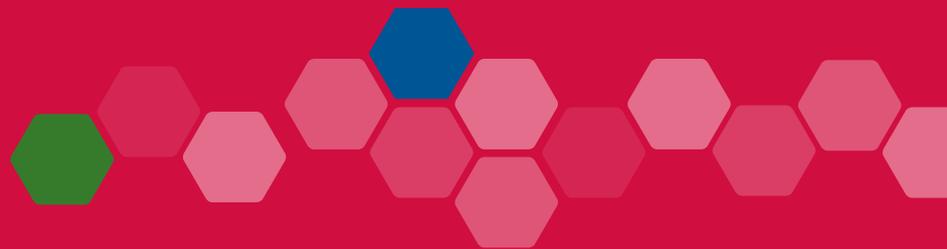




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# Evaluation of Job Start Payment: Annex B: Qualitative Research



**EQUALITY AND WELFARE**



# Evaluation of Job Start Payment: Annex B: Commissioned Qualitative Research

The Diffley Partnership  
June 2022



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## Executive Summary

### Background

Job Start Payment (JSP) was launched in August 2020 by the Scottish Government with the overall aim of helping young people who are out of work to meet the costs of starting a new job.

Young people aged 16-24 in Scotland who have been out of work and receiving a qualifying low-income benefit for six months are eligible to apply for the payment upon receiving a job offer, and up to three months after such an offer is made. Care-leavers aged 16-25 can also apply for the payment if they meet the same conditions, though are not required to have been out of work for six months. A previous recipient can apply and claim again, as long as two years have passed since they last received the payment.

JSP is currently a cash sum of £267.65 for those without children and £428.25 for those with children. During the period of primary research within this project, the amounts were originally £252.50 for those without children, and £404 for those with children, increasing from £250 and £400 from April 2021.

The research presented in this report will contribute towards the Scottish Government's overall evaluation of JSP, which will also draw on JSP administrative data and research conducted by Social Security Scotland, such as the Social Security Scotland Client Survey.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Social Security Scotland - Client Survey 2018-2021](#)

This report presents findings based predominantly on qualitative research with young people and stakeholders exploring their experiences of JSP. Research was carried out by Diffley Partnership between November 2021 and March 2022.

## **Aims and methods**

The main aims of the research outlined in this paper were to explore:

- The impact of JSP on young people who have received the payment,
- The reasons why some eligible young people may not be applying for JSP,
- Factors associated with JSP application denials.

The research findings relating to young people include results from a survey of young people across Scotland promoted by YoungScot.<sup>2</sup> This achieved 159 responses.

Interviews of up to 45 minutes were also conducted with individual young people via Zoom, Teams or phone. These included:

- 7 young people who had not applied for JSP,
- 26 young people who had applied and were successful,
- 6 young people who had applied and were unsuccessful.

Stakeholder findings focus upon primary research with two groups:

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<sup>2</sup> [Young Scot - Get Involved](#)

- 8 representatives of relevant stakeholder groups (which provide assistance to unemployed young people) with prior experience relating to JSP, and
- 7 staff from Social Security Scotland tasked with processing and assessing JSP applications.

Evidence from stakeholders was collected through discussion groups of up to one hour with Social Security Scotland colleagues via Teams, and individual interviews with other stakeholders of up to one hour conducted via Teams or Zoom.

### **The Aim of Job Start Payment**

- All interview participants recognised the period of waiting for their first pay cheque as a difficult time for people taking up work. There was consensus that targeted support via JSP at this point was valuable.
- All young people who had applied for JSP confirmed they had, or would, recommend JSP. This view was unaffected by the outcome of their own JSP application.

### **Impact of Job Start Payment on people who have received this support**

- **How the payment is spent:** Interviews with young people show that JSP recipients spend the payment in a range of ways, and indicate clothing for work and transport costs as the most frequent areas of spend. Other examples of spend included work equipment, domestic bills, and as a contribution towards childcare costs.
- **Whether it helps to meet costs associated with starting a new job, and enables clients to take-up employment offers:** All young people interviewed - including parents awarded the higher rate of JSP - were complimentary about

the level of the benefit and how it had helped them cover the costs of starting a new job. Young people described JSP using adjectives such as ‘fair’, ‘helpful’, and ‘amazing’. Stakeholder interviews elaborated on the start of employment for young people, and the challenges it can pose. They felt that any alleviation of the costs young people face during that period, through JSP, could improve aspects of their lives, in the short-term. Reflections revealed that whilst JSP does make a positive contribution to costs, it may not be enough to meet every individual’s needs – notably parents who face upfront childcare costs. There was consensus from young people and stakeholders that the benefit coming before the first pay cheque was optimal and accordingly, processing times should be as quick as possible. In the interviews, several young people said that they did not get the payment before their first pay check. Waiting for the payment was described as worrying, and in some cases meant that young people had to borrow money.

- **Whether it makes clients feel (a) more confident about starting a job and (b) more confident about their employment prospects:** Feedback from successful applicants illustrated that benefit could be spent on items which would boost the confidence of young people. Anxiety reduction in the short-term was a widely reported positive outcome of JSP. However, while young people agreed that the employment they secured had made them more confident about their employment prospects, this was not a direct result of receiving JSP.
- **Whether it helps clients to sustain employment:** In the research interviews, two successful applicants expressed the view that JSP had helped them to sustain (as well as obtain) their new job. However, these were exceptional cases. Stakeholders felt that while JSP helps young people transition to employment, sustaining a job involves wider factors that are not covered by the payment.

- **Whether it helps clients build and/or sustain social networks and broaden their lifestyle choices:** Receiving JSP did not contribute directly to these outcomes. However, some young people spoke about (a) improvements to their social networks as a result of taking up employment, and (b) how being in employment had made them feel more independent than being on benefits.
- **Whether it impacts the health and well-being of clients' families (including children, where relevant) during and after their transition to employment:** Successful applicants provided accounts of JSP making a difference not only to themselves, but other family members. For example, young parents putting the payment towards, childcare costs, toys and activities for children. Young people in low-income households explained how JSP had gone towards shared household bills. This applied to young people with children, and also to young people living with or caring for adult family members.

### **Possible factors which impact take-up of Job Start Payment, and issues around rejected applications**

- **Reasons why young people who are eligible for JSP may be not applying:** the findings highlighted a number of factors which may explain why some eligible young people do not apply for JSP.
  - The survey findings suggest that awareness of JSP could be greater amongst 16-24 year olds in Scotland. Additionally, in the interviews, young people expressed the view that awareness of JSP was low amongst their peers.
  - Stakeholders felt that knowledge and experience of JSP was low within their organisations, and that they could do more to signpost and promote the benefit to young people. However, some also felt they needed more

training and better promotional materials on JSP to do this effectively. Also, in some cases they were cautious about signposting young people to the benefit due to their own uncertainty over eligibility, and not wanting their clients to experience a denied application.

- Stakeholders raised how the details asked for in the application form, particularly giving details of a new employer, were anxiety-inducing, and may be putting off young people from applying for JSP. Interviews with successful applicants confirmed that some young people found approaching their employers for supporting evidence to be a difficult and awkward experience.
- Social Security staff, wider stakeholders and young people raised how the variable length of processing times could be discouraging for young people eligible for the benefit.
- **Reasons for rejected JSP applications:** JSP management information shows that just over half of JSP applications processed between August 2020 and March 2022 were denied. The research uncovered various issues relating to denied applications. These related to eligibility criteria and complications with the application process.
  - JSP management information shows the most common reasons for application denials are a failure to meet the following eligibility criteria prior to the job offer: (a) being in receipt of a qualifying benefit for at least 6 months, and (b) being out of work for at least 6 months. In focus groups, Social Security Scotland staff confirmed this was the case, and indicated that they had to apply these rules stringently when processing applications (i.e. to the exact date).

- Social Security Scotland staff and other stakeholders said a key issue with the above eligibility rules is that young people are often encouraged by work coaches to take up short, paid work placements, which can break up otherwise lengthy periods of unemployment, and which subsequently lead to a JSP denial. Stakeholders viewed these placements as crucial for young peoples' employability, and highlighted that they often do not impact other benefits such as Universal Credit. They felt strongly that this was a negative feature of JSP.
- JSP management information shows that 16-17 year olds have experienced an above average level of application denials. Social Security Scotland staff explained that applicants in this age-group were less likely to be on a qualifying benefit, and from their experience this was the main reason for denials amongst this age-group. Other stakeholders pointed out that existing employability initiatives (e.g. training schemes) for school leavers often precluded 16-17 year olds from claiming qualifying benefits.
- Regarding application process, the actual JSP application form was described as straightforward by applicants and stakeholders. However, Social Security Scotland staff expressed the view that the level of supporting evidence required was excessive for a one-off payment. One staff member speculated that this could be a factor in young people dropping out of the process after submitting the initial form, leading to denials. Indeed, young people described obtaining supporting evidence as stressful, and care leavers described obtaining proof of care leaver status as challenging and even traumatic.
- Social Security Scotland staff explained that JSP applicants must state the date they were offered the job on their application form, and this date must be confirmed in writing by their new employer. However, they said

(a) young people often put the job start (not job offer) date on their forms, and (b) that jobs can be offered verbally and in writing on separate dates – meaning they cannot approve those applications. Staff expressed frustration that they had to apply this rule strictly, and could not use other forms of evidence (e.g. job contracts) to validate JSP claims.

- Social Security Scotland staff also said that they could only contact young people via phone or letter to obtain supporting evidence after the initial JSP application is made. They felt these communication channels were not effective to reach young people. In interviews, some young people pointed out that they could not answer phones when they were at work.
- Stakeholders who work with unemployed young people expressed the view that information on JSP (e.g. on eligibility criteria) is confusing, and may be leading ineligible young people to apply – contributing to higher application denial rates.

### **Conclusion and implications for policy**

Overall, the research findings indicate that there is a genuine need for JSP, and that the payment is welcomed by young people and professionals who support unemployed young people. The evidence also indicates that JSP is achieving its key aims of helping young people meet the costs of starting a new job and boosting their confidence levels when making the transition to employment. All the same, the research identified a number of potential improvements which could increase the impact of the grant.

### **Raising more awareness of JSP amongst young people and support organisations**

The findings suggest that there could be greater awareness of JSP amongst young people, and that knowledge and experience of the benefit could be low

amongst skills and employability groups and third sector organisations who provide support to young people. More could therefore be done to increase awareness of JSP in order to increase take-up of the benefit amongst those who are eligible. Suggestions from young people and stakeholders included:

- Further promotional work including a collaborative re-launch of JSP, increased social media promotions, and paid advertising (e.g. on job search websites)
- Building JSP signposting into a requirement within new contracts such as Fair Start Scotland employment support service and the Young Person's Guarantee
- Engaging with stakeholder groups (e.g. at forums for employability and third sector organisations) to promote JSP and provide more guidance and materials on advising young people to apply for the benefit
- Raising more awareness of JSP amongst employers so that they can signpost the benefit to new recruits who might be eligible to claim the payment
- Exploring the possibility of intelligent automation so that eligible claimants automatically receive JSP.

### **Making improvements to the JSP application process**

The findings highlight that although the JSP application form is considered to be straightforward to complete, the wider application process can be challenging and stressful for applicants, stakeholders who support applicants, and Social Security Scotland staff who process applications. These complications may also be contributing to the high level of application denials, and possibly putting eligible people off from making claims in the first place. Suggestions to improve the application process from young people and stakeholders included:

- Taking steps to improve processing times to ensure that claimants receive the payment at the point of need (i.e. before their first pay check)
- Considering changes to the level of detail required as supporting evidence for applications, given the relatively low payment amount and its one-off nature
- Providing clearer guidance to applicants on (a) the eligibility criteria for JSP, and (b) the exact nature of supporting evidence required for applications along with illustrative examples
- Raising more awareness of JSP amongst employers to make the process of gathering supporting information easier for young people
- Giving Social Security Scotland staff more flexibility when processing supporting evidence, e.g. by allowing them to (a) make adjustments in their internal systems when applicants have entered an incorrect job offer date, and (b) use a wider range of information or documentation to validate JSP claims (e.g. job contracts)
- Allowing Social Security Scotland staff to contact applicants via text and email when following up to obtain supporting evidence, rather than only phone calls and letters.

### **Considering adjustments to JSP eligibility criteria**

The findings demonstrate that many JSP applicants do not meet the eligibility criteria for the payment, and that there are a number of associated issues with eligibility. Stakeholders suggested means to address these issues, which would ensure that JSP reaches more young people who (in their view) also need financial support when starting a new job. Suggestions included:

- Reducing the amount of time young people need to be out of paid work and on a qualifying benefit in order to be eligible for JSP

- Ensuring that short-term, paid work placements which interrupt otherwise lengthy periods of unemployment do not render applicants ineligible for JSP
- Implementing different eligibility criteria for 16-17 year olds, who are especially unlikely to be eligible for JSP under the current rules
- Allowing people to claim JSP more than once every two years, to reflect fluctuations in the labour market.

# 1. Introduction

This report presents the findings based predominantly on qualitative research with young people and stakeholders exploring their experiences of Job Start Payment (JSP). Research was carried out by Diffley Partnership between November 2021 and March 2022. The report was commissioned by the Scottish Government to contribute towards the Scottish Government's overall evaluation of JSP, which will also draw on JSP administrative data and research conducted by Social Security Scotland, such as the Social Security Scotland Client Survey.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.1 Policy background

The Scottish Government is creating a new social security system for Scotland, having taken over a number of benefits devolved in the Scotland Act 2016. Eight principles, set out in the Act, and the Social Security Charter, underpin this new system, which aims to treat clients with dignity and respect.<sup>4</sup>

The Social Security powers that have been devolved through the Scotland Act 2016 give the Scottish Parliament responsibility for £2.8 billion of social security expenditure (around 15% of total benefit expenditure in Scotland). An Order under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998 gave the Scottish Government further powers to arrange assistance under section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973. Social Security Scotland is the executive agency of Scottish Government that is responsible for delivering the social security benefits for Scotland.

