



Social Security Scotland – Insights Research Findings

1. Introduction

An insights research programme has been established in Social Security Scotland. To date, it has involved the collection of both routine monitoring and experience information. The results from this research programme will be used to continuously improve services.

This publication covers the period September 2018 to end June 2019, during which Carer's Allowance Supplement and Best Start Grant benefits were live.

2. Key Findings

- The insights programme has had feedback from clients on their experiences of engaging with the organisation during the period September 2018 to June 2019.
- During this period Social Security Scotland received approximately, 74,400 contacts by phone. Of these, approximately 39,000 were in relation to Best Start Grant, 27,300 were in relation to Carer's Allowance Supplement and 8,100 were general enquiries.
- Over 500 clients left ratings on their experience of engaging with the Social Security Scotland telephony service. Of those, 86% felt their call was answered quickly, 77% felt that they got what they needed from the call, and 84% were happy with the overall service they received.

- Over 1,500 clients left ratings following paper, online and telephony applications for Best Start Grant. Of paper applicants who left a rating, 91% rated the service as Very good or Good. For online applicants, 97% of those who left a rating rated the service as Very good or Good. For telephony applicants, 100% of those who left a rating rated the service as Very good or Good.
- A subset of clients left feedback in the form of open text comments following applications for Best Start Grant. The majority of comments (89% for telephony applications and 78% for online applications) were positive.
- Positive comments fell into three broad categories – applicants finding the form easy to fill in, applicants agreeing with Best Start Grant policy and applicants being happy with the service they received. Commonly used words included: ‘helpful’, ‘simple’, ‘good’, ‘quick’, ‘easy’, ‘great’, ‘clear’ and ‘straight forward’.
- A smaller proportion of open text comments were negative (1% of telephony and 7% of online open text responses). Negative responses fell into three broad categories – issues with the application form, applicants disagreeing with the Best Start Grant policy and applicants feeling that the wait between applying and getting a response was too long.

3. Background

An analytical team within Social Security Scotland are responsible for collecting, analysing and publishing management information, research and statistics that relate to the delivery and performance of Social Security Scotland. Within this, a programme of insights research has been established, to gather the experiences, needs and priorities of those who use and deliver social security in Scotland. This information, in turn, will be fed back into the organisation's processes, policy and practice, to facilitate continuous improvement. This work will be co-designed with people who have lived experience of social security, building on the work undertaken as part of the Social Security Experience Panels¹ and the development of the Social Security Charter².

Further detail on the background of the insights research programme and future plans can be found [here](#).

4. Methodology

Insights research to date has involved the collection of routine management information, and directly asking clients and staff about their experiences. The following section outlines the methods used to collect insights data during the current reporting period.

4.1. Client Insights

To capture client interactions and experiences with Social Security Scotland processes and services at point of contact, research methods have been embedded in both telephony and online channels using embedded surveys.

4.1.1. Telephony – call data and general call experience

Management information is taken from the organisation's telephony reporting system.

An automated survey mechanism is in place to gain insights from clients about how well telephony services are being received. Clients have the option of completing the survey following any telephone interaction (e.g. from general enquiry to benefit-specific contact). The focus for this survey is experience of the call.

Full telephony experience questions and response options are detailed in Annex A.

4.1.2. Applications

Clients' immediate views and feelings on the process of applying for benefits, across telephone, online and paper applications have also been gathered. Given that any survey following the application process will occur at the end of this contact, it is important that the number of questions are kept to a minimum. Two client satisfaction questions have therefore been embedded within a questionnaire which clients have the option of completing at the end of applications, as standard.

Full application experience questions and response options are detailed in Annex B.

For clients applying via paper application, the questionnaire is included in their application pack, with a freepost envelope for returning both forms. For clients applying online, a link to the questionnaire is available at the end of the application. For clients applying over the telephone, a client advisor offers to take the client through the questionnaire over the phone, or to post it out to them.

In addition, clients have the opportunity of completing the automated telephony survey (described in section 4.1.1) following their phone call, which may be beneficial if the client has (for example) additional feedback about that call specifically and/or feedback that they do not wish to disclose to the client advisor directly.

4.2. Staff Insights

Workforce statistics for Social Security Scotland are now being published as official statistics. The latest publication for the period up to end June 2019 can be found [here](#).

5. Findings

5.1 Client Insights – telephony contacts

From September 2018 to 30 June 2019 Social Security Scotland received approximately, 74,400 contacts by phone. Of these, approximately 39,000 were in relation to Best Start Grant, 27,300 were in

relation to Carer's Allowance Supplement and 8,100 were general enquiries.

