

Take-up rates of Scottish benefits 2024

November 2024

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Introduction

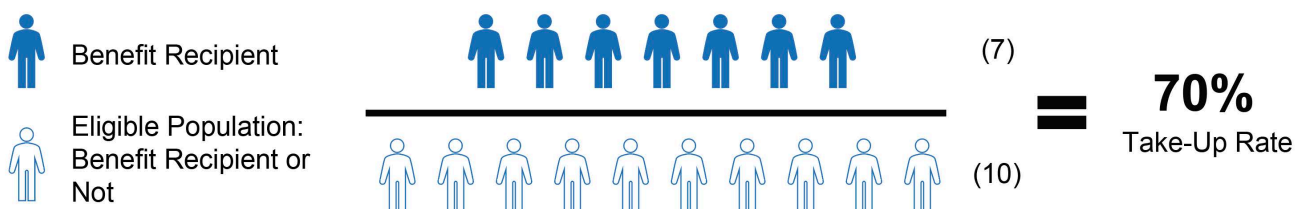
The [Social Security Scotland Charter](#) sets out what people should expect from Scotland's social security system. This includes working towards a better future by investing in the people of Scotland and making a positive difference to all our lives. As part of this the Scottish Government has committed to improving take-up, ensuring as many people as possible get the benefit support they are entitled to and making a particular effort to reach people who are most likely to be excluded.

Analysis of take-up rates are important to understand to what extent social security benefits delivered in Scotland are reaching the people intended and how that is changing over time. This is the third annual publication of estimates of take-up of the Scottish benefits delivered by [Social Security Scotland](#), covering:

- Scottish Child Payment (including local authority estimates)
- Best Start Grant
- Best Start Foods
- Young Carer Grant
- Funeral Support Payment
- Job Start Payment

What is take-up?

- A take-up rate is the percentage of people entitled to a benefit that receive it.
- Some people do not apply for benefits they are entitled to, this could be due to: social barriers (e.g. perceived stigma of applying for benefits), costly or complex access (e.g. complex application process), or a lack of information (e.g. people being unaware of available support).
- Take-up rates are calculated by dividing the number of recipients of a benefit by the number of people eligible for the benefit (whether they received the benefit or not).
- While the number of people receiving these benefits is known, the number of people eligible to claim these benefits has to be estimated. **This means the take-up rates in this publication are estimates only and contain a degree of uncertainty.**



Take-Up Rate Estimates

Most recent estimates of take-up for each benefit are outlined below, with time series estimates for previous years in Table 1 and Table 2, showing how estimated take-up rates have changed over time. Take-up rates can change due to a variety of different factors, and a degree of fluctuation annually for each benefit should be expected.

Due to wide eligibility windows for some benefits and the need to ensure only people who have had their full eligibility window to apply are counted, there are some take-up rate estimates which are for years prior to 2023-24 (e.g. Best Start Grant Pregnancy & Baby payment and Early Learning Payment). However, for every benefit, this publication provides a new additional annual estimate since last year's.

Figure 1: Take-Up Rates of Scottish Benefits

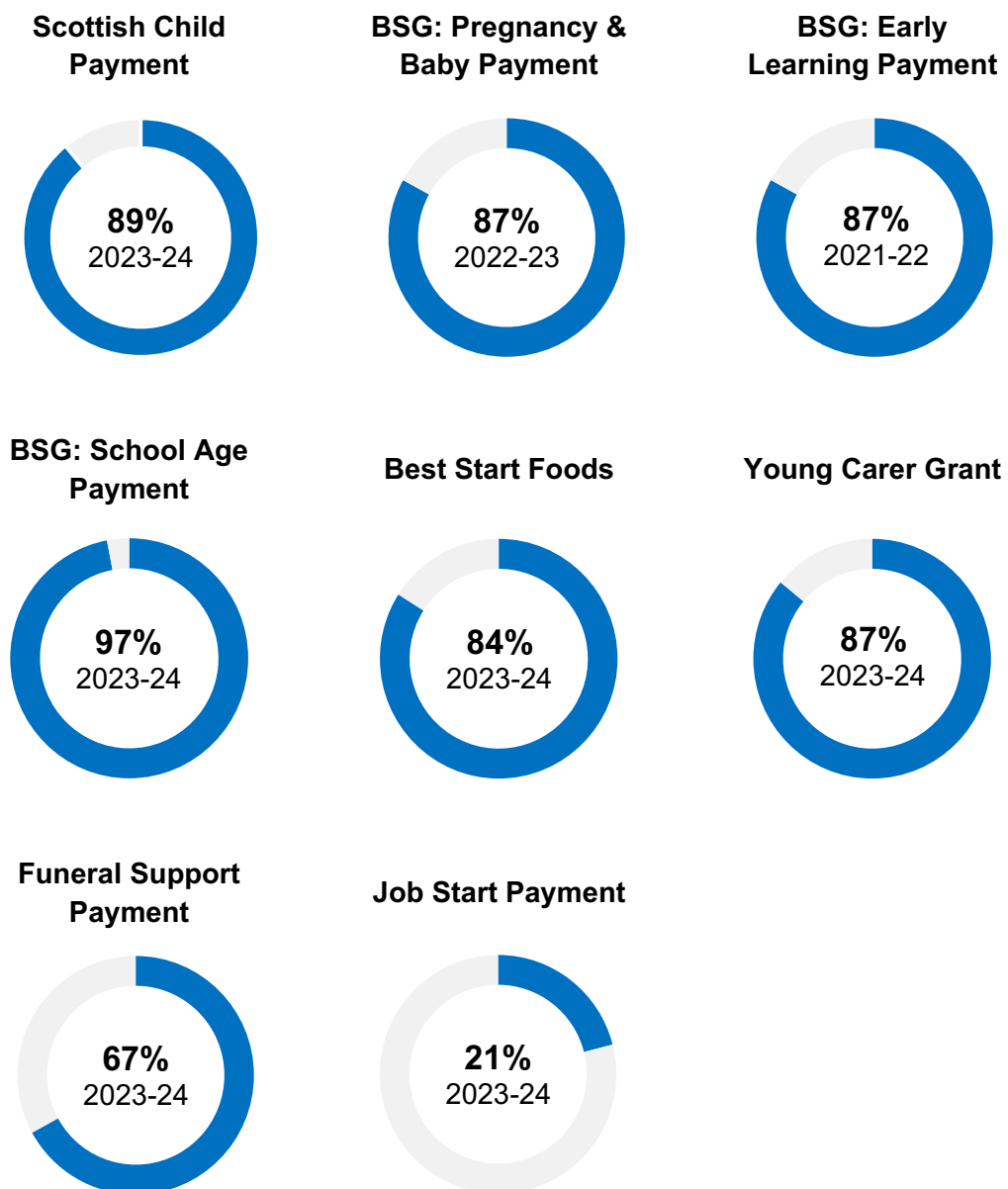


Table 1. Annual Estimates of Take-Up: Five Family Payments

Year	Scottish Child Payment	BSG: Pregnancy and Baby Payment	BSG: Early Learning Payment	BSG: School Age Payment	Best Start Foods
2019-20	..	83%	85%	73%	..
2020-21	..	84%	80%	91%	71%
2021-22	..	83%	87%	77%	92%
2022-23	..	87%	..	97%	92%
2023-24	89%	97%	84%

Table 2. Annual Estimates of Take-Up: Other Benefits

Year	Young Carer Grant	Job Start Payment	Funeral Support Payment
2019-20
2020-21	68%	30%	49%
2021-22	73%	29%	66%
2022-23	75%	15%	61%
2023-24	87%	21%	67%

Methodology

A detailed overview of the methodology used to estimate take-up is provided at the end of this publication.