## 1.2 Context of Job Start Payment

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<sup>3</sup> [Social Security Scotland - Client Survey 2018-2021](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Social Security Scotland - Our Charter](#)

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting young people to obtain and retain employment. A key part of this is helping young people on low incomes meet some of the initial costs of starting work, including transport costs, in order to reduce the risk of unemployment or economic inactivity later in life. Such efforts are particularly important given the increase in unemployment amongst 16-24 year olds in the year to December 2021 compared to end of 2019.<sup>5</sup> The increase is linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted the youth labour market.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore crucial that young people who have experienced a sustained period without paid work are given support to enable a smooth and sustainable transition into employment.

JSP is designed to support young people with the costs associated with beginning a new job, such as clothing, food or travel expenses (though the use of the payment is neither stipulated nor monitored). It has previously been observed that upfront costs to enter the job market can be significant for graduates.<sup>7</sup> The concern is upfront costs can make entry into employment untenable or may even deter people accepting a job offer, including lone parents.<sup>8</sup>

Eligible clients find themselves at the intersection of two demographic groups that are less likely to have savings or manage well financially: people in receipt of low-income benefits and young people.<sup>9</sup> This age bracket could be more likely to struggle with the up-front costs associated with entering employment.

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<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government, 2021: [Labour Market Statistics for young people \(16-24 years\): April 2020 to March 2021](#).

<sup>6</sup> Skills Development Scotland, 2021: [COVID-19 Labour Market Insights, July 2021](#).

<sup>7</sup> [The Cost of Working | milkround.com](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Citizens Advice Bureau, Not Getting Through](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Scottish Government, Section Six - Finance - Scottish household survey 2019: key findings](#)

JSP forms part of a wider package of measures to smooth entry into paid employment. It also sits alongside ongoing reforms to employability in Scotland that seek to build a holistic system of support, outlined in the Scottish Government's No One Left Behind delivery plan.<sup>10</sup>

It is within this context that this research takes place. Through this commission, Scottish Government was eager to assess the extent to which the JSP is meeting its aims, to understand the impact and experience of applying for and receiving the JSP, and to identify issues, and solutions, around take-up of the benefit.

### **1.3 Details of Job Start Payment**

JSP was designed based on a consultation conducted in 2019 which was reported on in July of that year and responded to by the Scottish Government in December 2019. Social Security Scotland began taking applications for JSP on Monday 17 August 2020.

Since April 2022, the amount of the payment has been a cash sum of £267.65 for those without children and £428.25 for those with children. During the period of primary research within this project, the amounts were originally £252.50 for those without children, and £404 for those with children, increasing from £250 and £400 in April 2021.

Young people aged 16-24 in Scotland who have been out of work and receiving a qualifying low-income benefit for six months are eligible to apply for the payment upon receiving a job offer, and up to three months after such an offer is made. Care leavers have an additional year to apply for JSP (i.e. until they turn 26), and while they do need to be on a qualifying benefit, they do not need to have been on a qualifying benefit or out of paid work for 6 months. . A previous

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<sup>10</sup> [Scottish Government, Section Six- Ensuring No One is Left Behind - No One Left Behind: delivery plan](#)

recipient can apply and claim again, if two years have passed since they last received the payment.

Qualifying benefits include Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, or Universal Credit.

The full eligibility criteria can be viewed on the mygov.scot website.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.4 Research Aims

The Scottish Government has committed to the principle of continuous improvement through regular and rigorous evaluation of social security policies and payments. The Scottish Government has outlined its social security principles and rights-based approach and has committed to conducting regular analysis and evaluations to assess the extent to which devolved benefits are satisfying these criteria.

The research presented in this report will contribute towards the Scottish Government's overall evaluation of JSP, which will also draw on JSP administrative data and research conducted by Social Security Scotland, such as the Social Security Scotland Client Survey.<sup>12</sup> Research aims, sub-aims and objectives are outlined below.

### Research Aim 1

Explore the impact of JSP on people who have received this support, by learning about their experiences with the payment.

**Aim 1a:** Determine whether JSP improves clients' employment outcomes:

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<sup>11</sup> [Scottish Government, Who can apply - Job Start Payment](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Social Security Scotland - Client Survey 2018-2021](#)

- How the payment is spent
- Whether it helps to meet costs associated with starting a new job, and enables clients to take-up employment offers
- Whether it makes clients feel more confident about starting a job, and reduces anxiety during the transition to employment
- Whether it makes clients feel more confident/less anxious about their future (medium- and long-term) employment prospects
- Whether it helps clients to sustain employment.

**Aim 1b** - Determine whether JSP improves other aspects of clients' lives, such as health and well-being, social opportunities (e.g., social networks), and lifestyle choices:

- Whether it helps clients build and/or sustain social networks
- Whether it empowers clients and allows them to participate more fully in society
- Whether it broadens clients' lifestyle choices
- Whether it impacts the health and well-being of clients' families (including children, where relevant) during and after their transition to employment.

## **Research Aim 2**

Examine possible factors which impact (a) take-up of JSP amongst young people who are eligible for the benefit, (b) JSP application denial rates.

- Reasons why young people who are eligible for JSP may not be applying for the benefit
- Cases where completed applications were unsuccessful, and reasons for rejected applications
- Whether there are any other barriers to accessing JSP, including those associated with the application process
- Whether JSP can be improved to increase take-up levels, and more generally

Regarding research Aim 2, it is important to explain in more detail what is meant by take-up and application denials, which are linked but not always directly.

1. **Take-up** refers to the extent to which people claim the benefits they are eligible for. To take a hypothetical case, the Scottish Government could estimate that – in a given period - 1,000 young people would have (a) been offered a job and (b) met all of the other eligibility criteria for JSP. If only 500 people had actually claimed JSP during the same period, take-up would be an estimated 50%. This would indicate that the other 500 eligible people who did not receive the payment either did not apply in the first place, or applied but could not provide sufficient evidence to support their claim, and therefore had their applications denied. At the moment, there is no data available on how many eligible young people applied but had their applications denied for not being able to provide enough supporting evidence for their claim.
2. **Application denials** happen when applicants are ineligible for JSP, or cannot provide enough supporting evidence to prove they are eligible for JSP. Therefore, it is possible that some young people who meet eligibility criteria have their applications denied because they cannot provide

sufficient evidence for their claim. However, many will be denied because they simply do not meet the eligibility criteria for the payment in the first place.

It should be noted that while JSP was still in its early stages, take-up of JSP (i.e. eligible young people claiming the benefit) had been lower than anticipated by the Scottish Government. This research therefore explored factors which may have impacted JSP take-up, as indicated by the objectives set out above.

Application denials were also explored as part of Aim 2. From the payment's inception in August 2020 up to 31 March 2022, 10,105 applications were received. Of the 9,595 processed, a majority (53%) were declined<sup>13</sup>. This elevated figure merited investigation.

To address the above aims and objectives, views and experiences were gathered from a range of people including:

1. Recipients of the payment
2. Unsuccessful applicants
3. Eligible individuals who did not apply for the payment
4. Representatives of relevant stakeholder groups with prior experience relating to the Payment
5. Staff from Social Security Scotland tasked with processing and assessing applications.

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<sup>13</sup> [Scottish Government, Job Start Payment: high level statistics to 31 March 2022](#)

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Overview

An approach was designed and ordered to ensure inclusion of a range of perspectives within the evaluation, utilising secondary and primary research:

- **Step 1:** Identify stakeholders for involvement in our discussion groups, and begin stakeholder engagement,
- **Step 2:** Analysis of administrative data to identify prospective explanations for low take-up and identify potential barriers,
- **Step 3:** Organise and hold discussion groups with relevant stakeholder representatives/practitioners,
- **Step 4:** Build a sample of clients through administrative data, and top this up with further recruitment via stakeholders identified and engaged in step 1,
- **Step 5:** Design a survey of young people in Scotland, administered through Young Scot, to gauge awareness and perceptions of JSP and for qualitative recruitment.
- **Step 6:** Conduct interviews with young people including successful applicants, unsuccessful applicants, and non-applicants,
- **Step 7:** Analysis and reporting.

## 2.2 Research methods relating to objectives

Research Aim One, and its sub-aims, were primarily to be met through active engagement with clients themselves. Semi-structured qualitative interviews with young people who have received JSP were designed to help understand the impact of the payment.

Stakeholder interviews were also seen as an opportunity to gather their more holistic overview of the payments' impacts. Given their expertise and the range of clients that they are likely to have interacted with, their insights were also seen as valuable in understanding more generalised trends and impacts.

Views from stakeholders were seen as valuable in identifying possible barriers to JSP take-up. Given that low take-up of JSP is of particular interest, and will be a key consideration for policymakers, efforts were made to hear from as many young people as possible about JSP. A survey was conducted, targeted at young people, to gauge the public's general awareness and understanding of JSP. This was therefore designed as a short survey, combining closed questions and a few open questions - delivering both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey's inclusion had the dual value of providing data and as a recruitment tool for follow-up qualitative research (particularly for individuals who have not applied for JSP).

The evidence reviewed in this report is almost entirely based upon primary qualitative research, including with young people and stakeholders. Data from the survey of young people is used primarily to give a sense of awareness around JSP.

High level information on applications and payments for JSP are included, taken from data published by Scottish Government.<sup>14</sup> This data includes:

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<sup>14</sup> [Scottish Government, Job Start Payment: high level statistics to 31 December 2021](#)

- Applications received- online, telephone and paper,
- Age breakdown of applications- 16-17, 18-21, 22-24, 25 years,
- Applications processed- including authorised, denied and withdrawn,
- Value of payments made.

### **2.3 Young people engagement**

Recruitment of young people for the qualitative research was achieved through two methods:

1. A survey promoted by Young Scot included an opt in box for young people interested in taking part in follow up research.
2. Using administration data provided by Social Security Scotland, Scottish Government researchers invited young JSP applicants to take part in the study.

The first method was particularly useful for ensuring a broad range of young people were involved in the research. These included young people across Scotland who had not applied for JSP and young people who had not heard of JSP. Through their survey questions the research team could get a sense of their circumstances before making arrangement for them to take part. As this was not an application process, or a review process, it is not possible to establish whether any young people would have been or were definitely eligible for JSP. Having said that, they did fall within the age range of eligibility, and had taken up employment since JSP began taking applications.

The second method was based upon Social Security Scotland's records for JSP applicants. Therefore, this group had both knowledge of JSP, and experience

applying. Scottish Government created a sub-sample of JSP applicants and sent them an email invitation to participate in this research. For those consenting, Diffley Partnership administered a short recruitment questionnaire. This gave further information to the research team to utilise in determining who to approach such as whether they had been successful or unsuccessful in their application, and information about their circumstances (See Appendix A).

In total, 39 young people took part in interviews between 15 November 2021 and 17 March 2022. Table 2.1 illustrates the profile of the 39 young people involved (See next page). The two young people we interviewed in the 16-17 age group were both non-applicants. This reflects the very low numbers of 16-17 year olds claiming JSP. Between August 2020 and March 2022, fifty-five 16-17 year olds were successful in claiming the benefit, indeed 79% of processed applications were denied for this age group.<sup>15</sup>

Interviews lasted up to 45 minutes and took part via an online platform or telephone as per the participants' preference. In advance, discussion guides were prepared for the research team to follow (see Appendix B). All young people who participated were provided with a £30 Love2Shop e-gift card as a thank you for their time.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [Scottish Government, Job Start Payment: high level statistics to 31 March 2022](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Love2shop e-Gift Card](#)

**Table 2.1: Profile of Young People interview participants**

JSP application status	number
Non-applicants	7
Unsuccessful applicants	6
Successful applicants	26
Sex	number
Male	16
Female	23
Age group	number
16-17	2
18-25	37
SIMD <sup>17</sup>	number
1 (most deprived)	11
2	9
3	3
4	6
5 (least deprived)	1
Unknown	9
Other profile information	number
Parent	12
Identify as care experienced/ care leaver	5
Identify as a young carer	4
Long term illness or disability	11
Rural Scotland (UR 2-fold Class) <sup>18</sup>	4

<sup>17</sup> Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 quintiles. See [Scottish Government, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020](#)

<sup>18</sup> Accessible Rural and Remote Rural Areas, see [Scottish Government, Overview - Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016](#)

## 2.4 Stakeholder engagement

A diverse range of stakeholder representatives was recruited in terms of geographical spread, field, operations, and specialisms (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2 – Stakeholder and Social Security Scotland staff recruitment**

Type of organisation	Organisations	Number of participants
Skills and employability focussed organisations	Skills Development Scotland The Lennox Partnership Fair Start Scotland contractor Scottish Government	6
Charitable organisations working with Scottish Government’s poverty priority groups	One Parents Families Scotland Enable	2
Social Security Scotland staff	Social Security Scotland	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

A few stakeholders, including those involved in welfare rights advice, declined to take part in interviews due to pressures involved with their organisations and their work commitments during the Covid pandemic. A couple of individuals approached declined on the basis that neither themselves nor their colleagues had first-hand knowledge or experience of JSP (please see section 4.5 for more discussion of levels of awareness and knowledge of professionals). However, stakeholders from charitable organisations working with Scottish Government’s poverty priority groups were included and professionals working within employability services.

All stakeholder research took place online through participants’ platform of preference. Research consisted of one-to-one interviews, double interviews with

two colleagues together and discussion groups. Social Security Scotland staff took part in two separate discussion groups. This period of research took place between 8 November 2021 and 3 March 2022.

Discussion Guides were agreed in advance and used as a basis for these semi-structured interviews and discussion groups (see Appendix C).

Stakeholders drew upon their current job roles, and their previous work in related roles and the wider employability sector. For example, some individuals had previously worked for DWP, others had worked in front-line roles and now in more strategic roles, one individual had been out of work for over six months themselves prior to securing their current role. Crucially, stakeholder interviews included people who currently process JSP applications (and review appeals where applications are denied) from within Social Security Scotland. Also, those from external organisations who are encouraging colleagues, and directly signposting, referring or supporting young people to apply for JSP.

