

EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Experience Panels: Employment Injury Assistance

Background

The Scottish Government is now responsible for some of the benefits previously delivered by the UK Government Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the work to prepare for this change, in 2017 the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels.

**Department
For Work
and
Pensions**



**Scottish
Government**



Over 2,400 people who have recent experience of receiving at least one of the benefits devolved to Scotland registered to take part in the Experience Panels when they were launched. As Social Security Scotland is now an established agency and the majority of benefits are live, the Experience Panels will close in April 2024.

This summary sets out the findings from a questionnaire about experiences of the Industrial Injuries Scheme.

What is the Industrial Injuries Scheme?



The Industrial Injuries Scheme (IIS) gives financial support to people who have become disabled or have developed a long-term health condition as a result of their work. The main benefit under IIS is Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB).



The Scottish Government is planning to replace IIS in Scotland. To do this, The Scottish Government has committed to introducing a new benefit called **Employment Injury Assistance** which will be delivered by Social Security Scotland.



Since April 2020, the Scottish Government has been responsible for the IIS in Scotland. It is currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) due to an agreement with the Scottish Government. This ensures that people continue to receive the payments they are entitled to when they need it.

This has meant that the Scottish Government have had to take time to think carefully about Employment Injury Assistance. This has taken longer than we planned due to the pandemic and other benefits we have had to prioritise such as Adult Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment.

About the research



Panel members who have received an Industrial Injuries Scheme benefit were invited to fill in a questionnaire about their experience. The questionnaire was open from December 2023 to January 2024.



16 responses were received.



More men than women responded.
Most were aged between 60 and 79 years old.



Almost all respondents had a long-term health condition or disability.



Almost all were carers, meaning that they cared for an adult or child with a long-term health condition, or an adult who needs support due to old age.



14 respondents had experience of IIDB, and one had experience of Unemployability Supplement. One respondent was a carer for a family member who received IIDB.



Quotes taken from comments made by respondents are used in this summary. Edits to spelling and grammar have been made to improve readability.

Finding Information



Most respondents said they found out about Industrial Injuries Scheme benefits via an organisation or professional.

Some respondents said which organisations or professionals provided them information. These were:

- the Department of Health and Social Security
- National Union of Mineworkers
- Legal advice
- Citizens Advice



Some found out information from a Jobcentre Plus adviser and some were given information from friends and family.

Application



There was mixed feedback about applying for an Industrial Injuries Scheme benefit through DWP. The majority of participants found it easy to apply. Some said it had been difficult or very difficult. Some said they couldn't remember.



One respondent said the application form wasn't difficult but took a long time to fill in. However, another said that they had found the questions difficult.



Another stated that they felt they had to provide a lot of information about their injury during their application.



Respondents' preferred way to apply for an Industrial Injuries Scheme Benefit was online. The second preferred option was to apply in person, followed by paper application.



Only two respondents said they had received ongoing help with their application. One respondent said it hadn't been easy to access support and advice when they applied.

Respondents provided **mixed feedback on their experience of the application process** overall.



A couple said the process was straightforward. Others were less favourable. One said they found the process difficult, especially the medical assessment which they felt didn't reflect their circumstances.

Quote from panel member:



“It all seemed so difficult. Filling in boxes with as much information [as possible] then assessment [which] consisted of bend, stretch and refused [the payment] because you could do this, but lost job, career due to disability which became permanent and progressive. There was no recognition of this by assessor.”



One respondent felt the process had lots of “obstacles” which aimed to put off people from making applications.

Medical Assessment



Almost all the respondents had been requested by DWP to undertake a medical assessment for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.



Experiences of the medical assessment were mixed. Some respondents said the assessment had been straightforward. One respondent said it had been good to talk to a doctor in person and not just rely on filling in a form.

Quote from panel member:



“[It was good] dealing with a doctor in person. Sometimes it’s difficult to formulate words when filling in a form.”



Some said it had been a negative experience. One called the assessment “stressful”. Another respondent said the assessment had made them feel like “an object” and one said they had been made to feel like a “liar”.



One respondent said they had three assessments and the location had not been accessible.

Quote from panel member:



“I had to have three medicals, the building was very difficult to get into with a wheelchair, I was more or less called a liar.”



One respondent said there had been a long wait to arrange the assessment.

Decisions and payments



Views were mixed on the length of time taken to receive a decision. One respondent said it took months to hear anything after their application. One said the process took around 6 weeks. A couple of respondents said it didn't take too long.

