfer clients, which is skewing the findings for these benefits. This could also be impacting the overall results on whether clients were told about other sources of additional help so findings should be interpreted with caution. Due to the relationship between benefit experience and demographic groups, results across different groups of respondents may also be impacted. As such, no demographic breakdowns are provided for this measure for 2022-23.

Tables 50 and 51 show data on the proportion of clients who were told about other benefits and additional sources of support for each benefit.

²⁴ The “Can’t remember/don’t know” option was accidentally omitted for Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Carer’s Allowance Supplement and Child Winter Heating Assistance, which is skewing the findings for these benefits.

Table 50: Whether Client Survey respondents were told about other benefits they might have been entitled to by staff, by benefit experience, 2022-23

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had been in contact with staff, % selecting each response option; row percentages.

Benefit Experience	Yes	No, but I would have liked them to	No, not applicable / relevant	Don't know / can't remember ²⁵
Carer's Allowance Supplement	27%	40%	32%	n/a
Best Start Grant	34%	32%	21%	13%
Best Start Foods	34%	33%	20%	13%
Funeral Support Payment	37%	29%	35%	n/a
Young Carer Grant*	22%	43%	35%	n/a
Job Start Payment	#	#	#	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance*	30%	33%	36%	n/a
Scottish Child Payment	25%	32%	32%	11%
Child Disability Payment applicant	17%	39%	33%	11%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	22%	26%	43%	9%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	15%	39%	33%	13%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	20%	34%	36%	10%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Young Carer Grant: 37; Child Winter Heating Assistance: 99)

²⁵ This option was accidentally omitted for Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Carer's Allowance Supplement and Child Winter Heating Assistance, which is skewing the findings for these benefits.

Table 51: Whether Client Survey respondents were told about other sources of additional help by staff, by benefit experience, 2022-23

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had been in contact with staff, % selecting each response option; row percentages.

Benefit Experience	Yes	No, but I would have liked them to	No, not applicable / relevant ²⁶	Don't know / can't remember ²⁷
Carer's Allowance Supplement	32%	29%	39%	n/a
Best Start Grant	25%	29%	31%	15%
Best Start Foods	25%	30%	31%	14%
Funeral Support Payment	41%	21%	38%	n/a
Young Carer Grant*	29%	26%	44%	n/a
Job Start Payment	#	#	#	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	28%	26%	46%	n/a
Scottish Child Payment	21%	27%	40%	12%
Child Disability Payment applicant	30%	51%	n/a	20%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	42%	39%	n/a	18%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	35%	46%	n/a	19%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	44%	41%	n/a	16%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (Young Carer Grant: 34; Child Winter Heating Assistance: 97)

²⁶ This option was accidentally omitted for Child and Adult Disability Payment applicants and case transfer clients, which is skewing the findings for these benefits.

²⁷ This option was accidentally omitted for Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Carer's Allowance Supplement and Child Winter Heating Assistance, which is skewing the findings for these benefits.

Measure 47: 80% of Client Survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they had enough choice in how they communicated with Social Security Scotland. Some groups were less likely to agree, these were:

- respondents aged 16-24 (73% compared to 78% to 83% of those in other age groups)
- white respondents (80% compared to 87% of ethnic minority respondents).

Table 52: Client Survey respondents’ views on whether they had ‘enough choice about how they communicated with Social Security Scotland’, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; % who ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’, row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	82%	79%
Best Start Grant	86%	80%
Best Start Foods	87%	79%
Funeral Support Payment	82%	82%
Young Carer Grant	90%	82%
Job Start Payment*	79%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	88%	79%
Scottish Child Payment	89%	80%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	79%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	84%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	81%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	79%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (72)

Measure 48: 79% of Client Survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they had enough choice of how the agency communicated with them. Some groups were less likely to agree, these were:

- respondents aged 16-24 (73% compared to between 79% and 82% of respondents between the ages of 25 and 54).
- respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (78% compared to 82% of those without a disability or long-term health condition).
- white respondents (79% compared to 84% of ethnic minority respondents)
- men (76% compared to 81% of women).

Table 53: Client Survey respondents’ views on whether they had ‘enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with [them]’, by benefit experience

All respondents with experience of each benefit who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; % who ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’, row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	74%	72%
Best Start Grant	84%	82%
Best Start Foods	84%	81%
Funeral Support Payment	83%	83%
Young Carer Grant	87%	82%
Job Start Payment*	76%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	72%	80%
Scottish Child Payment	85%	83%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	81%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	76%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	79%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	73%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (72)

Measure 49: 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 assistance paid under an earlier determination and the level of assistance paid after review. Rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control, there were five cases that received Short Term Assistance by 31 March 2023. Due to the small number of cases it is not currently possible to provide further information.

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

Positive experiences of accessibility and how clients were enabled

Many client participants had contacted Social Security Scotland by phone for help or advice. Some said their call was answered quickly. Others had to wait but didn't mind this. A few client participants had used Social Security Scotland's web chat service and were positive about the waiting time to connect to an adviser compared with phone waiting times. One participant suggested it would be helpful to know their position in the line while waiting to connect with a web chat adviser.

"The person I spoke to was helpful. I did wait a while. You don't need to sit by the phone anymore, you can do stuff while on hold. The wait was about 40 minutes. I called about 4pm, so it might be quite busy. It was my choice to wait so I didn't mind." **Client participant**

"Web chat was fine. I like it, you don't have to talk to anybody. Much quicker than being on the phone. 10 out of 10 for that. I was filling in the form, trying to do the documents and I just couldn't do it. I looked for an alternative and used web chat. [The adviser] told me to do it another way and it worked."
Client participant

Client participants were asked about their experience of making applications. Some participants said the online application was an accessible way for them to apply. Some said that their disability or long-term health condition made writing on paper forms difficult so were pleased to be able to apply online. Others said it was helpful to save their progress and return to complete the form at another time.

"I have problems with writing. I'm not a fan of handwriting, it's inconvenient and tiring, so I found it very convenient to do it online... It was quick... The fact it was online really does help. People who have dyslexia or handwriting problems, it can help having it online and to be able to zoom in to read text as well." **Client participant**

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

“[Online is] far easier than hand writing it [or] doing it on the phone. I can take breaks. [I] get brain fog, I lose my words sometimes, it might not make sense later on, so I can double check it later... Questions are difficult but the option to save and complete later is good for my condition.” **Client participant**

Some client participants had received support to complete their application, either from friends, support services, or Social Security Scotland staff. Participants who received help from Social Security Scotland said staff had taken care to explain the process and were sensitive to their needs. There was positive feedback about getting help from Social Security Scotland’s Local Delivery service to submit applications and verify participants’ identities. Participants said Local Delivery client support advisers helped them to fully explain their circumstances and needs in their applications. The Local Delivery service is discussed in more detail in Measure 52.

“Someone came out. They were lovely and asked me lots of questions. I never would have considered giving extra information that wasn’t in the form. He asked if I hold onto furniture to get around. He said ‘you do I just saw you do it!’ It was a brilliant service.” **Client participant**

“She was really good, she was brilliant. She understood the situation and I explained what had happened to my dad and she did almost everything for me. And if I wasn’t sure about something she would explain it in a different way and she was just really nice and professional.” **Client participant**

“The lady that I spoke to helped with the forms [for both my daughters]. She was brilliant and talked me through it. Without her I probably wouldn’t have got an award. She also split the call over two sessions which was helpful. Previously it has taken me about 15 days to complete the form myself.” **Client participant**

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

In the survey of partners, respondents provided comments about the accessibility of Social Security Scotland's service for clients. Positive comments were about clients being able to access the service in a way that suited them. Partner respondents mentioned other positive aspects of accessibility like: clients having multiple options to get in touch; the availability of applications in different formats; and being able to request help from staff to complete applications.

"People are able to access the service in the best way for them i.e. over the phone, requesting assistance with applications, making online claims. The format of the Adult Disability Payment application is also very good as the pictures and large layout means it is easier to explain to people the context of the questions being asked." **Partner respondent**

Negative experiences of accessibility

A couple of client participants were unhappy at how long their wait was when trying to contact Social Security Scotland by phone.

"Just when you want to call, you don't want to wait a long time. I forgot everything about the application because I waited a long time. Sometimes an hour and a half, a very long time. I don't always have the time." **Client participant**

Some client participants experienced difficulties with submitting their applications online. One participant who applied for Scottish Child Payment experienced problems accessing the mygov.scot website. Another participant said she found it difficult to find where to apply online. A client participant who applied for Adult Disability Payment said it would be helpful to know what questions were coming up next on the online application. She said this would have avoided repetition in her answers.