## 3. Research Findings

### 3.1 Overview

This findings section begins with important findings on the context of JSP. This is then followed by sections on each research objective. Lastly, recommendations to improve JSP are summarised.

Quotes are included throughout indicating the research participants as:

- **Non-applicant** - young people who were not JSP applicants
- **Unsuccessful applicant** - young people who were unsuccessful applicants
- **Successful applicant** - young people who were successful applicants
- **Skills and Employability** - stakeholders from skills and employability focussed organisations
- **Third Sector** - stakeholders from charitable organisations
- **Social Security Scotland** - employees working for Social Security Scotland

### 3.2 Context of JSP

Data gathered from young people and stakeholders on the context of the job market, barriers to sustainable employment and the difficulties of covering upfront costs when taking up employment all supported the premise for JSP.

#### Overview of the youth labour market

Young people interviewed talked of losing work prior to and during the pandemic. Although there is no corroborating evidence, a few examples were concerning in terms of sustaining employment including:

- Became pregnant and was not entitled to maternity leave,
- Thought they were made redundant, but employer was claiming furlough and not passing onto them,
- Having a miscarriage and gave up work due to mental health difficulties,
- Catching Covid within their probationary period and losing the role as a consequence.

Whilst acknowledging barriers to employment experienced by individuals depending upon their circumstances, such as those outlined above, stakeholders all described the current jobs market in positive terms. They used terms including 'healthy' to describe the market during the research period and felt there were many opportunities for young people.

Stakeholders drew upon their experience of working in employability, skills development or engagement with young people comparing Scotland in 2022 with other times they remember, and their perception of other countries.

“There’s more jobs out there for young people than there are young people looking for work.... I’ve worked through two recessions and the pandemic and all that....I think there’s opportunities in every sector right now.”

(Skills and Employability)

### **Barriers faced by young people to sustain employment**

Young people were open in interviews about challenges they faced in securing and sustaining work. These included some issues raised of concern to equality policy, and some outcomes related to the pandemic:

- Being made homeless and waiting for accommodation prior to applying for work,
- Anxiety and fear of socialising- aggravated under the pandemic,

- Perception that employers not open to hiring deaf people,
- Living in an island community with large proportion of tourism and hospitality jobs shut down due to Covid restrictions,
- Transitioning back to the workplace after being a carer for a parent with a long-term health condition who was shielding,
- Close family bereavement following caring for them during their terminal illness,
- Graduation coinciding with pandemic and lack of work experience on their CV.

Stakeholders outlined changes to the work available. Several stakeholders referenced a rise in work through agencies, short-term work and zero hours contracts. This was framed largely in negative terms as work, but not ‘sustainable work’ for young people.

The pandemic had led to a shift in the mode of work available. One stakeholder working for a skills and employability organisation, explained their views on its implications for the group they supported. They felt that remote working could suit young people suffering from anxiety better and lead them to taking up employment, however it was yet to be determined if they would sustain this employment when and if they were required to be back in a workplace.

Both stakeholders and young people highlighted the pressures associated with care responsibilities for older relatives. For example, one young person we interviewed had secured a new job and applied for JSP within a month of their mother dying from terminal cancer. They had also been a carer for their mother beforehand, and were in the processing of grieving whilst searching for work:

“My experience of getting back into the workplace after caring was difficult. Because I felt like I was pushed to get out there and look for job. It wasn’t even a month from when my mum passed, and I was told my benefits were

ended, and I had this pressure to get income right away. My case worker at the job centre wasn't very cooperative."

(Successful applicant)

### **Need for financial support on taking up employment**

All research participants recognised the period of waiting for their first pay cheque as a difficult time for people taking up work. There was consensus that targeting support at this point was valuable. One successful applicant said they would recommend it to others on the basis of covering upfront costs of starting in new employment:

"It's a great helping hand if they're starting a job, they might need transport or clothes or equipment and not [having that] come out of the money they need to live on."

(Successful applicant)

Young people interviewed also explained how upfront costs for starting work had caught them, and their friends off guard. They explained how lack of experience made it difficult for them to understand the costs of:

- Travel costs, especially petrol and diesel,
- Energy bills,
- Accommodation costs- when living away from home for first time,
- Costs to do work, including working from home equipment, but also equipment for in person working such as tools and uniform, software and hardware.

Childcare was flagged as a significant cost by all young people interviewed with children, and by stakeholders from both charitable organisations and skills and employability focussed organisations.

All respondents were asked at the end of the survey-‘Do you have any suggestions for ways to help young people meet the costs of taking up a new job?’. Many responses were positive reactions to the aim of JSP. Other comments, relevant for wider employability support for young people are included as Appendix D.

All young people interviewed confirmed they had, or would, recommend JSP. This was unaffected by the outcome of their own application. They emphasised that the benefit could make a real difference to people and have various impact depending upon their individual circumstances and needs.

Young people taking part in this research did not recognise any stigma with claiming JSP. Even unsuccessful applicants had no hesitation to recommend the benefit to other young people as they were supportive of the aim of the benefit.

### **3.3 The impact of JSP on employment outcomes**

The purpose of research aim 1a was to determine whether JSP improves clients’ employment outcomes.

For each objective relating to research Aim 1a, the main findings are summarised below.

- **How the payment is spent-** Interviews with young people show that JSP recipients spend the payment in a range of ways, and indicate clothing for work and transport costs are the most frequent areas of spend. Other examples of spend included work equipment, food, domestic bills, and using the money as a contribution towards childcare costs.
- **Whether it helps to meet costs associated with starting a new job, and enables clients to take-up employment offers-** All young people interviewed - including parents awarded the higher rate of JSP - were

complimentary about the level of the benefit and how it had helped them cover the costs of starting a new job. Young people described JSP using adjectives such as 'fair', 'helpful', and 'amazing'. Stakeholder interviews elaborated on the start of employment for young people, and the challenges it can pose. They felt that any alleviation of the costs young people face during that period, through JSP, could improve aspects of their lives, in the short-term. Reflections revealed that whilst JSP does make a positive contribution to costs, it may not be enough to meet every individual's needs – notably parents who face upfront childcare costs. There was consensus from young people and stakeholders that the benefit coming before the first pay cheque was optimal and accordingly, processing times should be as quick as possible. In the interviews, several young people said that they did not get the payment before their first pay check. Waiting for the payment was described as worrying, and in some cases meant that young people had to borrow money.

- **Whether it makes clients feel (a) more confident about starting a job and (b) more confident about their employment prospects** - Feedback from successful applicants illustrated that benefit could be spent on items which would boost the confidence of young people. Anxiety reduction in the short-term was a widely reported positive outcome of JSP. However, while young people agreed that the employment they secured had made them more confident about their employment prospects, this was not a direct result of receiving JSP.
- **Whether it helps clients to sustain employment-** In the research interviews, two successful applicants expressed the view that JSP had helped them to sustain (as well as obtain) their new job. However, these were exceptional cases. Stakeholders felt that while JSP helps young

people transition to employment, sustaining a job involves wider factors that are not covered by the payment.

Further details are included in the sections below for each research objective. These include direct evidence from young people successfully applying for JSP and accounts of successful applications from stakeholders.

### **How JSP is spent**

In the information on JSP, guidance and suggestions are made on how the fund can be spent by young people. According to the Scottish Government website:<sup>19</sup>

‘You could use it for things like:

- travel costs, such as a bus or train pass
- lunches
- new clothes or a uniform
- childcare

You’ll get this money in one payment. If you need to, you can spend it on things that might cost more, like a travel pass.’

At the same time, there are no stipulations on how young people spend JSP. Therefore, there is also no administrative data to capture spend of JSP. Within this research, interviews with 26 successful applicants provided details on how JSP was spent. Table 3.1 shows their spend relating to categories of items. Clothes and transport costs were the most frequent reported spend.

Stakeholders who had referred young people to JSP cited some examples of spend of their clients including:

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<sup>19</sup> [Scottish Government, Your payment - Job Start Payment](#)

- Equipment for work
- Uniforms or work-suitable clothing
- General household costs
- Paying bills until first pay arrives
- Travel costs

**Table 3.1: JSP spend recalled by successful applicants**

Type of item	Young people mentioning	Examples given included
Clothes	16	Clothes and shoes suitable for working environment- including office wear, uniforms, safety clothing for building sites
Travel tickets	14	Travel passes
Food	7	Food for their lunches, food for family
General bills	5	Own bills, and bills of parents when living at home
Savings	4	Put into bank account for unexpected expenses
Settling debt	3	Paying back money borrowed from friends and family, paying credit card debt
Childcare costs	3	Upfront payments
Leisure	3	Day out with children, trip to visit relatives, dinner out with partner
Car costs	3	Fuel, costs for MOT
Work equipment	2	Computer equipment, furniture to work from home
Children	1	Toys for children

## How JSP helps meeting costs associated with taking up new jobs

This section discusses evidence on whether JSP helps to meet costs associated with starting a new job and enables clients to take-up employment offers.

All young people – including parents awarded the higher payment rate - were complimentary about the level of the benefit and how it had helped them cover costs. All successful applicants talked in positive terms about the amount of money they received. They used adjectives including ‘fair’, ‘helpful’, ‘amazing’. One young person explained how £250 had helped her meet her costs:

“Especially because we had just got cut from our benefits, we weren’t getting housing benefit or Universal credit anymore. My partner was out of a job, so we didn’t have a stable income. So I went from UC onto a college bursary, so that really did help. When we came off the benefits we didn’t have the stability. All the money was going onto bills. And even going into Glasgow, where the office was, to pick up my laptop to start the new job for instance, I didn’t have money to do that. So JSP helped me pay for that...I felt that amount was more than enough for my circumstances at the time. I felt that that was, that helped me out definitely.”

(Successful applicant)

However, reflections revealed that whilst JSP does make a positive contribution to costs, it may not be enough to meet every individual’s needs. For example, one young parent had received the higher payment and was very positive about the amount. However, they revealed it could not cover the upfront childcare costs for them to start working:

“So, the majority of the payment went towards the childcare and we set up a payment plan to pay the rest of the up-front childcare cost. And for the likes of travel and uniform, then that just went on the credit card so I had to

get myself into a bit of debt. It was quite daunting. I'd never really been in much debt before and having been unemployed, it's not what you want to do before you start a new job in case it doesn't work out...Well to cover the full month of childcare and the travel, that would have been £1300. That would have covered everything, like, that would have been the ideal. ...Oh it was a huge relief. That came up with about a third of the money I needed and it made it a lot more manageable. Like, I wouldn't have been able to get all that on credit."

(Successful applicant)

Stakeholder interviews highlighted the financial challenges associated with starting employment. They felt that any alleviation of the challenges faced by young people during that period, through JSP, could improve aspects of their lives, in the short-term. One stakeholder gave an illustration of JSP helping a young person and their family:

"We had a participant, more recently, he had applied for it. He lived with his dad and brother, so they are fighting fire every day. All the family were on benefits. He has managed to get himself a job, we've supported him into employment. We were able to support him to apply for JSP. And as much as we could provide him with some support, with JSP he was able to buy safety boots, the jacket that you would wear with the bar in the arm [security job]. And meant he could use some of the money to get him going. It took about 2.5 weeks to get through, but it was good."

(Skills and Employability)

Stakeholders also discussed the level of the benefit, and whether that amount could have an impact on recipients' circumstances. This point was also reflected the testimony of successful applicants, that is to say they spoke positively about

the payment amount but felt it may not be high enough to meet every individuals' needs.

“Why it’s that figure, I have no idea. Some financial analysis in a government department, I don’t know. I think that’s a fair old chunk of money. If you’ve got that and a travel pass and some clothing and you might be due some Universal credit it’s a fair chunk. Could we do more, of course if there’s the money. But I think any financial incentive for people to start work and get a leg up is good. So, if you are 16 £250 might be a lot of money, but if you are 24 not so much. I think if you are sitting on benefits then it’s a good chunk of money.”

(Skills and Employability)

One stakeholder raised how young people may be getting financial support from different sources and in combination, those could cover costs associated with starting employment. They looked in the round at sources of financial support, including JSP, when supporting young people:

“You may also go the job centre and they might give you something for work clothing on top of that. You might get a travel pass. And I know that the job start payment is looked at that it will help you and pay some bills until you start work. Until you get your first pay. But Job Centre don’t need to know, so you could ask for things from both, the JSP and the job centre. For me it’s an incentive or a benefit to start work.”

(Skills and Employability)

One challenge around supporting the early stages of employment was the timing of the payment. There was consensus from young people and stakeholders that the benefit coming before the first pay cheque was optimal and accordingly,

processing times should be as quick as possible. However, this was not always the case. Young people interviewed recalled how long it took to receive JSP from first applying. They reported a range of waiting times - from a few days to around five months.<sup>20</sup>

Several young people who were successful applicants explained how the benefit did not coincide with their point of need, prior to their first pay. One explained how waiting weeks for the payment limited the impact of the benefit, and meant they had to borrow money to cover costs:

“With the waiting point, I just thought seven weeks. I understood they were going through a lot of applications, I understood that. But if I had it in time for me starting I wouldn’t have had to try get that financial support off other people. So you can apply for it in 10 minutes but it takes another seven weeks to get it, you know what I mean.”

(Successful applicant)

One young person had a four week wait from applying to receiving JSP, coinciding with the wait for their first pay. This had both mental health and financial implications:

“Was a frustrating and a worrying wait. I was very close to the edge financially. Okay, knowing money would come, I knew I would get paid and I was confident I would also get Job Start....every day I was watching the money get lower and lower and just holding out until then....I had to push

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that application processing times may have included time spent waiting for applicants to provide supporting evidence for their claim (supporting evidence can be provided after the initial JSP application form is submitted).

rent back for a few days actually. But my landlord was okay with that as I hadn't asked before."

