



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Measuring Our Charter 2021/22

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

Social researchers then analysed the information and used it to produce the framework. The original Charter Measurement Framework containing only the list of measures can be found at [Supporting documents - Social Security Charter: measurement framework - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#).

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 report covers the previous financial year. This year that means from the beginning of April 2021 to the end of March 2022.

Some of the measures will not be relevant until Adult Disability Payment and local services are fully rolled out. This is noted in the document.

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

The Client Survey 2021-2022

This is the [third Client Survey publication](#). All references to Client Survey respondents in this report refer to this publication. The survey ran in three rounds, together inviting all clients who had received a decision or a payment (where no application was required) between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 to take part. A total of 126,010 invites were sent for the Client Survey in the 2021/22 financial year. A total of 7,534 responses were received once the data had been cleaned and duplicate checks performed. This represents 6% of the number of invites issued.

There are a number of differences to be aware of between reporting Client Survey results in last year's Charter Measurement Framework compared to this year. Last year's figures included responses from clients with experience from when Social Security Scotland was founded in 2018 up to March 2021. This was because Client Survey findings were being reported in the Charter Measurement Framework for the first time. From now on, Client Survey findings will cover each financial year. In this framework, we have included the figures reported last year for context. However, for this and other reasons outlined below, the figures should not be treated as comparable. Next year's Charter Measurement Framework report will not include the 2018-21 figures. From then on, reporting will continue with more comparable year on year figures.

Another difference in the Client Survey is that this year, people whose applications were unsuccessful were invited to take part for the first time. Due to data constraints, this hadn't been possible in previous years. This is likely to have had an effect on Client Survey results.

In last year's report, respondents were defined as having experience of an application-based benefit only if they said they had applied. In this report, unless stated otherwise, respondents were counted as having an experience of a benefit if they said they had applied for or received a benefit. This allows for inclusion of people who have been case transferred from the Department for Work and Pensions' Disability Living Allowance for children to Social Security Scotland's Child Disability Payment, as these people did not need to apply.

This also means that experience of Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods is now available separately, as the survey asks about applying for these together, but receiving them separately. To avoid confusion, we have therefore only reported figures for this financial year (2021/22) for these benefits.

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 less than 100 for a particular benefit.

Charter research 2021/22

Research was conducted for this year's framework with clients, staff and partner organisations. We conducted 18 interviews with clients on the Client Panels. We also invited all Social Security Scotland staff to take part in a survey and interviews. This resulted in 426 survey responses (approximately 17% response rate), and 24 interviews. Separately, we conducted focus groups with 10 Client Experience staff who work on reviews, re-determinations, appeals, complaints, compliments and suggestions. Finally, we invited partner organisations to a survey, which got 74 responses, and interviews, which resulted in 10 conversations. References to client, staff, or partner organisation participants in this report refer to this research. Full analysis of this research can be found in the [Charter Research 2021-22 report](#). Figures for previous years are not given for the survey of staff, as last year only a subset of staff were surveyed, while this year all staff were invited.

Other sources for the first three sections are:

- **People Survey** – an annual survey of all Social Security Scotland staff. The 2021 People Survey ran from 28 September to 3rd November. 1,247 people responded, and this was a 76% 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.
- **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.

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

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

Reading the framework

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

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

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

Finally, the measures contain data and information that addresses the questions and demonstrates whether or not the ideals are being achieved. 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 quotations. This does not affect the meaning of the quotes.

A People's Service

Social Security Scotland's Service is Person-Centred

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



95%

of 2021 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



90% 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?

84%

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

81% 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

48% of Client Survey respondents said they had been in contact with a member of staff. Of those:

- **Measure 1:** 94% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were treated with kindness.
- **Measure 2:** 88% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they felt trusted by staff. Men were less likely to agree than women (85% compared to 90% of women). People aged 55-64 were less likely to agree than other age groups (82% compared to 87% or above for each other age group).
- **Measure 3:** 92% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff listened to them.
- **Measure 4:** 91% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff made them feel comfortable. People aged 16-24 were less likely to agree than some other age groups (86% compared to 91% or above for people aged 25-34, 35-44 and over 65).

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

Table 1: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they were 'treated with kindness' by benefit¹

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	91%	93%
Best Start Grant	n/a	95%
Best Start Foods	n/a	95%
Funeral Support Payment	95%	94%
Young Carer Grant	96%	94%
Job Start Payment*	n/a	86%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	95%	97%
Scottish Child Payment	96%	96%
Child Disability Payment	n/a ²	96%

*number of respondents for 2021-22 less than 100 (56)

¹ The number of respondents with Job Start Payment experience was too low to be included in 2020-21.

² Benefits are only included in tables for years where they were live and there was enough data to report.



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

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	84%	85%
Best Start Grant	n/a	90%
Best Start Foods	n/a	90%
Funeral Support Payment	89%	88%
Young Carer Grant	96%	93%
Job Start Payment*	-	83%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	89%	88%
Scottish Child Payment	93%	91%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	90%

*number of respondents for 2021-22 less than 100 (52)



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

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	90%	93%
Best Start Grant	n/a	93%
Best Start Foods	n/a	93%
Funeral Support Payment	93%	92%
Young Carer Grant applicants	97%	96%
Job Start Payment*	-	85%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	92%	94%
Scottish Child Payment	95%	94%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	93%

*number of respondents for 2021-22 less than 100 (54)



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

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	89%	89%
Best Start Grant	n/a	92%
Best Start Foods	n/a	92%
Funeral Support Payment	92%	91%
Young Carer Grant	96%	94%
Job Start Payment*	-	82%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	91%	90%
Scottish Child Payment	94%	93%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	93%

*number of respondents for 2021-22 less 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

Client participants were positive about how they had been treated by Social Security Scotland and its staff. Many had spoken to staff over the phone during their experience. These participants described how staff had made them feel comfortable, listened to them and treated them with kindness, understood their needs; and offered additional help. They said that they found staff to be caring, friendly and professional. A few specifically mentioned that they felt no stigma when speaking to staff and were treated with dignity “as a person, not just a number” during their experience. They positively compared this to previous experiences and praised Social Security Scotland for putting into practice a culture based on dignity, fairness and respect.

“Absolutely brilliant, no problem at all. She asked if she could use my first name and I said yes no problem at all. Very courteous, very pleasant. I was able to ask questions and she was able to answer back to me. I would say fantastic because, we’re not having to phone back, wait for a call back from somebody. Not like with the Department for Work and Pensions, it’s a completely different system. You’re treated like a person, not just a number, and it’s made very clear you’re treated as a person. Anything they can do to help. She went on to say is there anything else you need help with, is there anything we can advise you on, anything like that. Which wasn’t the case but it’s still nice to be offered that service.” **Client participant**

“I feel the service is much more humanised. I felt like a person and not just...before [with the Department for Work and Pensions] I always felt disregarded and some of the advisors were always dead abrupt but [Social Security Scotland] I feel is so much more person-centred and more about being compassionate. There’s more understanding and listening and that’s important for people.” **Client participant**



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

Participant: “Although it was a really awful time for me, I had to sort of get these things done. And the way they spoke to me. They were compassionate, yet professional. So it wasn’t promises or anything. They were being sort of transparent about what they do, what the role is, reassuring me about data protection and telling me what the journey will be like, what to expect, an indication of the time frame. And I felt like even if it was delayed that they would keep me up-to date with everything. But it wasn’t delayed, but I just felt trust. Yeah I didn’t expect it to be so good. I speak to people about it. It’s been a while since I’ve had to claim Social Security. Years ago it was hard work and then I was really pleased with how I was treated.”

Interviewer: “You mentioned trust, did you feel trusted by staff too?”

Participant: “Yeah, I had dealings before with the Department for Work and Pensions, which is separate from Social Security Scotland, and the difference I noticed with Social Security Scotland is that they gather the information without making judgements before reviewing it... it was just to get the information that they needed, and there was no false promises. Even at the start of the conversation, they gave you assurance about the information you’re giving over, and security checks... and the way they spoke as well.”

Client participant

Although client participants commonly praised staff, some described negative interactions. One participant had spoken to a staff member over the phone about their Funeral Support Payment application and was unhappy with how the advisor had spoken to them. When asked if they felt trusted by Social Security Scotland, the participant said they felt the advisor had used a negative tone of voice.

“There was one person, it was their tone of voice. I actually terminated the call. It was the gentleman’s voice. I didn’t say that to him. I made up excuses, like they were breaking up. It was probably more me than them.”

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. 3% of respondents said they had been discriminated against, and 4% preferred not to say.

White respondents were more likely to say they did not feel discriminated against (94%) than ethnic minority respondents (89%). For ethnic minority respondents, 4% said they had been discriminated against (compared to 3% of white respondents), and 7% said they preferred not to say (compared to 3% of white respondents).

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	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	96%	96%
Best Start Grant	n/a	91%
Best Start Foods	n/a	91%
Funeral Support Payment	95%	92%
Young Carer Grant	94%	92%
Job Start Payment*	90%	87%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	96%	95%
Scottish Child Payment	96%	93%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	95%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 less than 100 (31)

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

Measure 7: 34% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'I felt I could challenge it'. A quarter (26%, n=144) of white respondents who had experience discrimination agreed they felt they could challenge it. This compared to 54% of minority ethnic respondents (n=39). Men were more likely than women to say they felt they could challenge discrimination experienced (42% of men (n=43) compared to 33% of women (n=148)).

Measure 8: 38% said they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination they faced.

Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were more likely than those without a condition to say they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination they experienced (46% (n=83) compared to 34% (n=116)).

Men were more likely than women to say they told Social Security Scotland about the discrimination they experienced (43% (n=47) compared to 37% (n=159)).



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

All client participants were asked whether they had been discriminated against or treated unfairly by Social Security Scotland.

On the whole, client participants described feeling treated “fairly and respectfully” by Social Security Scotland. Participants said there had been no discrimination or unfair treatment when interacting with staff or using the service.

“The person was nice to speak to and I never felt like I was getting discriminated against. I just felt like it was good, I felt there was equality there. [...] My son is mixed race, Muslim and suspected autistic. [...] I think I’ve been treated fairly and respectfully.” **Client participant**

“No I don’t think so, not that I recall feeling. Even when I didn’t get [the benefit] because I’d already applied for it I just thought och I’ve been so silly, I never read it completely properly. So it wasn’t like I felt any way discriminated by that. It was just clear I hadn’t read every single bit of the small print and made complete sense of it.” **Client participant**

One client participant felt that they weren’t listened to or understood by a staff member. The participant felt it was almost, but not quite discrimination.

“I just felt like I wasn’t being listened to [...] I wouldn’t go as far as to say it was discrimination but certainly I was not listened to and things I said were not correctly put on to the notes that then must have formed the decision [...] And I felt like that person, to be honest with you, I felt like that person had worked for the Department for Work and Pensions before. That’s how I felt. I just felt as if they didn’t know the ethos of what [Social Security Scotland] was trying to achieve. [...] I wouldn’t go as far as to call it discrimination but it was sailing very close to the lid.” **Client participant**

Clients experience good service

66% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of these:

- **Measure 10:** 70% '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 (64% compared to at least 70% of respondents in other age groups)
 - Respondents who said they had a long term health condition (67% compared to 72% of respondents without a long term health condition)
 - White respondents (67% compared to 79% of ethnic minority respondents).
 - Gay, lesbian and bisexual respondents (62% compared to 70% of heterosexual respondents).

Measure 11: 89% agreed with the decision made on their application.

Table 6: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they 'received enough updates during the application process'

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Best Start Grant/Foods	76%	69%
Funeral Support Payment	76%	74%
Young Carer Grant	77%	76%
Job Start Payment*	74%	65%
Scottish Child Payment	78%	72%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	62%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 and 2021-22 less than 100 (31 and 94 respectively)

Table 7: Whether Client Survey respondents agreed with the decision on their application

All respondents who had applied for each benefit; % who said 'yes', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Best Start Grant/Foods	95%	88%
Funeral Support Payment	94%	89%
Young Carer Grant applicants	99%	93%
Job Start Payment applicants	-	84%
Scottish Child Payment applicants	96%	90%
Child Disability Payment applicants	n/a	88%

83% of Client Survey respondents said they had received one or more benefit payments from Social Security Scotland. Of these:

- **Measure 12:** 96% of Client Survey respondents who had received a payment said they were paid when Social Security Scotland told them they would be paid.
- **Measure 13:** 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. 93% said they got the right amount 'every time'.