"When we applied this year I think there was overcrowding. It was impossible to access the website for one or two days. When the traffic was down, it was simpler." **Client participant**

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

“Getting onto the Social Security Scotland website then finding out how to apply wasn’t as straightforward as it could be. The portal is quite hard to find if you’re not on a laptop or iPad. If I remember rightly I was getting quite frustrated at one point. I bookmarked the page to make life easier.”

Client participant

“It would have been helpful to know earlier [that] unless you answered, you couldn’t see the next question. We didn’t know that when we started to write up, we had to adapt that into the application. I’m assuming if you had a paper form you would see that, but when you’re online you don’t see the [next] question until you’ve answered the question.” **Client participant**

Although partner respondents praised the availability of interpretation, they felt staff needed more training on this and that it should be available from the beginning of a client’s experience. There were many examples of digital exclusion for clients who couldn’t access online information or applications. Some said the very reason they had acted as a third party was because the service wasn’t accessible for the clients they support.

“Ability to use an interpreter easily is great, however many of my clients are unable to even understand the initial menu options which are all in English so it would be good to make that option available earlier on. Additionally, some staff seem uncertain when it comes to using an interpreter which leads to confusion for clients.” **Partner respondent**

“I understand that computers are the way forward but we deal with older clients and those struggling financially. They do not always have access to a computer and the telephone waiting times are ridiculous.” **Partner respondent**

Places are accessible and convenient

Measure 51: X percentage of social security offices pass the accessibility checklist (Checklist to be agreed by disabled people with lived experience).

Social Security Scotland has two types of offices – base locations and outreach locations. Base locations are office spaces for staff and are not used to meet with clients²⁸. Accessibility is assessed for these locations, but for the measure we have focused on the outreach locations, where staff meet with clients. Clients can also have appointments with staff over the phone, by video call or at their homes, according to their preference and accessibility needs.

Social Security Scotland's policy for outreach venues is co-locating with other organisations which clients may know or visit. This limits the buildings we have available. This should be considered when reviewing the information below.

Across the 32 local authorities, as of March 2023 (the end of the financial year) there were 165 locations completely signed off as outreach locations. Accessibility consideration for 165 (100%) of these locations was available for analysis for this measure.

Accessibility information was analysed to determine the most frequently mentioned accessibility features. How accessibility was described varied across locations, which means that where a feature was not mentioned, it does not mean it was not present in the building. The accessibility consideration formed part of reports used to formally sign off locations for use. The top 5 most common accessibility features are listed below along with the frequency and percentage (respectively) of how often they were mentioned across all outreach locations:

- Accessible toilet/s (127, 77%)
- Disabled parking (105, 64%)
- Automatic door/s (98, 59%)
- Services are on ground floor, lift/s, and/or no steps (97, 59%)
- Ramp/s (92, 56%)

²⁸ In May 2023, Agnes Husband House in Dundee began providing face to face services to clients on site. This report covers up to the end of March 2023, so Agnes Husband House was not included in this measure.

Measure 52: X percentage of clients said it was convenient to get access to social security places and services. Two Social Security Scotland services can be delivered using appointments. Local Delivery staff can take proof of identity, support applicants to fill out Social Security Scotland forms, and assess people who want to become appointees. Health and social care staff conduct consultations with Adult Disability Payment applicants where more information is needed to make a decision on their application. Both Local Delivery and consultation appointments can happen in a client's home, at a Social Security Scotland location, over the phone, or by video call. The 2022-23 Client Survey asked new questions about the convenience of both of these services.

Of the 5% of Client Survey respondents who said they had contact with Local Delivery staff, 93% agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to book an appointment at a time and place that suited them.

Table 54: Client Survey respondents' views on whether 'it was easy to book an appointment with Local Delivery staff at a time and place that suited them', by benefit experience, 2022-23

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

Benefit Experience	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	#
Best Start Grant	87%
Best Start Foods	88%
Funeral Support Payment	#
Young Carer Grant	#
Job Start Payment	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	#
Scottish Child Payment	92%
Child Disability Payment applicant	94%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	#
Adult Disability Payment applicant	94%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer*	88%

* Number of respondents fewer than 100 (58)

A quarter (25%) of Client Survey respondents who applied for Adult Disability Payment said they'd had a consultation.²⁹ Of those who said they had a consultation:

- 90% agreed or strongly agreed that the appointment was at a convenient time
- 90% agreed or strongly agreed that the type of appointment (e.g. phone call, virtual face to face, in person face to face) was convenient.

How is the consultation 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

This section in the original Charter Measurement Framework referred to 'face to face assessments'. This is the language used by the Department for Work and Pensions for Personal Independence Payment. Adult Disability Payment in Scotland does not require face to face assessments, but some applicants will be asked to have a consultation with a health and social care practitioner.

A quarter (25%) of Client Survey respondents who had applied for Adult Disability Payment said they had a consultation.³⁰ Of those who said they had a consultation:

- **Measure 53:** 92% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they understood why the consultation was needed.³¹
- **Measure 54:** 87% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that 'my practitioner understood my disability or health condition(s) and how it affects me'.³²

²⁹ Many of these respondents may have had a phone call with a case manager to gather more information about their case, rather than a consultation with a health and social care practitioner. This means client views on consultation experiences should be treated with caution.

³⁰ Many of these respondents may have had a phone call with a case manager to gather more information about their case, rather than a consultation with a health and social care practitioner. This means client views on consultation experiences should be treated with caution.

³¹ The original measure was "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." This was shortened to 'I understood why the consultation was needed' in the Client Survey to make sure the question was easy to understand.

³² The original measure was "X percentage of people who had a consultation for disabled people's benefits said the assessment was carried out by appropriately qualified staff." The Client Survey instead asks about whether the client felt they and their health condition were understood, as clients will likely not know about the qualifications of the person who conducted their consultation.

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

Client participants and partner respondents were asked whether they'd been involved in a consultation for Adult Disability Payment. One client participant who applied for Adult Disability Payment said they had a consultation with a health and social care practitioner. Clients can choose to have the consultation in a way that suits them. The participant chose to have the discussion over the phone and found it easy to book an appointment for a convenient time.

“[Booking] was easy enough... The booking system online gave you a list of days and times and you could choose. And it said how long you'd be on the phone.” **Client participant**

The participant received information about what to expect and was pleased with how the appointment went. The participant felt listened to and that the practitioner took care of their wellbeing. The practitioner had followed Social Security Scotland's safeguarding policies to ensure the client was supported after the appointment.

‘Interviewer: “How did the appointment go?”

Participant: “It went well. The woman explained if I wanted to stop for any reason I could. I felt comfortable. [She treated me] with respect, they listened.”

Interviewer: “Did you feel your wellbeing was protected and prioritised?”

Participant: “Yes. At that point I was feeling [condition]. I disclosed that. And the next day I got a call from someone else at Social Security Scotland [following up as a duty of care].” **Client participant**

Partner respondents who said they'd supported clients with an Adult Disability Payment consultation were asked whether client wellbeing had been protected and prioritised during the process.³³

³³ As Adult Disability Payment began to be rolled out in March 2022, this is the first time partners have been asked about the Adult Disability Payment consultation process as part of the Charter Research. Therefore, year-on-year comparisons are not yet available.

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 (continued)

Table 55: How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Social Security Scotland protected and prioritised client wellbeing during the Adult Disability Payment consultation process

Number of respondents = 22; table shows number selecting each option

Response options	
Strongly agree	3
Agree	7
Neither agree nor disagree	11
Don't know / not applicable	1

Of the 22 respondents, around half agreed or strongly agreed that client wellbeing was protected and prioritised during the consultation process. A similar proportion said they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Partner respondents said in open-text comments that clients had been treated well and with dignity during Adult Disability Payment consultations. Staff were patient, respectful and helpful. The consultation process was quick which reduced stress for the client. One respondent positively described how a client was able to describe their condition in their own words through an interpreter during the process.

“The consultation process I was involved with whilst supporting a client was very good. It was quick and to the point, which meant that the individual did not experience any undue stress.” **Partner respondent**

“I had a service user who required [an interpreter]. The process went smoothly and meant the service user could explain their conditions and how these affect them in their own language, which helped immensely.” **Partner respondent**

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 (continued)

“Client care was excellent... client treated with dignity during the call.”