Call waiting times were on average 6 seconds; 8 seconds for Best Start Grant, 3 seconds for Carer's Allowance Supplement and 3 seconds for general enquiries.

Call handling times were on average 4 minutes and 30 seconds; approximately 5 minutes and 30 seconds for Best Start Grant, 3 minutes and 30 seconds for Carer's Allowance Supplement and 5 minutes for general enquiries.

5.2 Client Insights – application contacts

From 10 December 2018 to 30 June 2019, 71,625 applications for Best Start Grant were received. More detail on Best Start Grant high level statistics have been published [here](#).

5.3 Client Insights - satisfaction following general telephony contact

After any phone call with a client advisor, clients can stay on the line and answer a series of three questions about their experience with Social Security Scotland. The automated survey asks:

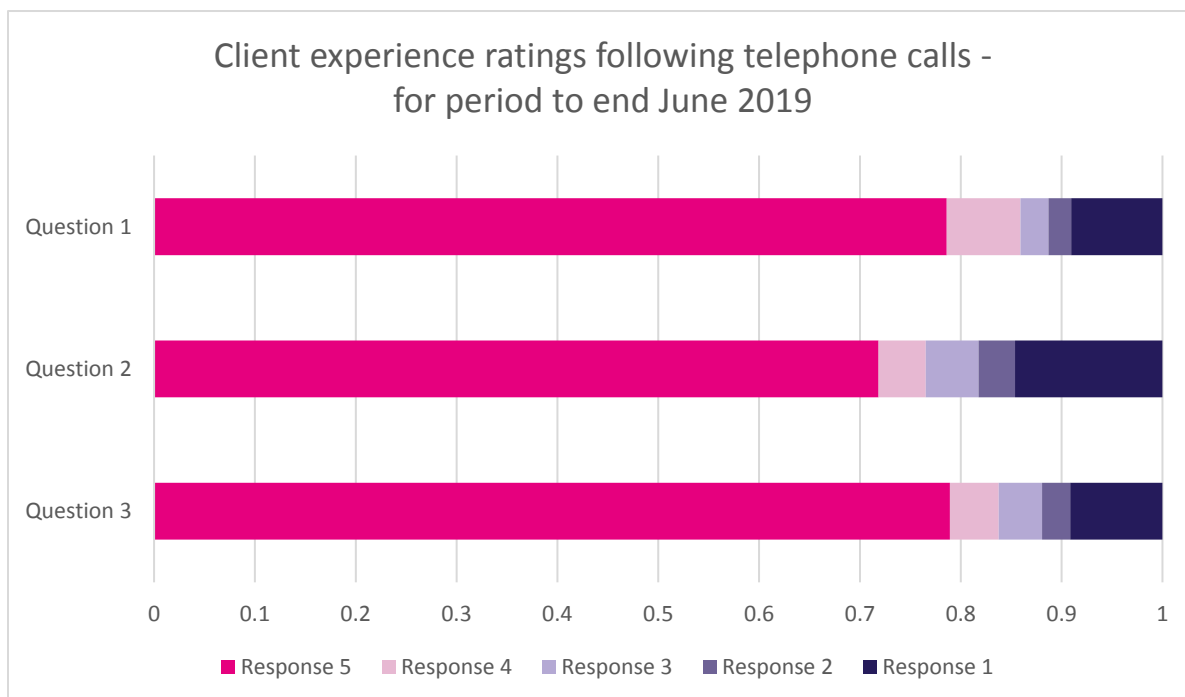
Question one: How quickly did we answer your call today? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is not quickly at all and 5 is very quickly.

Question 2: Did you get what you needed from this call? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all, and 5 is you got everything you needed.

Question 3: How would you rate our service today? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

Approximately 500 clients left a rating between for the period up to end June 2019.

Of those who left a rating, 86% felt their call had been answered quickly [Question 1] 77% felt they got everything they needed from the call [Question 2] and 84% rated the service positively overall [Question 3].