Table 8: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they received payment when Social Security Scotland said they would

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	94%	98%
Best Start Grant	90%	96%
Best Start Foods	89%	96%
Funeral Support Payment	92%	95%
Young Carer Grant	88%	98%
Job Start Payment*	92%	93%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	92%	97%
Scottish Child Payment	91%	97%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	95%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 and 2021-22 less than 100 (25 and 55 respectively)

Table 9: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they received the right amount first time

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	95%	98%
Best Start Grant	92%	97%
Best Start Foods	90%	95%
Funeral Support Payment	93%	94%
Young Carer Grant	98%	100%
Job Start Payment*	100%	98%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	93%	98%
Scottish Child Payment	92%	96%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	98%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 and 2021-22 less than 100 (25 and 56 respectively)

Table 10: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they were paid the right amount every time

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	94%	95%
Best Start Grant	91%	93%
Best Start Foods	89%	93%
Funeral Support Payment	90%	*71%
Young Carer Grant**	95%	*83%
Job Start Payment***	-	*66%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	92%	96%
Scottish Child Payment	92%	95%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	98%

* These lower figures are largely driven by high numbers of respondents saying 'don't know' or 'can't remember'. These are payments clients are likely to have received only once.

**number of respondents for 2018-21 less than 100 (65)

***number of respondents for 2021-22 less than 100 (56)

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

Clients find staff knowledgeable and approachable

48% of Client Survey respondents said they had been in contact with a member of staff. Of those:

Measure 14: 89% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits.

Table 11: Client Survey respondents' views on whether staff were knowledgeable about Social Security Scotland benefits

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	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	88%	87%
Best Start Grant	n/a	91%
Best Start Foods	n/a	91%
Funeral Support Payment	89%	88%
Young Carer Grant	93%	96%
Job Start Payment*	-	84%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	90%	91%
Scottish Child Payment	93%	92%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	88%

*number of respondents for 2021-22 less than 100 (55)

66% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of those:

Measure 15: 87% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the decision on their application was 'explained clearly'.

Table 12: Client Survey respondents' views on whether decisions were 'explained clearly'

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Best Start Grant/Foods	92%	86%
Funeral Support Payment	89%	86%
Young Carer Grant	93%	91%
Job Start Payment*	81%	85%
Scottish Child Payment	93%	88%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	88%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 and 2021-22 less than 100 (31 and 88 respectively)

Measure 16: 11% of respondents said they disagreed with a decision. Of them, 27% said they asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision again³.

Table 13: Client Survey respondents' views on whether they disagreed with and challenged the decision 2021-22

All respondents with experience of applying for payments for each benefit, row percentages.

For which benefit(s) did you think Social Security Scotland got the decision wrong?	Felt Social Security Scotland got the decision(s) wrong	% who then asked Social Security Scotland to look at the decision(s) again
Best Start Grant	8%	28%
Best Start Foods	6%	24%
Funeral Support Payment	9%	26%
Young Carer Grant	5%	-
Job Start Payment*	14%	29%
Scottish Child Payment	5%	27%
Child Disability Payment	8%	47%

*number of respondents for less than 100 (98)

³ This measure is being reported slightly differently from last year. The Client Survey used to ask if people 'felt they could' challenge a decision, and also if they did. It now just asks if they did, so that is what is reported here. Last year's figures are therefore not shown as they are not comparable.



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 about their experiences of getting in touch with Social Security Scotland and whether staff were able to help them. Client participants were positive about staff and said they found staff to be knowledgeable and supportive in assisting them to use the service. Participants gave examples of times when staff had been knowledgeable.

“She had a lot of information. She knew what she was talking about. I always think when we phone up these departments, like the Department for Work and Pensions, they don’t know what they are talking about, [they use] lots of jargon. She had lots of knowledge and talked to you like you were a person.”

Client participant

“...they were very friendly and knowledgeable about what I had to do. They didn’t have to go ‘well I don’t know’ and go and ask somebody else. They knew what they were speaking about. I suppose this is new for all of you. You haven’t had to deal with this before, with it just being changing.”

Client participant

Some client and partner participants felt staff could have been more knowledgeable or helpful. They felt staff didn’t know enough about benefit entitlement, didn’t offer enough detailed information about applying, and didn’t go over and above to answer queries. Some had mixed experiences with different members of staff.

“She seemed to understand the service inside out which was good because she was telling me things I hadn’t been told before, things I didn’t know, things I think I should’ve been told in the first phone call.” **Client participant**



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)

“The helpline staff are very friendly but poorly informed/trained.”

Partner participant

Understanding decisions

Overall, experiences of receiving and understanding decisions about applications were positive. There was praise for letters from Social Security Scotland with participants calling them clear and concise. A couple of participants with experience of Child Disability Payment particularly appreciated the wording and the tone of the letter they received.

“[The letter] was precise, it was clear and precise. It told me exactly how much and when it was paid, and that was it. It said this is the Social Security Scotland Carer’s Allowance Supplement payment your daughter is entitled to, you will receive it twice a year if you receive Carer’s Allowance with a disability within the higher rate, and that’s what it was.” **Client participant**

“What I really did like about it, to be honest, as much as it was addressed to me it spoke about [my son]. It said ‘[my son]’s payments will...’ and ‘[my son]’s award is for...’ so it was very personal. I knew that it was about my child. It wasn’t generic, to me it was more personalised, and I like that, especially as it was about my son, it was about my pride and joy. That stuck out to me by saying that my wee man was a person and not a number... There wasn’t jargon. I didn’t need to look up a thesaurus to work out what that word means. It was all very easy reading, and how the decision was made.”

Client participant

One partner participant said that decisions could be better communicated to funeral directors. The participant said that it was difficult to tell which clients had been successful when payments arrived from Social Security Scotland.



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)

“When Social Security Scotland pays money into the funeral directors bank account it appears by magic. No warning by email or letter. Only an initial and surname against it and most names can be duplicated so how can I tell who is being allotted the benefit? More communication is needed between all parties. Otherwise a good, robust and reasonably fast system.” **Partner participant**

Challenging decisions

Most participants we spoke to said they agreed with the decision on their application. One participant was happy with their decision but felt the wording in the letter could discourage other clients from challenging their decision. The decision letter stated that challenging the decision could result in a lower payment. The participant said they wouldn't have challenged the decision if they had disagreed with it due to worry over losing the benefit.

“It just went through his name and what he was entitled to and what level he was on. Then it went on to say that if you weren't happy with this decision you could dispute it. I think it said if you dispute it it could result in less payment. I think sometimes it does. It didn't scare me, I knew he wouldn't get the higher payment, but I think some people would be scared to dispute just in case [they] would stop your money.” **Client participant**

One participant who applied for Funeral Support Payment said it was unclear why she hadn't been given money for death certificates. The participant said a more detailed explanation would've helped make the reason behind this decision clearer. They felt there was no point challenging the decision as the amount was minor but they were unhappy about not being told why the award was lower than expected.

Staff are well trained

Measure 18a: 71% 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'.

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

Measure 19: 71% 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 were convenient for clients'.

Measure 20: 62% of staff respondents who do or will interact with clients 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that 'I know how to refer people to advice and advocacy services'.

Measure 21: 55% 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'. 48% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that 'I know enough about the appeals process to explain it clearly to clients'.

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

Measure 23: 95% of 2021 People Survey respondents said they understand their customers' or service users' needs. This compared to 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

Staff participants said ongoing training, the availability of guidance and their own professional experience had helped them to feel confident in their knowledge and skills. Examples of training included online learning, job shadowing, self-directed learning, workshops and seminars, and support from managers and colleagues. Training covered things like: diversity and discrimination, inclusive communication, understanding benefits and Our Charter, and using internal systems. Some said the initial training they received when they first joined Social Security Scotland had helped them to feel confident, well trained and prepared for their role. Participants appreciated that training about benefits had focused more on clients and their needs rather than being purely process-based.

“It was a thorough induction. We had about 6 weeks of training before starting the job which was really good. We had role play, case studies to do, job shadowing. A variety of different ways to get us ready for the job.”

Staff participant

“There hasn’t been an over-focus on processes. It’s been more about people and what lies behind the benefits. For example, Funeral Support Payment training has not been purely about the money and the mechanics of the benefit. It’s something that would involve bereavement and people in a particular position in life. That’s been good. The eLearning itself has been good. It’s generally been well written and well structured.” **Staff participant**

Knowledge of how not to discriminate

Participants felt a genuine commitment to understanding discrimination and preventing it. This was raised by both staff who have, and those who don’t have, regular contact with clients as part of their job.

“I suppose because we’ve done Equality Impact Assessment, when you apply it to things you’re introducing, having that at the back of your mind.”

Staff participant



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)

“The training reiterates how seriously it is taken. Really, really reiterates. Using preferred pronouns, seven protected characteristics. If I wasn’t confident in that I would be quite worried!” **Staff participant**

“I have been encouraged by my manager to do some of the different training events so I signed up to a micro-aggressions training event...I thought it was quite good that I was being encouraged to do these types of training and that these types of training even exist because it’s not something that’s been offered in other places I’ve worked.” **Staff participant**

More support needed

Some staff participants mentioned a need for further training and improved guidance. They said that guidance was difficult to navigate and incomplete in places. This had affected staff confidence and made it difficult for staff to follow processes effectively. They felt it would be helpful if guidance and best practice was formalised and shared in a more structured way rather than through word of mouth.

“I think the guidance could be greatly improved as it can be difficult to find the correct information and information is lacking in certain areas. The letter process can be confusing and templates can be hard to find. I've found a lot of workarounds are found through word of mouth but I think best practice should be shared more often through bulletins or daily meetings so that everyone is clear on what should be done.” **Staff participant**

A few participants found remote learning challenging and would prefer in person training. Some raised a need for more specific training to help with responding to unique or challenging situations, particularly when talking to a client on the phone or doing a home visit. They felt more one-to-one training or job shadowing could help with this.



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)

“The training was done on a remote basis. I would have preferred being able to sit down next to someone and literally shadow them doing the same job. Having the chance to see a few different situations that come up. That wasn’t possible because of the pandemic and because it was a very new benefit so there wasn’t a way to show people before we started. I feel a bit lost when something doesn’t work the way I expect it to.” **Staff participant**

“I think that maybe in the Local Delivery training they should focus a bit more on the situation when you’re in somebody’s house, when you’re doing a visit. What if they get really upset? Because they didn’t really cover that. It was more about the technical issues and signposting. Nothing about how to handle a difficult situation.” **Staff participant**

Staff are well supported

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

Measure 26: 92% of staff respondents said they had ‘good’ or ‘very good’ support from their line manager.

Measure 27: 94% of staff respondents said that they ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement ‘I would speak up if I saw something that wasn’t working, or something I thought was wrong, in Social Security Scotland’.

Measure 28: 93% of staff respondents said they felt ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’ to deliver a service that reflects the values of a human rights-based system as set out in Our Charter.



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

Good support for staff

Staff participants said what had helped them to feel supported at work. They highlighted support from managers and colleagues. They felt comfortable going to others for help or to ask questions, no matter the level of seniority. Participants also felt supported by Social Security Scotland more widely thanks to regular organisation-wide communications and internal social channels.

“My line manager has been a great support for answering questions and pointing me in the right direction. I’ve had things going on in the house so she’s been a really good support. Even higher up the chain as well, I’ve found it doesn’t seem to matter what level of seniority they were. If you’ve got a question, you can go and ask them. For example I needed to go to someone senior to ask for something that I needed. And they were like ‘yeah, no problem’. In my last job, if I’d have went to the equivalent they would have gone ‘that’s not my job’. So basically [I’m supported by] everybody in the team, and my manager, and her manager.” **Staff participant**

“I think the wider support that Social Security Scotland has provided has been quite good. There’s been quite a lot of regular communications about different things and about areas of support that they have, like wellbeing. And even little things that do make a difference, like the Yammer pages about festive quizzes or things to do with your teams, like icebreakers, which I think are really important and takes a lot of the pressure off of individual teams to create some of those informal conversations. I think that’s all been beneficial and I’ve not experienced that before. So that was good.” **Staff participant**

Staff confidence

Staff participants were asked about their confidence to deliver a service free from discrimination and in line with a human-rights approach. Participants raised a range of themes including the culture and ethos of Social Security Scotland and how this aligned with personal values.



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)

“I can’t stand discrimination against people in general. I think the culture here is bang on. Very inclusive for all. I think that ethos with its own staff, it’s what carries onto clients. Nobody should be getting discriminated against. I have that mind-set anyway. The Scottish Government has the right idea. They seem to be an ethical employer and that’s what I like. They care about people. The ethos is very much on people, and that’s the way it should be.” **Staff participant**

“Because we’re delivering a service with dignity, fairness and respect. And I believe that everybody, regardless of anything and everything, race, creed, sexuality, gender, all the rest. It doesn’t matter. We’re getting people what they’re entitled to. It’s my own personal values so it fits with me.”

