
Advance Awards

Advance Awards

To be eligible for a BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payment or a BSG Early Learning Payment the client must meet all relevant eligibility conditions on the associated application date.

Application date

The application date is either the date on which:

- a completed online or telephone application form is submitted
- a signed clerical application form is received by Social Security Scotland

There are limited circumstances where an application can be 'treated as made' on a date later than the application date.

When is an Advance Award appropriate?

If the client is not eligible for a BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payment or a BSG Early Learning Payment on the application date, but would meet all eligibility criteria within 10 working days beginning with the application date, the application can be 'treated as made' on the date the client would be eligible.

Examples

Application date 3 December

When you assess the application on 10 December, Searchlight shows a Qualifying Benefit award starting on 6 December. You can 'treat the application as made' on 6 December.

Application date 11 December

When you assess the application on 12 December, you see that the client was 23 weeks pregnant on 11 December. You can 'treat the application as made'

on 18 December. This is the day the client will be 24 weeks and 1 day pregnant.

Application date 20 December

On the application date the client is responsible for a child who is one year and 51 weeks old. You can 'treat the application as made' on 26 May. This is the day the child turns 2.

Advance Award rules

You must make the initial eligibility assessment on the application date. See ['Make a determination'](#) guidance.

If the client is not eligible, check if they could meet eligibility criteria within 10 working days of the application date.

An 'advance' BSG award can be made as specified above, but this should only be done if you are confident the client will meet all eligibility conditions on a future date.

If you are not sure if the client will meet all eligibility conditions, the application should be denied. See the SPM ['BSG application decisions: Client is not eligible'](#) guide.

Clients who may be eligible for BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payment or BSG Early Learning Payment

Due to the integrated BSG application process a client could be eligible for one child or pregnancy and be 'nearly eligible' for a second child.

As the application dates for BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payment and BSG Early Learning Payment are the same, you must be careful when applying Advance Award rules in these situations.

Example: Application Date 2nd June

On the application date the client is the birth mother of a child who is 5 months and 28 days old and is responsible for a child who is 1 year and 51 weeks old.

The applicant is eligible for a Baby and Pregnancy Payment as they are the birth mother of a child under 6 months old. However, the mother is 'nearly eligible' for an Early Learning Payment as the second child is almost two.

If you 'treat the application as made' on the day the second child turns two, the client will become eligible for an Early Learning Payment, but will lose eligibility for Baby and Pregnancy. This is because the first child will be over six months old on the 'new' application date.

As a result you must consider the impact of amending the application date on all potential BSG entitlements.

If amending the application date would create eligibility for one payment but remove it for another, the application date should not be amended.

This guidance will become redundant when School Age Payment goes live. This is because SPM will consider eligibility over the 10 days after the application date and will automatically award a Baby and Pregnancy, Early Learning and/or School Age Payment if appropriate.

Change the application date on SPM

It is not possible to change the application date on SPM to a future date.

If it's been decided that Advance Award rules apply, do this:

1. Add a note to the application case detailing the reasons why the application is being 'treated as made' on a date other than the application date.
2. Establish the first date after which the applicant will be eligible.
3. Set a task on SPM for that date.
4. When it's time to check, go to the application case and change the application date to the new 'treat as made' date.

For Pregnancy and Baby Payment evidence you must also amend the date held. To do this:

1. Select 'Evidence' from the top menu bar.
2. Select 'Evidence' on the left of the screen.

3. Select the 'Pregnancy and Baby Grant' evidence from the list. The 'Edit Pregnancy and Baby Grant Details' screen will be displayed.
4. Change the Pregnancy and Baby Grant date to the eligible date.

Edit Pregnancy and Baby Grant Details

* required field

Received Date *

Change Reason

Effective Date of Change

Evidence Dates

Start Date * End Date

Client

Participant Name

Client Details

Pregnancy And Baby Grant Date

Extended Application Date

Mother Details

Mother

Then, follow the 'Make a determination' guidance as normal.

Ask a client for more evidence

Call the client

If the client has given us their phone number, you should always try to call first. Make sure to identify any accessibility needs before making a call.

If a call is suitable, do this:

1. Try to call the client 3 times within 24 hours, at different times of the day.
2. If you cannot reach them, record details of each try with a brief description of the information or evidence required in a 'Communication' on SPM.
3. If the client answered the call:
 - ask them for more information or evidence during the call
 - ensure they understand what is required and how they can provide it

Clients should provide photocopies of evidence. If original documents are received, we'll scan a copy and return the original document to the sender using recorded delivery.