(Successful applicant)

One stakeholder reiterated how important it was for young people to receive JSP before their first pay cheque, using an example of a young person their organisation had supported to apply:

"Once they managed to apply, the time waiting for the payment took its time. So, you really need it in that small period of time- around when you start. Because that's when you want to be able to say, 'have I got the right footwear, and something that's warm for construction. It's all sorts of weather.' So it's that timeframe."

(Skills and Employability)

Even though JSP had not met all upfront costs associated with starting a new job, job related income was explained in terms of a boost to their living standards. One young person summed up how ongoing costs were subsequently addressed by their salary:

"I can say that since I got my job, the gas hasn't been off once, there's always food in the cupboards, I don't worry about that, and having the independence of having my own money to put into my own future or even to just spend it on myself, that's really nice."

(Successful applicant)

### **How JSP impacts confidence**

This section covers the following research objectives:

- Whether JSP makes clients feel more confident about starting a job, and reduces anxiety during the transition to employment
- Whether JSP makes clients feel more confident/less anxious about their future (medium- and long-term) employment prospects

Feedback from successful applicants illustrated that JSP could be spent on items which would boost their confidence. Many of the successful young people interviewed had spent at least part of the payment on work wear or work uniforms (see Table 3.1). They associated appropriate clothing for work with feeling confident, as one young person explained:

“First impressions are everything, and I didn’t want to walk up the jobs in some skinny jeans. Even though other people did, that’s their choice. I always like to dress smart to give a good first impression. And not only did I give a good impression, but I felt confident and smart. And it helped me feel that I could do that job properly.”

(Successful applicant)

Anxiety reduction in the short-term was a widely reported positive outcome of JSP. Most young people made the connection between receiving JSP and their wellbeing, for example:

“I think it is really incredible, that it’s open to you spending it. It feels like it’s rewarding you for doing a good job for getting a job. And sometimes that’s what some people need. Because I know it’s incredibly difficult to get a job. And it makes them feel less scared about getting a job, if you can get that to help you.”

(Successful applicant)



Young people spoke of their desire to feel accepted by others and not stand out to their colleagues for their lack of experience, their age or their appearance. One remarked:

“The Job Start Payment helps a lot, it really cuts down on a lot of stress. I felt a lot more confident knowing that I didn’t have to buy the uniform with no way to pay for it. That was where a lot of the anxiety was; it said you needed a dressy shirt but I just didn’t have any.”

(Successful applicant)

Young people felt reassured by having JSP in their bank account and more financially secure when it arrived. One interviewee put this simply:

“Money always makes you feel more confident.”

(Successful applicant)

Young people had also gained confidence from being in employment itself. One young person with experience of homelessness shared:

“Getting that job and starting fresh, it’s made such a difference. I’m more motivated to spend time with my friends, I have my own space, and because I’ve enjoyed my job so much, I’m actually working towards a promotion.”

(Successful applicant)

Young people related a growth in their confidence to the nature of their work and interaction with colleagues, for example:

“There’s been a growth in my confidence - I’m dealing with customer service so I’m forced to interact with people. Which I enjoy again now,

but it was a struggle at first. Interacting with colleagues - it is good because I've not really been interacting before with anyone outside my parents and my partner. And now I have colleagues and speak to them and socialise a bit more again."

(Successful applicant)

Young people also agreed that employment secured had made them more confident about their medium and long-term employment prospects. However, this potential impact was attributed to the job secured rather than to receipt of JSP.

### **How JSP helps sustain employment**

The next research objective was to determine whether JSP helps clients to sustain employment. Evidence is limited on whether JSP can help young people sustain employment, but there were a couple of examples which demonstrated how it might help in this way. For example, while they were exceptional cases, a couple of young people interviewed associated JSP with not only taking up work, but remaining in a job:

"[I] wouldn't have been able to work there for that long if I hadn't got it to be honest. Because I would have started off in debt to pay for my travel and food and bills before getting my salary."

(Successful applicant)

Within the cohort of successful applicants interviewed there was a mix of experiences. The majority had sustained employment; of these seven young people were working for different employers than at the time of claiming JSP and fourteen were still working for the same employer. Three young people taking

part in the research had secured work but were out of work and not in education or training at the time of their interview.

Stakeholders were positive about JSP helping people at a financial crunch point. However, they were conscious of wider costs associated with working and sustaining employment.

“It’s a grant that will help somebody, but it’s not of an adequate amount that it would completely take away the problems that people have [sustaining employment]. Because of that, it would need to be substantially more to do that, but it does go some way towards acting as a bit of a buffer.”

(Skills and Employability)

### **3.4 JSP Improving other aspects of clients’ lives**

The purpose of research Aim 1b was to determine whether JSP improves other aspects of clients’ lives, such as health and well-being, social opportunities (for example social networks), and lifestyle choices.

For each objective relating to Research Aim 1b, the main findings show:

- **Whether it helps clients build and/or sustain social networks –** Although not directly attributable to receiving JSP, young people interviewed did reference improvements to their social networks as a result of taking up employment.
- **Whether it empowers clients and allows them to participate more fully in society and whether it broadens clients’ lifestyle choices-** JSP was not directly associated in interviews with broadening lifestyle choices, nor empowering them to participate more in society. However, many young

people explained the contrast between claiming benefits and being in the workplace. Young people associated working with financial independence, building networks and developing their skills.

- **Whether it impacts the health and well-being of clients' families (including children, where relevant) during and after their transition to employment-** Successful applicants provided accounts of JSP making a difference not only to themselves, but other family members. For example, young parents putting the payment towards, childcare costs, toys and activities for children. Young people in low-income households explained how JSP had gone towards shared household bills. This applied to young people with children, and also to young people living with or caring for adult family members.

More details are included in the sections below for each research objective. These include direct evidence from young people successfully applying for JSP and accounts of successful applications from stakeholders.

### **JSP helping build and sustain social networks**

This research objective was designed to establish whether JSP helps clients build and/or sustain social networks. Young people interviewed did reference improvements to their social networks as a result of taking up employment. This impact could be indirectly attributable to JSP, in cases where young people felt JSP helped them take up employment.

On one hand, evidence from the interviews did not support that JSP itself helped young people build or sustain social networks. On the other hand, young people interviewed explained how being employed expanded their social networks. This did not relate to starting the job, but staying in a job and bonding with colleagues over time, as one described:

“In my current job I really like the friendly environment, I’ve made a lot of friends.”

(Successful Applicant)

Young people talked about meeting new people and making friends through work. Often this was contrasted to time during the pandemic, not working and only seeing close family and possibly friends when restrictions allowed.

One young person explained the culture of their new workplace, including how they made reasonable adjustments for their hearing impairment and employed them on a permanent basis after their Kickstart scheme:<sup>21</sup>

“A lot of benefits from this employment. I would say I’ve matured a lot in this job. And my mental health is a lot better due to the support we get in here. We are a small business, and a family owned business, it’s not my family, but a family. And we are really close knit and family run on here. So I’ve got a tonne of support. I’ve made so many new friends and I’ve allowed myself to grow.”

(Successful applicant)

### **JSP changing participation in society and lifestyle choices**

JSP was not directly associated in interviews with broadening lifestyle choices, nor empowering them to participate more in society. However, many young people explained the contrast between claiming benefits and being in the workplace.

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<sup>21</sup> The Kickstart Scheme provided funding to employers to create jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit. It was an initiative by UK Government with applications opening 2 September 2021 and closing 17 December 2021 [Kickstart Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/kickstart-scheme)

In interviews, young parents explained how they juggled caring for children with paid work, seeing work in positive terms, as per the following examples:

“It’s made me feel a lot more independent. I’ve got a working wage now rather than just having to be on benefits. And I feel a lot better in myself, I’m not just having to look after kids all the time. I feel a lot better in myself. Because I’m working part time I still do get some Universal Credit but wage-wise, because I get Universal Credit half-way through the month and my wages at the end, it really helps smooth things out.”

(Successful applicant)

“I was on Universal Credit and I’ve got 2 young kids – it was absolutely not enough to get by. It got us out of poverty and created better living circumstances for me and my children. It [the new job] had such significant knock-on effects that, the wages aren’t that great, but it’s a lot better than being on UC. It meant that my kids can start eating better, go back to the youth club. My childminder is worth her weight in gold; she’s an amazing support not just to my kids but for me. She’s expanded my whole support network.”

(Successful applicant)

There were two of examples from young people on how securing work had widened possibilities in their lives. One young person described how her employer was helping them to pursue qualifications in conjunction with their role:

“I’m now doing a course for a diploma. I’m essentially just doing really great. And actually I’m not doing the job, which I hadn’t realised at the time, but now I realise this is the job I want to do long-term, so working more in digital marketing. So I’ve developing my career now.”

(Successful applicant)

### **JSP impacting health and well-being of clients' families**

The purpose of this research objective was to establish whether JSP impacts the health and well-being of clients' families (including children, where relevant) during and after their transition to employment. Successful applicants provided accounts of JSP making a difference not only to themselves, but other family members. For example, young people in low-income households explained how JSP had gone towards shared household bills (see Table 3.1). This applied to young people with children, and also to young people living with or caring for adult family members.

Where the benefit was paid quickly, young parents with upfront childcare costs had utilised the benefit for this purpose. One parent directly linked JSP to nursery care:

“Yeah it helped my little girl get into nursery which is great. She’s a Covid baby so I feel really guilty, she’s not been around a lot of other children so it’s great to see her make friends and thrive.”

(Successful applicant)

Parents also gave examples of using JSP to pay for days out for their children before they started work, and for games to amuse them whilst they were working. They also framed the money they spent on themselves in terms of being able not to ‘feel guilty’ for not spending on their children.

One young person explained how they used the payment, coinciding with easing of pandemic restrictions:

“I actually spent it on a train ticket to see my mum, who I hadn’t see in months. Because I was on Universal Credit I couldn’t afford the ticket before then. I went to see her, and I took my partner out for dinner. Because we hadn’t done that at all. So I really saw it as a reward and spent it on two things that I hadn’t had the money to do before then, as a treat for starting my job really. So obviously there were things coming out my account that month, bills for necessities. But I put that money aside to spend time with people and enjoy that.”

(Successful applicant)

### **3.5 Possible factors which inhibit or enable take-up of JSP, and reasons for rejected applications**

The second research aim was to examine possible factors which inhibit or enable take-up of JSP amongst young people who are eligible for the benefit, and to explore reasons for rejected applications. As explained earlier in the report, (a) take-up refers to the extent to which eligible people claim the benefits they are eligible for, and (b) rejected applications relate to cases where claims are denied because the applicant has either not met the eligibility criteria or failed to provide supporting evidence that they meet the eligibility criteria.

Main findings are as follows:

- **Reasons why young people who are eligible for JSP may be not applying** – the findings highlighted a number of factors which may explain why some eligible young people do not apply for JSP.
  - The findings indicate that awareness of JSP might be low amongst 16-24 year olds in Scotland.

- Employability and third sector stakeholders felt that knowledge and experience of JSP was low within their organisations, and they could do more to signpost and promote the benefit to young people. However, some also felt they needed more training and better promotional materials on JSP to do this effectively.
- Stakeholders raised how the details asked for in the application form, particularly giving details of a new employer, were anxiety-inducing, and may be putting off young people from applying for JSP.
- Social Security staff, wider stakeholders and young people raised how the variable length of processing times could be discouraging for young people eligible for the benefit.
- **Reasons for rejected JSP applications** - The research uncovered a number of issues relating to denied applications. These related to eligibility criteria and complications with the application process.
  - The most common reasons for application denials are a failure to meet the following eligibility criteria prior to the job offer: (a) being in receipt of a qualifying benefit for at least 6 months, and (b) being out of work for at least 6 months. Social Security Scotland staff indicated that they had to apply these rules stringently when processing applications (i.e. to the exact date).
  - Stakeholders said a key issue with the above eligibility rules is that young people are often encouraged by work coaches to take up short, paid work placements, which can break up otherwise lengthy periods of unemployment, and which subsequently lead to a JSP

denial. Stakeholders felt strongly that this was a negative feature of JSP.

- Social Security Scotland staff explained that applicants aged 16-17 were less likely to be on a qualifying benefit, and from their experience this was the main reason for denials amongst this age-group.
- The JSP application form was described as straightforward by applicants and stakeholders. However, Social Security Scotland staff expressed the view that the level of supporting evidence required was excessive for a one-off payment – it was speculated that this could be a factor in young people dropping out of the process after submitting the initial form, leading to denials.
- Social Security Scotland staff explained that JSP applicants must state the date they were offered the job on their application form, and this date must be confirmed in writing by their new employer. They described how this process led to complications and denials, and expressed frustration that they could not use other forms of evidence (for example job contracts) to validate JSP claims.
- Social Security Scotland staff also said that they could only contact young people via phone or letter to obtain supporting evidence after the initial JSP application is made. They felt these communication channels were not effective to reach young people. In interviews, some young people pointed out that they could not answer phones when they were at work.
- Stakeholders who work with unemployed young people expressed the view that information on JSP (for example on eligibility criteria) is

confusing, and may be leading ineligible young people to apply – contributing to higher application denial rates.

### Reasons why eligible young people do not apply for JSP

As explained previously in this report, take-up of JSP had been lower than anticipated by the Scottish Government – suggesting that some eligible young people have not applied for or received the benefit. One of the main objectives of this research was to explore reasons for this outcome.

#### Awareness of JSP amongst young people

The research findings indicate that low awareness is a reason why some eligible young people do not apply for JSP. As stated at the outset of this report, a survey was conducted with Young Scot members across Scotland. Its primary aim was to recruit participants for the qualitative research. However, the survey also established general awareness of JSP amongst young people. As shown in Table 3.2, one-fifth of survey respondents had heard of the benefit.

**Table 3.2: Knowledge levels in Young Scot promoted survey**

Did you know that some young people can receive money from the Scottish Government to help with the costs of starting a new job?	n	%
Yes	47	30
No	112	70
Have you heard of Job Start Payment?	n	%
Yes	32	20
No	127	80

Source: Survey promoted by Young Scot, n=159.