Partner respondent

Partner respondents made suggestions about how the consultation process could be improved. These included shorter waiting times between submitting an application and getting a consultation, and an easier way for clients to change their consultation appointment if they can't attend the original slot. Another suggestion was for the questions to be more specific and tailored to the client.

“The waiting times between submitting applications to getting a consultation at present are very lengthy. I can only suggest that the time scale is shortened.”

Partner respondent

“A letter with an appointment is good, but if the person can't make the call time they are then faced with having to try and contact Social Security Scotland which is near impossible.” **Partner respondent**

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

Clients, staff and partners made suggestions for improvements to communication. Client participants suggested email as a communication method and an online portal to show progress from application to decision and to store letters. Partner respondents also said they'd like the option of email communication with Social Security Scotland. Staff respondents thought SMS and pre-recorded phone messages could be helpful for providing updates to clients. There were also suggestions for an automatic call back system and having more staff resource on the phone line.

"[Emails for] progress updates. And then people with communication difficulties can get through on the phone more easily and others can get email."

Client participant

"Clients have said the phone waiting times are too long – a call back service would be appreciated." **Staff respondent**

"Having an automated message as soon as a client phones for Adult Disability Payment to explain the backlog [...] Have more regular texts/emails sent to clients apologising for the delay which again would limit calls and allow us to process faster." **Staff respondent**

There were suggestions about improvements to the application process. Staff respondents suggested clearer guidance for clients about filling out application forms and providing supporting information. One client participant said it would be helpful to have guidance embedded in the application form. Partner respondents suggested: a tick-box on the first part of Adult and Child Disability Payment applications to request help from Local Delivery staff to complete the second part; perforated paper forms to make scanning easier; and online options to complete re-determinations, change of circumstances, and third party consent forms.

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

“I think finding a way to add more information with icons where people who need it more could click and get it without having to go back through the entire pages before. An easy way to access that content.” **Client participant**

“[...] Short videos [to] be put on the website with either real people or animation:

1. to inform clients of how to complete the application
2. what supporting information is required
3. what help is available i.e. Local Delivery, can they pop into the local office etc
4. what happens to the application form after we have received both Parts 1 and 2
5. how a decision is made i.e. with the supporting information, GP/consultant reports, and how long the process can take i.e. up to 58 days for a GP to respond.” **Staff respondent**

“A simple click box, after completing part one online, to ask for contact from the Local Delivery team would help a lot and save the phonelines and chat agents’ time.” **Partner respondent**

“We have requested editable documents so that our service can type directly on to the form but the only forms that are available are Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment – we require all forms including re-determinations, change of circumstances etc.” **Partner respondent**

Client participants who had applied for Adult Disability Payment had suggestions for improvements to the application process. These included information about the possible effect of making an application on a client’s wellbeing and guidance about providing information about more than one health condition in response to each question.

“Maybe put in safeguards on the website, to say if you’re struggling, maybe throughout the form... phone numbers or something.” **Client participant**

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

“If it felt like ‘okay we’re going to deal with X first and we’re going to ask you questions around that... this is what we’re talking about and all the questions in this section will refer to X because you’ve told us you suffer from X’. That might help people.” **Client participant**

There were also suggestions for improvements to letters. One client participant said if a letter includes a request for a client to do something, this should be clear at the beginning of the letter. Another client participant said she missed important information about other forms of financial support because the information was towards the end of a long letter. The participant said she had missed a deadline and wasn’t able to receive the help to which the letter signposted.

“I’ve worked in comms and usually the call to action should be early in the letter. Some of yours had that but others don’t. I like to sort things into piles of things I need to do something with and ones I don’t and some in between. Some of yours would end up in between. Because I received so many I was thinking do I actually need to do anything?” **Client participant**

“I have been really unwell and I didn’t read the full blurb in the acceptance letter. I should have read it as you only have one month to apply to get your extra money on your Working Tax Credit. And if you go over that time by one day, you don’t get it backdated. I think that should be on the first page. It was on the third page, and I missed it by one day. It’s really important and I think they should make sure it’s right on that first page.” **Client participant**

Measure 57: Examples of You said: We did

Some staff respondents described specific examples where their feedback was listened to and led to changes in Social Security Scotland. A common theme was improvements to internal policies and processes. This included improvements or changes to accessibility, the time needed to process some cases, and how information is communicated and shared within and between teams.

“I have been and continue to be vocal when things are not working... I feel that this has led to improvements, big or small, depending on the individuals and processes involved.” **Staff respondent**

“I have raised issues in the past regarding communication and the lack of information that was being filtered down to practitioner level. I felt that this was listened to. I have also fed [back] to my senior [colleague] regarding time frames expected in particular cases and I received feedback about that too.”
Staff respondent

“As part of the Accessibility Champions, I noticed something in a different business area that didn't meet accessibility guidelines. I reached out to the area that managed it, explained what I noticed and had a conversation about it. They appreciated the feedback and were able to tell me the plans that were in place to improve it.” **Staff respondent**

Client Experience staff participants said Social Security Scotland had made some changes due to client feedback. Complaints about processing times had led to indicative timescales being removed from information online. Another example where Social Security Scotland made a change was in response to feedback about information for clients who move away from Scotland.

“Time taken to process the claim – Social Security Scotland took that off the website as obviously we couldn't meet it and we were getting complaints.”
Client Experience staff participant

“We got a complaint about someone who was moving out of Scotland so their money stopped but it was our fault as we didn't have information out there about that. So I managed to get that improved.”
Client Experience staff participant

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. Figures relate to the position at the end of March each year to represent the financial year.

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 56: Sex of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Female	60.7%	57.7%	59.8%	61.4%
Male	39.3%	42.3%	40.2%	38.6%

Table 57: Age of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
16-19	2.7%	0.9%	0.7%	0.4%
20-29	20.0%	21.5%	22.6%	20.6%
30-39	29.0%	27.5%	29.6%	30.7%
40-49	25.5%	26.3%	24.9%	24.4%
50-59	20.7%	21.0%	18.9%	19.9%
60-64	#	2.2%	2.8%	3.3%
65 and over	#	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%

indicates that figures are suppressed due to low numbers.

Table 58: Disability status of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Disabled	10.8%	10.7%	10.4%	9.8%
Not disabled	59.3%	58.5%	51.3%	40.1%
Prefer not to say	1.5%	2.1%	1.8%	1.6%
Unknown	28.4%	28.7%	36.5%	48.5%

Table 59: Ethnicity of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Ethnic minority	2.7%	3.3%	4.1%	3.7%
White	82.9%	77.2%	66.1%	53.7%
Prefer not to say	0.0%	0.7%	1.1%	0.6%
Unknown	14.4%	18.8%	28.7%	41.9%

Table 60: Religion or belief of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
None	51.8%	46.9%	41.0%	33.3%
Church of Scotland	9.9%	10.0%	7.7%	6.3%
Roman Catholic	14.9%	14.2%	12.5%	9.4%
Other Christian	4.2%	4.1%	3.6%	3.2%
Other religion or belief	2.9%	2.9%	3.1%	3.3%
Prefer not to say	1.7%	2.9%	3.4%	2.7%
Unknown	14.7%	18.9%	28.7%	41.9%

Table 61: Sexual orientation of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or other	6.2%	6.5%	7.3%	6.3%
Heterosexual/straight	76.9%	71.5%	61.3%	49.7%
Prefer not to say	2.1%	2.9%	2.8%	2.2%
Unknown	14.9%	19.1%	28.6%	41.9%

Table 62: Marital/civil partnership status of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Married/civil partnership	19.5%	20.7%	16.8%	16.0%
Single	5.4%	7.0%	4.7%	3.7%
Other	5.3%	5.3%	5.0%	5.0%
Prefer not to say	0.2%	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%
Unknown	69.7%	66.4%	73.1%	75.0%

Measure 59: Examples of acknowledgment of mistakes

Client participants were asked if they felt anything had gone wrong during their experience with Social Security Scotland. One client participant described getting in touch with Social Security Scotland about a letter she received about Scottish Child Payment. The participant was told by staff that a mistake had been made about who cares for one of her children. The adviser told the participant he would fix the mistake and called back the following day. The participant wasn't able to answer the call so wasn't sure if the issue had been resolved.