Staff participant

Staff said internal policies and procedures and training had helped them to feel confident to deliver a service in line with Our Charter and without discriminating. Participants also mentioned a commitment from individual staff, and from senior managers, to avoid discrimination. Some staff talked about how experience from previous jobs made them feel confident to spot discrimination and avoid it.

“Years as a Trade Union rep and attending conferences and training... I’ve dealt with too many personal cases over the years around discrimination and a lack of inclusivity. I’m not saying by any means that I’m an expert, but I think I would have enough experience to tackle anything that I came across.”

Staff participant

Additional staff needs

In the examples below, participants described the ways in which their additional needs and requirements had been met. This included the provision of additional equipment to aid working from home and support related to caring responsibilities and wellbeing.



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)

“I got diagnosed with [illness]. I took a panic one day that my desk set up was not right. I got in touch with the Health and Safety Manager about different things at home like my monitor and desk set up. They were really helpful in terms of getting that set up. They did that quite quickly, which was helpful.”

Staff participant

“I had to take some time off [for caring responsibilities and for bereavement]. As soon as I came back to work, my manager was like ‘you don’t have to have your camera on in meetings if you don’t want to speak’. But she said feel free to send her an email afterwards if there has been anything that day that’s been said that’s upset me, or if I’m feeling a bit low. The ironic thing was I didn’t actually need to do any of those things - just knowing I could, just knowing that support was there made all the difference. When I did return to work it was a staged return. And I didn’t need to worry about work or anything like that. Just knowing I had that support behind me. It made all the difference.” **Staff participant**

Lacking confidence and support

Some staff respondents reported not feeling confident at work. Some respondents mentioned issues related to training which have been covered above in ‘Staff are Well Trained’. For staff participants who reported not feeling supported, issues were about understaffing, workload, fairness in recruitment, problems with internal systems and inconsistencies when receiving information from managers.

“My line manager has been very understanding. I don’t feel afraid to ask questions or for advice or support. But I’ve also noticed a bit of inconsistency in how line managers interact with their teams or manage certain problems. Information can get to different teams at different times. A lot of the time when I’m finding out something important it’s through other colleagues but I’m not finding out from my manager for quite a while. We should all get the information at the same time.” **Staff participant**



“We are severely understaffed at the moment and every team member has a long list of tasks to be done every day that is expanding all the time, plus telephony/web chat duties. We are paid lower level salaries when we have all this workload and are in a position to make decisions on applications, which is not fair. Due to our extreme workload we cannot possibly attend to everything on time, meaning we are two months behind processing and clients are justifiably frustrated and taking it out on telephony and web chat agents. We need more staff and a better distribution of labour so that we are more efficient and manage to pay clients on time. Also, our [internal system] is full of errors, counter-intuitive and many times shows the wrong data.” **Staff participant**

Processes that Work

Do processes work?

Processes work well

When a client has been denied a benefit and they feel they should have received it, they can request a re-determination or internal review. Job Start Payment and Best Start Foods have internal reviews, other benefits have a re-determination process. In this process, the application is assessed again by a separate team. Table 14 below shows the percentage of applications where clients requested a re-determination or internal review. This is shown as a proxy for:

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

Table 14: Percentage of cases where re-determinations/internal reviews requested by clients by benefit

Benefit	% of re-determinations/ internal reviews 2019/20	% of re-determinations/ internal reviews 2020/21	% of re-determinations/ internal reviews 2021/22
Best Start Grant	0.9%	1.0%	0.7%
Best Start Foods	*0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Funeral Support Payment	*4.1%	2.7%	2.3%
Young Carer Grant	*0.9%	2.1%	2.0%
Job Start Payment	n/a	3.1%	2.4%
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	0.1%	0.7%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	n/a	*4.2%

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

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

Measure 30b: percentage of re-determinations allowed are found 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. Any requests judged to be invalid requests are not included in the statistics.

Table 15: 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%

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

Table 16: 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%

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

Table 17: Outcomes of re-determinations Funeral Support Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed/ Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2019-20	49%	46%	5%
2020-21	44%	43%	13%
2021-22	57%	35%	9%

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

Table 18: 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%	58%	9%

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

Table 19: Outcomes of reviews Job Start Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed/ Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2020-21	67%	21%	12%
2021-22	63%	31%	7%

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

Table 20: Outcomes of re-determinations Scottish Child Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed/ Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2020-21	25%	25%	49%
2021-22	30%	49%	22%

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

Table 21: Outcomes of re-determinations Child Disability Payment

Year	Disallowed	Allowed/ Partially allowed	Withdrawn
2021-22	15%	84%	[c]

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

[c] - figures suppressed for disclosure control.



Measure 31a: percentage of applications processed within 10 working days are in the tables below⁴.

Table 22: Percentage of applications processed within 10 working days: Low Income payments

Benefit	% of applications processed within 10 working days		
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods	56%	23%	28%
Funeral Support Payment	61%	52%	27%
Young Carer Grant	30%	41%	20%
Job Start Payment	n/a	74%	36%
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	6%	22%

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

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

During 2021-22 Social Security Scotland launched Child Disability Payment. This benefit has a more complex application process than the low income benefits referred to in the table above. Social Security Scotland has not set a number of days within which Child Disability Payment applications should be processed. So for this benefit, the table below draws on the official statistics publications to show the proportion of decisions by processing time. This approach will be reviewed for next year's Charter Measurement Framework.

Table 23: Application processing times: Child Disability Payment in 2021-22

⁴ Funeral Support Payment is the only one of these benefits where Social Security Scotland have said it should be paid within 10 days of application.



Year	Applications ⁵ Processed In		
	1 to 20 days	21 to 35 days	36 or more days
2021-22	18%	37%	45%

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

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. 99.95% of payments in 2021-22 were on time. Where they were not on time, this was either because of client error, operator error or system error.

Table 24: Percentage of payments paid on time

Benefit	% of payments on time
Best Start Grant ⁶	99.89%
Funeral Support Payment	98.23%
Young Carer Grant	99.54%
Job Start Payment	99.77%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	99.33%
Scottish Child Payment	99.99%
Child Disability Payment	99.69%

Source: Social Security Scotland management information

⁵ *Processing times for any application received is calculated between the received date of the part 2 application and the date that a decision was made regarding the application. 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. Processing times for applicants applying under the special rules for terminal illness have not been included due to low numbers. A number of applications that had a decision but did not possess a part 2 application date were excluded from this analysis as processing time could not be calculated. All applications with a decision, where a part 1 was made via telephone, paper, claim in alternative or local delivery, do not have a part 2 date present, and therefore have been excluded from this analysis. This issue is under review.

⁶ 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 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 is in the tables below:

Table 25: Percentages of low income benefit re-determinations/internal reviews processed within 16 working days⁷

Benefit	% of re-determinations/internal reviews processed within 16 working days		
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Best Start Grant	97%	93%	92%
Funeral Support Payment	95%	83%	93%
Young Carer Grant	100%	90%	89%
Job Start Payment	n/a	92%	88%
Scottish Child Payment	n/a	97%	86%
Best Start Foods	87%	84%	88%

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

Table 26: Percentages of Child Disability Payment re-determinations processed within 56⁸ working days

	2021-22
Child Disability Payment	99%

Measure 34: Call waiting times

The average time a caller waited before a call was answered in 2021-22 was 5 minutes and 51 seconds across all phone line queues. This ranged from an average

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.



of 30 seconds for Child Disability Payment case transfer to an average of 8 minutes and 55 seconds for Carers Allowance Supplement.

Table 27: Average call wait time by telephone queue (hours:minutes:seconds)⁹

Queue	2020-21 ¹⁰	2021-22
Best Start Grant	00:14:21	00:07:11
Carers Allowance Supplement	00:02:50	00:08:55
Child Winter Heating Assistance	00:07:42	00:03:53
Funeral Support Payment	00:02:14	00:01:46
General Enquiries	00:08:59	00:07:09
Job Start Payment	00:03:10	00:02:18
Scottish Child Payment	00:15:30	00:07:05
Young Carer Grant	00:03:41	00:02:56
*Child Disability Payment general	n/a	00:00:46
**Child Disability Payment case transfer	n/a	00:00:30
***Adult Disability Payment general	n/a	00:00:55
*Accessible Vehicle and Equipment	n/a	00:02:16
All Queues	00:10:58	00:05:51

Source - Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings

* These queues launched in July 2021.

** This queue launched in November 2021.

***Please note these queues launched 21 March 2022, so these figures are for only 12 days of calls.

⁹ please note that Social Security Scotland moved to a new telephony system on 30 March 2021.

¹⁰ 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

We asked Client Experience staff participants about some of the main reasons why clients have asked for their decision to be looked at again. Reasons differed by benefit type, although some reasons were common across benefits. These included clients believing they were entitled to more money or a higher rate of benefit or thinking Social Security Scotland did not consider all available information at the application stage. Another common reason was clients not being able to provide all the necessary evidence with the application but the evidence then becoming available to the client after the application stage.

For benefits involving children (such as Best Start Grant and Scottish Child Payment), clients had asked for a re-determination in cases where they were responsible for the child but were not deemed the responsible party in the original decision. For Best Start Grant specifically, reasons for re-determination included applying outwith the application window (either too early or too late) and confusion about criteria such as the age of the child or the stage of pregnancy.

“If the child is deferred some people think they apply when the child actually goes to school but it’s the age they go by, not when they go to school. So there’s lots of re-determinations on that but sometimes it’s too late.”

Client Experience staff participant

Focus group participants also mentioned reasons for re-determinations on Funeral Support Payment applications. Clients had asked for re-determinations in cases where their application had been denied because of a lack of evidence that the client and deceased were normally resident in Scotland. Clients had also asked for the decision to be looked at again where the payment amount was lower than they had expected.

“If the client has the funeral outside of the deceased’s local authority and it costs more than the funeral in the local authority area, then we will pay for the cost in the local authority rather than the other way. We had one where someone [requested a] re-determination as they thought they should be paid more.” **Client Experience staff participant**



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

Re-determinations have also been requested in cases where an application was denied for identity and verification reasons. This can happen across different benefits, but focus group participants gave an example related to Child Disability Payment where the verification can be missed due to missed appointments leading to a denial decision.

“In Child Disability Payment there is a full section on identity and verification that clients need to go through, and that can end up being completely missed because appointments need to be made, appointments get missed and it gets denied on that basis. Then we have to do the re-determination on the basis that they were denied on identity and verification reasons.”

Client Experience staff participant

Why decisions were or were not changed

Client Experience staff participants were asked for some examples where decisions had been changed following re-determinations in the past year. They said decisions had been changed in cases where the client supplied more evidence or information to show that they were eligible for the benefit.

“A Child Disability Payment client was initially awarded nothing. They put in a re-determination and provided more information like NHS letters and testimonies from the health visitor. So loads of additional information. They ended up being paid the highest and higher. The new information helped make the decision fairly straightforward.” **Client Experience staff participant**

Decisions have also been changed in Scottish Child Payment competing claims cases where it became clear which client was responsible for the child. Re-determinations on these cases have led Client Experience staff participants to review the evidence again in order to gauge who is responsible for the child and to change the decision depending on who the responsibility lies with.



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)

“I had one that was a Scottish Child Payment competing claims case. The client had applied for their child but they were told it was paid to someone else. I had to look at that and see who was really responsible for the child. We looked at information to see who was responsible and I spoke to the Department for Work and Pensions. They were able to tell me who had the responsibility on their end. So I was able to award the parent and I had to stop the award for the other party.” **Client Experience staff participant**

Client Experience staff participants said missing the application window and not meeting the eligibility criteria were some of the main reasons why decisions had been unchanged following re-determinations. Some clients weren't aware that they needed a qualifying benefit or low income in order to be eligible.

“You see that a lot with Job Start Payment. They have put in an internal review to be looked at again but they've had earnings in the last six months. We have a system where we can check their earnings. So we phone the client to double-check. If they say they didn't have earnings we ask them for evidence. But if they don't provide evidence, or they say they did have earnings, then unfortunately the decision wouldn't be changed. It is very black and white if they don't meet the criteria.” **Client Experience staff participant**

Examples of the re-determination process

Client Experience staff participants were asked how they felt the re-determinations process had been working overall. Participants thought that the re-determinations process has been fairly positive for clients. They mentioned that being able to speak to clients directly over the phone during a re-determination had helped to make the process personal and informative for clients.