Reflecting the survey findings, young people interviewed generally felt that there was a lack of awareness of JSP amongst their peers. One successful applicant, made aware of JSP by a charity, explained how they thought people might not know about the benefit unless told by a professional.

“I would say not a lot of people know about it unless someone’s told you. I don’t think young people know about it just cos there’s not much information about it. You might if you’ve got someone like [charity/welfare rights advice organisation] telling you about it, they’ll obviously tell you about it. But if you’re by yourself without any support, I don’t think you’d know about it.”

(Successful applicant)

### **Knowledge and awareness of JSP amongst professionals who support young people**

The findings suggest that signposting by professionals is an important factor in whether JSP is taken-up by young people. Indeed, in the interviews, most successful applicants said they found out about JSP via referrals by professional organisations, including employers and the Job Centre (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: Ways successful applicants had heard about JSP**

Sources of knowledge of JSP	Number of successful applicants
Job Centre	13
Friend or family member	5
Employer	4
Employability and third sector	4
Social Security Scotland	2

Social media advert	1
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Note: 3 young people had heard about JSP from more than one source

Young people gave examples in their interviews of professionals supporting them to apply. One strong example was from a young person experiencing homelessness helped with their application by their housing support worker:

“She asked if I’d applied for my Job Start Grant and I was like ‘What are you talking about?’ So she came down and over a cup of tea she kind of explained it all to me and was like, you’re starting a job, you know, you’re going to be working from home, you’re going to need supplies and between when you get your job to your first wage, that’s a month where you’re not going to have those things.”

(Successful applicant)

Stakeholders from employability groups and charity organisations recognised that their knowledge of JSP, and processes to signpost to young people, were one route to help address numbers of eligible non-claimants. Staff in Social Security Scotland were commended for reaching out to their organisations to raise awareness. One stakeholder gave examples of Social Security Scotland making visits to premises, presentations at team meetings and joint social media and media work to promote JSP. Others referred to promotional materials on JSP.

However, stakeholders highlighted factors which they felt could be limiting JSP referrals, and therefore affecting overall take-up of JSP. These primarily related to a lack of knowledge about the benefit. Some participants said that their own knowledge could have been better, and felt they needed more preparation time and better materials to advise young people about JSP effectively. One

specifically felt that Social Security Scotland’s promotional materials could be improved:

“We got some formal information in the benefit through from Social Security Scotland . And it was based on the eligibility and the process. We just wouldn’t talk to a young person like that.”

(Skills and Employability)

Additionally, all stakeholders felt that knowledge of JSP within their organisations could be improved. Related issues were mentioned by participants, such as:

- A lack of discussion of JSP within professional networks
- The feeling that knowledge was ‘patchy’ within employability support organisations
- Personal experience of supporting young people to apply for JSP being lower than expected amongst their colleagues
- No data from their organisations to track referrals made versus successful applications made
- The feeling that Covid-19 pandemic diverted the attention and resources of their organisations away from JSP
- Perceptions that knowledge of JSP was low amongst employers.

In addition to a lack of knowledge of the benefit, interviews highlighted other factors that may have reduced signposting to JSP. For example, stakeholders working directly with young people emphasised that it took time to build up trust and relationships with individuals. This meant they were not always fully aware of

young peoples' circumstances, and therefore might not realise when they are eligible for JSP:

“They’re maybe not comfortable to start the conversation with you. And even you do pick it up with them, they may not want to say they are struggling and ask for a voucher.”

(Skills and Employability)

Stakeholders also discussed high denial rates for JSP applications. These, coupled with a general lack of certainty over JSP eligibility criteria, meant that they were cautious about signposting young people to JSP.

“You look at it and you think I don’t know if you are eligible or not. And we don’t want to refer them to something they might not be eligible for.... We want to be confident referring that they are eligible, rather than a vague signposting.”

(Skills and Employability)

“When we meet with them and they are going to apply for it we go through the eligibility with a fine-tooth comb with them, as we don’t want them to apply and then be unsuccessful.”

(Skills and Employability)

### **Anxiety due to the information required**

According to stakeholders, young people might be put off from applying altogether when they see that they need to fill out details such as employer details, or to back up their claim with evidence from the employer.

“The only thing is if they are applying for a job and you have to put the employers details. And they are thinking ‘oh my goodness they are going to be asking questions about me’ and it’s actually not, it’s just confirming that they have started. So it’s about how we reiterate that to the participant. Sometimes maybe that’s why they find it difficult because they are thinking, ‘what are they going to do here?’, ‘what are they asking?’ and I guess that comes down to how we relay that to the applicant.”

(Skills and Employability)

Indeed, young people included in this research reported feeling awkward and anxious about seeking evidence from their employer.

“It was a really awkward experience having to ask for proof, I felt like I was being unreasonable and was questioned why I needed it.”

(Successful applicant)

“So I think I was new, and my first kind of official job for a proper company, you know a big company. And I was nervous to talk to my manager. Even I know she is good, but she is a busy person.... I’m grateful for the money, but it really wasn’t an easy process. Even during that time I thought sometimes ‘just leave it’. It seemed too much anxiety to get the money. I felt like it’s not a very big amount and I felt like they had picked me out for further investigation for no good reason. Yes I know they are supporting us, they are trying to help us. But I’m an open person, and I felt there was something wrong. If they want us to prove anything then why don’t they have a standard form that is completed by the manager with the information needed and that’s that, end of story. But they wanted one thing, and then needed more, and needed more. It was a hassle for my manager. Even if they need to contact the employer, they should have a

separate relationship and not involve us in that in a way that we are being put in an awkward situation. And so we don't feel any pressure. I felt like I was under pressure.”

(Successful applicant)

Given these quotes are from successful applicants, they may indicate a wider barrier to young people making initial applications and following through with providing evidence from their employers at the request of Social Security Scotland.

### **Reasons for rejected JSP applications**

Of all processed applications from 17 August 2020 to 31 March 2022, 53% were denied.<sup>22</sup> In the research interviews, stakeholders aware of these statistics expressed disappointment and dismay, and framed the decline of JSP applications as being:

1. A setback for young people which could knock their confidence.
2. A reputational risk for Social Security Scotland and Scottish Government.

A key objective of this research was to explore reasons for the high level of JSP application denials. The relevant findings are presented in this section. They can be broken into the following categories: (a) denials due to eligibility criteria, and (b) denials associated with the application process.

### **Denials due to eligibility criteria: six months out of paid work and on benefits**

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<sup>22</sup> [Scottish Government, Job Start Payment: high level statistics to 31 March 2022](#)

An investigation of management information by Social Security Scotland revealed that the most common reasons for application denials was a failure to meet one or both of the following eligibility criteria:<sup>22</sup>

- Being in receipt of a qualifying benefit for at least six months prior to finding employment.
- Being out of work for at least 6 months prior to finding employment.

In focus groups, Social Security Scotland staff who processed JSP applications confirmed that these were the most common reasons for denials. Their discussions also flagged the stringency with which they had to apply both of these eligibility rules, and that many cases could not pass eligibility tests because the dates were close, but not eligible. Staff also expressed:

“You’ve seen applications you’ve had to deny because someone has fallen short by literally one day.”

(Social Security Scotland)

According to Social Security Scotland staff and other stakeholders, a key issue with these criteria is that young people are often encouraged to take up short-term, paid work placements, which can break up otherwise lengthy periods of unemployment. These were described as being a ‘stepping stone’ to full employment. However, because they technically count as ‘paid work’ they could render the young person ineligible for JSP, and lead to an application denial. All stakeholders felt strongly that this was a negative feature of the benefit, and unfair on young people.

“I had one, as a denial that stuck with me. They were a poll worker during the election, their work coach said ‘yes go for that’, good experience,

something to talk about that on their CV. So they had worked one day. And because of that, when they got their job offer, and when they applied to us for JSP they were ineligible. The experience had helped them get that job, and then we knocked them back with the benefit. They had only got £50 for that poll work.”

(Social Security Scotland)

“I think the disqualification for short term jobs and trial shifts is very harmful. [...] Work tasters and talent tasters gets them exposed to the world of work. And we have examples of them being offered work through these, and that being cut short through no fault of their own and could see that as a real penalising measure.”

(Skills and Employability)

“I guess it could potentially affect them claiming Job Start Payment when they secure a job [...]. That’s tricky to consider when you are trying to do the best for your clients. They would benefit from both of course, but one [short-term paid work] could then later cancel the other [JSP] out.”

(Skills and Employability)

Stakeholders also flagged that short-term work placements usually do not impact other benefits. For example, one explained that work coaches could get permission from the Job Centre that paid placements would not impact a young person’s Universal Credit.

In addition to issues with work placements, stakeholders raised other concerns around the fact that JSP applicants need to be out of paid work and on qualifying benefits for six months. One highlighted the issue of people moving between

benefits. They said that, through no fault of the young person, this could create a gap in their receipt of benefits which could render them ineligible for JSP.

“I would say the continuous benefit receipt can cause problems, mainly because people are switching back and forwards. When somebody’s child reaches 5, they have to move from IS [Income Support] to UC, and there can be quite a gap there getting from one to the other, and with the UC 5-week wait, their entitlement starts when they’re accepted and it’s up and running.”

(Skills and Employability)

Another view was that the need to be on qualifying benefits for six months was excessive. One participant was critical of the current rules, and felt that they could – inadvertently - encourage people to stay on benefits longer if they cannot meet the costs of starting a job. Social Security Scotland staff also expressed the view that the rule was excessive.

“It doesn’t send the right message for us around having to be on Universal Credit for six months before you would get help to start a job. If [the young person is] on UC and only on [it] for two months, and then if the financial barriers is too high and they can’t get the payment they might be put off [applying for a job]. And for me there are subliminal messages around dependency there.”

(Skills and Employability)

“For other benefits just receipt at the time they apply. For continuous and one-off payments too. When they apply, we don’t look back in time. It’s based on circumstances on date of application. But in this one we have to go further back and look at their lives for the last six months.”

(Social Security Scotland)

### **Denials due to eligibility criteria: age range of applicants**

To be eligible for JSP, applicants must be aged 16-24 (or 16-25 if they are applying as a care leaver). In the interviews and focus groups, age eligibility was discussed by both Social Security Scotland staff and other stakeholders. They particularly focused on denial rates amongst 16 and 17 year olds.

From 17 August 2020- 31 December 2021 81% of processed JSP applications made by 16 and 17 year olds were denied – considerably higher than the average denial rate of 53%. Social Security Scotland staff contended that, ultimately, 16 and 17 year olds are less likely to have been on a qualifying benefit for 6 months at the time of job offer - and that this was the main factor in higher denial rates for this age group.<sup>23</sup>

“Technically we can provide support to people who are between 16 and 18. Functionally it’s very rare that we are able to pay anyone who is that age. Because one of the criteria is that they have to [be on a] qualifying benefit. And most young people aren’t.”

(Social Security Scotland)

Employability stakeholders explained how existing employability initiatives for 16 and 17 year olds meant they were unlikely to be on a qualifying benefit for JSP. However, they generally felt that these young people still needed financial help

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<sup>23</sup> The JSP [Official Statistics publication](#) explains that some 16 and 17 year olds can be in receipt of a qualifying benefit if they: (a) are caring for a severely disabled person or (b) have child responsibility and are the main carer of a child or (c) are no longer in touch with their parents, or (d) are limited in their ability to work.

when starting a job. Several suggested having different eligibility criteria for the youngest age group which corresponded more to the education and training opportunities they were taking up.

“There’s a lot of 16 year olds that would go straight into training at some point, so not that period of unemployment. It’s two fold because we are pushing for 100% positive destination and there is the ‘no one left behind’ initiatives. So there’s a lot in place, so very few 16 year olds that would be eligible. But they can still need the money when they start a new job.”

(Skills and Employability)

“Young people who leave school and go through employability fund training [...] are not unemployed, or claiming. But neither are they earning a major wage. They earn £55 a week on a training scheme. Which is not a lot of money. [...] And for those young people that are lucky enough to go onto employment that money would go a long way to help them too.”

(Skills and Employability)

A third sector stakeholder highlighted that, in their experience, 16 and 17 year olds often do not claim benefits they are entitled to, and require support to do this. Therefore, it is possible that some denied JSP applicants (or non-applicants) in this age group would have been eligible at the point of being offered a job, if they had claimed benefits early enough.

“We do get people in the younger ends that aren’t claiming benefits and that’s one thing we are trying to do is to help them claim benefits. But they won’t have been on benefits six months by the time they find work. They might have only just registered. So, in that time they might have had a job

or college and then not quite claimed. They might have been eligible all the way along for the qualifying benefit, but not claimed it.”

(Third Sector)

Given their experience supporting employment uptake by people of different ages, some stakeholders commented on the upper age limit of JSP. One participant felt that this could be extended, particularly to cater for single parents who often transition into employment when they are older – and require financial assistance to do so.

“It’s only when parents are slightly older that they’re then moving into work. Up to 25, they could be looking after young children and not available for work. So we see quite a lot of parents that move into work for the first time between 25-30, and they can have the same problems as people below 25. So for single parents, who are maybe looking after disabled child, and it’s only when they’re moving into school that their caring needs can be reduced enough that they can consider going into part-time work.”

(Skills and Employability)

### **Denials due to eligibility criteria: working 12 hours per week and the JSP reclaim period**

Stakeholders also discussed the JSP eligibility rule that the job being offered must involve working at least twelve hours a week, averaged over a four week period. The findings suggest that, compared to other eligibility criteria, this rule does not lead to many denials or related issues. Social Security Scotland staff explained that young people do not need to provide formal evidence of working hours, illustrating that some eligibility criteria require less supporting evidence than others.

“We just overlook that to be honest. Unless at the time of applying they say less than twelve hours [then] it’s a straight denial.”