"I got a letter saying the Scottish Child Payment would stop for my middle son, because they see a record that I don't look after him anymore. I spoke to a man on the phone, he said it looks like a mistake and he will correct it... He said he would correct the mistake... He phoned back the next day but I couldn't answer so I still don't know for sure." **Client participant**

Another client participant experienced problems with their payment. They received a payment from Social Security Scotland but no award letter. The participant had felt concerned so phoned Social Security Scotland to make sure the payment was correct. Staff apologised for the error. The issue of clients receiving a payment but never an award letter was also raised by staff respondents.

"We got money in the bank. We slightly panicked as we didn't know. We got a lot of money put in, and no letter had appeared. [...] They apologised when I phoned to query." **Client participant**

Staff and partner respondents mentioned other problems and mistakes made by Social Security Scotland including: applications going missing; mistakes in mass communications to clients; and being cut off by Social Security Scotland's telephony system whilst waiting to speak to an advisor. In one example, a partner respondent was pleased with how a staff member apologised for a mistake with a paper application and "went above and beyond" to resolve the situation. However, the client experienced further problems later when they received an automated communication saying their application had not been received.

Measure 59: Examples of acknowledgment of mistakes (continued)

“I had exceptional customer service from one member of staff when I contacted via web chat about a claim that was reportedly not received by post. He allowed me to send the copy of the form directly to him in case the upload on the system did not work. He also then called the client to apologise and reassure them that he had the claim and would ensure that it was passed to the correct person. He went above and beyond. Unfortunately a couple of months later the same client got another automated letter saying her claim had not been received and was deeply distressed by the experience.”

Partner respondent

Measure 60: Qualitative evidence on client experience of the complaints and feedback process³⁴

Client experiences of complaints

Some client participants made a complaint about the problems or mistakes they'd experienced. One client participant made a complaint about a series of issues relating to the transfer of her son's disability benefit. The participant said letters had gone missing and staff she spoke to weren't able to give clear information or answer her questions. In particular, the participant highlighted the attitude of one staff member who she felt had hung up on a call when unable to answer her questions.

"[...] I got cut off. I was very frustrated at this point, so I made a complaint on the website. [...] The [staff member], he was horrendous. He shouldn't have been dealing with customers at all." **Client participant**

The participant said the complaints process was quick and that staff were helpful and did their best to investigate and resolve the complaint. The participant received a letter setting out the steps Social Security Scotland were taking to address the issues raised in the complaint. These included staff training and options for other ways to get in touch. The participant said the letter was honest about the mistakes that had been made but noted the letter had typing errors.

"They got in touch very quick, all the information was correct and timely. They contacted me by email, it was a combination of email and telephone. She was lovely, she was really nice. She seemed genuinely interested in trying to resolve what had happened to me. They did listen to the calls, and they said the level of service was not acceptable. There were four points, they were going to look at training, at accessibility for people in a vulnerable situation who don't have time to phone... I got a letter apologising... it was full of typing errors." **Client participant**

³⁴ The original Framework had this listed as separate measures for feedback and complaints. These have been brought together into one box as clients we spoke to used both words to describe similar experiences.

Measure 60: Qualitative evidence on client experience of the complaints and feedback process (continued)

A client participant who had applied for Child Disability Payment also made a complaint. The participant didn't receive communication from Social Security Scotland after submitting her application. The participant made multiple calls for progress updates on her application but staff weren't able to provide helpful information. The participant said the complaints process was easy and quick.

"The adviser told me how to put in a complaint. I just wanted to know where I was in the process. [Making the complaint was] very easy and it was quite quick. I can't complain about the complaints process." **Client participant**

Some partner respondents described positive experiences of providing feedback, either online or directly to staff. One partner respondent described a negative experience where they tried to provide feedback to a client adviser over the phone but the staff member terminated the call. Other issues included: delays hearing back from Social Security Scotland, not hearing back at all, or feedback not being actioned. Some partner respondents talked about wanting to give feedback but not knowing how to do so.

"I pointed out that as a security question I was asked to confirm bank details which I declined to give as according to [Social Security Scotland's] website at no point should such details be requested. The person just hung up the phone." **Partner respondent**

Staff perspectives on complaints

Client Experience staff participants said complaints were commonly about timescales. For example, clients had made complaints after long waiting times for a decision on their application. Client Experience staff said that a lack of clarity about expected timescales contributed to clients' frustrations. They had received suggestions from clients for Social Security Scotland to introduce more updates during the application process.

"Waiting for everything and not being informed how the process works and where they are in the process. People thinking their case has been picked up and thinking it's in the process but then waiting three months to be told it's still at stage one. So they're not happy." **Client Experience staff participant**

Measure 60: Qualitative evidence on client experience of the complaints and feedback process (continued)

“[Suggestions] from clients [were about] having more texts to let them know where they are in the process and how it works. They get a text when they apply but it would be good to let them know when it moves to different stages – so when it moves from part one to part two – with an indication of the timelines.” **Client Experience staff participant**

Client Experience staff participants said other client complaints were about:

- unclear policies or processes about changing parental responsibility for benefits paid for children
- problems and delays related to changing circumstances during the case transfer process.

“Sometimes with Child Disability Payment the parents split up and whoever has responsibility gets the money and there seems to be a policy black hole of switching responsibility over. Kind of competing claims. The other parent wanting to put a claim in but they can’t as there’s already one in. The money needs to go to the child. It starts with one parent asking how to change the claim and then they come back later and it’s still not been changed. We don’t have a solution.” **Client Experience staff participant**

“I had someone the other day who had [condition] and they had been waiting for their award to get upgraded since last year. You feel sorry for people with the waiting. But you can’t give a solution as the change of circumstances has been received. I think with the complaints procedure they think it will happen quickly but it can’t, it’s still in a queue.” **Client Experience staff participant**

Client Experience staff participants described some of the resolutions they had provided to clients about their complaints. Participants said they were often unable to do more than apologise to clients. Participants said where they could, they tried to make improvements where complaints identified issues with the service.

Measure 60: Qualitative evidence on client experience of the complaints and feedback process (continued)

‘Participant 1: “Basically you tell them you are upholding the complaint and they have a right to complain but we can’t do anything faster so it is very difficult... We really just apologise.”

Participant 2: “We might remind them of the action we will take, speak to a manager. Something along those lines. There’s usually a bigger issue behind that – they’ve tried to achieve something but can’t do it so we focus on it if there is any improvement we can make to try and resolve that.”

Client Experience staff participants

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

Measure 61: 78% of Client Survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that Social Security Scotland was an open organisation. Some groups were less likely to agree, these were:

- respondents aged 45-54, 55-64 and 65 plus (75%, 70% and 72% compared to at least 82% of respondents in younger age groups)
- respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (74% compared to 83% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
- white respondents (77% compared to 90% of ethnic minority respondents)
- men (73% compared to 80% of women).

Table 63: Client Survey respondents' views on whether 'Social Security Scotland is an open organisation', by benefit experience

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

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	71%	71%
Best Start Grant	87%	85%
Best Start Foods	87%	85%
Funeral Support Payment	78%	78%
Young Carer Grant	88%	86%
Job Start Payment*	78%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	80%	79%
Scottish Child Payment	87%	84%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	77%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	75%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	72%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	67%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (87)

Measure 62: 81% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland was an honest organisation. Some groups were less likely to agree, these were:

- respondents aged 45 and over compared to those aged 25-44. For example, 76% of those aged 65 and over agreed that Social Security Scotland was an honest organisation, compared to 86% of 25-34 year olds.
- respondents with a disability or long-term health condition (77% compared to 85% of those without a disability or long-term health condition)
- white respondents (80% compared to 91% of ethnic minority respondents)
- men (77% compared to 82% of women).

Table 64: Client Survey respondents' views on whether 'Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation', by benefit experience

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

Benefit Experience	2021-22	2022-23
Carer's Allowance Supplement	79%	75%
Best Start Grant	89%	86%
Best Start Foods	89%	85%
Funeral Support Payment	83%	83%
Young Carer Grant	88%	83%
Job Start Payment*	76%	#
Child Winter Heating Assistance	84%	83%
Scottish Child Payment	90%	86%
Child Disability Payment applicant	n/a	82%
Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	80%
Adult Disability Payment applicant	n/a	76%
Adult Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	71%

* Number of respondents for 2021-22 fewer than 100 (95)

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

Partner respondents were asked if they thought Social Security Scotland was an open and honest organisation.