“I think on the whole clients find it a good process. Particular because we send a letter to the client and we can contact clients [over the phone] and explain things to them fully. [...] Clients find it quite a positive experience regardless of the outcome if you explain the decision and the reasoning behind everything. We have the autonomy to do that.”
Client Experience staff participant



Measure 36: Appeals upheld or rejected

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

In 2021-22, 10 appeals were received for Funeral Support Payment and 5 appeals were completed. Of these completed appeals, 100% (all) were not found in the client's favour. This compares to 2020-21, when 15 appeals were received for Funeral Support Payment and 20 appeals were completed. Of these completed appeals, 61% were not found in the client's favour.

In 2021-22, 15 appeals were received for Best Start Grant and 15 appeals were completed. Of these completed appeals, the vast majority were not found in the client's favour. Fewer than 5 cases were found in the client's favour. Exact information on appeal outcomes has been suppressed to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts. This compares to 2020-21, when 35 appeals were received for Best Start Grant and 20 were completed, with the vast majority not found in the client's favour.

In 2021-22, 20 appeals were received for Scottish Child Payment and 15 appeals were completed. Exact information on appeal outcomes has been suppressed to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts. In 2020-21 the number of appeals was not published to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

In both 2020-21 and 2021-22, a small number of appeals were received for Young Carer Grant. These numbers have not been published to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

A very small number of appeals were received for Child Disability Payment since its launch. This number has not been published to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

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



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

Client Experience staff participants said appeals had been rejected in cases where the decision made at the re-determination stage was found to be correct. They said appeals were commonly rejected for the same reasons as re-determinations: the client missing the application window or not meeting the eligibility criteria for the award.

We asked Client Experience staff participants for some examples where decisions had been changed following an appeal. Participants said there had been occasions where it became clear during an appeal that the guidance for making benefit decisions didn't match up with legislation for a particular benefit. In one example about Funeral Support Payment, the Client Experience team became aware of an inconsistency between guidance and legislation following an appeal. The guidance was amended and used by the team to review other Funeral Support Payment cases that had previously been denied.

Another example where a decision was changed following an appeal was when a payment was made to the wrong client. Social Security Scotland acknowledged the mistake and awarded the correct client. They then issued a letter to the wrongly paid client to explain the situation and reassure them that they wouldn't be recovering the money.

“There have been times when appeals have happened and it's meant a policy change [...] There were a few Funeral Support Payment cases where it became apparent that the guidance didn't match up with the legislation. We identified 900 or so cases that had been denied. We did a scan of all those cases to see if they would be eligible under the new interpretation. We ended up paying 30 or so of those people.” **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 28: How would you rate the overall service delivered by Social Security Scotland?

(n=74) Column percentages

Response options	
Very good	16%
Good	41%
Neither good nor poor	19%
Poor	14%
Very poor	4%

57% of partner survey participants said they rated the overall service as good or very good, while 18% said it was poor or very poor.

Similarly to client participants, partners we interviewed praised Social Security Scotland's values and ethos. This was common across both partners who support clients and those who work in partnership as an organisation. They felt that Social Security Scotland had built the service in a way that puts clients first. They praised Social Security Scotland for taking lived experience and partner feedback into account when delivering the service. A few partner participants were pleased about how Social Security Scotland has actively lined up their work with their Charter commitments.

“What I would say is Social Security Scotland are very communicative, positive and really very engaging with organisations to try and get the feedback. That has been really positive. They're very keen to try to get it right. There are lessons to be learned about how the Department for Work and Pensions has delivered the service. Social Security Scotland have used that backdrop to try and take advantage of providing a service to the people of Scotland that reduces anxiety or challenges people have had during the process. I needed to provide feedback on parts, so I would go back to the people. That falls in



with Charter. All the time they've been specific in going in line with the Charter. That's been positive throughout. The key to getting it right. They have been trying to get opinions from a variety of user groups to take the benefits and allowances forward." **Partner participant**

"Excellent values and ethos." **Partner participant**

Some partner participants favourably compared Social Security Scotland's approach to that taken by the Department for Work and Pensions. They felt there was more room for collaboration and that Social Security Scotland had been open and friendly in their approach to working with partners and delivering the service for clients. A partner participant who supports clients said that Social Security Scotland has been treating clients fairly and compassionately. However, they made the point that it can take time for clients to build trust in Social Security Scotland and understand the organisation's ethos.

"Social Security Scotland seem to be taking a more collaborative, less adversarial approach to the Department for Work and Pensions, and this is appreciated." **Partner participant**

"I think it's going to be a slow process getting the type of clients we have to feel comfortable contacting [...]. The feeling from the Department for Work and Pensions benefits was people were scrounging to get them and that they were trying to catch them out and look for a loophole not to make payment. My experience with Funeral Support Payment is completely different. They're really warm and friendly on the phone and it's about trying to help [clients], making sure they can access it and not trying to catch them out and stop them accessing it. But I think it's only time, and people accessing the benefits and using them over time that they'll realise the difference." **Partner participant**

Partner participants who had used the service on behalf of clients were asked about their experience of speaking to Social Security Scotland staff. Participants were positive about staff manner and said staff were helpful over the phone. One participant said that staff had been non-judgemental in their manner and tone of voice.

How accessible are services and places?

Services are accessible

66% of Client Survey respondents said they had experience of applying for a Social Security Scotland benefit. Of those:

- **Measure 39:** 90% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that application process was clear.
- **Measure 40:** 90% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the application form asked only relevant questions. Respondents aged 55-64 were less likely to agree than those in other age groups (82% compared to at least 87% of those in other age groups). Respondents who said they had a long term health condition were less likely to agree (86%) than people without a long term health condition (92%).

Table 29: Client Survey respondents' views on whether the 'application process was clear'

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Best Start Grant/Foods	94%	91%
Funeral Support Payment	90%	91%
Young Carer Grant	92%	91%
Job Start Payment*	77%	90%
Scottish Child Payment	95%	84%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	87%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 and 2021-22 less than 100 (31 and 93 respectively)

Table 30: Client Survey respondents' views on whether the 'application asked only relevant questions'

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Best Start Grant/Foods	92%	90%
Funeral Support Payment	88%	87%
Young Carer Grant	91%	93%
Job Start Payment*	74%	86%
Scottish Child Payment	93%	91%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	83%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 and 2021-22 less than 100 (31 and 88 respectively)

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: ("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. Just over a third of those who experienced barriers said they told Social Security Scotland about them (35%).¹¹

Where respondents had told Social Security Scotland about the barriers they experienced, around half 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland 'understood them' (52%). 45% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland 'supported [them] in overcoming them' (these numbers are too small to break down by benefit). Numbers were too small to compare most demographics, with the exception of disability. People who had a disability or long term health

¹¹ Last year's figures are not shown here as these questions have been re-worded in the Client Survey.

condition were less likely to agree they'd been supported to overcome barriers (37%) than people without a disability or health condition (54%).

Measure 43: (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 3% could not communicate how they wanted to¹². 37% of respondents who faced at least one of these communication barriers told Social Security Scotland about the barriers they experienced. 47% of this group who told Social Security Scotland about the barriers faced strongly agreed or agreed that Social Security Scotland supported them to overcome them.

Measure 44: 75% of Client Survey respondents who had applied for a Social Security Scotland benefit 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that their application was handled within a reasonable time frame. Respondents aged 55 and over were more likely to say their application was handled in a reasonable time frame. For example, 93% of respondents aged 55-64 and 91% of those aged 65 or over said their application was handled in a reasonable time frame, compared to 85% of 16-24 year olds. Minority ethnic respondents (80%) were more likely to agree their application was handled in a reasonable time frame than White respondents (72%).

Table 31: Client Survey respondents' views on whether their 'application was handled within a reasonable time frame'

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Best Start Grant/Foods	85%	72%
Funeral Support Payment	90%	81%
Young Carer Grant	88%	81%
Job Start Payment*	81%	67%
Scottish Child Payment	86%	75%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	73%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 and 2021-22 less than 100 (31 and 90 respectively)

¹² 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 45: 86% of Client Survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that their time was not wasted.

Table 32: Client Survey respondents’ who said ‘Social Security Scotland did not waste my time’

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	87%	84%
Best Start Grant	n/a	87%
Best Start Foods	n/a	87%
Funeral Support Payment	90%	86%
Young Carer Grant	95%	88%
Job Start Payment*	94%	77%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	88%	87%
Scottish Child Payment	92%	89%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	87%

*number of respondents for 2018-21 and 2021-22 less than 100 (31 and 97 respectively)

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

- 31% said staff had told them about other benefits they might have been entitled to. 29% said that they would have liked to have been told about other benefits by staff but were not. A further 28% said this question was not applicable or relevant to them.
- 35% said staff had told them about other sources of additional help (for example Citizens Advice Scotland, etc.). 31% said that they would have liked to have been told about other sources of help by staff but were not. 16% said this question was not applicable or relevant to them.



Table 33: Client Survey respondents' who said staff told them about other benefits they might have been entitled to, 2021-22

All respondents with experience of each benefit; row percentages.

Benefit Experience	Yes	No, but I would have liked them to	No, not applicable/relevant
Carer's Allowance Supplement	31%	30%	31%
Best Start Grant	38%	29%	20%
Best Start Foods	38%	29%	20%
Funeral Support Payment	26%	23%	38%
Young Carer Grant	27%	29%	34%
Job Start Payment*	34%	32%	25%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	29%	26%	38%
Scottish Child Payment	38%	28%	22%
Child Disability Payment	23%	30%	37%

*number of respondents less than 100 (42)

Table 34: Client Survey respondents' who said staff told them about other sources of additional help, 2021-22

All respondents with experience of each benefit; row percentages.

Benefit Experience	Yes	No, but I would have liked them to	No, not applicable/relevant
Carer's Allowance Supplement	33%	35%	18%
Best Start Grant	37%	30%	15%
Best Start Foods	38%	29%	16%
Funeral Support Payment	33%	27%	20%
Young Carer Grant	35%	31%	17%
Job Start Payment*	36%	24%	24%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	39%	35%	5%
Scottish Child Payment	38%	27%	18%
Child Disability Payment	35%	38%	5%

*number of respondents less than 100 (34)

Measure 47: 85% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they had enough choice in how they communicated with Social Security Scotland.

Respondents aged 55-64 years old were less likely to agree than those in other age groups (77% compared to 82-89% of those in other age groups).

Table 35: Client Survey respondents' views whether they had 'enough choice about how they communicated with Social Security Scotland'

All respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	86%	82%
Best Start Grant	n/a	86%
Best Start Foods	n/a	87%
Funeral Support Payment	86%	82%
Young Carer Grant	92%	90%
Job Start Payment*	-	79%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	87%	88%
Scottish Child Payment	92%	89%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	89%

*number of respondents for 2021-22 less than 100 (72)

Measure 48: 80% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they had enough choice of how the agency communicated with them. More than four in five respondents aged 25-34 (85%) and 35-44 (83%) agreed, compared to a maximum of 77% of respondents in other age groups.

Table 36: Client Survey respondents' views whether they had 'enough choice about how Social Security Scotland communicated with them'

All respondents who had looked up or made contact with Social Security Scotland; % who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', row percentages.

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	85%	74%
Best Start Grant	n/a	84%
Best Start Foods	n/a	84%
Funeral Support Payment	90%	83%
Young Carer Grant	92%	87%
Job Start Payment	-	76%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	85%	72%
Scottish Child Payment	91%	85%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	84%

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. Short-term Assistance recently went live, but numbers of clients eligible for it to date have been too low to be reported. We will revisit this in next year's framework.



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

Positive experience of accessibility and how clients were enabled

Client participants were asked about their experience of making applications. Feedback from most participants was positive. Key themes were that applications were straightforward and submitting supporting information was easy to do. This was echoed by a partner participant who support clients to make applications.

“Really easy, really accessible. From just a Google search it came up straight away. The website was clear and explained things. The application process, which I was really dreading... the questions were really easy to understand and gave you prompts. It wasn't repetitive. Some other benefits that I've looked at before for other people, it was repetitive, and almost feels like trick questions to get people to say different things. But it wasn't like that. It was really straightforward, simple, it was easy. I was pleasantly surprised.”

Client participant

“On behalf of my customers I find that the information and applications are easy to access and very user friendly.” **Partner participant**

Client participants generally said they were able to complete an application in a way that suited them. There were examples where participants had been supported by staff to complete applications or provide supporting information. The feedback about the help received from client advisers was very positive.