Clients should send evidence to Social Security Scotland at:

BSG, PO Box 10300, DUNDEE, DD1 9FU.

4. Record details of any information or evidence you asked for in a 'Communication' on SPM.
5. Set a task on SPM for 14 calendar days from the date of request.

Send a letter

If you could not reach the client by phone, do this:

1. Complete the 'BSG_RequestEvidence' letter template with details of information or evidence required and send to the client. This is stored in the shared drive:

2. Record the details of the letter you sent in a 'Communication' on SPM.
3. Set a task on SPM for 14 calendar days from the date of request.



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If the client provided the information or evidence within 14 days

Do this:

- action the information/evidence as appropriate
- clear the associated task

If the client did not provide the evidence within 14 days

1. Call the client or send a reminder letter asking for the outstanding information or evidence.
2. Set a task on SPM for 7 calendar days from the date of request.

If the client did not provide the information or evidence within 7 days

Decide if more time should be allowed for the client to provide the information or evidence.

Give the client more time to provide information or evidence

You can give the client more time to send in the evidence, if they tell us:

- they're having difficulty obtaining the evidence
- the evidence will be available within the next week

This should be not be longer than 28 calendar days from when you first requested the evidence. If you want to extend the time more, your Team Manager must approve this.

If the client did not provide the information or evidence

If the client does not provide the information or evidence within the appropriate timescales, make a determination using the available information.

Best Start Grant eligibility

Check the client is eligible for Best Start Grant (BSG)

To be eligible for BSG the client or their partner must be either:

- a mother of the child
- a parent or carer of the mother
- responsible for the child

No one else can be due to get BSG or Sure Start Maternity Grant for that child (exceptions may apply - detailed further in this guidance).

Mother of the child

The client or their partner is a mother of the child if they are at least 24 weeks pregnant or have already had the baby (if the child has been born and is under 6 months old no responsibility test is required).

The child may also be:

- a baby who was still born
- a baby who was premature (born before or during week 24 of pregnancy)
- a baby who was born and then died

There is more [guidance on still-births, premature births and infant death](#).

Parent or carer

The client or their partner are the parent or carer (for example grandparent) of a mother as described above and she is dependent on them.

A person is a dependant of the client where the client has been awarded Child Tax Credit, Child Benefit, State Pension Credit or Universal Credit (Child element) for them; or the client may be the person's kinship carer.

Responsible for the child

The client or their partner have taken responsibility for the child after it was born and pass the BSG responsibility test.

They also must meet all of the following criteria:

Application window

Pregnancy and Baby Payment

The application window for Pregnancy and Baby Payment is:

- between 24 weeks of pregnancy and the baby being 6 months old
- before the child is 1 year old, if they have taken over responsibility for that child

You should also accept applications where the child is born alive before the 24th week of pregnancy (prematurely).

[Find out more about eligibilty when a client experiences stillbirth or infant death.](#)

Early Learning Payment

The application window for Early Learning Payment is:

- between the child's second birthday and six months after their third birthday, to align with the time when they may be taking up a place in early learning
- they don't have to take up a nursery place to qualify

Existing awards

No-one else is due to get BSG or the Sure Start Maternity Grant (SSMG), or has already received SSMG for that child i.e. if the client is claiming:

- Pregnancy and Baby Payment, no one else can have had or is due to get a Pregnancy and Baby Payment or SSMG for that child
- Early Learning Payment, no one else can have had or is due to get an Early Learning Payment for that child.

If the client takes over responsibility for the child within the application window. Then a second payment can be made for the same child for all 3 grants. If the client is a partner or dependant (e.g daughter, granddaughter) of the first payment recipient they cannot have a second payment.

Residency

The client or their partner meets the conditions for residence in Scotland.

Qualifying benefits

The client or their partner is getting at least 1 qualifying benefit. They do not require a qualifying benefit if they are under 18, or they're 18-19 and dependent on another person.

Qualifying benefits

Qualifying benefits are:

- Income Support (IS)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit (UC) – with the award in the month of, or the month before, the application date, that is the current or previous assessment period. This would be an award of more than 0 before any deductions are made - for example, for sanction or debt (See 'Qualifying benefits for BSG' guidance for information on UC assessment periods)
- State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

A client can apply for BSG before their application for a qualifying benefit is approved by the DWP. However, we must wait until that benefit has been awarded to the client before we can process the BSG claim.