Table 65: Partner respondents' views on whether Social Security Scotland is an open organisation

Number of respondents: 2021-22 = 72; 2022-23 = 97; column percentages

	2021-22	2022-23
Strongly agree or agree	65%	51%
Neither agree nor disagree	13%	37%
Disagree or strongly disagree	13%	4%
Don't know	10%	8%

Around half (51%) of partner respondents in 2022-23 said they agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland is an open organisation. This compares to around two-thirds (65%) in 2021-22. Most of this change was due to an increase in the proportion saying they neither agreed nor disagreed (from 13% in 2021-22 to 37% in 2022-23). The proportion of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed decreased from 13% to 4%.

Table 66: Partner respondents' views on whether Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation

Number of respondents: 2021-22 = 72; 2022-23 = 97; column percentages

	2021-22	2022-23
Strongly agree or agree	60%	53%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%	33%
Disagree or strongly disagree	7%	3%
Don't know	11%	11%

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

Slightly more (53%) partner respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland was an honest organisation. This compares to 60% in 2021-22, though again this was due to an increase in respondents saying they neither agreed nor disagreed. The proportion disagreeing decreased from 7% to 3%.

In open-text comments, partner respondents praised Social Security Scotland for operating openly and honestly. Respondents had experienced openness and honesty during stakeholder reference groups. Some felt Social Security Scotland were transparent about their processes and challenges to the delivery of the service.

"I received a very open and honest answer to my request for more information [regarding] a process. Other workplaces may not have been so honest and I really appreciate the warmth and honesty in my interaction with our local Social Security Scotland manager. It really was refreshing and reassuring and gave me a positive insight as to how our most vulnerable people will be supported as well going forward." **Partner respondent**

"In my dealings with the [reference group], Social Security Scotland has always been both open and honest." **Partner respondent**

"I have found Social Security Scotland staff to be open and transparent about the issues they are dealing with." **Partner respondent**

Negative comments were about a lack of transparency on application processing times. Partner respondents were unhappy that the timescales for Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment decisions had changed compared original expectations. Others said they were unable to openly share or receive information from Social Security Scotland due to issues with consent when acting for clients.

"When attending training for benefits provided by Social Security Scotland, the timescales given for decisions were completely unrealistic – and when the benefit has been launched, very far from the truth." **Partner respondent**

"[Social Security Scotland] are far from open. Sharing information with staff is next to impossible, much to the detriment of the clients." **Partner respondent**

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

During interviews, client participants were asked if they thought Social Security Scotland was an open and honest organisation. Many agreed and mentioned things like clear information about eligibility and how clients' data is protected. Some client participants said that Social Security Scotland staff were honest when things went wrong or if there was a delay. Other participants said Social Security Scotland had told them about a "backlog" of applications and appreciated this honesty in spite of challenging circumstances or long waits for decisions.

"They can't be any more open or clear about the eligibility, it's all on the form. They were very helpful, I'll put it that way." **Client participant**

"Very honest, he said there's a backlog however I have the application now and I can assure you I'm putting it in. So even though I knew there was a backlog and it would take time, I knew and I believed and I trusted that the application was in." **Client participant**

Some participants said staff were honest even if they couldn't answer clients' questions. However, one participant said this caused her to be concerned about staff knowledge and training. One participant said that Social Security Scotland was open and didn't try to conceal when things went wrong with a process.

"If they couldn't answer my questions, they said so. They didn't try to make things up... They were honest, but that honesty highlighted some concerns for me, that some of the staff didn't have the information they needed."
Client participant

"It's a good experience speaking to Social Security Scotland staff, they are friendly and open... They are quite muddled with their processes but they are honest. It is not like they are hiding anything." **Client participant**

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

A couple of client participants questioned whether information about application processing times had been misleading. The participants said they struggled to get a clear indication from staff about how long a decision would take. Some felt it would have been more transparent and helpful to receive updates on their application. A couple of participants thought Social Security Scotland should be more honest, or more realistic, about how long it takes to reach a decision. Changes to online information about application processing times in response to client feedback is discussed in Measure 57 above.

“I applied in July and was told I would get a decision in six weeks but it took three months and I didn’t get a reason for the delay... I would highlight that saying it’s a six week wait on the website when it takes three months, it’s not deliberately being dishonest but it was an oversight not to put up something more accurate.” **Client participant**

“I don’t think [they’ve been] dishonest or misleading, but they could have been more realistic with their timescales.” **Client participant**

“Just a bit frustrated, the timescales they gave weren’t met, they had lots of applications. It would have been good to hear ‘we’re working on it, we do have it’.” **Client participant**

Social Security Scotland works well with other organisations

Measure 65: 38 service level agreements are in place with external partners.

There are 12 formal service level agreements in place with external partners. There are also 26 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.³⁵

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

Partner respondents were asked about their experience of working with Social Security Scotland.

Table 67: How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Social Security Scotland has worked well with me and my organisation

Number of respondents: 2021-22 = 72; 2022-23 = 63; column percentages

Response options	2021-22	2022-23
Strongly agree	19%	19%
Agree	45%	48%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%	24%
Disagree	11%	5%
Strongly disagree	8%	2%
Don't know/not applicable	4%	3%

Around two thirds (67%) of partners agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland had worked well with their organisation, up from 64% in 2021-22. Fewer than one in ten (7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to nearly one in five (19%) last year. A quarter (24%) of partners selected 'neither', up ten percentage points from last year.

In open-text comments, partner respondents said they felt positive about working with Social Security Scotland due to things like: informative stakeholder engagement events; feeling listened to when participating in reference groups; and the approachable and open attitude of staff. They praised Local Delivery staff in

³⁵ 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.

particular, highlighting their enthusiastic manner and proactive approach to building relationships with partners.

“Engagement events are always well advertised and I feel well informed from the event.” **Partner respondent**

Measure 66: Qualitative evidence from organisations that work with clients on partnership working (continued)

“The Local Delivery Lead is fully engaged in our local groups and works well with a range of partners to ensure staff and volunteers are knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland payments and work together with Social Security Scotland officers to support their clients.” **Partner respondent**

Some partner respondents had suggestions to improve their relationship with Social Security Scotland. These included: sharing information and updates in a more consistent way; following up on queries after external events; and opportunities to build relationships with Local Delivery staff as standard practice.

“Emails and updates being received are really dependant on what courses you have attended or if you have had a specific enquiry and that person then decides to send information when they have it... it does create information deserts.” **Partner respondent**

“I have been fortunate to work with both Local Delivery staff and relationship managers locally but don't think this is standard practice – it should be.” **Partner 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 way³⁶. Instead, the data below outlines the main training courses which are informed by clients and how many times they have been undertaken in the last two financial years

Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide figures on the percentage of staff who have undertaken each training course. This is because the learning system does not track overall staff numbers.

For context, in March 2021, Social Security Scotland had 1,136 directly employed staff. By March 2022, there were 2,445, and in March 2023 there were 4,027 (source: Social Security Scotland quarterly workforce publications).

Table 68 shows how many staff have undertaken each course in each year, and which staff it is relevant to. It only includes training linked to the central learning platform. Any courses undertaken separate from that are not counted centrally.

Table 68: Training informed by clients

Training Title	Available to	Number of staff completed, 2021-22 ³⁷	Number of staff completed, 2022-23	Details
Inclusive Communications	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff.	724	1280	Includes testimonies of people with lived experience using accessible communication tools and methods
Corporate Parenting	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff.	657	1531	Includes quotes from people with lived experience

³⁶ The main reason for this was that client experiences are not relevant to a large proportion of training packages. For example, training on how to use systems, technical learning, or fire safety.

³⁷ Please note, the table in the 2021-22 Charter Measurement Framework provided data on the number of times each course had been completed. This meant some duplicates were present in the data. This year the figures are based on the number of staff completing each course, excluding duplicates. The figures for 2021-22 have also been updated in the table in line with this approach.

Social Model of Disability	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff working on disability benefits.	884	1507	Shaped by input and quality assurance from Glasgow Disability Alliance and the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland.
Scottish Child Payment Meeting our clients	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff delivering relevant benefits.	n/a - launched in July 2022	468	Designed with input from Child Poverty Action Group. Informed by a survey the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland shared with their users.
Meet the Client Adult Disability Payment	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff delivering relevant benefits.	425	42	Informed by a survey the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland shared with their users.
Meet the Families Child Disability Payment	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff delivering relevant benefits.	300	1076	Informed by a survey the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland shared with their users.

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 2022-23 for continuous improvement. It does not include testing undertaken by user researchers in the Scottish Government working on the design of benefits and parts of the service that have not yet been passed over to Social Security Scotland.