(Social Security Scotland)

“Even though part of eligibility criteria is twelve and above hours, we could just go by their word, we don’t take evidence of that. I don’t think that is preventing people being awarded that criteria condition.”

(Social Security Scotland)

The consensus from stakeholders who support young people was that most of their clients taking up employment would meet this criteria. One explained that if a young person was combining working and claiming Universal Credit they would likely be working around 16 hours in a week, which came over the twelve hour minimum. Therefore, stakeholders did not regard the working hours criteria as an explanation for high denial levels.

Another JSP eligibility rule is that - if a claimant has received JSP before, they can only apply again if their previous application was more than two years ago. Given that the benefit is relatively new, stakeholders did not focus on this rule as a reason for denial rates. However, they felt it should be revised in the post-pandemic environment and emphasised how fluctuations in the job market did not correspond to a rigid model.

“I do think they should be able to apply again without having to wait two years. I think that’s fair because there has been such a shift in employment over Covid, and I think that’s going to get worse over the next year, especially in the hospitality industry where a lot of people have lost their jobs.”

(Skills and Employability)

“I think some of the criteria could be reflected on. There’s lots of opportunities for training and support. And sometimes work is very fluctuating for young people and it maybe isn’t full-time or long-term.”

(Skills and Employability)

One young person we interviewed explained these fluctuations in practice:

“The only thing I think would be better is if you can get it more often. Cos I think it’s every two years at the moment. I was in my other job for five years, and then I’ve changed jobs three times in two years. And I wouldn’t usually expect to, but in the current climate I feel like a lot of people have moved around more than they usually would do.”

(Successful applicant)

### **Denials associated with the application process: the application form**

According to the JSP Official Statistics report, ‘Applicants can choose to provide supporting evidence when making an application by post or through online document upload. If an applicant does not provide all the evidence required for an application, they will be contacted by a client advisor and asked to provide this.’<sup>14</sup>

In the focus groups and interviews, participants were asked questions about the JSP application process. Some of the discussion focused on the initial application form. Completing the online form was viewed in positive terms by applicants and stakeholders. Those supporting young people directly explained that applying was relatively straightforward, if they were prepared with the young person’s supporting information:

“I’ve helped participants myself, three within the last six months which I must say is very simple [...] Once you do it more than once it’s quite simple. And we can sit and support them with it.”

(Skills and Employability)

### **Denials associated with the application process: challenges young people face getting supporting evidence**

Whilst the initial application form is generally viewed in positive terms, the research findings highlight that the next stage of the application process - the provision of supporting evidence for those who do not submit it with the initial form - can be challenging for both applicants and Social Security Scotland staff. This is important, because failure to provide the required supporting evidence can lead to an application being denied.

The JSP application form explains what supporting evidence applicants must provide:<sup>24</sup>

- Confirmation of job offer from the employer, including key details such as the name of the applicant, the name of the employer, and the date of job offer
- Confirmation of time in care for applicants who are care leavers and wish to have their application considered against the less stringent eligibility criteria
- Confirmation of being the main person looking after a child, for parents or carers who wish to be considered for the higher rate of payment.

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<sup>24</sup> [Scottish Government - Job Start Payment Application- Pdf version](#)

In focus groups, Social Security Scotland staff expressed the opinion that the level of supporting evidence required for JSP is too much for a relatively small, one-off payment. It was suggested by one participant that young people are liable to drop out of the process after submitting the initial form, thereby leading to a denial.

“I think you get a job offer, you send that in, we should be able to pay them that. It’s only paid out every two years max. I don’t understand why there is the rigmarole, especially when some of these clients are so young and don’t have a lot of experience in life. They’ll just give up and think it’s not worth the hassle. So it does seem over the top to me, the amount of evidence they need to apply. Certainly compared to other benefits, and given the award amount is small. It’s not even a continuous benefit.”

(Social Security Scotland)

The testimony of young people reflects the above comments. Most interviews (with both successful and unsuccessful applicants) contained references to submitting evidence, and this was described in terms ranging from an extra task to an extremely stressful step. One young person had their JSP application denied because their employer failed to provide them with the evidence they needed.

The employer offered to give me a contract and that’s it – but then the manager actually quit before they did and the new manager refused to provide this.

“All I had was a Whatsapp message asking me to start tomorrow and they [Social Security Scotland] wouldn’t accept the screenshot. When I talked to [Social Security Scotland] staff about this I was told I needed to have my name, the position, and contact details of my manager as evidence and I

couldn't get this so ultimately couldn't provide evidence of getting a job. It was absolutely infuriating."

(Unsuccessful applicant)

An employability stakeholder echoed the view that it was not always easy for young people to get evidence from employers. They also explained how, depending on the nature or size of the employer, it can be challenging to get written confirmation of job offers which contain the required level of detail.

"Might be it's not always as easy as you would hope to get a job offer confirmation from an employer. We sometimes find that a bit of a challenge. And I don't know what level of accuracy they are looking for. In their guidance they say they would accept an email from the employer, but then does it have to have company name, clients name, what exactly would it need? It might come from a Hotmail address or what not if it is a smaller company. So that form of job offer and the communication varies depending on the size of the company and the sector, it's not in the control of the young person."

(Skills and Employability)

Care leavers who took part in interviews shared their experiences of getting confirmation of care leaver status. This process was described as challenging and even traumatic. One of these participants, who applied twice unsuccessfully (the second time specifically on the basis of being a care leaver) explained that their evidence of being a care leaver was deemed not to cover a sufficient period of time. Their testimony is shared below, along with the experience of another care leaver.

“[After the initial denied application] I got back to them at the job start and told them that I was a care leaver. They asked me to submit evidence of that, which is fair enough....Then a couple of weeks later I got a phone call from someone from Job Start Payment. They told me that I ‘did not have the care experience that they were looking for’. I remember their exact words. They were very nice on the phone and I was in shock to be honest. They said that I wasn’t subject to a supervision order when I was of the age 16 years. And that was that. So I was just left thinking, I was in care, I spent time getting evidence together. I had to think back to that period of my life, and even reconnect with agencies and think through what happened to me. And then nothing came of it. They didn’t know my back story and what I had gone through as a child. It was like they had just found a reason not to give me the payment. Like the first time it was one day off the six months and the second time it was a few months not subject to a supervision order overlapping my 16th birthday. If there are criteria around these things they should say. I don’t really understand the logic either.”

(Unsuccessful applicant)

“So being a care leaver means I can apply sooner than other people. But I’ve not been in contact with social services since I was 18 so about 7 years ago. I didn’t have a great experience with social services when I was a kid so it was quite traumatic having to get back in touch with them, and the communication with them wasn’t great. It kept going back and forth to get what I needed from them.”

(Successful applicant)

**Denials associated with the application process: challenges obtaining evidence with proof of job offer**

As explained above, the confirmation of job offer must give the date when the applicant was offered the job. Furthermore, this date must correspond with the date of job offer the applicant put on their application form, in order for an application to be approved. The findings indicate that this rule can be the cause of failed attempts to evidence JSP claims. Social Security Scotland staff said that - in their experience - applicants often provide a job start date instead of a job offer date on the application form. It was speculated by one participant that this was linked with the name of the benefit.

“Firstly, it’s confusing from the start as it’s Job Start Payment, but we need the evidence of offer... Often when they fill in the application they will put their job start date because that’s the name of the benefit, and it’s what they think of, the date on their contract.”

(Social Security Scotland)

Staff also explained that a date of job offer can be difficult to pin down and/or validate in some cases. Firstly, when a job is offered verbally with no written evidence. Secondly, when a job offered both verbally and in writing, on separate dates. When the latter happens, and if the young person puts the verbal offer date on the application form, staff said they are not allowed to accept the written document as confirmation - because the two dates do not match.

“They could have been offered it verbally one day after their interview say, and then the employer emails to formally offer the job another day. The client puts the verbal offer date, so then the evidence for the formal offer is useless to us as it doesn’t prove their job offer date as per the date they put in their application form. This is an operational decision from what we can make out, not in regulations.”

(Social Security Scotland)

In general, Social Security Scotland staff expressed frustration that they had to apply this rule strictly, and could not use other information as confirmation of job offer. This would include a job contract (which does not include a job offer date) or data they can access themselves from HMRC.

“If we are lucky they can provide their contract, but then the dates don’t match as [it is] offered later. And then we can’t piece together the initial email and the contract. We can’t smush them together and say, we have enough evidence on balance.”

(Social Security Scotland)

“We can see their income live, we pull that information straight from HMRC. We can see that they are working for the company, we can see if they were out of work before that. But they [applicants] haven’t provided that proof, [the HMRC data] it’s in our system, so that doesn’t count.”

(Social Security Scotland)

### **Denials associated with the application process: challenges contacting young people to obtain supporting evidence**

Social Security Scotland staff also expressed frustration that JSP applicants are not required to provide evidence at the time they submit initial application form, citing difficulties contacting young people to obtain the necessary information. They felt this was compounded because they could not contact applicants by methods other than phone:

“It’s the only benefit that we don’t require them to upload evidence to make the application. It says it at the very start, what we will need from them. We can’t process everything straight away if they haven’t uploaded any evidence. And then often we can’t get hold of them by phone...There’s [...] a gap in many applications at the time of submission.”

(Social Security Scotland)

“We don’t have text functionality. We can’t email. So we really need to bring our communications into the twenty first century. Phone or letters that’s it. There’s certain automatic text messages, but we can’t send anything, even to flag we are going to phone them. People just ignore phone if they don’t recognise the number, or they’re working, so they can’t answer it anyway.”

(Social Security Scotland)

Young people fed back that the processes of communicating via phone calls without warning made following up on anything outstanding from their applications difficult. A few successful and unsuccessful applicants pointed out that in a new job you often cannot have your phone on or take a call during working hours unless agreed with a line manager.

### **Denials associated with the application process: clarity of information on about JSP**

In the research interviews, stakeholders who work with young people said that, in their view, information provided about JSP by Social Security Scotland was unclear. Specifically, this was surrounding the required supporting evidence for claims, and the eligibility criteria. Their contention was that if they found this

information unclear, then young people would certainly find it confusing, and this could be a factor in people submitting ineligible claims.

It is important to remember that not all young people applying have English as their first language. One young person explained how they needed help to apply:

“So [my support worker] helped me on the form because growing up I used sign language. So the sign language to English back the way, it’s actually quite hard. So I had to get her to help me just with the wording of the questions just as a comprehension, check on my end.”

(Successful Applicant)

Misunderstandings with questions and terminology used towards applying can happen and this could be contributing to high denial rates. The testimony of an applicant with severe dyslexia illustrates how information about JSP, including eligibility, can be misconstrued by young people – and lead to application denials. They had unsuccessfully applied for JSP as they had not taken up employment and were not eligible. When interviewed, they were still under the impression that JSP was to help with the costs for looking to start work, rather than costs to start work. They had hoped to receive JSP to help them buy a computer with a screen reader and help in their job searches and applications:

All the [job] applications were different and hard for me to work out and write things. I struggle with that. I was making me very stressed filling in applications.

“I felt really bad about myself because I find it so difficult. Some things I just don’t know how to do myself. And I need help with them, when it’s writing. And I didn’t have that really.”

(Unsuccessful applicant)

Another unsuccessful applicant explained how they really wanted JSP to pay for upfront costs for starting work. However, they could see clearly that they did not fulfil this criteria when they applied and were not surprised with their denial. There is no further evidence to support how common this experience is, but it is a possibility that some young people apply for JSP in the hope that their failure to meet certain eligibility criteria would be overlooked.

I thought the eligibility was quite clear and I applied even though I didn't fit all criteria.

“I didn't fit the length of time on the benefit – I had only been getting Universal Credit for a little over five months and thought they might look at it on a case-by-case basis.”

(Unsuccessful applicant)

### **3.6 Suggestions to improve JSP and increase take-up of the benefit**

In the interviews and focus groups, young people and stakeholders were asked if they had any suggestions which they felt might improve JSP and increase the number of eligible people applying for the benefit. Their feedback is summarised below.

#### **Improving awareness of JSP amongst young people**

With regards to raising awareness directly with potential applicants, young people felt that more could be done to promote the JSP on social media. They also suggested promoting the benefit on job search sites so that people looking for work would see adverts at a relevant time.

Stakeholders suggested further promotions of JSP via (a) a collaborative re-launch of JSP to increase media promotion and public awareness, and (b) support organisations (e.g. employability and skills groups) re-posting social media marketing campaigns by Scottish Government. Stakeholders also mentioned that the benefit should be marketed on the basis that young people can choose how they would like to spend the payment. Notably, this is something successful applicants said they particularly welcomed about JSP.

Other suggestions from stakeholders to increase awareness and take-up of JSP included the following:

- Making JSP signposting a requirement within new contracts such as Fair Start Scotland employment support service<sup>25</sup> and the Young Person's Guarantee<sup>26</sup>.
- Using the potential of data sharing agreements and intelligent automation so that young people could receive the benefit without applying. A JSP applicant also felt that there must be a way that young people could receive the benefit without applying.

### **Improving awareness of JSP amongst support organisations and employers**

As highlighted by the research findings, professionals who support unemployed young people have a key role in signposting to JSP and assisting with applications for the benefit. However, the findings also indicate that knowledge and experience of JSP could be improved within support organisations. To address this, stakeholders suggested the following measures:

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<sup>25</sup> [Scottish Government, Fair Start Scotland employment support service - Employment support](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Our partners | Young Persons guarantee](#)

- Social Security Scotland should engage in further promotions of the benefit (e.g. at forums for employability and third sector organisations) and provide more guidance on advising young people to apply. They felt this would lead to snowballing of information within organisations, and more awareness of JSP reaching frontline delivery staff.
- Improving sharing and learning from data (held by organisations who assist young people) around JSP referrals they have made, and their experiences of supporting young people to apply for the benefit.