If the client applies for a BSG and are waiting for a decision on a claim for Universal Credit, the BSG claim will be held until the end of the first UC assessment period. If they are waiting for a decision on any other benefit, the claim will be held for 10 days in case a decision on the qualifying benefit comes through and then a determination will be made.

If the qualifying benefit is awarded after this, the client will have to re-apply for BSG.

Responsibility for a child

To be classed as responsible for a child, the client or their partner must either meet:

- 'Test 1' – this means they have been awarded Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Pension Credit (Child Element) or Universal Credit (Child Element) for the relevant child
- 'Test 2' – this means they have a court order which transfers parental rights, for example an adoption, kinship or a court order
- 'Test 3' – this means they are dependent on another person, are the child's parent and the child normally lives with them, for example they are under 18, or 18-19 and in non-advanced education and are dependent on their own parent

If the client is not receiving a responsibility benefit under test 1

Then the client can meet the responsibility criteria under 1 of the following:

- adoption
- guardianship
- kinship care
- parental order

Adoption

In this situation either:

- the child has been placed with a person or couple by an adoption agency (as defined by section 119 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007)
- baby/child has been adopted under section 28 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007

UK legislation

Courts in England and Wales may make children subject to care orders, supervision orders or educational supervision orders under the Children Act 1989 (the "1989 Act").

Courts in Northern Ireland may make children subject to care orders, supervision orders or educational supervision orders under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (the “1995 Order”).

Guardianship

In this situation the client or their partner have been appointed guardian of the child under Section 11 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

Kinship care

Kinship care is where a child or young person lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or family friend. This is because they are not able to live with their birth parents.

In this situation either:

- the child has been placed in kinship care by a Children’s Hearing under a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) as defined in Section 83 of the Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011*
- the child has been placed in kinship care by a Children’s Hearing under an Interim Compulsory Supervision Order (ICSO) as defined in Section 86 of the Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011*
- a kinship care order has been made within the meaning of section 72(1) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- a kinship care placement is subject to a Permanence Order under Section 80 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) 2007 Act
- a voluntary kinship care arrangement has been agreed between the parent and local authority under Section 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995

[Find out more about kinship care](#)

Parental order

In this situation a parental order has been made under section 54 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008.

Change in responsibility for a child

Normally only one BSG can be awarded per child.

A second payment can be made if responsibility for the child changes within the application window. For example, a child moves to live with a different carer who meets the responsibility criteria. This is the case for all 3 grants.

If the client is a partner or dependant (e.g. daughter, granddaughter) of the first payment recipient, they cannot have a second payment.

Award amounts

Pregnancy and Baby Payment

The client will receive:

- £600 for a first child
- £300 for all other children
- £300 for multiple births

The client will receive the higher first child rate of £600, if there are no other children under 16 in the household for whom they or their partner are responsible.

This means the first child is the oldest child for whom the client is receiving a responsibility benefit or has a legal order for.

An exception to this is where the parent is under 16 and they have a brother or a sister in the house who is under 16. For example, if a grandparent is applying and gets child benefit for the mother of the baby and her siblings, they are not counted and the baby being applied for is regarded as the first child in the family.

Multiple births

The client will receive a multi-birth supplement of £300, in addition to the usual BSG payments.

Number of children in multiple birth	BSG payment	BSG multi-birth supplement	Total
2	£600 (first birth) £300 (second birth)	£300	£1200
3	£600 (first birth) £300 (second birth) £300 (third birth)	£300	£1500
2 - where there is already a child within the family	£300 (first birth) £300 (second birth)	£300	£900

Early Learning Payment

£250 around the time that the child might be expected to start nursery.

Evidence

To process an application we need the following information from the client:

- their National Insurance number (from a National Insurance card, benefit letter, payslip or P60) - for example, 'QQ 12 34 56 A'
- if the details cannot be verified via Searchlight or [BabyBox](#) provider:
 - a MAT B1 form to confirm the due date of the child, if still to be born (this is a free certificate issued by a registered midwife or a doctor to a pregnant woman after week 20 of the pregnancy)
 - a birth certificate if the child has already been born
 - proof, if they've taken custody of the child - for example, a parental order
- their bank details - sort code and account number

Clients can send in scanned originals. See the [list of accepted evidence](#).

Infant death

In this case, if evidence of pregnancy cannot be evidenced via BabyBox, the client can provide:

- a MAT B1 form
- a long-form birth certificate
- a death certificate

Stillbirth

In this case, if evidence of pregnancy cannot be verified via BabyBox, the client can provide:

- a MAT B1 form
- a stillbirth certificate.

Clients will be able to apply on the phone, online or in paper form.