Application Processing Times

Clients were asked about their experiences of making applications and their processing times. Revised messages about disability application processing times were then tested with clients. These findings are being used to meet clients' needs with applications.

Icons

Icons have been developed for the potential use of all benefits offered by Social Security Scotland. User testing was undertaken on these icons. We found clients were positive about icons that could easily be associated with a specific benefit. Icons are now being introduced for each benefit.

Benefits Web Pages

Research was undertaken with Client Panel members about the website that has information about Social Security Scotland's benefits. Through interviews, we asked clients for their views about the information provided. During the interviews, we were able to identify difficulties that users of the webpages may run into. Changes are currently being made to the website to reflect these findings.

Best Start Foods

We spoke to people on the Client Panels who had applied for and received a Best Start Foods card. These findings will help shape long-term changes to Best Start Foods over the coming years.

Funeral Support Payment

This project was to improve the Funeral Support Payment application process. We asked clients and case managers to help us test new application form questions. We will use these findings to help shape future research to work on improving the service.

Five Family Payments

Ahead of increasing the Scottish Child Payment to £25 per child per week, research was undertaken with clients to test the wording around automatic awards of the Five Family Payments and its effect on applications made online, by phone and paper. Clients told us the information was clear, with no changes needed to those questions.

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. In 2022-23, there were 285,013 invitations to the Client Survey across all benefits, and 34,070 clients took part. During the survey, clients are invited to join the Client Panels and take part in further research. By the end of 2022-23 we had over 5,000 Client Panel members.

The Insights Research publication³⁸ also provides information gathered from short surveys which were included at the end of application forms and telephone calls to seek immediate feedback.

Social research conducted for Social Security Scotland is reported on the [Social Research section of our website](#). In 2022-23 there were 11 social research reports containing new research with clients. As well as Client Survey and Client Panels reports, there was one on applicant, staff and partner experiences of Child Disability Payment.

Last year's Framework reported on a survey of Client Panel members about their experience of taking part in panels research. From December 2022 the research team have offered feedback surveys to all Client Panels participants after they take part in surveys and interviews. By the end of March 2023, there had been 23 responses to survey feedback surveys, and 13 responses to interview feedback surveys. This was not a very busy time of year for research, in future years there will be higher volumes of responses to report on. So analysis this year focuses on the open-text questions where participants wrote in about their experiences.

Survey and interview feedback included comments about the research being easy to take part in, and about appreciating the chance to feed back. One comment on how the research team could improve surveys mentioned the postal strikes.

“It was self explanatory and easy to complete and it's pleasing to know that the Scottish government are interested in people's views.” **Client participant**

³⁸ See Annex A for details.

Qualitative evidence on client involvement in measuring effectiveness (continued)

“Was straightforward questions that were answerable, without having to put a huge amount of thought into it.” **Client participant**

“Knowing that by taking this survey I may be helping.” **Client participant**

Interview participants also wrote about their positive experience of the interviewers. Again there was one comment on how the research team could improve, and it referred to a video call link not working.

“The information given about the report was good to hear. It made me feel like I was listened to and that this feedback would be looked at if even at a surface level.” **Client participant**

“It feels good to be able to provide some constructive feedback for improvement purposes.” **Client participant**

“Was very relaxed and questions were clearly put.” **Client participant**

“Felt at ease in the comfort of my own home. The interviewer was polite and respectful.” **Client participant**

The research team will continue to survey participants directly after every survey and interview. There will also be a survey of all panel members every two years on their overall experience.

During interviews for the 2022-23 Charter Research, some client participants said they were happy Social Security Scotland encouraged feedback from clients to help them improve their service. Participants said they were happy to take part in the Charter Research. They felt sharing their experiences helped Social Security Scotland understand how their service is performing and where it can improve. One participant said it felt good to see his feedback included in published reports.

Qualitative evidence on client involvement in measuring effectiveness (continued)

"I think it's good Social Security Scotland are listening and trying to improve. I'm happy to do what I can to help and make things get better."

Client participant

"If I get asked to provide feedback I always do because that's how you make the process better." **Client participant**

"I like doing this [research] as it helps future people. I know my name's not against what I've said but I've seen stuff in documents and thought 'I remember that!' I like to see that." **Client participant**

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 Scottish social security system adhere to the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 principles of dignity, fairness and respect. The information and examples within this report demonstrate our commitment to these principles.

Some key highlights from this reporting year include:

- The national launch of Adult Disability Payment in August 2022 following a phased pilot commencing in March 2022. Adult Disability Payment replaces the Department for Work and Pensions' Personal Independence Payment. Work to transfer clients currently in receipt of Personal Independent Payment and Disability Living Allowance in Scotland is ongoing.
- The decision to uprate all Scottish benefits by at least 10.1% from April 2023 in line with inflation, including those not required to be uprated under the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018.
- Continued engagement with clients who have experience of at least one relevant benefit with Client Panels, which gives the people engaging with the Scottish social security system the opportunity to have a significant impact on how we shape and continue to deliver our benefits
- The launch of Winter Heating Payment, with the first payments made in February 2023. This replaces the Department for Work and Pensions' Cold Weather Payment and will help 400,000 low-income households with their heating expenses each winter.

The following sections show how the Social Security Principles are delivered through policy work. The Scottish Government engages with stakeholders regularly and seeks feedback to help shape social security policy, legislation and systems. We share these annual reports with stakeholders and comments are used to inform the development of the Social Security system as well as the content of future reports. In this reporting year, work has begun to review the Social Security Charter and the Charter Measurement Framework with a set of recommendations to be laid before Parliament by January 2024. This will ensure the Charter continues to meet the expectations of our clients and other stakeholders.

Social Security fits well with other policies

Social Security is designed to support and progress the [National Outcomes](#) with particular focus on 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 disabled people, carers, families or households facing unexpected costs.

Following a pilot period from March – August 2022 Adult Disability Payment had its national rollout on 29 August 2022. We have introduced key measures that focus on improving the experience of applying for disability benefits. These include gathering supporting information on our client’s behalf if they wish and getting rid of harmful Department for Work and Pension-style assessments, replacing them with consultations which can be undertaken via video or telephone call. Clients are only invited to a consultation when it is requested by the client directly or is required to make a decision.

The first payments of Winter Heating Payment were made in February 2023 delivering a one-off payment of £50 to those in receipt of a qualifying benefit. This benefit is designed to help low income households manage the increased costs of heating their homes in winter weather.

The [2022 – 2023 Programme for Government \(PfG\)](#) focused on the cost of living crisis and what steps would be taken to support those with the greatest need. In particular, it laid out plans to extend Scottish Child Payment from children under 6 to children under 16 and increase from £20 to £25 per week per eligible child in November 2022. This was rolled out on 14 November 2022 and brought the total value of our Five Family Payments benefits to over £10,000 by the time a family’s first child turns 6. This supports the wider Scottish Government commitment to tackling child poverty as laid out in the [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022 – 26](#).

Social Security Scotland now delivers 13 devolved benefits, seven of which are new benefits not delivered elsewhere in the UK. Uprating for the upcoming reporting year took effect from April 2023 and was 10.1% which is a higher increase than comparable UK benefits.

Policy making takes user experience into account

In summer 2017 the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels, made up of people who have experience of one or more of the relevant benefits. This includes people who have applied for a benefit and been unsuccessful, and people who have been through the appeals process.

For this reason, the Experience Panels have been a particularly valuable way of understanding a range of experiences of accessing the benefits system – including

barriers within the application process and how eligibility criteria impact on different people depending on their circumstances.

The research team is currently also analysing the data from the final stage of our research with seldom heard groups, and this will be published later in the year. Over the course of the coming months we are planning research on Pension Age Winter Heating Assistance and Employment Injuries Assistance.

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. Currently user testing with panel members is taking place for processes and systems relating to Pension Age Disability Payment and Carer Support Payment.

Over the last year we have published reports on:

- Scottish Carers Assistance
- Motability
- Low Income Winter Heating Assistance
- Research with Seldom Heard Groups
- Research on a number of topics covered within the “Enhanced Administration and Compensation Recovery” consultation, including redeterminations, appeals, COVID-19 special measures and measures relating to low-value fraud.

All of our reports are on the [Experience Panels publication page](#).

During 2022 we returned to offering some face-to-face research for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. We aim to be as flexible as possible going forward in terms of participation channels and offer phone or video calls, online, postal and in-person options.