Stakeholders also felt checks should be made that Job Centre staff are signposting young people to the benefit and not denying young people in Scotland access to UK wide support schemes such as the Flexible Support Fund<sup>27</sup> as a result of applying for JSP. However, it should be noted that findings from interviews with young people show that many had actually found out about JSP via the Job Centre, and there was no evidence that claiming JSP was affecting the ability of their work coaches to utilise specific Department of Work and Pensions funding pots. Indeed, a couple of successful JSP applicants explained how they also received support from Department of Work and Pensions in the form of vouchers to help with starting their new jobs.

The findings presented in this report show that some young people find out about JSP via their new employers. Young people suggested that more could be done to increase knowledge of JSP amongst employers, particularly to make the process of collecting supporting evidence easier. Stakeholders also suggested that Social Security Scotland should raise awareness about JSP with groups of employers in different sectors, and that employability and skills agencies should raise awareness about the benefit with individual employers.

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<sup>27</sup> [Turn2us - Getting Into Work Guide – Flexible Support Fund](#)

## **Simplifying the application process for both applicants and Social Security Scotland staff who process claims**

Young people felt that the information provided to applicants on the supporting evidence required for JSP claims (e.g. to prove care leaver status) should be made clearer, and said that there should be examples of supporting information and templates for anything they should be asking for from employers. They also suggested that (a) there should be a way for applicants to check the progress of their applications, and (b) Social Security Scotland should contact them by email for supporting evidence, rather than by phone or letter.

Based on their experience processing applications, Social Security Scotland staff also gave a number of suggestions to improve the application process, including:

- Creating clearer guidance of eligibility to help applicants and staff processing claims, including more guidance around processing claims from applicants who become self-employed
- To ensure eligible young people do not have their applications denied, staff should be able to use discretion when processing supporting evidence – for example, by being able to use a range of documents or information to validate claims (e.g. job contracts or HMRC data)
- Allowing JSP assessors to adjust job offer dates in the systems and add notes for any changes they have manually made based upon their cross checking
- Instead of contacting applicants via three phone calls and letters to obtain the necessary supporting evidence, text and email communications should also be used.

## 4. Conclusions and Implications

The main aims of the research outlined in this paper were to explore:

- The impact of JSP on people who have received this support, by learning about their experiences with the payment
- Factors which impact take-up of JSP amongst young people who are eligible for the benefit, and
- Issues around JSP application denial rates.

The findings were derived primarily from qualitative research with young people (both JSP applicants and non-applicants), Social Security Scotland staff, and stakeholders from organisations that support unemployed young people. The main findings and subsequent policy implications are summarised below.

### 4.1 Summary of key findings and implications for policy

#### The Aim and Impact of Job Start Payment

The findings indicate that there is a need for targeted support when young people start a new job. Recipients reported spending the payment on items such as clothing or transport for work. They spoke positively about the payment amount and generally felt it had boosted their confidence when starting a new job. Although not directly attributable to the payment, young people reported various other positive impacts of being in employment.

However, the findings also show that the payment amount may not be enough to meet every individual's needs – notably parents who face upfront childcare costs when starting work. There was also consensus from young people and stakeholders that the benefit was most impactful if received before the first pay

check. However, in the interviews, several young people said that they did not get the payment before their first pay check, which created worry and in some cases a need to borrow money.

### **Factors which impact take-up of Job Start Payment**

The findings highlight a number of factors which could explain why some eligible young people have not claimed JSP. For example, the evidence suggests awareness of the benefit could be greater amongst 16-24 year olds in Scotland. Also, stakeholders from employability or third sector groups felt that knowledge of JSP was low within their organisations, and that they could do more to signpost and promote the benefit to young people.

In addition to the above, stakeholders felt that having to put employer details on application forms was anxiety-inducing for young people, and potentially putting them off from applying for JSP. All participants felt that the variable length of processing times could be discouraging for young people eligible for the benefit.

### **Issues around rejected JSP applications**

The findings show the most common reasons for application denials are a failure to meet the following eligibility criteria: (a) being in receipt of a qualifying benefit for at least 6 months, and (b) being out of work for at least 6 months.

Stakeholders said a key issue with these rules is that young people are often encouraged to take up short, paid work placements, which subsequently lead to a JSP denial. They felt strongly that this was a negative feature of JSP.

Additionally, stakeholders explained that 16-17 year olds were less likely to be on a qualifying benefit, and from their experience this was the main reason for the higher rate of denials amongst this age-group.

In addition to issues with eligibility, the findings indicate that issues with the application process which are linked with denials:

- Social Security Scotland staff felt the level of supporting evidence required was excessive for a one-off payment, and it was speculated that this could be a factor in young people dropping out of the process after submitting the initial form
- Staff also said that they could only contact young people via phone or letter to obtain supporting evidence after the initial JSP application is made, which they perceived to be ineffective methods for that age-group
- Staff also explained that to validate JSP claims applicants need to provide a job offer date, confirmed in writing by employers – a process which they said led to difficulties in practice, and in some cases denials.
- Finally, stakeholders who work with unemployed young people expressed the view that information on JSP (e.g. on eligibility criteria) is confusing, and may be leading ineligible young people to apply – contributing to higher application denial rates.

### **Implications for policy**

As suggested by the main findings, JSP appears to be achieving its key aims of helping young people meet the costs of starting a new job and boosting their confidence levels when making the transition to employment. However, they also highlight a number of issues which have potential policy implications, summarised here:

- **Raising awareness of JSP amongst young people and support organisations:** More could be done to increase awareness of JSP in order to increase take-up of the benefit amongst those who are eligible.
- **Making improvements to the JSP application process:** There may be a need to simplify the application process (particularly processes and procedures around supporting evidence) to make it easier for both applicants and staff processing claims, and potentially improve processing times.
- **Considering adjustments to JSP eligibility criteria:** There may be a need to review the main eligibility criteria to ensure more young people who need support when entering employment can access JSP – notably those who have taken up short placements (but otherwise meet all the criteria) and 16-17 year olds who currently are less likely to be eligible than other young people.

## 4.2 Limitations and further research recommendations

This study provided rich and detailed information through a mainly qualitative approach. Throughout the report, there are reminders that these findings cannot be generalised to all young people's experiences. Having said that, the study provides rich and detailed information which can help evidence impacts of JSP, explain factors inhibiting or enabling take-up.

Data and information is valuable, however it is important to consider JSP has been administered over the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. As one staff member explained:

“We still don’t know what a normal year looks like in JSP, as everything has been shaped by the ebbs and flows of the pandemic.”

(Social Security Scotland)

The largest remaining research gap in relation to the research questions, is whether there are cases where eligible young people start, but do not finish, the application process. It would be very challenging to identify young people who have not completed an application. If they dropped out during the initial application Social Security Scotland would unlikely collect, and certainly not retain any personal information. Furthermore, if they dropped out of the application at the point of a request for further evidence, then establishing contact to encourage them and clarify the process would take precedence over establishing contact to include them in any evaluation. We recommend that the starting point for exploring this question is digital analytics of the applications portal. This could indicate points of drop off and examine completed fields relating to eligibility criteria.

Scottish Government will continue to review their estimation of the number of young people potentially eligible for JSP. This could be based upon a combination of population statistics, including Scotland’s Census 2022. This analysis would help compare numbers of young people eligible with numbers applying and successfully applying. Work is ongoing within Scottish Government on measuring the take-up of Scottish social security benefits.

It would be valuable to commission user testing for any updates to the application process, not only changes to the initial application forms (online, by post, by phone), but to steps throughout the process, including submission of further evidence. Ongoing user research within Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland may include this in future plans.

## Appendix A: Headline JSP information from successful applicants

Who told them	Application experience	Timescales	Spend	Status when interviewed
Job centre work coach and uncle	'Straightforward' Good experience with Social Security Scotland staff phoning and updating them	When offered job 3 weeks later	Clothes Travel ticket	Unemployed
A friend	'Long wait' and had to re-submit twice Social Security Scotland staff 'super helpful'	Over a month After first pay cheque	Clothes Travel ticket	Different employment
Employer	Seemed straightforward but took a long time and employer (a charity supporting single parents) helped them follow up.	Once started job	Clothes Travel ticket	Same employment

Job centre	Relatively simple, needed more proof of job offer.	After job offer Within 2 weeks	Put in account and used for general expenses and bills including car MOT	Same employment- from Kickstarter scheme
Job centre	Phoned to check they had received, they were reassuring.	Just over 4 weeks 2 weeks after starting job	Clothes Travel ticket Food	Same employment
A friend	Really easy and quick	Within a week or two Before first pay cheque	Travel ticket, Food Phone bill Contributed to parents' power bill	Unemployed
Social Security Scotland (young carer's grant team)	Easy to apply but felt like a long wait and had to phone them a couple of times to chase.	7 weeks	Clothes	Different employment
Job centre	Easy process	3-4 weeks	Travel Power bills Paid back money borrowed for interview expenses	College and self-employed on side

Invest in Renfrewshire	Nothing difficult- email to say processing high levels of applications so taking longer.	1 month	Into bank account, Paying credit used for start of work expenses	Same employment- from Kickstarter scheme
Manager at new job	Advised by Social Security Scotland to re-submit	3 weeks	Travel ticket, Food	Different employment part time, and full-time student
Army careers office	Straightforward	2 weeks	Protective clothing for work- gloves and boots Money to mother for house bills	In training
Facebook advert	Fine, but called to enquire and had to ask employer for extra evidence	Under one month	Clothes for herself Toys for her kids	Different employment
Job centre	Straightforward once employer provided evidence of job offer	2 weeks	Shoes Travel ticket 'A cushion' in case of unexpected expenses	Same employer- different seasonal job
Mother who saw promotion on Twitter	Simple	Around 3 weeks	Shoes Bulk buying food items for lunches	Same employment- now full time rather than part time

Boss in new job, Job centre Friends all mentioned	Straightforward except understanding and getting evidence to submit	2-3 weeks	Train to visit close family member before starting work Dinner out to celebrate new job	Same work- through Kickstarter Work-based diploma
Social Security Scotland (young carer's grant team)	Really stressful process- especially submitting evidence	3 weeks	Clothes Travel Food	Different employment and volunteering for charity supporting refugees
Job centre	Simple	Under a month	Office clothes	Same job and university
Job centre	Simple- work coach completed with them and attached needed evidence	3 days	Equipment to work from home- headset and keyboard Travel to office for training Clothes	Same job
Job centre	Straightforward	Under a month	Fuel for car Lunches Work uniform	Same job part time and Universal Credit

			Childcare costs	
Job centre	Had to phone up and found needed to submit additional evidence	Under a month	Work uniform Lunches Transport tickets	Different employment
Job centre	Simple	Around a month	Transport ticket Put in bank account for general expenses	Same employment
From partner who works for a charity	Straightforward	Under 7 working days	Clothes including safety boots Transport tickets	Same employment
Job centre	Complicated proving care status	Can't remember, 'not long'	Paying childminder upfront costs	Same employment
Employer	Helped by support worker in homeless accommodation- problems with application process submitting evidence	5 months at least	Paying back money from family and friends A desk for working from home	Same employment- Kickstarter scheme
Job centre	Straightforward	2 months	Clothes Day out with children Travel tickets	Just made redundant from temporary contract

Case worker through Fair Start Scotland	Straightforward and positive	10 days	Fuel for car Childcare costs	Different employment
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## Appendix B- Young people discussion guides

### Applicant Version

#### **Job Start Payment**

Discussion Guide, November 2021

Versions for those who have applied 'All', including 'successful applicants' and 'unsuccessful applicants'.

#### **All - Set up**

Introduce Diffley Partnership Team

Welcome to the Discussion Group–

- Explain the discussion will last up to 45 minutes
- There will be plenty of time to get your views across and discuss issues between yourselves, something we encourage; my role is to keep the conversation flowing, ensuring we cover the broad areas we need to and ask any follow-up questions,
- Fully anonymous and confidential; The Diffley Partnership abide by the Market Research Society Code of Practice and the SRA Ethical Guidelines.
- Request permission to record discussion – with your permission I will record the discussion; this is just so we can go back and listen again after the discussion. This recording will be deleted and we will never share this with anyone outside our research team.

Do you have any questions before we start?

**All- Introductions and opening discussion**

Can you please tell me a bit about the impact the pandemic has had for you? Prompts- working, types of jobs, career plans, education plans, caring responsibilities, money and savings.

Have you moved recently to take up any opportunities such as study or work?

How did you first hear about Job Start Payment?

Prompts- from whom, when abouts including

Did anyone recommend you look into applying?

Prompts- friends/ family, employer, recruiter, Career coach/ Job Centre, social worker, charity

How easy or difficult did you find it to work out if you could be eligible to receive Job Start Payment?

**Unsuccessful applicants - Details of their Circumstances**

Were you receiving any of the qualifying benefits beforehand?

Check-

- Income-based Job Seeker’s Allowance
- Contributions Job Seeker’s Allowance
- Income Support
- Income-related Employment Support Allowance
- Contributions Employment Support Allowance
- Universal Credit

Follow up- for roughly how long?

What was your employment status at the time you applied for Job Start Payment?

Check-

- Out of work for approximately how long
- Working on and off
- Studying/ education and working

- Self-employed

Please tell me a bit more about your job offer which led you to apply for Job Start Payment.

What kind of company was it with?

what kind of contract were you offered?

What were your expected weekly hours?

How long between being offered the job and your start date roughly?

### **Unsuccessful applicants - Application Process**

How did you find the application process?

Check mode-

- Online
- by phone
- by post

Did you speak to any staff about your application?

\*Only if contacted to Social Security Scotland staff (which they should have been)

How did they communicate with you?

- By phone
- By post

Follow up- How did you find this?

How easy or difficult did you find submitting evidence to support your application? Prompts- job offer date, recipient of qualifying benefits

Did your new employer provide you with any supporting evidence?

Did you expect to be successful when you applied?

Roughly how long did it take from first applying to finding out you were unsuccessful? – Prompt around how many weeks or months?