Analysis of Take-Up Rate Estimates

Overview

All the figures presented in this publication are estimates and there is more uncertainty for benefits with lower numbers of recipients as there is a higher degree of uncertainty within the eligibility calculations. Therefore fluctuations in estimated take-up rates year to year should be expected.

Benefit take up rates are likely to be influenced by levels of awareness of the benefit, whether the benefit is a regular or one-off payment, the value of the benefit, and the characteristics of recipients (e.g. age profile etc.).

The estimated take-up rates for Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods – the ‘Five Family Payments’ – are generally higher than the other Scottish benefits.

There are a number of possible reasons for this. For example, eligible families can make a combined application for all of the five family payments resulting in a simplified process. There are also more opportunities to reach and inform eligible families about the Five Family Payments through the public services they already access as part of supporting their children to grow, learn and develop. This helps to spread awareness through word of mouth, complementing the wider marketing efforts of Social Security Scotland.

Scottish Child Payment

Results

The estimated take-up rate of Scottish Child Payment for all children aged under 16 in 2023-24 is 89%. This is the first time a full financial year take-up rate estimate can be provided for all children aged under 16 since eligibility was extended to include children aged 6 to under 16 in November 2022. Last year’s publication included a March 2023 snapshot take-up rate estimate for all children aged under 16 of 83%. Analysis of quarterly Scottish Child Payment take-up rates throughout 2023-24, for June, September, December and March, show estimated take-up rates for all children aged under 16 steadily increasing over that time.

The estimated take-up rate of Scottish Child Payment for children aged under 6 in 2023-24 is 97%. This is a marginal increase from last year’s estimate of 95% and

indicates the vast majority of children aged under 6 in families eligible for Scottish Child Payment go on to receive the payment.

The estimated take-up rate of Scottish Child Payment for children aged 6 to under 16 in 2023-24 is 85%. This is the first time a full financial year take-up rate estimate can be provided for children aged 6 to under 16 since eligibility was extended to include them in November 2022. Last year's publication included a March 2023 snapshot take-up rate estimate for children aged 6 to under 16 of 77%. Analysis of quarterly Scottish Child Payment take-up rates throughout 2023-24, for June, September, December and March, show estimated take-up rates for children aged 6 to under 16 steadily increasing over that time

Overall, these figures reflect lower take-up rates for older children than younger children, however, they are steadily increasing over time and are expected to continue to do so, as awareness of the eligibility extension increases, as observed with take-up rates for younger children. It may be that younger children continue to have higher take-up rates than older children due to a number of reasons, including associated education and health settings having more involvement in benefit awareness than for older children. However, the Scottish Fiscal Commission expects gradual convergence of these take-up rates over time.

This publication includes estimated take-up rates for Scottish Child Payment at the local authority level for the second time. These estimates range from 84% to 94%

Best Start Grant

Results

The estimated take-up rate for Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment in 2022-23 is 87%. This is an increase on last year's estimate of 83% for 2021-22. Given that applications can be made between a 9 month window, 2022-23 is the latest full year an estimate can be produced for, to ensure all clients counted as eligible have been given their full window to apply. The number of payments made for clients eligible in that time declined slightly compared with the year before, but there was an even larger decline in the estimated number of clients eligible for the payment which results in a higher take-up rate than last year. Next year's publication will cover 2023-24.

The estimated take-up rate for Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment in 2021-22 is 87%, a substantial increase from last year's estimate of 80% for 2020-21. Automation of payments to clients already receiving Scottish Child Payment began in November 2022, which has contributed to this increase. Due to the 18 month

application window for Early Learning Payment, 2021-22 is the latest full year an estimate can be produced for. Next year's publication will cover 2022-23.

The estimated take-up rate for Best Start Grant School Age Payment in 2023-24 is 97%, the same as last year's estimate of 97% for 2022-23. For 2023-24, both the estimated number of children eligible for the payment and the number in receipt, were very similar to the year before.

Best Start Foods

Results

The estimated take-up rate for Best Start Foods for 2023-24 is 84%. This is a substantial decrease from the previous year's estimate of 92%. Although between last year and this year, the number of people eligible for Best Start Foods is estimated to be fairly stable, the total number of payments made to clients has decreased by around 8% and the decline in the estimated take-up rate appears to be driven by a fall in application numbers.

As of February 2024, the income limit which applied to Best Start Foods eligibility has been removed, this effect has been excluded from this year's analysis as it applied for around 1 month only, however, for next year's estimate of Best Start Foods take-up for 2024-25, the income threshold removal will apply for the entire financial year and this will increase the number of people eligible to receive Best Start Foods.

Young Carer Grant

Results

The estimated take-up rate for Young Carer Grant in 2023-24 is 87%, a substantial increase from last year's estimate of 75% for 2022-23 and a year on year increase in estimated take-up rates since 2020-21.

Successful applications to Young Carer Grant increased by around 50% between 2022-23 and 2023-24 while the estimated number of people eligible increased by around 30%.

It should be noted there is a particular difficulty in accurately estimating the size of the eligible population for Young Carer Grant. This is due to the small size of the eligible population and uncertainty of survey data used to analyse caring prevalence.

Job Start Payment

Results

The estimated take-up rate for Job Start Payment in 2023-24 is 21%, an increase on last year's estimate of 15% for 2022-23. Despite this increase, Job Start Payment still has the lowest take-up rate of any Scottish benefit.

According to published [statistics](#), there were 775 authorised applications for Job Start Payment in 2023-24 from 1905 total applications. This demonstrates a large number of people eligible for the payment are not applying for it and a large number of people who do apply are deemed not eligible.

Funeral Support Payment

Results

The estimated take-up rate for Funeral Support Payment in 2023-24 is 67%, an increase from last year's estimate of 61% for 2022-23.

While the number of people estimated to be eligible for Funeral Support Payment in 2023-24 was lower than the year before, a higher number of payments were made.