Alongside the research with the Social Security Experience Panels, we are also conducting research as part of the five year review of the Social Security Charter, ["Our Charter"](#). In this review we are working with a group of Social Security Scotland clients over a series of five workshops to discuss and identify any changes that would be beneficial in the Charter going forward. The research will also speak to seldom heard groups, and has involved Social Security Scotland partners and staff in the lead up to the workshops with clients. These participatory workshops will lead to a set of recommendations that will be laid before Parliament by January 2024. Within the review, we will also consider how changes to the Charter should be reflected in the Charter Measurement Framework and making sure the framework is similarly updated for the next five years.

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 2022-23, Equality Impact Assessments have been undertaken to consider the potential effects of the Disability Assistance, Winter Heating Payment and The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendment and Transitional Provision) (Scotland) Regulations.

The evidence and data gathered from the Disability Assistance Equality Impact Assessment indicated it should have a positive impact and will help to develop better outcomes for disabled individuals, particularly young people transitioning from Child Disability Payment to Adult Disability Payment by providing them with financial continuity. No potentially negative impacts on any protected groups were found.

The Winter Heating Payment Equality Impact Assessment identified that the Winter Heating Payment is likely to have a positive impact for those who share protected characteristics. In particular, those who are disabled, are older or those who have a disabled or young child will benefit from this new form of support each year.

Island Communities Impact Assessments have also been undertaken for Disability Assistance, Winter Heating Payment and The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendment and Transitional Provision) (Scotland) Regulations. The need for flexibility, to meet the unique circumstances of those living in island communities was recognised throughout the Winter Heating Payment Islands Communities Impact Assessment. The removal of the weather dependency component for Winter Heating Payment will have a direct positive impact as the islands temperatures are typically higher than those in other parts of Scotland. This group will now be able to get additional financial support with heating costs during the winter months.

Public money is spent fairly

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring public money is spent fairly and goes directly to the people of Scotland who need it the most. The Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement 2022-23 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 and Fairer Scotland assessment of the budget and an overview of the impact of the budget on child poverty targets. It provides a clearer focus on the main challenges that are faced, across different portfolios, in relation to socio-economic equality, on the basis of the protected

characteristics in the Equality Act 2010, and on the realisation of human rights and how these challenges are being addressed through our budget decisions.

The investment in social security is focused on the overarching aim of creating a fairer Scotland. We have continued to prioritise funding to support the development, design and implementation of our social security powers and delivery of benefits through Social Security Scotland. We are establishing a social security system that meets the needs of the people of Scotland and delivers a service that treats people with dignity, fairness and respect; the investment in social security benefit expenditure for 2022-2023 was £4 billion, with £445 million invested in the ongoing delivery of a unique social security system in Scotland. This investment is crucial in meeting our National Performance Framework Outcomes such as tackling poverty.

These choices show social security is a priority for this government and we are proud of the increases in benefits expenditure that we will be delivering, which provides clear value for money for the public purse. This investment being made by the Scottish Government to deliver Social Security benefits is an investment in the people of Scotland and is key to our national mission to tackle child poverty, help low-income families with their living costs and help disabled people live full and independent lives. This includes new payments only available in Scotland such as our game-changing Scottish Child Payment, which reached 303,000 children; as well as Winter Heating Payment which was paid out to nearly 400,000 people in February. We aim to create a fairer Scotland in a way that delivers value for money.

Did the Government promote social security positively?

Social Security is promoted as a human right

Scotland's devolved social security system is founded on the principle that social security is a human right. The ability to access the support and assistance provided by an effective and efficient social security system is also recognised to be essential in ensuring that other human rights are properly respected, protected and fulfilled for every member of Scottish society.

The Scottish Government remains committed to implementing Social Security principles in full. We are continuing to build a system which places dignity, fairness and respect at the heart of everything we do. At Social Security Scotland people are welcomed and treated equally in a way that ensures their rights are upheld. Our new system is as accessible as possible by removing barriers for people, not putting them in their way. The system exists to fulfil human rights, not obstruct them.

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

that, far from being a burden on society, social security provision is an investment in the people of Scotland.

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.' Within that overall context, specific programmes such as the Scottish Child Payment have been developed in ways that give direct effect to human rights and equality principles. The Scottish Child Payment directly addresses 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](#), including the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27) and to benefit from social security (Article 26).

A rights based approach continues to inform activity across the Scottish Government and in Social Security Scotland, from policy development and service design, to the day-to-day delivery of benefits and advice. The way Social Security Scotland staff are recruited and trained, and the interaction between staff and the people who use the new service reflect that same ethos.

The Scottish Government is now working to develop a new Human Rights Bill for Scotland. This new legislation will further strengthen the existing recognition given to social security as a human right by incorporating the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) into Scots law, as far as is possible within the limits of devolved competence. Article 9 of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights explicitly recognises the right of everyone to social security. A [consultation paper](#) setting out our proposals for the bill is available on the Scottish Government website.

The Scottish Government has consistently called for key measures introduced in the Welfare Reform Acts (2012 and 2016) to be repealed and continues to invest significantly in mitigating the impact of these measures. In the 2022-23 period local authorities paid £68.1m in Discretionary Housing Payments to Scottish households as part of the Scottish Government commitment to fully mitigate the Bedroom Tax. In addition, in February 2023 the Scottish Government announced further funding to mitigate the benefit cap as far as possible within devolved powers.

Myth and stigma about social security is challenged

We recognise that stigma is a key barrier for many families and individuals accessing the support they are entitled to. There is evidence from Scottish Government evaluation activity this year of a positive experience around the process of applying for and receiving benefits. The interim evaluation of Scottish Child Payment found that clients saw the application process as straightforward. For some, the simple

application process created a sense that they were entitled to the payment, as opposed to feeling they had to prove themselves for it. Similarly, applicants of Best Start Foods mostly viewed the ability to jointly apply for both Best Start Foods and Best Start Grant as positive and time-saving. The evaluation of Best Start Foods also reported less stigma when using the Best Start Food card and those with experience of the UK Healthy Start Voucher scheme reflected positively on the changes the payment card had made. For example, where the vouchers were felt to draw attention to their need for financial support, the Best Start Food card was found to be more discreet.

Research to support the evaluation of Job Start Payment involved speaking to young people, both those who had been unsuccessful and successful and also those who had not applied. All of the young people were supportive of the benefit and reported that they would recommend it to others. The research also found some challenges in applying for the benefit with young people reflecting on the social barriers involved in obtaining supporting evidence from employers. On the other hand, they also did not feel there was any stigma associated in applying for the benefit.

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

The Scottish Government is committed to tackling poverty. A robust and accessible system of social security is a key component of managing this goal especially within the current cost of living crisis.

Our [Benefit Take-up Strategy](#) sets out the following principles:

- Prioritise Person-Centred Approaches
- Communicate and Engage Effectively
- Bring Services to People
- Encourages Cross-System Collaboration
- Continuously Learn and Improve

The Scottish Government encourages and supports those who are eligible for social security benefits to access them by active marketing and advertising of what benefits are available. This also challenges stigma around claiming benefits and reinforces the Scottish Government commitment to promote benefit uptake. Wider awareness and advertising of what benefits are available naturally destigmatises the concept of claiming benefits and this approach reinforces that the Scottish Government views social security and its clients positively. This focus on ensuring people are aware of what benefits are available is not replicated in the UK government which has no formal strategy to encourage benefit take-up although it does publish estimated take-up in relation to some benefits.

Social Security Scotland's Local Delivery service helps people access the benefits to which they are entitled by providing advice and support on benefit applications and eligibility. Local Delivery colleagues can visit people in their homes or in local outreach venues which, alongside online, telephone and paper options, ensures that the service is as accessible as possible and meets the needs of clients that want to use it. By giving people a range of options for accessing support Scottish Government reiterates their positive and proactive approach to social security and those who use it.

[The costs of living support Scotland](#) website signposts to both Scottish and UK benefits and includes a benefits calculator to aid people who may be unsure what benefits, if any, they are eligible for.

In a Scottish Parliament debate on 3 November 2022 on automation and benefit uptake, the then-Minister for Social Security and Local Government Ben Macpherson stated: "I emphasise that we all need to encourage people to access Social Security Scotland and to assure them that, when they do so, they will always be treated with dignity, fairness and respect." This statement shows the weight that Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland places on ensuring people have access to the benefits they are entitled to. Mr Macpherson described social security benefits as "an essential investment in the people of Scotland" in a Scottish Parliament debate on 7 February 2023, further emphasising the Scottish Government view that social security is a right and its users should be treated with kindness.

Did benefits make a difference?