Total number of responses to Question 1: 575

Total number of responses to Question 2: 554

Total number of responses to Question 3: 536

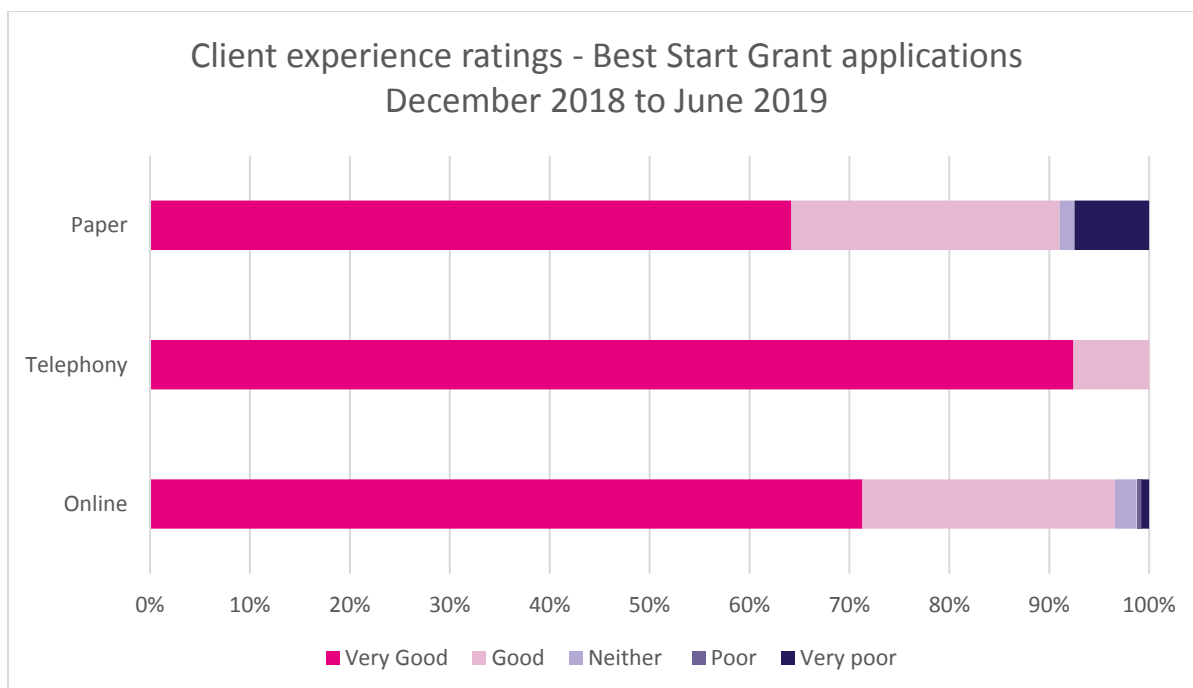
5.4 Client insights - satisfaction following applications

Experience ratings following applications

Following paper, online and telephony applications for Best Start Grant, a questionnaire offers applicants the opportunity to make ratings on how the experience has been for them.

1,588 applicants left experience ratings following a Best Start Grant application between December 2018 and end June 2019.

Of paper applicants who left a rating during this period, 91% rated the service as Very good or Good. For online applicants, 97% of those who left a rating rated the service as Very good or Good. For telephony applicants, 100% of those who left a rating rated the service as Very good or Good.



Total number of ratings following a paper application: 91

Total number of ratings following a telephony application: 417

Total number of ratings following an online application: 1080

In addition to making a rating, clients have the opportunity to leave an open text comment about their application experience in response to the question “Is there any further feedback you would like to provide?”.

Responses provided after online applications and telephone applications were analysed separately. Each response was classed as negative, neutral, mixed or positive and responses were analysed for recurring keywords.