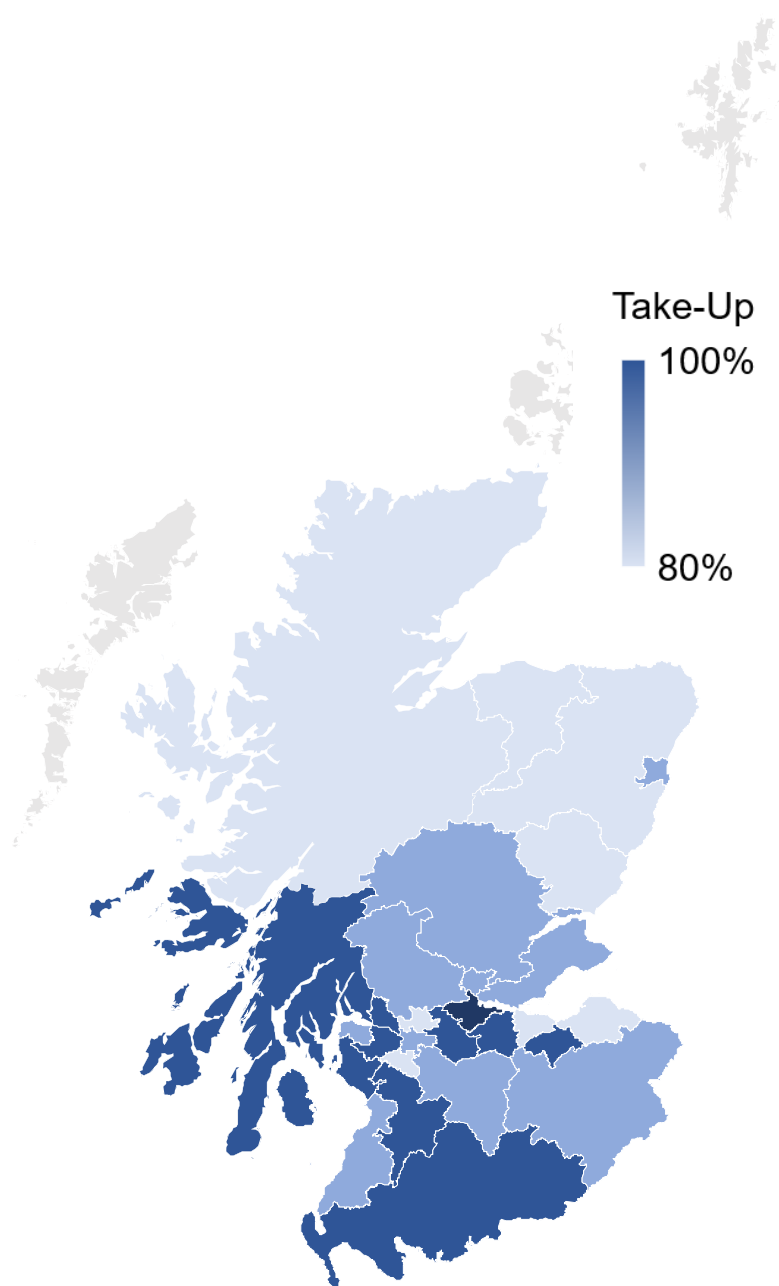
There is a higher degree of uncertainty in the estimate of eligibility for Funeral Support Payment than other benefits because of the need to identify the likelihood of the person responsible for the funeral being eligible. For that reason it is reasonable to expect variation in take-up rates year to year. Another potential reason why take-up of Funeral Support Payment is lower than other benefits is that people may make provision to cover funeral costs themselves, for example with money left in the deceased person's estate, and therefore choose not to claim the benefit. Or some people may in fact be ineligible due to the level of funds in the estate but are still included in the eligible population when calculating estimated take-up.

Methodological changes to estimating the take-up rates for Funeral Support Payment were introduced for this year's publication which we believe has improved the robustness of this estimate.

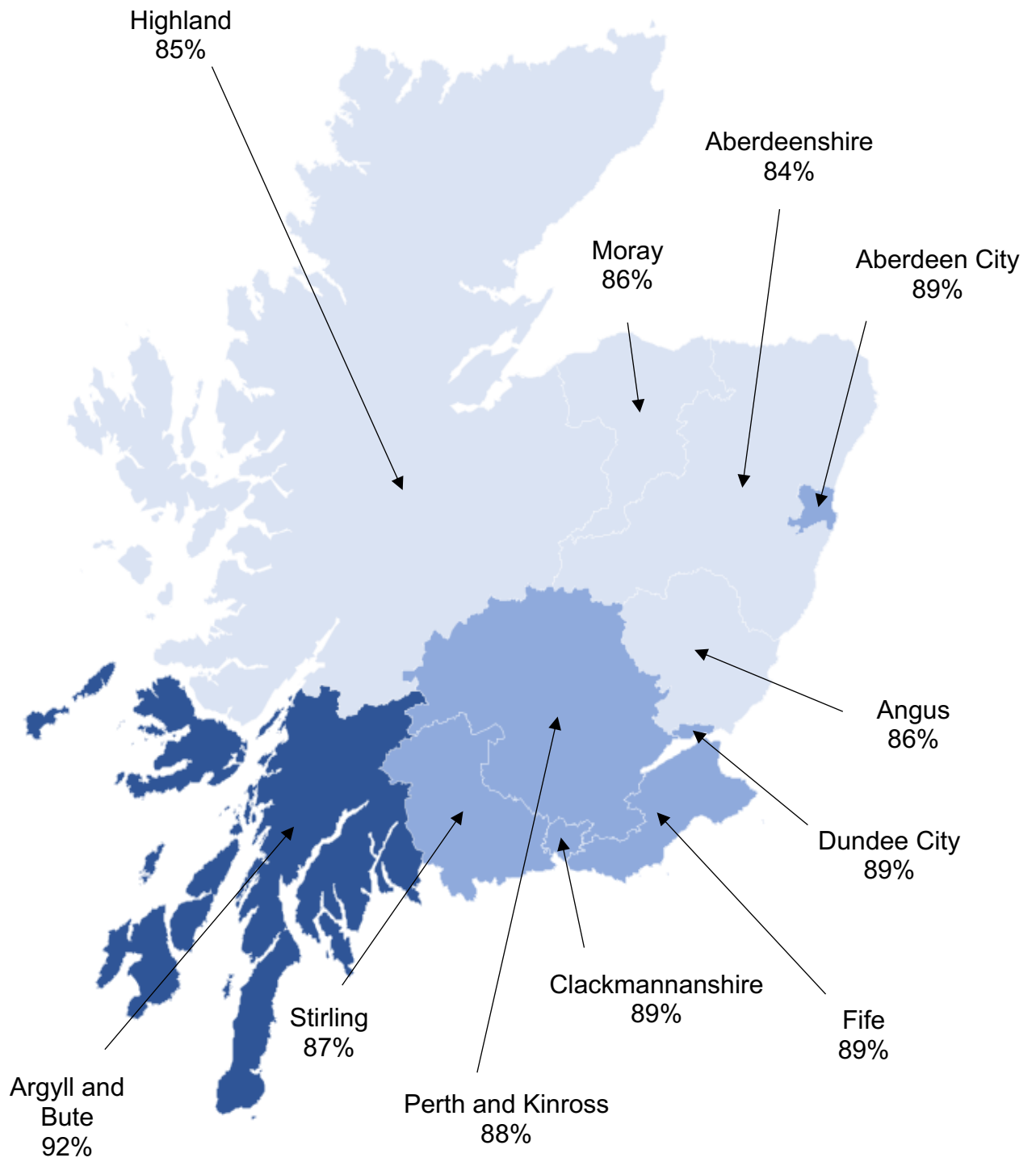
Scottish Child Payment: Local Authority Take-Up Rate Estimates

The following maps and table (Table 3) show estimated take-up rates for Scottish Child Payment (all children under 16) across local authorities in Scotland for 2023-24. Estimated take-up rates range from the lowest estimates of 84% for Aberdeenshire, East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire to the highest estimate of 94% for Falkirk.