How did you find out?- by phone, email

How many times did you try to apply? Prompts- just the once or more than once, whether they were advised to re-submit

Have you any suggestions for improvement around the application process? Prompts- communication, accessibility, timescales

### **Unsuccessful applicants – Impact**

Should you have been awarded JSP, what were you thinking to spend the money on? Prompts- Public Transport, car costs including fuel, buying new clothing, Tools/ equipment for new job, food, bills, paying off debt e.g. credit card, loan, spending money on family members

What impacts did not receiving JSP have for you? Probe- please tell me more about your employment situation

How do you feel about your future job prospects?  
How would you feel about applying for JSP again?

### **Successful applicants- Application Process**

How did you find the application process?

Check mode-

- Online
- by phone
- by post

Did you speak to any staff about your application?

\*Only if contacted to Social Security Scotland staff (which they should have been)

How did they communicate with you?

- By phone
- By post

Follow up- How did you find this?

How easy or difficult did you find submitting evidence to support your application? Prompts- job offer date, recipient of qualifying benefits

Did your new employer provide you with any supporting evidence?

Roughly how long did it take from first applying to receiving the benefit? Prompt- weeks or months

How many times did you try to apply? Prompts- just the once or more than once, Follow up- were you advised to re-submit?

\* Only if unsuccessful before successful

Do you know the reason for your denial? Prompts- dates, location, age, qualifying benefits, evidence required

Have you any suggestions for improvement around the application process? Prompts- communication, accessibility, timescales

#### **Successful applicants- Spend**

How much did you receive? Prompts- £250/£252.50 or £400/£404

There are no restrictions around what Job Start Payment is spent on. Can you tell us what you spent it on? Prompts- Public Transport, car costs including fuel, buying new clothing, Tools/ equipment for new job, food, bills, paying off debt e.g. credit card, loan, spending money on family members

Did it cover/ not cover your travel to your new place of work? Please tell me more about your travel arrangements and costs and if you think they would change post pandemic?

#### **Successful applicants- Impacts**

Did receiving JSP help you at all? Follow up with probes- How so/ not so?/ In what ways?/ Please tell me more.

\*Only for parents

How did receiving JSP help your family at all? Probe- how so/ how not so?

Did JSP help you take up your new job at all? Probe- how so/ how not? (checking whether pivotal to taking up the job or meeting the costs to take up)

Did JSP impact how confident you felt when starting your new job? Probe- how so/ how not?

Could you describe the impact the new job had on your life? Prompts- well-being, social network, financial independence, lifestyle improvement, more optimistic about career. Probe- how so/ how not?

Follow up- how about your social network? How has it made you feel about your career? Probe- how so/ how not?

\*Only for parents

What difference did starting this new job mean for your family? Prompts- well-being, financial, lifestyle improvement Probe- how so/ how not?

What are your circumstances now?

Check-

- Same employment
- Different employment
- Unemployed
- Education/ training
- Other

### **All - Conclusions and wrap-up**

Would you recommend young people you know apply for JSP? Probe- How so/ how not?

Lastly, do you have any suggestions for improvement so that Job Start Payment can help young people who are out of work and starting a new job?



Thank you for your time today.

To confirm you will receive a e-gift card for Love2Shop for £30 as a thank you for your time today. Please check your email, including your junk mail folder. Any problems let us know.

## Non-applicant version

### Job Start Payment

Discussion Guide, December 2021

Version for non-applicants (who are not in school and have taken up employment)

#### Set up

Introduce Diffley Partnership Team

Welcome to the Discussion Group–

- Explain the discussion will last up to 45 minutes
- There will be plenty of time to get your views across and discuss issues between yourselves, something we encourage; my role is to keep the conversation flowing, ensuring we cover the broad areas we need to and ask any follow-up questions,
- Fully anonymous and confidential; The Diffley Partnership abide by the Market Research Society Code of Practice and the SRA Ethical Guidelines.
- Request permission to record discussion – with your permission I will record the discussion; this is just so we can go back and listen again after the discussion. This recording will be deleted and we will never share this with anyone outside our research team.

Do you have any questions before we start?

#### Preamble

We are talking to you today because we have been commissioned by the Scottish Government to evaluate a benefit called Job Start Payment.

As part of the evaluation we are speaking to young people who have applied for the benefit.

We are also speaking to young people, such as yourself, who have not applied for the benefit.

Hearing about your experiences will help inform Scottish Government about the wider context of young people and work, including the costs of starting a new job.

#### Employment History

What opportunities have you looked into in the past few years?

- Employment
- Apprenticeships
- College/ University

How has the pandemic impacted your opportunities and your choices?

Have you received any guidance about your opportunities?:

- Careers advice and guidance through school/ college/ university
- Job centre plus
- My World of Work/ Young Person's Guarantee (SDS)
- Charities
- Trade unions
- Professional bodies

Please tell me more

Please tell me about your employment status in the past few years

Follow up if have worked-

- What kind of companies have you worked for?
- what kind of contracts have you been offered?
- What amount of weekly hours have you been working?

What was your employment status at the moment?

Check-

- Out of work, for approximately how long
- Working on and off
- Studying/ education and working
- Self-employed

Follow up if working-

Please tell me more about your current job

- What kind of company do you work for?
- What kind of contract do you have?
- What kind of hours do you work?

Follow up if not working-

Please tell me a bit more

- Are you actively looking for work at the moment?
- What kind of work are you looking for?
- Have you any concerns about starting a new job when you are offered one?

Follow up if self-employed-

Please tell me a bit more

- When did you set up as self-employed?
- Did you gain any financial assistance to help you whilst contracts picked up?

#### Experience of starting jobs

Interviewer check responses to survey- taken up new jobs within the JSP period- one/ more than one.

In your survey you said that you had taken up Interview enter job/ jobs, since May 2020

Please tell me a bit more about the job/s you have taken up

- Were you out of work for any periods in between jobs?
- Did any jobs fall through?
- Were you doing any trial shifts?

- Did you get advice about jobs from any professionals such as careers advisors?
- Where did you look for jobs?
- Did you go through any recruitment agencies?

Have you found any financial difficulties when starting a new job?

Have you ever been put off applying for/ or taking up a job because the upfront costs were too high?

Have you ever had to pay anything upfront before getting your first salary payment?

Prompts- travel costs, uniform and equipment costs, childcare costs

Did you expect these costs before starting the job?

How have you managed to pay for up front costs before getting your first salary payment?

Prompts- savings, credit, loans, borrow family and friends

Did you look into what financial assistance you could get to help with these upfront costs?

Did you look into what benefits were available, such as Job Start Payment?

#### Knowledge, Experience and Views of JSP

Interviewer check survey response- note whether they had heard/ not heard of JSP prior to our survey and whether they are aware/ unaware of assistance from government

If respondent not heard of JSP prior to our survey:

Job Start Payment is a benefit to help young people with the cost of starting a new job.

How might receiving that benefit have helped you?

Interviewer check survey response- note whether heard of JSP but not applied.

If respondent heard of JSP but did not apply:

When and how did you first become aware of Job Start Payment?

Please tell us more about why you didn't apply for Job Start Payment

You said in our survey your reasons were Interviewer enter, please tell me more

If respondent heard of JSP, and did not complete their application:

You said in our survey your experience starting to apply for Job Start Payment was Interviewer enter, please tell me more

#### Details of their Circumstances

Interviewer- check survey responses and select questions accordingly- benefits, disability, parents etc.

If claiming any of the eligible benefits-

Have you had any advice about benefits you may be eligible for and from whom?

Check-

- Social worker
- Job Centre Plus

How would you describe your financial situation at the moment?

Do you feel able to deal with the unexpected i.e. an unexpected expense of £200 or more- Why/ why not?

How does thinking about your financial situation make you feel?- why?

Have you had any advice about financial management and from whom?

Check-

- Friends and family
- Bank/ building society
- Credit union

- Money Advice Scotland
- Other charities
- Sources online- websites/ videos

Can you please tell me a bit about the impact the pandemic has had for you? Prompts- health and wellbeing of them and their family

How do you feel about your future job prospects?

#### Suggestions

Interviewer- check response to last question in the survey and follow up

Lastly, do you have any suggestions for the Scottish Government to help young people who are out of work and starting a new job?

#### Conclusions and wrap-up

Thank you for your time today.

To confirm you will receive a e-gift card for Love2Shop for £30 as a thank you for your time today. Please check your email, including your junk mail folder over this coming week. Any problems let us know.

Thank and close

## Appendix C- Stakeholder Discussion Guide

<p><b>Job Start Payment</b></p> <p>Stakeholder Discussion Guide, November 2021</p> <p>Prep- interviewer highlights questions relevant for each stakeholder group</p>
<p>Set up (5 mins)</p>
<p>Introduce Diffley Partnership Team</p> <p>Welcome to the Discussion Group/ Interview–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explain this will last an hour</li> <li>- There will be plenty of time to get your views across, my role is to keep the conversation flowing, ensuring we cover the broad areas we need to and ask any follow-up questions,</li> <li>- Fully anonymous and confidential; The Diffley Partnership abide by the Market Research Society Code of Practice and the SRA Ethical Guidelines.</li> <li>- Request permission to record discussion – with your permission I will record the discussion; this is just so we can go back and listen again after the discussion</li> </ul> <p>Do you have any questions before we start?</p>
<p>Introductions and opening discussion (5 mins)</p>
<p>To begin, please can we go round everyone to briefly outline your role and connection with JSP to date.</p>
<p>Context of benefit- young people and employment</p>
<p>First, let's discuss the context of JSP.</p> <p>What are your key observations of the challenges faced by young people in securing and sustaining employment? Prompts- Covid recovery</p>

What are the main barriers experienced by young people? Prompts- financial, skills gaps, opportunity availability, inequality

Do you have any observations on the hours of employment this age group are?

- Seeking
- Securing

Follow up for both- Is over 12 hours a week the norm?

#### Take up and Eligibility

How does your organisation support young people to apply for JSP?

Have you come across cases where young people choose not to apply for JSP?

Prompt- eligibility criteria

Let me quickly run through the eligibility criteria of JSP to get your feedback.

On the day of the job offer they must be aged 16-24, offered a job averaged at least 12 hours per week over a four week period, have been out of work and receiving an income related benefit continuously for at least 6 months, be living in Scotland.

Care leavers have to be out of work (not for min of 6 months) and in receipt of a qualifying benefit. They can apply up until their 26th birthday.

Have you any reflections on the eligibility criteria concerning?

- Age groups
- Hours of work within a four-week period
- Continuous period of income related benefit- the qualifying benefits

JSP has had high levels of non-eligible applications. What are your thoughts on reasons for this?

Have you any examples of supporting young people whose applications have been rejected?

- Reasons for rejection
- Reactions
- Implications

Have you observed any other barriers to eligible young people accessing JSP?

- Associated with the application process
- Due to lack of awareness/ promotion
- As a result of Covid pandemic

Do you feel that JSP is missing any groups of young people?

Prompts- protected characteristics, groups they work with

(Interviewer n.b. Consultation and reference group work suggested enhanced payments for disabled young people, people living in rural areas and older people. The distinction between care leavers and care experienced may also come up – the former are defined in the legislation and have easier eligibility rules. The latter are not treated differently)

#### Views on Impacts for individuals

We are now going to cover the impacts you are aware of from JSP since its introduction

Do you have any examples of how JSP has supported individuals?

Do you feel that JSP helps meet costs associated with starting a new job, and enables clients to take-up employment offers?

Do you feel JSP helps people be more confident about starting a job, and reduces anxiety during the transition to employment?

Do you feel JSP then helps people sustain employment?

Have you any examples of how JSP has led to improvements to young people's lives during and after their transition to employment?

- helping them build and/or sustain social networks
- allows them to participate more fully in society
- broadens lifestyle choices
- impacts the health and well-being of clients' families (including children, where applicable)

Are you aware of any other impacts from JSP we have not covered?

#### Recommendations for improvement

Do you have any thoughts on factors which influence the impact of JSP during the pandemic?

Prompts- types of jobs, distance travelled to jobs, salary for jobs, types of contract

Given your reflections on JSP and its impacts do you have any recommendations for improvement?

Going forward have you any views on how JSP can- [go through each dimension separately]

- Treat clients fairly and with dignity
- Invest in people
- Reduce poverty
- Bring value for money

#### Conclusions and wrap-up

Thank you very much for the discussion, is there anything not already covered that you would like to mention?

Thank and close

## Appendix D- suggestions made through respondents to survey of young people

- More young people want to work for themselves it would be useful to have more tools available.
- Consideration needs to be given to the fact that disabled young people are likely to incur more costs when starting a new job.
- A mentorship programme would be nice too, for young people who don't have a suitable person to support them in their future choices. This doesn't have to be someone in a particular career, just someone who is willing to be there for a young person.
- Community based resources/funds may be more appropriate. Less red tape and more local knowledge on who needs help.
- I am 20 and have been working at living wage for the past few years and was shocked when I interviewed for a few jobs and they were all minimum wage - £3 less per hour than living wage. How is the minimum wage for young people so much less than over 25's? They have the same bills, rent etc to pay and do the same job so why are they paid less?
- I think it would be nice if there was some sort of programme for young people in Scotland who have severe anxiety but want to work.
- Have a place to rent / borrow more office/formal clothes for interviews.



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*From many voices to smart choices*

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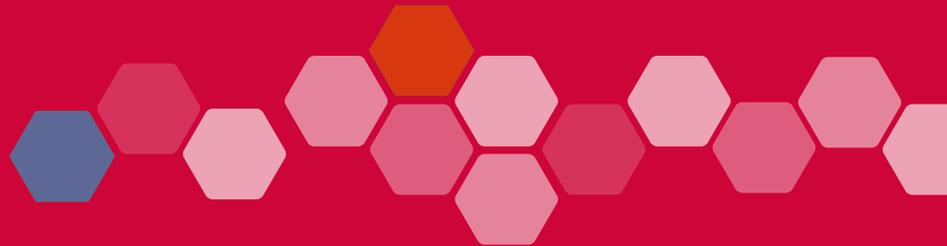
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