“I got in contact and I spoke to the girl and she said ‘right, because you're phoning me today, if you've time we can go over the first part', you know, doing your name, address, that kind of thing in the phone call. So that was fine, we did all that and then she asked if I had any issues filling in forms. I'm actually dyslexic, so she then said ‘well that's fine, I'll send you out the form but I can schedule someone to phone you'. So somebody phoned me and he filled out the form for me. That was really helpful, getting someone else to fill it in... It was a video call and it was an hour. He was on his computer and he was speaking to me as well as typing it all in for me. That was really good.”

Client participant



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

One participant said web chat was an accessible way for her to get in touch as it could fit round her caring responsibilities.

“The web chat is a great function. From an autism mum who does it on the sly. If I use the phone it’s ‘who you talking to?’ you know, the usual. So being able to do web chat, and I didn’t have to be on the phone, it was brilliant, I got the answer I needed.” **Client participant**

A few participants had positive feedback about Social Security Scotland telephony service. One participant said hearing information over the phone was easier to understand than letters. A partner participant gave an example of an improvement made in the quality of videos for British Sign Language users.

“There was a number of film clips and there was an English person signing British Sign Language. What they’ve done is, they’ve made improvements. They’re now using Scottish people doing British Sign Language. It’s like a dialect, like the difference between Glasgow and Edinburgh. We want to make sure people in Scotland understand British Sign Language.”
Partner participant

Negative experiences of accessibility

Partner participants raised the issue that it can be difficult to complete the required security checks over the phone when supporting a client with complex needs. This issue was also referenced by a staff participant. The staff member raised a concern about whether the identification process at the beginning of calls should be adapted to take into account clients’ needs.

“We work with some of the most vulnerable client groups who have various complex needs. It has been very difficult for us to act of their behalf due to actually having to be with them to go through security which they can’t always get through due to their complexities. This means that it has been made very difficult to access the correct benefits and actually get issues sorted for the client base we work with.” **Partner participant**



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

Partners and staff who took part in the research had suggestions to improve the accessibility of communication for clients. Examples of these included: for guidance about the document upload process to be available in different formats and large-print to be available in all application forms.

“A client I spoke with could not follow the instructions to upload a document that we required on-screen. The client requested written instructions to enable her to upload the birth certificate we required, and requested these instructions either by email or letter...this is something I believe we should have to make our service more fully inclusive.” **Staff participant**

“I had an occasion where a client had asked for large text but the only appointee declaration was in regular sized text.” **Staff participant**

Partners who support clients and potential clients raised concerns about the availability of information and the quality of service to clients who use languages other than English, including British Sign Language.

“The translation service is not very good and Social Security Scotland staff don't seem to understand how to access a translator for non-English speaking customers.” **Partner participant**

“Working with British Sign Language users is an issue with language barriers. Understanding letters is not clear for British Sign Language users as their language is visual. I [know] one client who is having issues with making contact through Contact Scotland due to staff not being aware of the service, and also the [...] queue for clients has been very poor with waiting with the interpreter on line. [They had] been waiting four hours on two calls, one was cut off and the other was a lot of confusion with the client. To improve this, Deaf awareness should be given to explain the difference between a British Sign Language user and a hard of hearing person. I'm seeing Deaf clients being frustrated and [getting] upset.” **Partner participant**

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 clients. 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 2022 (the end of the financial year) there were 111 locations completely signed off as outreach locations. Accessibility consideration for 96 (86%) of these locations was available for analysis for this measure. This 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.

- Accessible toilet/s (53, 55%)
- Automatic door/s (46, 48%)
- Disabled parking (45, 47%)
- Ramp/s (43, 45%)
- No steps/services are on ground floor (32, 33%)

Measure 52: X percentage of clients said it was convenient to get access to social security places and services. Due to the impacts of Covid-19, a low proportion of clients used local delivery outreach locations in 2021-22. We will begin reporting on

this when enough clients with experience of locations have responded to these questions in the Client Survey.

How is the consultation¹³ process for benefits for disabled people (and people with health conditions) working for clients?

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

These measures are relevant for Adult Disability Payment. Adult Disability Payment began roll out on 21 March 2022. We will begin reporting on this when enough Adult Disability Payment clients have responded to these questions in the Client Survey:

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

¹³ This section referred to 'face to face assessments' in the original Charter Measurement Framework. This is the language used by the Department of Work and Pensions for Personal Independence Payment. When Adult Disability Payment launches in Scotland to replace Personal Independence Payment, there will not be face to face assessments, but some applicants will be asked to a consultation.



A Learning System

To what extent is Social Security Scotland a learning organisation?

Social Security Scotland uses feedback to improve performance

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

Staff and partner participants mentioned a range of ways communication and information for clients could be improved. This included changes to application forms to make sure only relevant questions are included. Another example was from a partner who said Social Security Scotland's opening hours should be extended to cover public holidays.

“Questions [in] part 2 of the Child Disability Payment application were not applicable for children under 14 months of age. The questions for children above 14 months are applicable, but when you're asking a mother does her 4 month old baby brush his teeth, hair or get themselves dressed it feels silly to ask those questions. As a new organisation I feel it's necessary to feed this information back to my managers as ultimately it will improve the client's customer experience...We have the knowledge and technology to change anything in this organisation which would make the application process for that specific age group a bit smoother, and would also help the parents or guardians have the confidence to fill out the application themselves online as the person I spoke with said she did not have the confidence to attempt the application as she felt the questions were not applicable to her child.”

Staff participant

“...as a bereavement industry, the Scottish Government often asks us to make ourselves available to make sure that death and funeral move through their process timeously and that we don't cause unnecessary delays. So during COVID-19 we had registrars out seven days a week, the burial and crematorium teams were working seven days a week and yet Social Security Scotland shut down to close for every holiday. We don't close for four day holidays, we open for one of them. We'll be open on Good Friday because a four day shutdown for funerals and bereavement as a service is too much.”

Partner participant



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

There were also suggestions about further ways for clients to access information about their applications.

“Clients are constantly stating they would like to be told over the phone what the decision is on their application as opposed to waiting on the award letter.”

Staff participant

There were many suggestions for an online app or account to allow clients to monitor the status of their applications and review their application history. This related to the importance of updates and timescales to clients. Both staff and clients said that an online account would help facilitate this.

“Having clients being able to make themselves an account on our website so that when they submit an application they can regularly check the progress of the application, and we as advisors can leave notes on the application that clients can see. For example when we need further supporting documents uploaded. It would help with the volume of calls massively.” **Staff participant**

“What I thought at the time would be quite good is if you had an account you can log in to apply and that way you can see what you’ve already applied for. Because I’d applied for the wee one’s nursery but I had done the wrong application for it so I then had to do another application.” **Client participant**

There was also a number of suggestions for email to be included as way for clients to get in touch with Social Security Scotland. Reasons email would be helpful focused on accessibility and convenience for clients and partner organisations who support them.

“People have asked to be communicated with by email. But we can’t email people. Some people don’t want to see people face to face, there’s people who have anxieties about it. Others say I don’t want a letter coming in the post, I don’t want that.” **Client Experience staff participant**



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

“Call wait times are excessive and there is a lack of options for contacting in other ways. In particular, email is essential to enable effective working with intermediaries acting on behalf of people claiming. We have high demand for the service and it is not possible to sit on the phone for 45 minutes with every person we support.” **Partner participant**

“An email would have been handy [to ask a question] or an online form. I don’t know if that’s a thing already.” **Client participant**

There were a couple of further suggestions for additional support for clients that weren’t related to communications. These were: a way to make the identification processes easier for clients with experience of domestic abuse and making payments into multiple bank accounts.

“I have provided feedback in relation to individuals fleeing domestic abuse and the identity process as not everyone has the correct documentation if they are fleeing a situation. As of yet there has been no update to the process. If we could accept other forms of documentation such as letters from a solicitor or domestic abuse agencies to help with identification, this would allow the applications to be considered and not cause additional delays in having to wait for evidence of identity letters being sent out.” **Staff participant**

“Clients have to have their benefits all paid into the same bank account. There are good reasons why people might not want to do this. This issue has been raised but so far nothing has been done.” **Staff participant**



Measure 57: Examples of You said: We did

Some staff provided clear instances of times when feedback led to an improvement. A common theme was improvements to internal processes which were put in place in response to feedback, for example about how work is organised and tracked. There were also examples about improvements to communications within and between teams.

“Suggestion to improve practice by creating a spreadsheet tracker of file requests. This improved knowledge of staff dealing with this work and also made an electronic trail to monitor progress.” **Staff participant**

“I’d seen from my last role that one team manager was giving all the information to one team but then the other team weren’t been told anything... And at first it did appear that you were disadvantaged if you weren’t with the service manager that had been here a long time... I was able to talk to my line manager and say ‘this is what my thoughts are, this is what others are saying’... straight away that was dealt with. We all got the same email, whatever information we needed was sent to everyone... And again I was respected for saying that. They were actually happy that I said it because they didn’t realise that had happened.” **Staff participant**

There were also examples of providing suggestions which led to improvements in the client experience. These were: improvements to application forms; working in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions; and working with policy and legal teams to consider benefit eligibility.

“Feedback that the online Child Disability Payment form is too long and difficult to follow as it feels like the client is repeating themselves or can’t see what questions are coming up. Fed back to manager and was informed that a new online form is going to be trialled.” **Staff participant**



Examples of You said: We did (continued)

“While taking a call from a client in Case Transfer the information they received from the Department for Work and Pensions was not correct and my responsibility was to advise the client of this and get them to call back the Department for Work and Pensions. By the time I took the call two hours of phone calls had been made. I realised asking the client to call back the Department for Work and Pensions would upset them more. I therefore took the client’s details and said I would check this out and call him back.

Speaking with my managers, my manager escalated the miscommunication and this led to the Department for Work and Pensions realising a system error at their end, which was quickly rectified and saved many of their clients receiving wrong information. I believe it also brought together managers from the Department for Work and Pensions to work with us more closely if this type of scenario arose again. Because of the excellent working environment I am in, I was confident in speaking to superiors on this matter and confident I could 'bend the rules' slightly in that I could call the client back. The client was so relieved and thanked me for delivering what I said I would.” **Staff participant**

“I was to deny a client their application for a Low Income Benefit as they did not meet the eligibility criteria. On questioning that particular reasoning, the case was put to policy and legal [teams] to be used as an example where this barrier was looked at and policy and guidance was amended to include this part for this particular group of clients.” **Staff participant**

As well as within the organisation, it is important that Social Security Scotland can receive and provide feedback to partners. This includes policy makers within the Scottish Government. In their survey comments, staff gave examples of Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government sharing feedback.

“Feedback from clients and third parties has been put to policy for consideration and options papers developed for changes to regulations.”
Staff participant

Examples of You said: We did (continued)

Partners who took part in the research gave some examples of providing feedback that led to improvements. One participant gave an example of how Social Security Scotland had listened to their feedback and used it to improve information for older clients. Another partner participant gave an example related to issues of accessibility for clients who use British Sign Language (see measure 50).

“Working alongside Social Security Scotland, regarding the changes in the names of benefits to come and their approach to this project, I have found very informative and helpful. The project supervisors have listened to my thoughts/experience of working with [the] elderly and their approach to the information leaflets [has been] altered to help the client understand the new process to come and make clear to them the changes to come.”

Partner 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.

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 37: Gender of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

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

Table 38: Age of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
16-19	2.7%	0.9%	0.7%
20-29	20.0%	21.5%	22.6%
30-39	29.0%	27.5%	29.6%
40-49	25.5%	26.3%	24.9%
50-59	20.7%	21.0%	18.9%
60-64	*	2.2%	2.8%
65 and over	*	0.7%	0.5%

*Suppressed due to low numbers.

Table 39: Disability of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

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

Table 40: Ethnicity of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

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



Table 41: Religion or belief of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

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

Table 42: Sexual orientation of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

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

Table 43: Marital/civil partnership status of people directly employed by Social Security Scotland

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



Measure 59: Examples of acknowledgment of mistakes

A few client participants mentioned mistakes made by Social Security Scotland. It is important to note some of these client participants retained an overall positive view of Social Security Scotland despite mistakes happening. Many had goodwill towards Social Security Scotland despite their experiences. For many, an open and honest approach from Social Security Scotland to making mistakes was particularly helpful. There was evidence that clients understood that Social Security Scotland wouldn't always get it right and that an open and transparent attitude made the difference when things went wrong. There were also a couple of client participants who thought that IT problems can cause mistakes which are out of anyone's control.

