

Disability Benefits Policy Position Papers

**Paper 2: How do I make an application to
Social Security Scotland for a disability
benefit?**

Disability Benefits Policy Position Papers – October 2020

This is Paper 2 of 5 position papers published in October 2020, which provide an overview of the new Scottish approach to disability benefits. These papers were correct as at the date of publication: please check the Scottish Government's [Social security: policy position papers](#) webpage for any further updates.

Paper 2: How do I make an application to Social Security Scotland for a disability benefit?

Introduction

This paper looks at the Scottish Government's inclusive approach to ensuring anyone can make an initial application for disability benefits in a way that suits them, and that they can also access support and advice on entitlements if they need it.

Clients will have the choice to make applications to Social Security Scotland in a number of ways. This includes by post, online, by phone, and through face-to-face contact with staff. Providing a range of options for clients, and actively making people aware of these, means people can choose the method that will suit them best. This is in direct contrast to the current UK system, which can make it hard to access advice in ways that meet the needs of clients. The table at the end of the paper sets out the differences and improvements between the current system and the new Scottish system.

We are committed to making applications as straightforward as possible for people to complete, reusing information where we can and seeking to collect the necessary information as sensitively and quickly as possible.

Application Forms

All our application forms are designed and tested with the people who will use them before they are put into use and we are committed to refining them based on people's feedback. This ensures that the questions can be clearly understood and answered, and also that the emotional effect of discussing sensitive details about a person's health and capabilities can be handled as compassionately as possible.

The form itself is structured into different sections, allowing clients to view and complete these in an order that makes sense to them. Online, there is a home page where people can see a list of all of the sections of the form and can then choose to navigate to wherever they wish to start. They can return to this home page at any time. The digital form will also be responsive to the information a client enters: based on the answers the client gives, they will only be asked further questions that are applicable to their personal situation, making the application process clearer, shorter and more focused on the client's own circumstances.

To make the application form for Adult Disability Payment as easy to use as possible, we are using visual aids as well as written guidance. We intend to use pictures in the form, and are testing the possibility of short videos, to really show

clients what type of information we are looking for. We will only ask for information that is needed to make a decision, clearly linking this to the descriptors within each activity so that clients can see how their answers will be used. This will include examples of the type of information we are looking for in each question and why we need it to understand their condition, with supportive guidance for each activity rather than generic advice for all questions.

Online and telephony services

Clients will be able to access benefit information on www.mygov.scot, where they can also find out about all Scottish Government services that may be available to assist people with a disability or long term health condition. Through www.mygov.scot clients will be able to access a single secure point to apply for benefits, update information, or check eligibility.

Clients will have the option to use an online service to make their applications for disability benefits. Application forms will have supporting guidance explaining the type of information and level of detail needed to answer each question embedded throughout, so this is clear for the person filling in the application and they will not need to navigate elsewhere to get through the form. Social Security Scotland staff will be available on the telephone and web chat to assist with any additional queries or questions that clients may have as they fill in the form.

To allow the online application to be taken at a pace that a client is comfortable with, they will be able to securely save and resume their applications as many times as they need to, and upload any supporting information they wish to provide.

Social Security Scotland staff can, in addition to providing access to the independent Advocacy service, signpost to third sector organisations like Citizens Advice Bureau, and local authority welfare rights teams, who can further assist the client depending on their individual requirements.

Clients who need further assistance or would prefer face-to-face support to apply will be able to access that through our new Social Security Scotland Local Delivery service. Further detail on this, and the independent Advocacy service, is outlined in our position paper "[What extra support can Social Security Scotland give me if I need it?](#)".

Next Steps

Application forms for the disability benefits, and accompanying guidance, continue to be tested with users ahead of the launch of the Scottish disability benefits.

We will also undertake further engagement with stakeholders, including organisations who assist clients in completing applications, to assist in maximising benefit uptake.

An overview of the differences between the UK and Scottish approaches to applying for disability benefits

Current UK system	Scottish approach
<i>Thinking about applying</i>	
Limited advice is available from Jobcentre Plus staff and online about disability payments on gov.uk; there is no take-up strategy.	<p>We will have telephone and online services to advise on what payments are available, and explain clearly how people can go about applying for these.</p> <p>We have a benefit take-up strategy in place to encourage people to take up the payments that they are entitled to.</p>
There is no pre-application advice service, and limited local presence through DWP visiting officers.	Social Security Scotland, including the local delivery service, will provide application advice across the country and support and encourage people to take up the payments that they are entitled to.
<i>Making the application</i>	
There is no electronic facility to make an application for disability benefits and no face-to-face applications.	We recognise that clients will require options and choices for how they interact with Social Security Scotland and will offer a multi-channel approach, including telephone, paper-based and face-to-face applications, to ensure that individuals who cannot or choose not to adopt digital services will have alternative channels that meet their needs
There is limited guidance about the criteria for entitlement to disability benefits, or how decisions are made.	We will explain the eligibility criteria for Disability Assistance clearly and transparently, so that clients know how we will make decisions about their case.
Clients with a terminal illness must meet a strict test – death must reasonably be expected within 6 months in consequence of a terminal illness.	There will be no time-limit and we will fast-track applications for clients with a terminal illness. Medical professionals will use their clinical judgement on a case-by-case basis to ensure that those individuals who need support receive this quickly, in accordance with guidance from the Chief Medical Officer.

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