Quote from panel member:



“It took months to get any correspondence from anyone and when I did, it was to refuse me as I could not pinpoint a specific date and time of injury.”



More than half of the respondents said they received a payment every week. Most others said they received a payment every four weeks.

Quote from panel member:



“So glad to receive the benefit weekly, it certainly does help me live from week to week.”

Feedback about the process overall



Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed that the current Industrial Injuries Scheme treats people with **dignity, fairness and respect**. Answers were mixed. About the same number of respondents said they agreed compared to disagreed. Around the same number said they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents also provided overall feedback about the process.



One respondent said the process had been straightforward and quick. One said they were happy to receive the benefit especially given how hard it had been for someone with a disability to find work.

Quote from panel member:



“Filling in the form was quite straightforward and the medical assessment was carried out shortly afterwards. The [benefit] was then awarded quite quickly.”



One respondent said they had “persevered” through the process.



Two respondents said that “nothing” had gone well in the process. One respondent said they experienced difficulties about the timing of their injury. They were asked to give a specific date when their injury happened but weren’t able to do this as their condition had worsened over time.

Respondents said what could be **improved** about the overall process.



One respondent said the process should treat people with kindness.



One participant said it was important that medical assessments are carried out by qualified staff who understand the impacts of injuries on a client.

Quote from panel member:



“Employing suitably qualified medical assessors, with at least over 5 years specialist hospital-based experience would be a good start to understanding the nature and presentation of permanent disability, especially spinal injury and chronic pain.”



One respondent said employers should have more responsibility for injuries caused through work.

The respondent also said it should be clearer how different benefits for people with disabilities interact with each other and why there are different benefits for people with needs resulting from an industrial injury compared to other health conditions or disabilities.

The respondent said that it is important that the rules for benefits took into account that different groups may experience more or less injuries as a result from work, in particular, differences between men and women.

Quote from panel member:



“Now, I accept that some of these benefits are in a sense restorative [...] But what are benefits for, and how did we reach a situation where some people with very severe needs are receiving far less support than others? [...] Men are far more likely to get...Industrial Injury benefits than women, yet women often suffer from long term disabilities and might have identical care and support needs. So, it is sexist and discriminatory: and I am saying this as a man.”



One respondent said there should be more information about industrial injuries benefits.

Quote from panel member:



“No one tells you about these benefits, I found out by chance after talking to someone regarding my injury at work.”

Future



Most respondents said they would like to get information about industrial injuries benefits online. Many also said they would like written information and for Social Security Scotland to provide information. Only a couple of respondents said they would like information in newspapers or magazines or via Jobcentre Plus.

One respondent felt that the system wasn't set up for people who earn lower wages or who experience financial difficulties. The respondent said that the Industrial Injuries Scheme only provided help for people who are better-off financially. Receiving Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit can affect entitlement to some income-related benefits such as Universal Credit or Pension Credit. The respondent suggested that a dedicated agency should be created to administer benefits for people injured at work.

Quote from panel member:



“There must be a special agency set up so that everyone injured at work is included, not just the well off as that's how [I feel] it works at the moment – for the well off already.”



More respondents said Employment Injury Assistance should be paid weekly compared to monthly.



There was some support among respondents to offer a choice of regular payments or a lump-sum to let clients choose the method that suits them best.

Quote from panel member:



“I was never given this choice. I think age might have a lot to do with it. All forms of payment should be considered and best choice given.”



Four respondents said regular payments helped with budgeting.



Respondents were asked if there was anything it is important to consider about giving clients the choice to receive a **lump-sum**. Respondents gave a range of things to consider.



Two respondents said lump-sums were not a good idea. One said a lump-sum might only be helpful if a client is at end-of-life. Another said ongoing payments were more suitable if it is unknown how long an injury may have an impact on the client.

Quote from panel member:



“Someone who is in receipt of [the] benefit would be better with weekly or monthly payments because one never knows how long an injury can affect a recipient.”



Two raised concerns that a lump sum could have an impact on entitlement for other benefits or for tax. One respondent said it was important to provide information about how the benefit would affect a client's finances.

Quote from panel member:



“It would have to be transparent in the information you provide to the client. For example, any tax issues this would incur, any other benefit this would affect. All relevant information would have to be disclosed.”

Next steps



This questionnaire gathered feedback to help to make sure that the new benefit works well for the people who are entitled to it.



The findings from this questionnaire will provide evidence on how the IIS is experienced by clients and it will also inform policy development of Employment Injury Assistance in Scotland. The Scottish Government has committed to consulting on Employment Injury Assistance this year.



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