“Things will go wrong. Mistakes will be made. For me it's how it's dealt with. And for a wee while it wasn't dealt with very effectively. But once it got to the point where I grudgingly put in a complaint – because I really didn't want to complain because I want this to work so much. But once I put in a complaint it was dealt with very quickly, very effectively, and within the timescales that are laid out that I was told about. To me, if it goes wrong it's how it's dealt with and it was dealt with pretty efficiently to be fair.” **Client participant**

Examples of mistakes made by Social Security Scotland included errors in processing applications and delays or problems making payments.

“When I phoned up after the date I had been given had passed, the chap was really helpful. He said he was going to look into it. It was at this time I found out that [the] details didn't match up with what was on the registry, and that was why there had been such a delay. He said to me ‘actually, somebody should have checked that before now’... So he just looked into it and that's when we found out it was [that] the name had been spelled wrong and that's why it hadn't been processed yet... I did feel like they acknowledged that there had been a mistake and he was apologetic for it.” **Client participant**



Examples of acknowledgment of mistakes (continued)

Participant: “With it being the wrong pay day, the staff member that I spoke to said it’s happened to so many people. And you can tell that they were being honest about it... My experience of the Department for Work and Pensions is they’ll never ever ever admit they’ve made a mistake over the phone. Whereas, to have a staff member say straight up ‘this has happened to lots of people, we’re really, really sorry and our managers are aware there’s not been letters out to people, it’s an issue’...”

Interviewer: “and how does that make you feel on the other end of the phone?”

Participant: “It makes you feel like you’ve been listened to, it makes you feel like your complaint counts. I’ve never felt as if the person is trying to rush me off the phone, and I can talk!” **Client participant**

This issue was also raised by a staff participant. The participant had given feedback about the issue to managers but felt there had been a delay in making improvements.

“We have changed clients’ payment days who are transferring from Disability Living Allowance for Children to Child Disability Payment. We assure our clients via social media and introduction letters that their payment dates will not change. However, this is not always the case. We are changing clients’ payment schedules as [the payment system] can only handle paying Child Disability Payment on a Wednesday. I informed management in November 2021 that some clients in receipt of Disability Living Allowance for Children get paid on Tuesdays... This went ignored at the time and may potentially be a huge issue now [February 2022] as clients are now not receiving their payments when they should, despite being reassured nothing would change.”
Staff participant



Measure 60: Qualitative evidence on client experience of the complaints and feedback process¹⁴

Client experiences of complaints

Some participants who mentioned mistakes said they had made a complaint about the error. This included one who had experienced multiple issues to do with their payments, and another who was unhappy with the process for becoming an appointee for her son.

“I did raise a complaint because of the bank holiday... there was an IT error that [meant] payments had been deferred. As soon as that happened, I need to be honest, my anxiety kicked in. I thought, oh my god, this has went back to this ‘other’ bank account.

And I remember what had upset me that time was that we had planned to take him [on a trip], and I had told my son this... I said what’s upset me is now, telling any child that you’re going to do something and then taking it away, you’re going to [get] a bit of a reaction. But see telling an autistic child something, and then you pull it away, he starts to lose trust in me and I can’t afford that.

But again, the girl was very apologetic, she said it was something that the IT team were working on. And the fast track team really helped... they completely understood, they were apologetic, they took ownership when it mattered. They were able to look into things and say ‘that doesn’t look quite right’ or ‘not quite sure’.” **Client participant**

Participant: “But when they were asking questions about the appointeeship, I felt as if I was going through an assessment to be honest with you. I felt as if they were reassessing my son and I wasn’t told that would happen... I felt it wasn’t an appointeeship appointment, I felt it was an assessment appointment. I’m not criticising, obviously the advisor needed it for a reason. But [the advisor] was there for nearly two hours... I phoned and I said I wasn’t happy.”

Interviewer: “What happened when you spoke to someone with feedback?”

Participant: “They apologised and said they’d look into it.” **Client participant**

¹⁴ 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.



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

Staff perspectives on complaints

Participants in the Client Experience focus group said that problems with Social Security Scotland's systems had led to a number of complaints from clients.

"A number of complaints have system issues at their heart. Uploads haven't worked or systems aren't working the way they are meant to. So quite a lot of complaints involve something going wrong with the IT side of things."

Client Experience staff participant

Participants said that another common reason for complaints were long processing times and lack of updates on the status of applications.

"That's the bulk of it – timescales and people being told different things. Also complaints about the lack of call backs and lack of keeping clients updated. A lack of communication on how their application is progressing or how their issue is being resolved." **Client Experience staff participant**

Participants also raised communication as an important theme when discussing experiences of the complaints process. They said that improvements were needed to ensure complaints were being handled consistently and within the agreed timescales. This was important in order to provide accurate updates to clients.

"I would say maybe sometimes at the first stage the complaint handling could be improved. 'I'm going to call you back in 5 days and this is our complaints process' – sometimes that is missing. Some people just log a complaint then don't take responsibility for fixing it. So I wouldn't say keeping clients informed is uniform across the agency." **Client Experience staff participant**

A Client Experience staff participant raised a concern about responding to suggestions from clients when there is no clear timescale on when improvements may be made. A similar issue was raised by a staff participant who said improvements were needed to the complaints system to allow outcomes to be more accurately recorded.



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

“It’s difficult to get someone to say ‘yes we are going to do that’. Oh yeah, it’s in the pipeline for the future. How on earth do I explain that to a client? I had one on the go and I checked in with him every two weeks and at the end [of] 6 months it was like ‘it’s on a list, we might get to it eventually. Your suggestion has been taken on board, but at the moment it’s not something we are going to implement. We might implement it over the next however many months’. It’s a difficult thing because there is no timescale attached to it.”

Client Experience staff participant

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

Measure 61: 81% of Client Survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that Social Security Scotland was an open organisation.

Men (77%) were less likely than women (83%) to agree that Social Security Scotland was an open organisation. Respondents aged 45 years old and over were less likely than those in younger age groups to agree. For example, 70% of those aged 65 and over agreed that Social Security Scotland was an open organisation, compared to 83% of 16-24 year olds. Respondents who said they had a long term health condition were less like to agree (78%) than people without a long term health condition (84%).

Table 44: Client Survey respondents' views whether 'Social Security Scotland is an open organisation'

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	67%	71%
Best Start Grant	n/a	87%
Best Start Foods	n/a	87%
Funeral Support Payment	76%	78%
Young Carer Grant	82%	88%
Job Start Payment*	70%	78%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	71%	80%
Scottish Child Payment	82%	87%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	83%

*number of respondents for 2021-22 less than 100 (87)

Measure 62: 84% of Client Survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Social Security Scotland was an honest organisation.

Respondents aged 45 years old and over were less likely than those in younger age groups to agree. For example, 78% of those aged 65 and over agreed that Social Security Scotland was an honest organisation, compared to 84% of 16-24 year olds. Respondents who said they had a long term health condition were less like to agree (82%) than people without a long term health condition (87%). Gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents were less likely to agree (80%) than heterosexual respondents (85%).



Table 45: Client Survey respondents' views whether 'Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation'

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

Benefit Experience	2018-21	2021-22
Carer's Allowance Supplement	79%	79%
Best Start Grant	n/a	89%
Best Start Foods	n/a	89%
Funeral Support Payment	86%	83%
Young Carer Grant	88%	88%
Job Start Payment*	80%	76%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	83%	84%
Scottish Child Payment	89%	90%
Child Disability Payment	n/a	84%

*number of respondents for 2021-22 less than 100 (95)

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

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

Table 46: Partner participant views on openness and honesty

(n=72) Row percentages

How much do you agree or disagree with the following...:	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Don't know
Social Security Scotland is an open organisation	65%	13%	13%	10%
Social Security Scotland is an honest organisation	60%	22%	7%	11%

Around two-thirds (65%) of partner participants said they agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland is an open organisation. Slightly fewer (60%) said they agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland was an honest organisation.



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

Around one in ten said they disagreed or strongly disagreed that Social Security was open (13%) and honest (7%).

Partner participants described examples of when they felt Social Security Scotland had been open and honest. They said that the organisation had been transparent about plans and processes for delivery of current benefits and the rollout of new benefits. One participant who works in partnership with Social Security Scotland mentioned a specific example, where they felt they were given a “very open and honest answer” although their query could not currently be answered.

“I think it’s been doing really well to be fair. It’s always an open and honest conversation. The two groups that I contribute to, if there’s any concerns that have been raised (not that I’ve had many), they’ve always been addressed. I’ve raised concerns around data [...]. There was a very honest comment on that, to say ‘we haven’t gathered that data, we don’t really have the systems to gather that data at the moment, but it’s something we’re going to try to address’. [...] As I say it was a very open and honest answer and I was happy with that.”

Partner participant

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

Client participants described openness and honesty in terms of Social Security Scotland being clear about their services and processes.

“I didn’t know that benefit existed. They were explaining what the benefit was, what it covers, and you could tell they were following the rule book. And it was in a good way, because with these types of calls it’s important to have black and white rather than grey areas. It was good for me because they were being open and honest and transparent, and not giving me any false expectations. The way they spoke, they were so knowledgeable. They explained the process, how it would be, how they gathered the data. It was world class.” **Client participant**



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

Client participants were pleased when staff were honest when they didn't know the answer to a query. Participants felt this was open and transparent, and they appreciated when staff went to actively seek out the answer for them. Some participants understood that it wasn't always possible for staff to find an answer to their query, but were pleased that staff were honest about it.

“They've been able to answer questions, and if there was something that they weren't quite sure of, especially at the start with the payments and whatever else, the girl was like 'I'm not quite sure but I'll phone you back'. It wasn't like 'oh I'm not quite sure' and that's the end of it. It was 'I'll seek further information, I'll find out for you, or I'll speak to the relevant person and call you back'. She was really good. Ownership was taken [...] which was great because you knew that you were heard.” **Client participant**

“I contacted to ask how long it would be. Then the guy I called rang me and said he was sorry he didn't know how long it would be. That was good, that he did that, that he was honest about that. The communication was good.”
Client participant

Participants were happy when staff highlighted other sources of support or signposted them to the website for information on other benefits. Some participants wanted the advisor to tell them about other benefit entitlement but didn't get this.

“She advised to also look on the website because there were other benefits I could also get.” **Client participant**

“Because [the advisor] didn't say, we didn't know there was something other than Best Start Grant. I was trying to help friends by going online but it's not really clear who can apply for what.” **Client participant**



Social Security Scotland works well with other organisations

Measure 65: 39 service level agreements are in place with external partners.

There are 12 formal service level agreements in place with external partners. There are also 27 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.¹⁵

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

Partner participants were asked about their experience of working with the organisation.

Table 47: How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Social Security Scotland has worked well with me and my organisation

(n=74) Column percentages

Response options	
Strongly agree	19%
Agree	45%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Disagree	11%
Strongly disagree	8%
Don't know/not applicable	4%

¹⁵ 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.



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

Around two thirds (64%) of partners agreed or strongly agreed that Social Security Scotland had worked well with their organisation. Nearly one in five (19%) disagreed or strongly disagreed and 14% selected 'neither'.

Partner participants were mostly positive about their relationship with Social Security Scotland and mentioned good experiences of partnership working. Things like the enthusiastic attitude of staff; willingness of the organisation to engage and receive feedback; and regular updates on progress had contributed to partner participants feeling positive about the relationship. In terms of improvement, there were calls for partnership meetings to have more of a focus on collaborative discussion and for updates to include a higher level of detail.

“Social Security Scotland is clearly committed to best practice in providing accessible communication and is doing well to keep partner organisations updated on progress e.g. rollout of benefits. A very positive experience in regard to partnership working.” **Partner participant**

“I've had the privilege of working in partnership with Social Security Scotland on the implementation of the devolved disability benefits (Child Disability Payment / Adult Disability Payment). This has required me to work closely with [teams in the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland]. In all instances, I've found officers to be very collaborative and enthused about the work that they do.” **Partner participant**

“Social Security Scotland's third sector / partnership meeting group set-up and delivery has been very good. The reports, communications and meetings have demonstrated Social Security Scotland's commitment to the Charter both in delivery and context. I often speak about Social Security Scotland in meetings with officials in national government, and elsewhere, highlighting their service approach and willingness to take on board feedback and to focus on inclusive delivery of the service. The information and communications before and at meetings is extremely good and very accessible but sometimes a little short on detail and tends to be 'reportage' rather than proposals for discussion.”
Partner participant



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

A couple of partner participants who work in partnership with Social Security Scotland mentioned a shift in their relationship with the organisation over time.