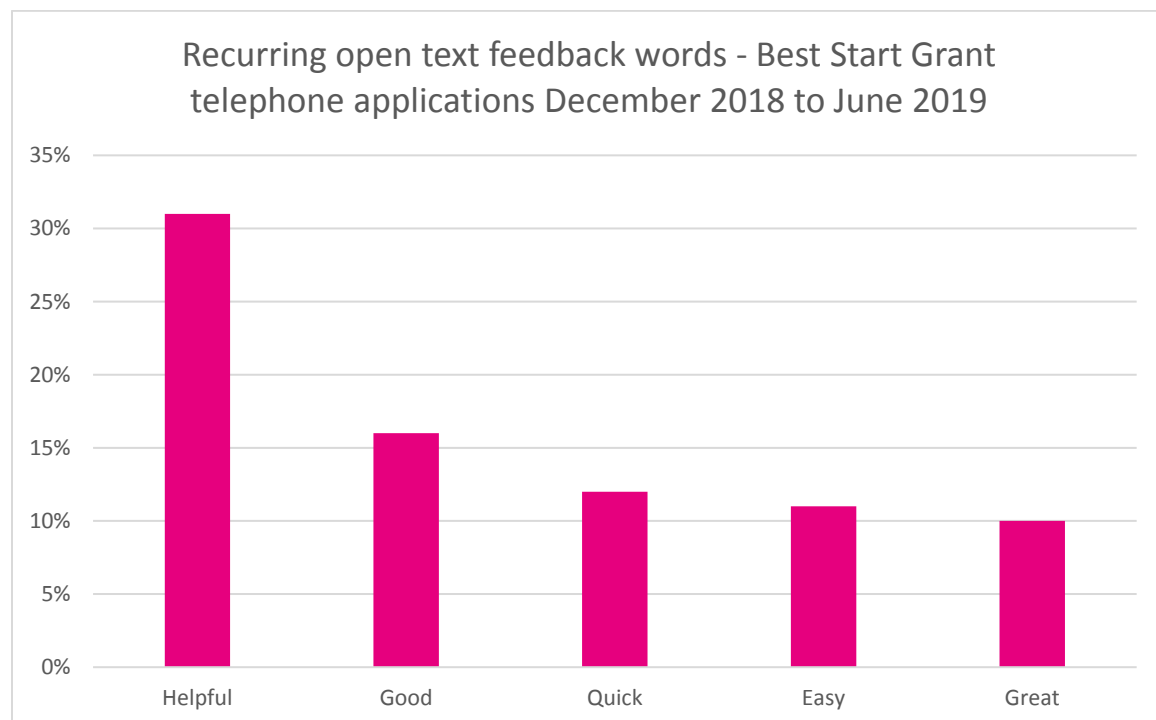
Open text responses following applications

Of those who applied for Best Start Grant over the phone between December 2018 and June 2019, 108 chose to answer the further feedback question. The majority of responses were positive (89%) with only 1% of responses negative. 4% of responses were mixed while 6% were neutral. Some illustrative examples of each classification are provided below.

Category	Example
Negative response	“Could not apply through link on facebook, as did not work”
Neutral response	“No other feedback.” “No comment”
Mixed response	“I feel that you have been very helpful ... over the phone. But I was confused with the online application ...” “The first call I made to the department was poor as I was given the wrong information but ... today it has been very good.”
Positive response	“It was a lot easier than expected” “Everyone I spoke to put me at ease, been very helpful. Overall a very good service.” “I would give Social Security Scotland a 10 out of 10” “A lot easier to make the application. It wasn't an upsetting experience to apply ...”

The word “helpful” was mentioned by 31% of telephony applicants who provided a response to the open text feedback, while the word “good” was mentioned by 16% of clients, “quick” mentioned by 12% and “easy” mentioned by 11% of applicants.

The below chart shows the most commonly recurring words mentioned in the responses to the further feedback question after a Best Start Grant telephone application.



Of those who applied online for Best Start Grant between December 2018 and June 2019, 269 chose to answer the further feedback question. 78% responses were positive and 7% of responses were negative. 7% of responses were mixed while 8% were neutral.

Negative responses fell into three broad categories: issues with the application form, applicants disagreeing with the Best Start Grant policy and eligibility rules and applicants feeling that the wait between applying and getting a response was too long.

Mixed responses focused on issues with and suggested improvements for the application form, and applicants feeling that Best Start Grant should be better publicised.

Most neutral responses expressed that applicants had no further comments, while some comments suggested more people should be aware of Best Start Grant.