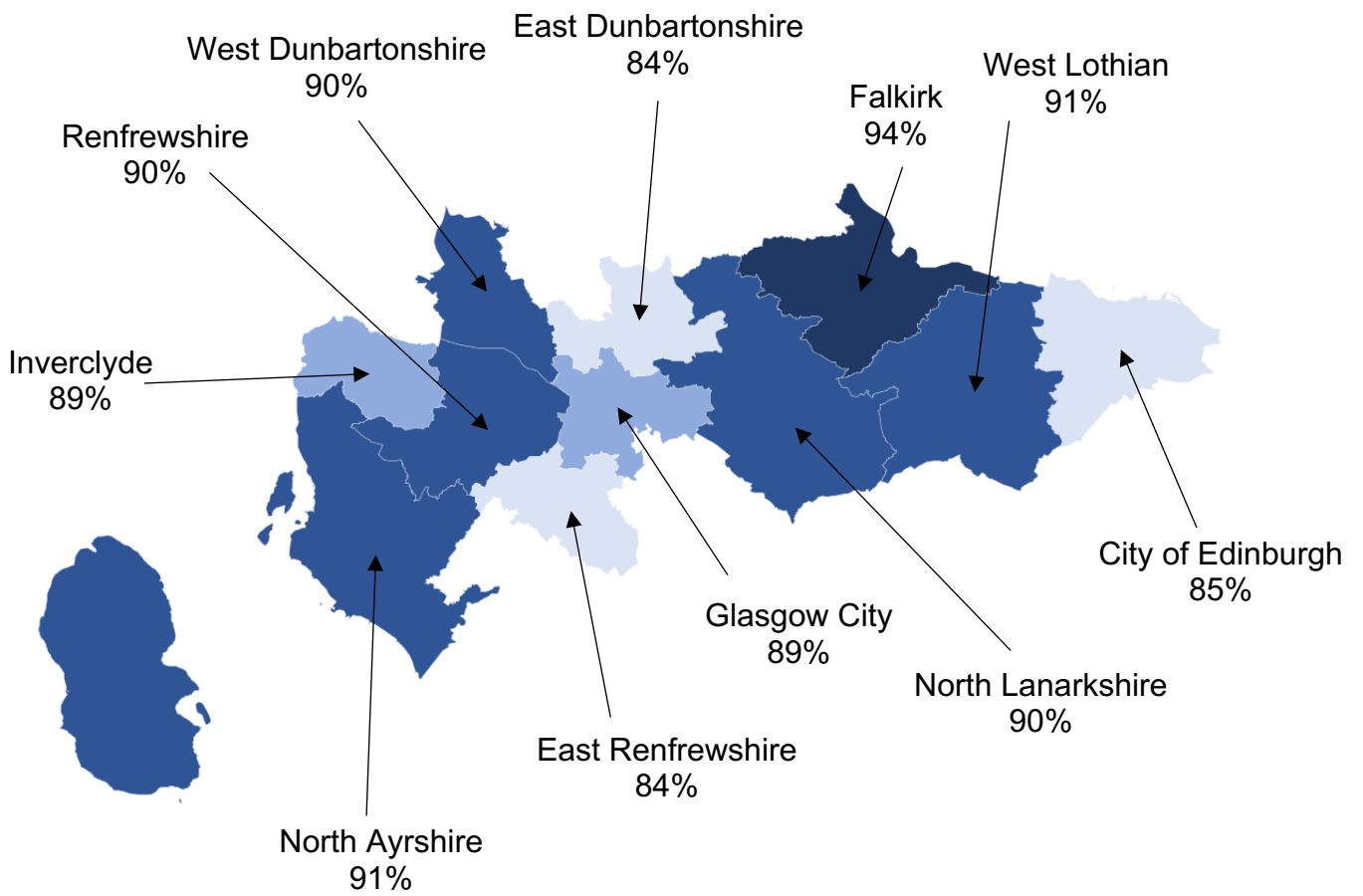
Map 1 – All Local Authorities Scottish Child Payment Take-Up Rates