Our benefits counteract poverty and improve participation in society

Income from social security is described as one of the three drivers of poverty reduction and this year's Tackling Child Poverty progress report summarises key statistics relating to the delivery of social security in 2022/23. This includes:

- As of end March 2023, 303,000 children were in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment, with almost £190 million paid to families in 2022-23.
- Over £92 million of Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payments were awarded to families in 2022, with almost 143,000 school age children benefitting from a double Winter payment of £260 made in December 2022.
- Between April and 30 November 2022, £21.3 million has been paid to clients for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods.
- As of 31 March 2023, it is estimated that 62,325 children were in receipt of Child Disability Payment. Between July 2021 and March 2023 £204.9 million of Child Disability Payments were issued.
- As of 31 January 2023, 23,660 people were in receipt of Adult Disability Payment, and between March 2022 and 31 January 2023 £33.3 million of Adult Disability Payment were issued.
- A total of 26,555 Child Winter Heating Assistance payments were issued for winter 2022-23 with a total value of £5.7 million.

This year has involved a significant amount of evaluation activity. In accordance with our evaluation strategies, we published five evaluation reports covering our devolved benefits. Take-up and access to social security is critical in our efforts to tackle poverty. Evidence across our evaluations helps us to understand how households are being supported to access the benefits they are entitled to.

- Awareness of the benefit: Clients reported that they had heard about the benefits through a variety of different routes but awareness was not high across the board and stakeholders reported that more could be done to promote some of the benefits
- Simplicity of application: Positive reports on the quick and straightforward application form for Scottish Child Payment which also gave recipients a sense they were entitled to the benefit, as opposed to feeling they have to prove themselves for it
- Automation of payment: Participants who took part in qualitative research for the [evaluation of Child Winter Heating Assistance](#) highlighted the automation of the payment as a benefit, which also helped some families feel that they were entitled to the benefit

Evaluation evidence has also helped us to understand the difference that social security is making to households. Drawing on analysis of Client Survey data and qualitative research with individuals, the evaluation of [Best Start Foods](#) and [Scottish Child Payment](#) found positive evidence that the benefits had helped to reduce financial pressure on households. For some, this was through guaranteeing access to healthy foods and freeing up money for other essential household items. Research with clients of Scottish Child Payment was conducted when the weekly payment was £10 and that point recipients reported it had increased child related spend, allowing them to more fully participate in social and educational opportunities. There was also evidence from these and the evaluation of [Funeral Support Payment](#) that the benefits were reducing individuals' need for borrowing and helping them to avoid getting into debt.

Benefit levels reviewed and updated in line with inflation

The Scottish Government reviews benefit levels and the impact of inflation in each financial year. A [report](#) was published in February 2023 in fulfilment of the duties under section 86A of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018.

The rate of inflation as at September 2022, based on the CPI figure at that time, was recorded at 10.1%. In recognition of the difficulties faced by clients due to the cost of living crisis, Scottish Ministers agreed to uprate all devolved assistance by at least 10.1%, including those additional forms of assistance not specified under section 86B.

Twelve devolved benefits were increased by 10.1% in April 2023, in line with inflation at a cost of around £430m. Scottish Child Payment was increased by 25% in November 2022 – bringing forward its uprating by four months and increasing its rate above inflation. Scottish Child Payment is now £25 per week – a rise of 150% in eight months.

Fairer rules are designed and new benefits created

The Scottish Government are making social security fairer where we can. For example, our new Winter Heating Payment which replaces the Department for Work and Pensions' Cold Weather Payment provides a stable, annual £50 payment. Our benefit is more reliable and not reliant on the location of weather stations, which often do not reflect the conditions that people are experiencing and will continue to help around 400,000 low-income individuals with their heating expenses each winter. All automatic payments of Winter Heating Payment were paid by the end of March 2023 and we have committed to exploring the feasibility of moving payments forward next winter.

The Adult Disability Payment was rolled out nationally on 29 August 2022 and is the most complex benefit to be delivered yet, replacing the UK Government's Personal Independence Payment. We are focused on providing a positive and compassionate

experience for people applying for and receiving Adult Disability Payment where no one will be subject to degrading examinations. People with ongoing awards of Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance do not need to apply as the transfer will be automatic, ensuring no gaps in payment and that people continue to receive the right amount at the right time.

On 31 January 2023, we launched a consultation seeking views on the eligibility criteria for the mobility component of Adult Disability Payment. The consultation is an opportunity for people to consider the evidence we have gathered so far and share their own views.

On 14 November 2022, the Scottish Child Payment was automatically increased to £25 per week and extended to all eligible 6-15 year olds. We are prioritising lifting children out of poverty, payments are calculated from the day someone applies if they are eligible for the benefit. The Scottish Child Payment is not available anywhere else in the UK and is estimated to lift 50,000 children out of poverty. Our five family payments, which includes the Scottish Child Payment, could be worth around £10,000 by the time an eligible child turns 6 and over £20,000 by the time an eligible child is 16.

Take-up improved

Ensuring that people can access all of the social security benefits to which they are entitled is a moral duty and fundamental priority of the Scottish Government.

Under the provisions of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, Scottish Ministers are required to prepare a Benefit Take-up Strategy to promote the take-up of Scottish benefits. The first Benefit Take-up Strategy was published in October 2019, with a duty to publish a new strategy in two years' time. The second Benefit Take-up Strategy was published in October 2021 and outlines our work on take-up to date, as well as setting out our next steps. The second Strategy builds on that foundation and is based upon the following five guiding principles for benefit take-up:

1. Prioritise Person-Centred Approaches
2. Communicate and Engage Effectively
3. Bring Services to People
4. Encourage Cross-System Collaboration
5. Continuously Learn and Improve

The strategy shows how these underpin everything we do, and will be applied through a number of new initiatives aimed at maximising the take-up of Scottish benefits.

As part of delivery against these principles, we launched the Social Security Independent Advocacy Service in January 2022 and continue to invest in Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships - placing welfare rights advisors in 180 GP practices in Scotland's most deprived communities, as well as remote rural and island settings.

In order to track progress, we introduced a new [annual publication](#) in October 2022 that contains our latest estimates of take-up of the Scottish benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland, as well as an annual update on progress against the principles set out in the Benefit Take-up Strategy.

Annex A: Data Sources

Data Source	Description	Links	Frequency
Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods Official Statistics	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.	https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#beststartgrantandbeststartfoodsstatistics	Quarterly
Funeral Support Payment Official Statistics	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.	https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#funeralsupportpaymentstatistics	Quarterly
Young Carer Grant Official Statistics	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.	https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#youngcarergrantstatistics	Quarterly
Job Start Payment Official Statistics	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.	https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#jobstartpaymentstatistics	Quarterly
Scottish Child Payment Official Statistics	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.	https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#scottishchildpaymentstatistics	Quarterly

Data Source	Description	Links	Frequency
Child Disability Payment Official Statistics	This publication series provides information on Child Disability Payment, including statistics on the number of applications received, processed, and authorised, as well as the value of payments made from 26 July 2021.	https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#benefitsforcarersanddisabilityassistance	Quarterly
Adult Disability Payment Official Statistics	This publication series provides information on Adult Disability Payment, including statistics on the number of applications received, processed, and authorised, as well as the value of payments made from 21 March 2022.	https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#benefitsforcarersanddisabilityassistance	Quarterly
Social Security Scotland Workforce Information Official Statistics	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers of directly employed staff by category • numbers of non-directly employed workers by category • staff sickness absence • staff diversity information • location information. 	https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#socialsecurityscotlandworkforceinformation	Quarterly
Social Security Scotland 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.	https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/client-survey-2022-2023 Earlier publications at https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/social-research	Annual

Data Source	Description	Links	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.	<p>Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings April 2021 to the end of March 2022 at https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/insights-research-findings-april-2021-to-march-2022</p> <p>Earlier publications at https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/social-research</p>	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, which takes place in the Autumn.	<p>More information on the People Survey can be found at Scottish Government People Survey - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</p> <p>Data for 2022 is at Civil Service People Survey: 2022 results - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p> <p>Data for 2021 is at Civil Service People Survey: 2021 results - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).</p> <p>Data for 2020 is at Civil Service People Survey: 2020 results - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>	Annual
Charter Research	Research with clients, staff and partner organisations, to inform the ‘examples of’ measures in the framework.	<p>https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/charter-research-2022-2023</p> <p>Earlier publications at https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/social-research</p>	Annual



Social Security Scotland

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