“We had a really good relationship at the start but there’s been some turnover with senior managers. As that turnover has happened I think things have become more dilute. We used to get new people as they were coming into post, they’d make contact with us and they’d do an awareness session or something with us. If they had new people coming into their teams, we might do a wee half hour or an hour just to help people on the road. There’s been much less of that. Probably partly because we’ve been going through a merger. I think it’s mostly because people that are coming in are not so aware. I’ve seen that in other organisations, things become dilute as people move on [...] It can be harder to ask for help when you don’t know the face at the end of the email.” **Partner participant**

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 way¹⁶. Instead, the data below outlines the main training courses which are informed by clients and how many times they were included in 2021-22.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide figures on the percentage of staff who have undertaken each training course in 2021-22. This is because the learning system does not track overall staff numbers.

¹⁶ 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, fire safety or data protection.

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

The table below states how many times each course has been undertaken, 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 48: Training informed by clients

Training Title	Available to	Number of times completed	Details
Inclusive Communications	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff.	726	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.	835	Includes quotes from people with lived experience
Social Model of Disability	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff working on disability benefits.	888	Shaped by input and quality assurance from Glasgow Disability Alliance and the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland.
Scottish Child Payment Meeting our clients/ Meet the Client Adult Disability Payment/ Meet the Families Child Disability Payment	All staff, and part of induction training for client facing staff delivering relevant benefits.	785	First one designed with input from Child Poverty Action Group. Second and third informed by a survey and 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 2021-22 for continuous improvement. It does not include testing undertaken by user researchers in the Scottish Government working on the design of the benefits yet to go live.

Cookie consent

Research was conducted with clients explaining how client's data would be used (often called cookie consent) in our application forms. The research sought to explore the level of detail clients felt comfortable with, and the optimum layout of the information. Feedback from clients was used to develop the cookie consent banner that has been introduced to all application forms.

Funeral Support Payment

Following changes to legislation, the updated Funeral Support Payment application form was tested with clients who had experience of Funeral Support Payment. Research confirmed the new question wording was easy to understand and would not cause issues for clients.

Best Start Foods

Research was conducted with clients who were not actively using their Best Start Foods card to understand potential pain points or barriers. The research helped identify improvements to the notifications being sent to clients.

Identity Badge research

As our Local Delivery staff start to meet with clients face-to-face, research was required to test the identity badge staff would wear. Feedback from the research streamlined the badge to make the key information clients were looking for more noticeable.

Scottish Child Payment message testing

Prior to the Scottish Child Payment increases taking place, research was conducted to test the main communication messages. The feedback helped shape the message Social Security Scotland went live with.

Unsuccessful applications

Research was conducted with clients who had received an unsuccessful application notification. The research identified potential changes to the notifications to address clients' needs.



Measure 69: Qualitative evidence on client involvement in measuring effectiveness

Clients are involved in measuring effectiveness in several ways. The Client Survey and Client Panels research programme are the two main ways. There are also short surveys at the end of application forms and telephone calls to seek immediate feedback, these can be found in the Insights Research publication (see Annex A for details). Social research conducted for Social Security Scotland is reported on this page [Social Security Scotland - Social Research](#).

The [Client Panels](#) research programme began in September 2020. In May 2022, members of Social Security Scotland's Client Panels were invited to take part in a survey about their experience of the panel. The survey included questions about Client Panel communications, publications, and taking part in research activities. 364 members took part in the survey.

Overall attitudes

- Around nine in ten (88%) strongly agreed or agreed that Social Security Scotland values feedback and the Client Panels is a good way to help them improve.
- Nine out of ten (90%) said they were glad to be a member of the Client Panels and that they could take part in a way that suited them.
- The majority (85%) said taking part in the Client Panels was worthwhile.
- Almost all (95%) who had taken part in a research activity said they were very likely or likely to take part again in the future.

Publications

- Almost all who had read reports said they were easy to understand (94%) and were detailed enough (91%). Almost all (94%) said they found the report(s) they read interesting.
- Over 90% who had read summaries said they were easy to understand (93%) and were detailed enough (91%). A similar number (93%) found the summary or summaries they read interesting.



Qualitative evidence on client involvement in measuring effectiveness (continued)

Taking part in research activities

- Over 90% of respondents who had taken part in a survey said the questions were easy to understand (91%) and the survey was easy to complete (93%).
- Most respondents (86%) said the length of the survey was about right.
- Most (90%) said they had enough time to take part before the survey was closed.
- All or almost all who took part in an interview said it was straightforward, the questions were easy to understand, and they were able to take part in a convenient way.
- All strongly agreed or agreed that the interviewer had made them feel at ease and said they were treated with dignity, fairness and respect throughout the interview process.

Client participants in the Charter Research were happy Social Security Scotland carried out research with clients to understand how their service is working. Participants were pleased to have the chance to take part in the research and discuss their experiences.

“I think that’s why I wanted to do it. To say I hadn’t had the best experience. As someone who doesn’t know how the benefit system works, it can be quite confusing for people who don’t know. I wanted to take part so that that was logged somewhere.” **Client participant**

“With the other disability thing I never ever got asked anything. I didn’t get asked how I was getting on. Nothing like this, no research, that was it. It was just ‘you get it, here it is, goodbye’. I think it’s good you’re doing that, just so you can see if it’s working or if you need to change things.”
Client participant



Qualitative evidence on client involvement in measuring effectiveness (continued)

“I’m quite happy to help. The fact that you’re asking, that’s enough. See having the service user engagement, that’s ideal. How else will you know if something’s working or failing unless you speak to people who use it? This is great this system. I’m happy with it. I’m grateful you asked me to take part.”
Client participant

A couple of client participants had specific concerns about the ways Social Security Scotland gathers clients’ feedback. Issues raised included the length of the Client Survey as potentially off-putting and inaccessible. One participant hoped research would be carried out face to face in the future.

“The feedback form, that’s 40 pages. That needs to get in the bin. That’s exactly where it’s going to end up for most people it’s sent out to.”
Client participant

“It would be nice to be working with people from yourselves and your part of the organisation, looking at different benefits that aren’t quite there, to do that face to face. I don’t mind this [video calls], I’ve got used to this. Everything I’m involved in with my kids, it’s been done online. And I don’t mind it. I just feel it’s a bit impersonal.” **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 new social security system are to adhere to the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 principles. The examples in this report demonstrate our commitment to these principles. Some key highlights this year are:

- The rollout of **Child Disability Payment**, which launched nationally in November 2021 and the pilot phase of **Adult Disability Payment**, which launched in three local authority areas in March 2022. The launch of Child Disability Payment marks the first time anywhere in the UK that disability benefit applicants can apply online, as well as by phone, post or face-to-face.
- The publication of a **second Benefit Take-up Strategy** in October 2021 which sets out how the Scottish Government is working to ensure people can access the support they are entitled to.
- The Scottish Government's response to the **consultation on Adult Disability Payment**, which sought the views of all people, including those with lived experience of disability and disability benefits. Most of the proposals were supported and responders recognised the ambition to make bigger and bolder changes to disability assistance in Scotland. The feedback received from this consultation was utilised to make further changes to ensure Adult Disability Payment delivers a better service and a better experience for disabled people in Scotland.
- Detailed **user research with Social Security Experience Panels** has been used to inform decisions about the design and development of different ways to support clients. This includes ongoing work to ensure services and information about the social security system are accessible to everyone, as well as the development of policy and legislation that underpins delivery of the social security system. Within this reporting year, reports have been published on the new Winter Heating Payment, supporting clients' accessibility, disability and other needs, the appointee system, benefit take-up and the Coronavirus pandemic's effect on communicating with Social Security Scotland.

- The publication of an **interim evaluation of Young Carer’s Grant** and research commissioned for [Funeral Support Payment](#), [Job Start Payment](#), [Scottish Child Payment](#), [Best Start Foods](#) and Child Winter Heating Assistance.

The sections that follow show the specific impact of policy work to deliver the Social Security Principles. The Scottish Government works closely with stakeholders throughout the year and their feedback is taken into account when we develop social security policy, legislation and system creation. We share these annual reports with stakeholders and comments are used to inform the development of the Scottish social security system and also the content of future years reports.

Social Security fits well with other policies

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

The 2021-22 [Programme for Government](#) (PfG) promoted a fairer and more equal society, with decisive action on child poverty. A key commitment of the Programme for Government was to roll out Scottish Child Payment for children under 16 by the end of 2022 and to double the Scottish Child Payment from £10 to £20 per week as soon as possible. Although just outwith the scope of this report, it is worth noting that we moved quickly to double Scottish Child Payment to £20 per week in April 2022. This alongside the support available through the bridging payments of £520 for children in receipt of free school meals demonstrates our commitment to tackling child poverty. We committed to provide a double payment of the Carers Allowance Supplement and roll out Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment.

On 31 August 2021, the [Bute House Agreement](#) came into effect. This historic agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party Parliamentary Group commits both parties to work collaboratively to build a greener, fairer, independent Scotland. The [shared policy programme](#) reiterates the commitment to building a fairer Scotland and tackling child poverty.

The [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26](#) was published in March 2022, once again demonstrating our commitment to tackling child poverty through further increasing Scottish Child Payment to £25 per week per child. The report also

highlighted the uprating of eight Scottish social security benefits by 6%, to keep pace with rising costs.

Social Security Scotland now delivers 12 different benefits to people across the country, seven of which are brand new and don't exist elsewhere in the UK.

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. Indeed, the cohort has been particularly valuable in understanding the barriers to accessing some benefits, and understanding how the eligibility criteria can impact on different people. The research we have done on Carer's Allowance is a good example of this, where a number of participants have had an underlying eligibility for Carer's Allowance, due to their caring role, but do not receive the benefit because their circumstances do not meet the other eligibility criteria. The research we have done to date in that area is available [here](#). More research is currently underway in relation to the new Scottish Carer's Assistance and will be published later in the year.

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.

Over the last year we have published reports on:

- The new Winter Heating Payment
- How Social Security Scotland can record and support clients' accessibility, disability and other needs
- Experience Panels members' views on topics such as the appointees system and benefit take-up
- Understanding how the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected how people want to communicate with Social Security Scotland
- The Seldom heard programme of research, covering topics and groups that are sensitive, marginalised or dispersed, who are less likely to be visible in a project like the Experience Panels.

All reports can be found on the [Experience Panels publications website](#).

The findings from the Experience Panels Research are fed directly into policy, design and service delivery teams making decisions about Social Security Scotland's benefits and services. A key example is that panel members were asked to respond to proposals for the new Winter Heating Payment, including the plan to remove the 'cold spell' requirement. 90% of panel members supported this idea.

Findings from the research on Benefit Take-up, and our work on the impact of COVID-19 on communication preferences, are also feeding into the development of local delivery services and inclusive training materials.

Relevant panel members were also asked to help inform decisions about criteria for becoming an appointee, and how Social Security Scotland should manage situations where someone is capable of acting for themselves, but would like to choose to have an appointee act for them.

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

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

Panel members and other citizens have also been involved in research to shape future benefits such as Scottish Carer's Assistance and Winter Heating Payment.

We are conscious that there are a number of panel members who prefer to participate in research face-to-face and that the necessary step of pausing face-to-face research during the COVID-19 pandemic will have prevented some from taking part. We have aimed to continue to be as flexible as possible in the alternative participation channels – offering phone and video calls, online surveys and paper surveys. We have also asked panel members their views on re-starting face-to-face research sessions, in the knowledge that some panel members may be more vulnerable to the virus or concerned about returning to group sessions. We are

considering what this offering should look like to best keep panel members safe and to meet the needs of panel members and our research team. We are clear that when we restart face-to-face research, we will continue to offer remote participation channels as standard.

Policy making promotes all groups in society

The Scottish Government conducts impact assessments on all new benefit proposals and major policy and legislative changes. 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. When developing new benefits, we consider whether any of the following impact assessments are required:

- Equality
- Children's Rights and Wellbeing
- Data Protection
- Future Proofing Legislation
- Fairer Scotland Duty
- Human Rights
- Island
- Strategic Environment
- Business and Regulatory

In 2021-2022 impact assessments were carried out for a number of pieces of legislation that were introduced into Scottish Parliament.

Child Disability Payment regulations came into force on 26 July 2021. A [children's rights and wellbeing impact assessment](#), [equalities impact assessment](#), [fairer Scotland duty assessment](#) and an [island communities impact assessment](#) were carried out as part of the policy development process. The assessments identified that overall the introduction of Child Disability Payment had potential to have a positive impact for children and young people in Scotland who share protected characteristics.