Map 2 – Northern Region Scottish Child Payment Take-Up Rates



Map 3 – Central Region Scottish Child Payment Take-Up Rates



Map 4 – Southern Region Scottish Child Payment Take-Up Rates

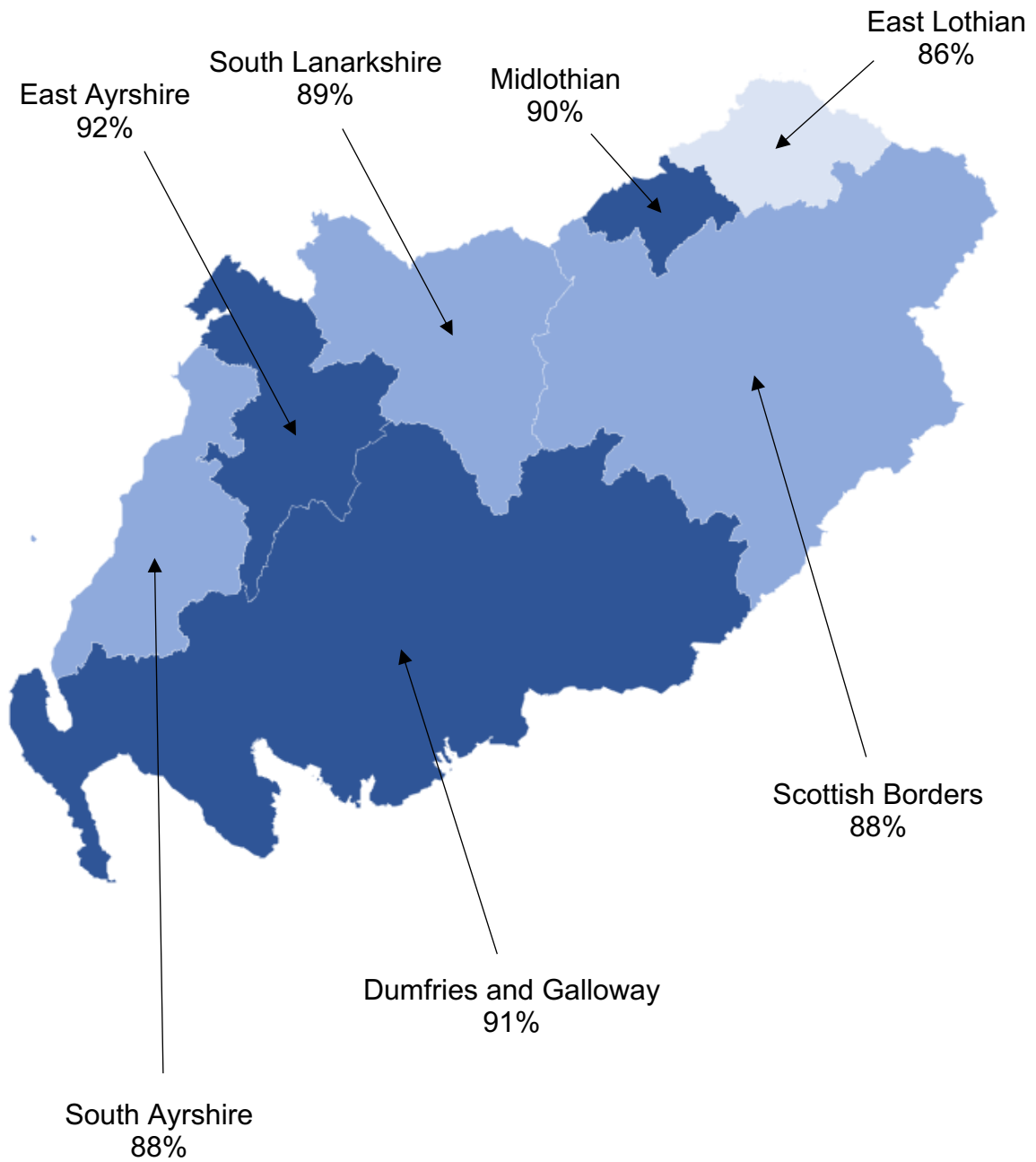


Table 3: Local Authority Estimates of Take-Up: Scottish Child Payment

Local Authority	Estimated Take-Up Rate for 2023-24
Aberdeen City	89%
Aberdeenshire	84%
Angus	86%
Argyll and Bute	92%
Edinburgh, City of	85%
Clackmannanshire	89%
Dumfries and Galloway	91%
Dundee City	89%
East Ayrshire	92%
East Dunbartonshire	84%
East Lothian	86%
East Renfrewshire	84%
Falkirk	94%
Fife	89%
Glasgow City	89%
Highland	85%
Inverclyde	89%
Midlothian	90%
Moray	86%
North Ayrshire	91%
North Lanarkshire	90%
Perth and Kinross	88%
Renfrewshire	90%
Scottish Borders	88%
South Ayrshire	88%
South Lanarkshire	89%
Stirling	87%
West Dunbartonshire	90%
West Lothian	91%

Estimates for Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan Siar have not been included because the number of recipients is around 1000 children or less, deemed to be below the minimum threshold required for confidence in estimates.

Child Disability Payment Take-up Analysis

Introduction

As part of work to increase the scope of analysis of take-up of Scottish benefits, this section contains analysis of trends in Child Disability Payment and discussion of how estimates of eligibility and take-up rates could be approached. Due to significant challenges in estimating the number of people eligible for any disability payment, this section does not contain an estimate of take-up for Child Disability Payment. Instead, this section contains three illustrative potential approaches to produce estimates and analysis of the merits and drawbacks of these. Robustly estimating eligibility and take-up for disability related benefits is a significant challenge. There are no official estimates of take-up rates of disability benefits in the UK published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Scottish Government or any other stakeholder.

Child Disability Payment was rolled out nationally in November 2021 after months of piloting. It replaced Disability Living Allowance for children (DLAc) in Scotland. Child Disability Payment is designed to mitigate some of the additional costs of care and mobility support for a disabled or terminally ill child or young person. The benefit is within devolved competence and delivered by Social Security Scotland.

Eligibility

Child Disability Payment provides support for the extra costs that a disabled child might have. Applications can be made for a child under the age of 16, however Child Disability Payment can be paid until the child reaches 18 and can sometimes be paid after the child turns 18.

Eligibility for Child Disability Payment is broadly similar to DLAc in England and Wales. Child Disability Payment is made up of 2 components:

- Care
- Mobility

The Care component has 3 payment rates:

- Lowest – paid if the child either:
 - a. needs attention from someone, for a significant part of the day, in connection with their bodily functions due to a physical or mental disability
 - b. is 16 or older and, due to a mental or physical disability, is unable to prepare a cooked main meal for themselves

- Middle – paid if the child either:
 - a. needs frequent attention from someone during the day, or prolonged or repeated attention at night, in connection with their bodily functions due to a physical or mental disability
 - b. needs continual supervision during the day, or another person to be awake for a prolonged period or at frequent intervals at night, to avoid substantial danger to themselves or others
 - c. gets renal dialysis treatment, during the day or at night, at least twice a week

- Highest – paid if the child either:
 - a. needs frequent attention from someone during the day, and prolonged or repeated attention at night, in connection with their bodily functions due to a physical or mental disability
 - b. needs continual supervision during the day, and another person to be awake for a prolonged period or at frequent intervals at night, to avoid substantial danger to themselves or others
 - c. gets renal dialysis treatment, during the day and at night, at least twice a week
 - d. is terminally ill

The mobility component has 2 payment rates depending on the level of mobility support required¹

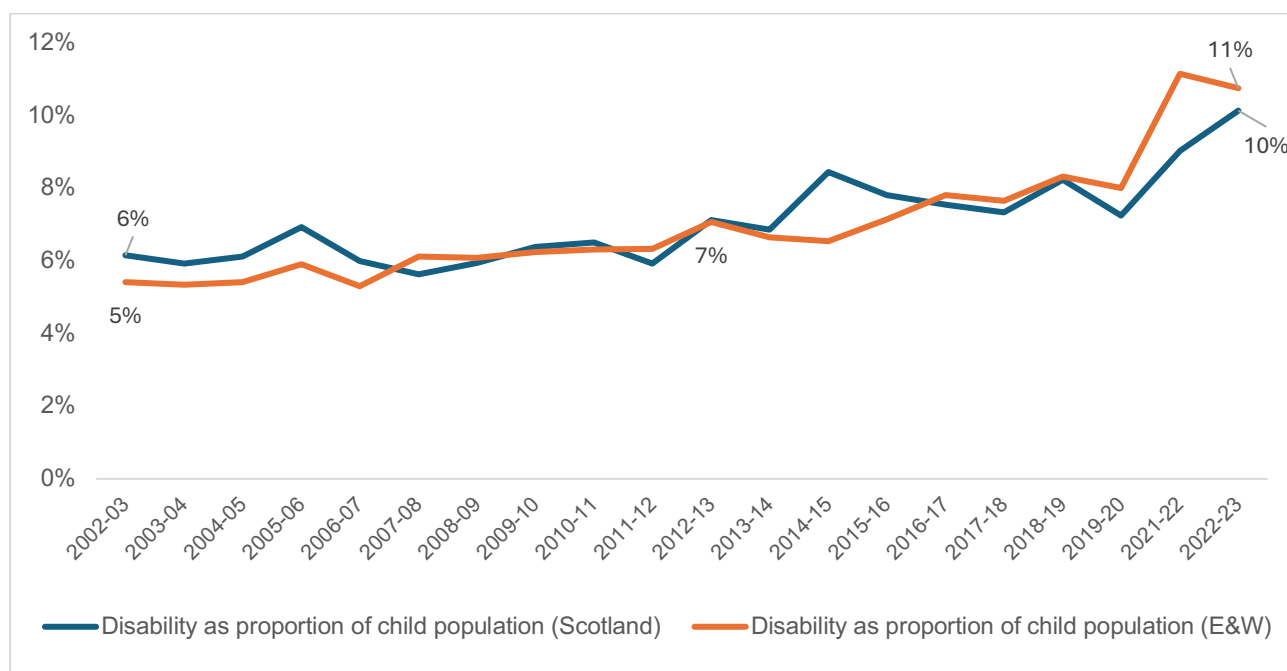
Trends in Disability Prevalence

Although eligibility for Child Disability Payment cannot be simply tracked to trends in disability as measured by established surveys, it is reasonable to expect there to be a link between trends in those measures and trends in eligibility.