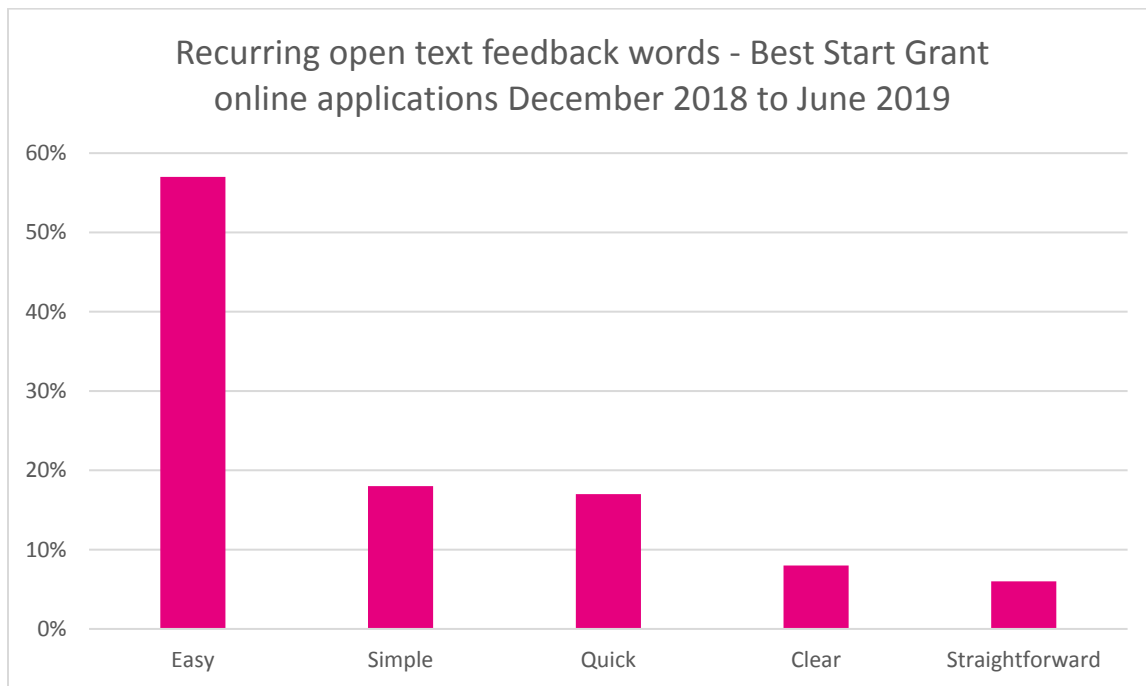
Positive responses left by clients fell into three broad categories: applicants finding the form easy to fill in, applicants agreeing with Best Start Grant policy and applicants being happy with the service they received.

Some illustrative examples of each classification are provided below.

Category	Example
Negative response	<p>“Not kept up to date with claim”</p> <p>“I had already applied but heard nothing back”</p> <p>“Form took 11 times of filling in for it to work”</p>
Neutral response	<p>“None”</p> <p>“No”</p> <p>“only knew about this through my friend”</p>
Mixed response	<p>“I think it's a brilliant idea to give wee ones a chance ... We didn't have a clue about any grants ... maybe people could be made more aware”</p> <p>“It was pretty easy to fill in the application form online. It would be better if the grant was better publicised.”</p>
Positive response	<p>“The form was easy to fill out and caused me no stress or anxiety. And it didn't take too long to fill out.”</p> <p>“I always depend on my husband to fill in forms but this form is so clear and to the point that I filled myself thanks”</p> <p>“The information provided through the relevant web-page prior to application was concise and well presented”</p> <p>“The online application process was quick and easy to understand, fill in and submit.”</p> <p>“Really pleased to be able to apply online as it can be hard finding the time to print and send off forms with a new baby and a young child.”</p> <p>“One of the easiest claim forms I've ever used. Very surprised!”</p>

The word “easy” was mentioned by 57% of applicants, while the word “simple” was mentioned by 18%, “quick” mentioned by 17%, “clear” mentioned by 8% and “straightforward” mentioned by 6% of applicants.

The below chart shows the most commonly recurring words mentioned in the responses to further feedback question after a Best Start Grant online application.



There were not enough open text responses from paper applications to present an equivalent analysis.

6. Summary

This report summarises insights research programme findings for the period September 2018 to June 2019. As the organisation grows, clients and staff will continue to have opportunities to feed their views back into the system.

To date, findings reveal that the vast majority of clients who have left a rating or comment in relation to a telephone or application-based interaction with the organisation have been positive about the experience.

7. References

- 1) <https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-security/engagement-on-social-security/>
- 2) <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about-us/our-charter>

8. Annex A – Telephony experience survey content

Thanks for staying on the line. You're about to hear 3 short questions about your call today.

Question one: How quickly did we answer your call today? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is not quickly at all and 5 is very quickly.

Question 2: Did you get what you needed from this call? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all, and 5 is you got everything you needed.

Question 3: How would you rate our service today? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

Thanks for taking part. We'll use your answers to improve our service.

9. Annex B – Application experience survey content

About your experience with Social Security Scotland

10 Overall, how would you rate the service provided by Social Security Scotland e.g. in making your application?

1 1 – Very poor

2 2 – Poor

3 3 – Neither poor nor good

4 4 – good

5 5 – Very good

11 Is there any further feedback you would like provide?



© Crown copyright 2019

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence.

To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

This report is available on the Scottish Government Publications Website (<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/Recent>)

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83960-304-4 (web only)

Published by the Scottish Government, October 2019