Adult Disability Payment regulations came into force on 21 March 2022. A [children's rights and wellbeing impact assessment](#), [equalities impact assessment](#), [fairer Scotland duty summary](#) and an [island communities impact assessment](#) were carried out as part of the policy development process. The assessments identified that the

introduction of Adult Disability Payment has the potential to have a positive impact for people in Scotland.

Disability Assistance for Children and Young People and Scottish Child Payment (Suspension) Amendment Regulations, which provide safeguards in relation to the operation of suspension of assistance, came into force in February 2022. An [equality impact assessment](#) was undertaken which identified the regulations could have a positive impact for all clients, including those with protected characteristics.

We published regulations in September 2021 to allow refugees from Afghanistan parity of access to Scottish benefits as they would have to UK Government benefits. In March 2022, similar legislation was passed for refugees from Ukraine. Due to the emergency nature of the regulation, impact assessments weren't carried out. However in the [policy note](#) we noted the regulations will have *“a positive impact on individuals settling in Scotland, who have had to flee their homes and country of residence due to the Russian invasion.”*

The Carer's Allowance Supplement Bill came into force on 7 October 2021 and all impact assessments were carried out for this. The [equality impact assessment](#) recommended no changes to the Bill provisions were necessary as a result of the assessment.

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. We published the [2021-2022 Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement](#) in the context of one of the greatest challenges of any of our lifetimes – the global COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented measures we took to combat it. This highlights the consistent commitment of the Scottish Government to examine the impact of the Scottish Budget on the diversity of Scotland's population. This approach supports our ambition for a fairer Scotland.

The statement provides an overview of Equality 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; in total the investment in social security for 2021-2022 was £3.95 billion, including £3.56 billion for benefits paid to people, with over £390 million used for the ongoing creation 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. Social Security is a shared investment to help build a fairer society, an investment in the people of Scotland that goes beyond the amount we spend on benefits. It is money that will help low-income families with their living costs, support older people to heat their homes in winter, and enable disabled people to live full and independent lives. Most importantly of all, it will help us build a fairer society; a land of opportunity for everyone in Scotland.

Importantly, we aim to create a fairer Scotland in a way that delivers value for money. [Audit Scotland's report](#) on progress in implementing devolved benefits states that *“robust processes are in place for in-year financial monitoring”*. It notes that financial monitoring and reporting processes have been strengthened and there are financial controls in place.

Did the Government promote social security positively?

Social Security is promoted as a human right

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

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

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

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

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

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 established the first social security system in the UK which reflects the United Nations principle that social security systems should ‘be established under national law and ensure the right of individuals and organisations to seek, receive and impart information on all social security entitlements in a clear and transparent manner.’ The Scottish Child Payment has been developed to directly tackle child poverty and is expected to have a positive impact on children’s rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in particular the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27) and to benefit from social security (Article 26).

A rights based approach is at the heart of everything we do as Scotland’s national government; from policy development and service design, to the day-to-day delivery of benefits and advice. The way 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. Over 2,400 people with direct experience of the UK system were recruited to co-produce a new and better social security model for Scotland through the Social Security Experience Panels.

The Scottish Government is working to develop a new Human Rights Bill for Scotland. Scotland’s new Human Rights Bill will incorporate the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes a right to social security, into Scots law, as far as possible within devolved competence.

The Scottish Government has consistently called for key measures introduced in the Welfare Reform Acts (2012 and 2016) to be repealed, including the benefit cap. As of August 2021 around 6,400 households were affected by the benefit cap in Scotland, on average reducing the incomes of the affected households by around £218 per month.

Myth and stigma about social security is challenged

Scotland has undergone significant social and economic change, primarily as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. When preparing the refreshed [benefit take-up strategy - October 2021](#), stigma was identified to still be one of the prevalent reasons clients find it difficult to access their entitlements. We recognise access to Social Security is a human right and therefore no person should be, or feel, discriminated against when accessing benefits they are entitled to. We have worked closely with people who have experience of social security in the development of our benefits in order to remove barriers such as myths and perceived stigma about social security.

Our evaluation activity is designed to capture the outcomes and experiences of those who have applied for, or received a devolved benefit and the impact it had on wider quality of life measures. The qualitative research we commissioned in 2021/22 also aims to explore any barriers in accessing entitled benefits. The completed interim evaluation of Young Carer's Grant (August 2021) found that interviewed recipients most commonly felt the grant had helped them to feel more recognised for the care they provide. The very existence of the grant and the fact they had been deemed eligible to receive it supported overall validation of their unpaid carer role.

Evidence from forthcoming evaluations for low-income and disability benefits will provide further evidence on progress to improve recipients' attitudes towards the social security system and how the process of applying for and receiving different benefits interacts with these attitudes.

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

Ensuring that support reaches those in need is of paramount importance, and will be critical in delivering on our national mission to tackle poverty and increase the take-up of Scottish benefits. We are keen to encourage cross-government and cross-system working, in particular where areas of civic life can come together to tackle

poverty and maximise incomes. Our latest [Benefit Take-up Strategy](#) sets out the following principles, which form the basis of our approach:

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

Key to maximising incomes and improving the take-up rate of benefits is reducing the stigma associated with benefit receipt. Stigma is identified as one of the main barriers to take-up in many groups of the population and we are working closely with our stakeholders and Social Security Scotland to reduce stigma and change the negative narrative around benefits receipt.

We launched a marketing campaign focused on financial wellbeing. This campaign had three core strands:

- To challenge stigma and encourage people to take-up the benefits to which they are entitled;
- To highlight the availability of free debt advice services, and how they can be accessed; and
- To highlight the availability of affordable credit, and how this can be accessed.

We want people to recognise their rights and be empowered to access the support that is available.

In a Scottish Parliament debate on 04 November 2021 on accessing Scottish social security benefits, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government Shona Robison highlighted the consistent commitment of Scottish Government to talk positively about social security and those who use it. Ms Robison stated: “The Scottish Government is clear that we will ensure that anyone who is eligible for our range of benefits can access them simply and easily, and we will actively work to promote the financial support that is available to people”, displaying how Social Security Scotland are working to build a system founded on dignity, fairness and respect.

Did benefits make a difference?

Our benefits counteract poverty and improve participation in society

The impact devolved benefits make to recipients continues to be monitored through research and analytical activity conducted in line with our published evaluation strategies. In October 2021, we set out our plans for [evaluating the disability benefits](#) being devolved to Scotland. We are committed to gathering evidence on the lived experience of people applying for and receiving benefits and this year commissioned qualitative research with recipients of a range of low-income benefits including [Funeral Support Payment](#), Job Start Payment, Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Foods. Evidence from that research will be used alongside other analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation and impact of these benefits. A series of evaluation reports is intended for publication in Summer 2022 and whilst it is often difficult to link the impact of specific policies to wider social security outcomes such as overall poverty levels, evidence on the success of progress towards short- and medium- term outcomes will help us to assess the likely contribution towards high-level trends.

In August 2021, we published an [interim evaluation of Young Carer's Grant](#) which drew on evidence from three strands: analysis of management information, review of data from Social Security Scotland Client Survey findings and commissioned qualitative research with young carers and stakeholders. This provided important emerging evidence on the impact of the grant on carers participation in society. Overall, the grant was welcomed by recipients and had a positive impact on their ability to take part in opportunities that would be the norm for their non-caring peers.

Also this year, as part of our evaluation of disability benefits, we commissioned qualitative research with recipients of Child Winter Heating Assistance, exploring their experiences of receiving the payment and associated financial and wellbeing impacts. This report will be published in Summer 2022.

Benefit levels reviewed and uprated in line with inflation

The Scottish Government is obligated under Sections 86A and 86B of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 to give due regard to the level of inflation when uprating social security payments. For the financial year 2022-2023, the Scottish Government sought to address the significant increase in the cost of living which had been further exacerbated by the conflict in the Ukraine. It was decided to increase Scottish

Assistance payments by 6% from April 2022, as the September 2021 CPI rate of inflation (3.1%), was not reflective of the current situation.

Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment were both increased by 3.1% to ensure parity with the UK Government's annual rate of increase, which remains based on the CPI rate in September 2021.

Reflecting the pressures that families were facing we accelerated the doubling of Scottish Child Payment to £20 per week, introducing this on 1 April 2022. By the end of 2022 we will extend Scottish Child Payment to all children under 16 and further increase the payment to £25 per week.

Fairer rules are designed and new benefits created

The Scottish Government are making social security in Scotland fairer within the limits of our devolved powers. The Child Disability Payment was rolled out nationally in November 2021 and has been co-designed with stakeholders and Experience Panel members to ensure that the values of dignity, fairness and respect are embedded throughout. It directly supports our National Performance Framework Outcomes on Children, Poverty, Communities and Health (amongst others) by providing payments that help with the extra care and mobility costs for children and young people with a disability, up to the age of eighteen. Child Disability Payment is the first recurring disability benefit delivered by Social Security Scotland, replacing Disability Living Allowance for children in Scotland. It offers a range of inclusive and accessible methods for making new applications and support will be offered through Social Security Scotland's Local Delivery Service, which provides advice on eligibility and assistance in filling out applications. The launch of this benefit marks the first time anywhere in the UK that disability benefit applicants can apply online, as well as by phone, post or face-to-face. We have started the process of transferring individuals from Disability Living Allowance for children to Child Disability Payment as part of our phased case transfer process which is the first time Scottish clients have been transferred from the Department of Work and Pensions to a replacement Scottish benefit. The safe and secure case transfer process ensures clients will not have to make a new application and that there will be no gaps in payment.

Adult Disability Payment, which replaces the UK Government's Personal Independence Payment, launched a pilot in March 2022 with full national rollout in August 2022. Clients on the highest components of the new benefit and whose needs are highly unlikely to change will be eligible for an "indefinite award". In effect,

this will mean they will not be subject to reviews and can rely on their new benefit on a long-term basis.

On 15 December 2021, eligible carers received a double Carer's Allowance Supplement payment of £462.80, in recognition of the additional pressures faced as a result of the pandemic. The Scottish Government also increased Best Start Foods in August 2021 from £4.25 to £4.50 a week, exceeding the rate of inflation and a weekly payment that is more generous than in the rest of the UK. The Scottish Child Payment was actively supporting around 103,000 children by the end of March 2022, across all 32 local authorities in Scotland. As stated above, though also relevant here, the Scottish Child Payment was doubled from £10 to £20 per week for every eligible child in April 2022 and will further increase to £25 by the end of 2022.

Take-up improved

Ensuring that families access all of the Social Security Benefits to which they are entitled is a moral duty and fundamental priority of the Scottish Government. Our second Benefit Take-up Strategy, published in October sets out how we are working to ensure people can access the support they are entitled to.

The second Benefit Take-up Strategy was published on 21 October 2021, as set out in legislation. This Strategy included our initial estimates of take-up of five new Scottish benefits, including Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment, Best Start Foods and Funeral Support Payment. It also included a more recent estimate of take-up of Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment.

Our estimates of take-up were in the region of 77% to 84% for the child benefits, meanwhile take-up of Funeral Support Payment was estimated to be lower, at 59%. We will be publishing updated estimates of take-up of these benefits later this year, which will enable us monitor changes in the take-up rate of these benefits over time.

We are continuing work to produce estimates of take-up of carer and disability benefits. Our first take-up strategy, published in October 2019, discussed at length the inherent challenges with estimating take-up of these benefits.



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



Data Source	Description	Links	Frequency
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
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
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



Data Source	Description	Links	Frequency
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-2021-2022 Earlier publications at https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/social-research	Annual
Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings	Publication covers client experiences at point of contact with the organisation. Including telephony numbers, call waiting times, and feedback on application forms and telephone contacts.	Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings April 2021 to the end of March 2022 at https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/insights-research-findings-april-2021-to-march-2022 Earlier publications at https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/social-research	Annual
People Survey	Social Security Scotland take part in the Civil Service People Survey which is a standardised annual survey of all staff members across Civil Service departments in the UK.	More information on the People Survey can be found at Scottish Government People Survey - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Data for 2021 is at Civil Service People Survey: 2021 results - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) . Data for 2020 is at Civil Service People Survey: 2020 results - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	Annual



Data Source	Description	Links	Frequency
Charter Research	Research with clients, staff and partner organisations, to inform the 'examples of' measures in the framework.	https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/charter-research-2021-2022 Earlier publications at https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/social-research	Annual
Client Panels Member Feedback Survey	Research with Client Panel members on how they have found participating in Client Panels research.	https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/reporting/publications/social-security-client-panels-research-members-feedback-survey-report	To be confirmed



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ISBN: 978-1-80525-192-7



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