Figure 4 shows that, according to the Family Resource Survey, in 2012-13, around 7% of children in Scotland and England and Wales were disabled. By 2022-23 this had risen to 10% in Scotland and 11% in England and Wales. However, broadly speaking, disability prevalence in Scotland and England and Wales has tended to be very similar over time. Differences in specific years may be explained by smaller survey sample sizes in Scotland reflecting slightly higher volatility in rates between years.

¹ [Child Disability Payment - mygov.scot](https://mygov.scot)

Figure 2: Prevalence of Disability among Children - Scotland vs England & Wales



Source: Family Resource Survey individual dataset, Stat-Xplore. 2020-21 removed due to data quality

People in Receipt of Child Disability Payment

Applications to Child Disability Payment, or any other benefit, are assessed against eligibility criteria so not all applications are successful. The overall application success rate of Child Disability Payment since its launch² in July 2021 is 76%, meaning that 76% of processed applications were authorised.

Table 4: Child Disability Payment Statistics

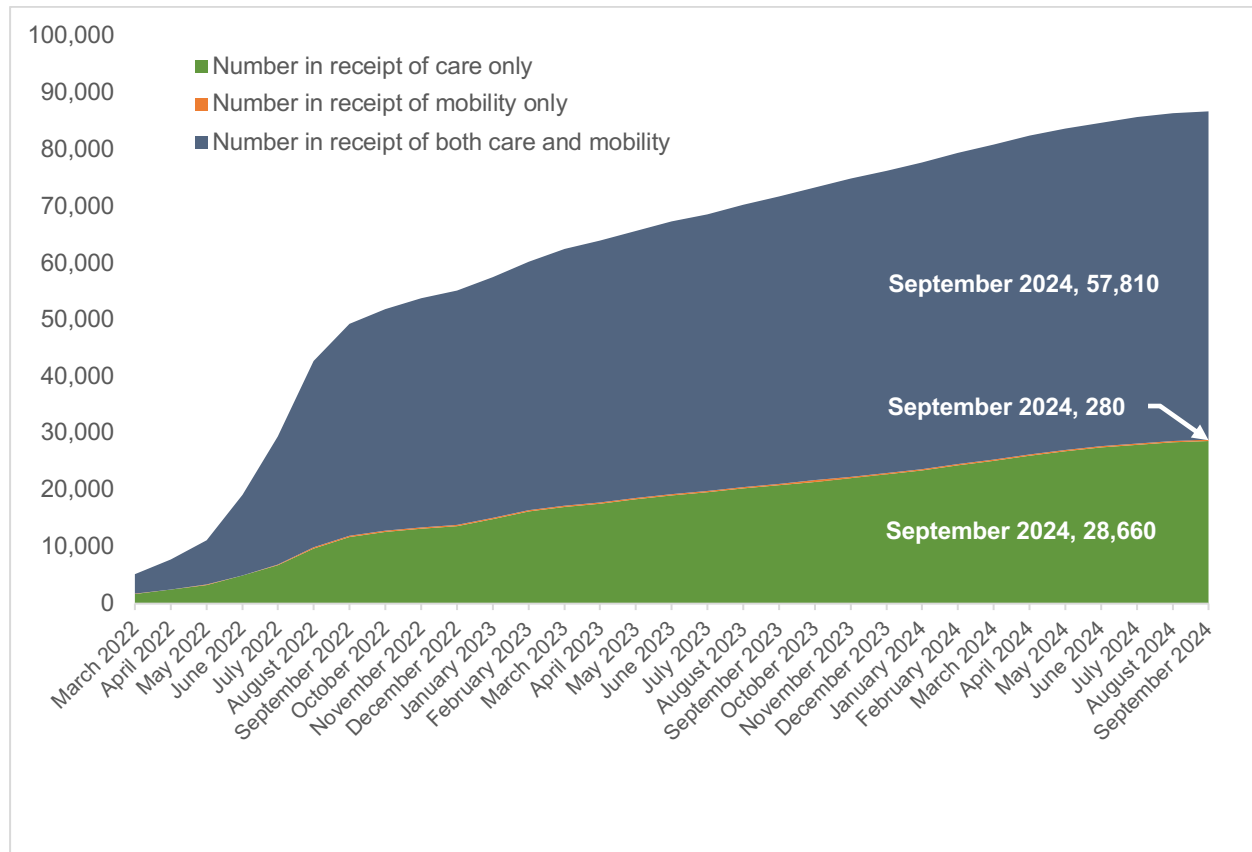
Year	Total Part 1 Applications Registered	Total Part 2 Applications Received	Total Applications Processed	Percentage of Processed Applications Authorised	Percentage of Processed Applications Denied	Percentage of Processed Applications Withdrawn
Total	67,635	56,150	60,820	76%	21%	3%
Financial Year 2021-22	9,600	6,540	3,575	75%	17%	8%
Financial Year 2022-23	21,555	18,795	16,960	82%	14%	4%
Financial Year 2023-24	23,765	20,075	26,360	76%	21%	3%
Financial Year 2024-25	12,715	10,745	13,920	68%	29%	3%

Source: [Social Security Scotland - Child Disability Payment: high level statistics to 30 September 2024](#)

² Child Disability Payment was piloted in July 2021 and rolled out nationally in November 2021

Figure 3 below shows how the number of people in receipt of Child Disability Payment has increased in Scotland over time. This reflects both cases transferred from Disability Living Allowance for children and also new applicants.

Figure 3: Number of People in Receipt of Child Disability Payment aged 0-19



Source: [Social Security Scotland - Child Disability Payment: high level statistics to 30 September 2024](#)

The latest published Child Disability Payment caseload³ of children aged 0-19 was 86,770 in September 2024⁴, of which 33% of recipients were in receipt of the care only component, 67% in receipt of both the care and mobility components, and less than 1% in receipt of only the mobility component. Children aged 0-17 comprise the majority of the caseload, and for September 2024, 84,915 were in receipt of payments.

Challenges in Estimating Take-Up

As take-up is a measure of the number of people who receive a benefit as a proportion of those who are eligible, calculating the level of benefit take-up requires us to estimate the size of the eligible population. It is more straightforward to estimate eligibility for low-income benefits, where eligibility depends on household

³ a derived statistic based on identifying all cases who are in receipt of, or have been approved for, a payment in the caseload period, even if they have not been paid yet

⁴ [Social Security Scotland - Child Disability Payment: high level statistics to 30 September 2024](#)

characteristics and qualifying benefit receipt and where data is more easily accessible.

Household survey data showing the prevalence of medical conditions and disabled people in the population could be used to establish eligibility for disability benefits, however there are several reasons why this is problematic and unlikely to be robust:

- Disability related questions that are currently asked in surveys may not capture all of the eligibility criteria for disability benefits.
- Social Security Scotland make person-centred decisions based on the specific circumstances of the application/review and detailed information provided. Therefore, it is not possible to match those identified as disabled through surveys with those determined to be eligible for disability benefits.
- Disability is self-reported in surveys which means perceptions of disability may vary person to person and do not reflect an objective measure of the eligible population.

Overall, for the reasons set out above, the number of people who meet definitions of disability in surveys is unlikely to align with the eligible group for Child Disability Payment or disability benefits in general.

Illustrative Eligibility Definitions

As above, there are no known robust approaches to estimating eligibility for Child Disability Payment. However, this section sets out three illustrative approaches, partly to demonstrate the challenges present and the wide range of estimates of eligibility these alternative approaches can produce. These approaches are based on:

1. Family Resources Survey - Those who identify as having a disability under the Equality Act 2010 core definition
2. Census - Those who identify as having a disability or health condition
3. Scottish Health Survey - Those who have a disability which limits day-to-day activities

All three of these approaches, for reasons previously discussed, cannot be currently used to arrive at a robust estimate of take-up for Child Disability Payment.

1. Family Resources Survey - Equality Act 2010 Core Definition

Using Family Resource Survey (FRS) data published in StatXplore for financial year 2022-23, we estimate around 90,000 children in Scotland aged 0-17 were identified as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 core definition, meaning they “have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities". Where 'substantial' means more than

minor or trivial, and 'long-term' means 12 months or more⁵. This estimate assumes the responses in age bracket 16-19 are distributed evenly across all individual ages. However, this definition does not fully align with the eligible group for Child Disability Payment, there may be some children who identify as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 core definition but who would not be successful in applying for Child Disability Payment. Similarly, there may be children who would be successful in applying for Child Disability Payment but who do not identify as having a disability by this definition. Given latest statistics on the number of children currently in receipt of Child Disability Payment, this may be too narrow a definition.

2. Scotland's Census 2022 – Disability or Health Condition

We can also use disability and health questions from Scotland's Census 2022⁶ to try to estimate eligibility for Child Disability Payment. For example, we could use the number of children aged 0-17 who report their disability limits their day to day activities a lot or a little. This is similar to the Equality Act 2010 core definition and results in an eligible total of around 85,000. We could also use the number of children aged 0-17 who report having a long term illness, disease or condition, this results in an eligible total of around 55,000. Although they cannot be compared directly due to differences in time periods, given the latest caseload of Child Disability Payment for children aged 0-17 was around 82,000 in June 2024, both these definitions would under-estimate eligibility and be too narrow a definition.

We could also use the total number of children aged 0-17 who report any health condition at all, which results in a total eligible figure of around 125,000. However, there is significant uncertainty around the extent this would align with the Child Disability Payment eligibility criteria set out earlier. It is very likely this total would include children who would not be eligible for Child Disability Payment. There would also be significant challenges around aligning census data, updated every 10 years, with any annual estimates of take-up rates.

3. Scottish Health Survey – Limiting Long Term Condition

Alternatively, the Scottish Health Survey 2022⁷ indicates that 15% of children (aged 0-15) have a limiting long-term condition. Assuming this proportion is the same for children aged 0-17 and then applying mid-2022 population estimates⁸ results in an eligible total of around 150,000. This is much higher than most other eligibility estimates, including even the already too broad Census definition reporting any health condition. This approach is likely to include people who would not be eligible

⁵ [Disability Status of the Individual \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk/disability-status-of-the-individual)

⁶ [2022 results | Scotland's Census \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results)

⁷ [Scottish Health Survey 2022: supplementary tables - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/scottish-health-survey-2022-supplementary-tables)

⁸ [Mid-2022 Population Estimates Scotland | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/mid-2022-population-estimates-scotland)

for Child Disability Payment and to be a significant over-estimate of the number of children eligible for Child Disability Payment.

Table 5: Child Disability Payment Illustrative Estimates Summary Table

Data Source	Method of Estimating Eligibility	Description (Including Limitations)
1. Family Resources Survey 2022-23	Identify as having a disability under the Equality Act 2010 core definition	This produces an eligible total of around 90,000. Being disabled under the Equality Act 2010 core definition means someone has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities". This is likely too narrow a definition given latest Child Disability Payment statistics.
2. Scotland's Census 2022	Have a disability which limits day-to-day activities a little or a lot	This produces an eligible total of around 85,000 and is a similar definition to the Equality Act 2010. This is also likely to be too narrow a definition given latest Child Disability Payment statistics.
	Identify as having a long-term illness, disease or condition	This produces an eligible total of around 55,000 and describes people who report having a long term illness, disease or condition that does not have to limit activities. This is too narrow in scope to reflect Child Disability Payment eligibility.
	Identify as having a health condition	This produces an eligible total of around 125,000 and describes anyone reporting a health condition. This is too broad to reflect Child Disability Payment eligibility and likely includes a significant number of people who would not be eligible.
3. Scottish Health Survey 2022	Have a limiting long-term condition	This produces an eligible total of around 150,000 and is the largest total of any definition. This is even higher than the Census health condition definition so again appears too broad a definition and a significant over-estimate.

Summary

The illustrative definitions of Child Disability Payment eligibility set out produce a wide range of eligibility ranging from between 55,000 to 150,000 children, with significant uncertainty that any definition is a precise measure of eligibility for the payment. Due to the complex nature of assessing eligibility for disability payments, significant challenges remain in establishing a reliable measure from available data sources, however, by further analysing these and exploring if there are opportunities for using new data sources, we will continue to investigate approaches to estimate eligibility and take-up for Child Disability Payment.

Future Analysis Developments

Scottish Government analysts continue to work on developing methodologies to estimate take-up rates for the other Scottish benefits not yet reported on (e.g. disability and carer benefits), which were still in the process of being launched or migrated as of the most recent complete financial year (2023-24). It is not possible to robustly estimate the number of recipients of benefits when case transfer is incomplete as the caseload is split between Social Security Scotland and the DWP.

Estimates of take-up have not been included for the following benefits:

[Child Winter Heating Payment](#) is paid automatically to children and young people who receive Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment at a certain rate.

Similarly, [Winter Heating Payment](#) is paid automatically to people on low-income qualifying benefits.

[Carer's Allowance Supplement](#), is paid automatically to people who receive Carer's Allowance or [Carer Support Payment](#), which only became available in November 2024.

[Pension Age Disability Payment](#) was only piloted in October 2024, with national roll-out not expected until April 2025.

Estimates of take-up have also not been produced for [Child Disability Payment](#). This analysis does not include an estimate of take-up, but provides a summary of related analysis including the challenges that exist to producing a robust estimate of Child Disability Payment take-up at this point in time.

A similar preliminary analysis of [Adult Disability Payment](#) is planned for next year's publication. It is not currently possible to produce a robust take-up rate estimate for Adult Disability Payment due to challenges in estimating the eligible population and while case transfer from DWP benefits continues.

Take-Up Strategy Update

Ensuring people in Scotland are aware of, and are encouraged to access, all the financial support they are entitled to in the devolved social security system, is a priority for the Scottish Government. Social security is a human right and we are committed to protecting that right and supporting people to exercise it.

The figures in this publication suggest our approach to maximising take-up in Scotland remains effective, however, we know that more needs to be done. Ahead of publication of the next Benefit Take-Up Strategy, due by October 2026, we intend to publish an updated position on take-up activity. This will specifically consider approaches to support marginalised communities access their entitlements and tackle stigma, which continues to be a barrier to benefit take-up.

Implementing our Benefit Take-Up Principles

Our Benefit Take-Up Strategy is structured around five guiding principles which underpin our approach to maximising take-up in Scotland. In line with these Benefit Take-Up Principles, we have taken the following action to support people to access devolved social security payments:

Principle 1: Prioritise person-centred approaches

The Independent Social Security Advocacy Service, funded by the Scottish Government, has continued supporting people to access and apply for Social Security Scotland assistance. The service is free and provides advocacy to anyone who self-identifies as disabled. Building on our human rights-based approach, it seeks to make Social Security more accessible – supporting and empowering disabled people in Scotland to be more involved in processes and decisions which affect them. To date, the service has supported over 7,900 people.

In November of this year, we rolled out Carer Support Payment nationally, our replacement payment for Carer's Allowance in Scotland. Delivery of this benefit marks a key milestone in improving support for unpaid carers and will be available to many carers in full-time education who cannot currently get Carer's Allowance. In delivering Carer Support Payment, tailored signposting has been developed to support carers to access wider services and clear information on the support available to them. We will improve how we deliver the benefit by continuing to work directly with carers and support organisations to understand how well the system is working and identify any changes needed.

We know that there are groups of people who are under-represented and often poorly engaged by public services, including the wider social security system

(‘seldom-heard groups’). To support our understanding of these groups and the barriers to take-up they face, the Scottish Government recently published new independent [research](#). In response to the recommendations, we will further explore approaches to maximise take-up and address barriers to access for seldom-heard communities, including the harmful impacts of stigma. Further research has also been carried out with a range of seldom-heard audiences (including Gypsy/Traveller communities, recently released prisoners, care-experienced people and minority ethnic communities). This has helped us to understand the barriers different groups face to applying for benefits and the most effective messaging to improve take-up.

Principle 2: Communicate and engage effectively

Communications activity plays a vital role in helping people get the financial support they are entitled to. Activity raises awareness of benefits that Social Security Scotland delivers and drives applications by communicating key information such as eligibility criteria, payment values and how to apply. It also aims to encourage take-up by breaking down barriers to applying (e.g. stigma) and communicating the positive difference the benefits can make to people’s lives.

Social Security Scotland undertakes a range of activity across different channels - including media relations, social media, stakeholder engagement and paid-for marketing. This helps ensure messages about benefits reach and engage different audiences at the right times, in the right places and in the right formats. Ensuring communications are accessible and inclusive is vital. Social Security Scotland make use of different formats and languages, allowing people to engage in the way they want and need. Information materials are available in 12 community languages, British Sign Language, and over 100 languages are available on request, including Braille.

Examples of communication and engagement work undertaken include:

- Raising awareness of Carer Support Payment via paid-for marketing (local radio, local press, targeted digital) as it rolled out across Scotland in pilot areas.
- Delivering information sessions on Pension Age Disability Payment for staff from advice services, local authorities, health services, and other third sector organisations to ensure information can be cascaded to eligible people.
- Promoting Best Start Foods by working with Gary Maclean, Masterchef winner and the first National Chef of Scotland, to create video content which highlights quick, cost-effective healthy meals which can be made using the payments. This was shared across social channels and with partners.
- Collaborating with Public Health Scotland to make sure information materials – such as posters, leaflets and factsheets – are available in spaces and

services people interact with like schools, GP surgeries, registrars and libraries.

Principle 3: Bring services to people

As part of the wider advice services landscape, and supporting key partners in efforts to maximise incomes, to date, the Scottish Government has invested over £4.7 million since 2021 into Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships. These partnerships, targeted in deprived communities and remote and rural locations, see Welfare Rights Advisors placed into accessible and non-stigmatising primary care settings. Evaluation to date has shown that over 16,000 people have taken up support in a participating GP Practice during the evaluation period, with over 89% of individuals accessing advice for the first time through this initiative.

To build on the success of the Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships work, this year we have allocated up to £1.5 million to increase the provision of advice within services that people already go to through our Advice in Accessible Settings Fund. The fund is supporting and encouraging partnerships between advice providers and a range of other community based services including youth charities, housing and homelessness services, faith based charities, specialist mental health services, carers support services and Disabled People's Organisations. Since the fund was launched in July 2023, it has supported more than 7,900 clients and unlocked more than £12 million in financial gains.

Principle 4: Encourage cross-system collaboration

We value the vital role that our stakeholders and partner organisations play in promoting benefit take-up and championing the interests of different client groups. The Scottish Government continues to facilitate a Benefit Take-Up Stakeholder Reference Group to provide expert advisory input into the development of benefit take-up approaches. Following recent research into seldom-heard groups, membership of this Reference Group was expanded to organisations representing the interests of these communities.

We know that income from social security is one of the main drivers to eradicating child poverty – a national mission for this Government. The Fairer Futures Partnerships, focussing on systems change for better child poverty outcomes, are working with Social Security Scotland to support targeted income maximisation activity by seeking new ways to share data across organisations. In order to support public sector reform by sharing key information with organisations that need it, the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland agree that safe, secure and proportionate data sharing holds potential opportunities for benefit take-up, income maximisation and ultimately tackling poverty. We are working with local authorities as part of the Fairer Futures Partnership programme to explore this further.

While the Scottish Government has no formal role in the administration of reserved benefits, we continue to work with DWP officials to look at ways the benefit system can be improved to make it more accessible for those eligible for these payments. For example, the Scottish Government has undertaken a range of activity to support promotion of Pension Credit take-up, including engagement with stakeholders through newsletters, roadshows and forums, reposting DWP related content on Scottish Government social media platforms, and promoting the new dedicated Pension Credit webpage, which launched recently.

Principle 5: Continuously learn and improve

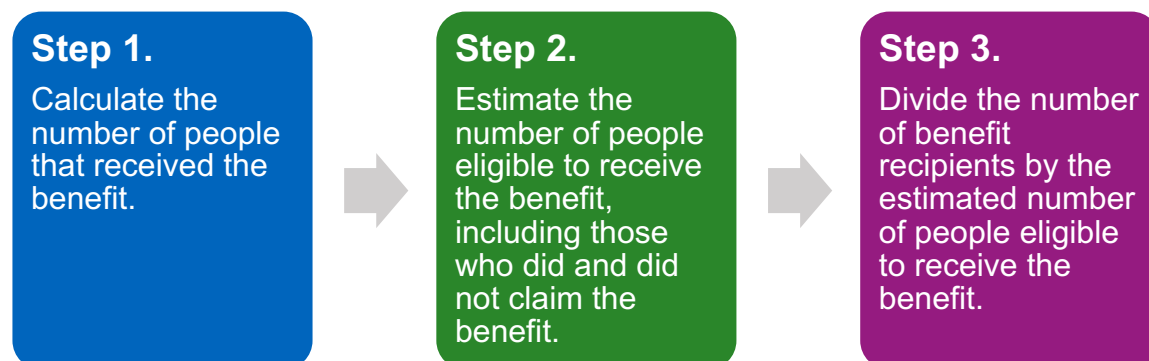
The Social Security Scotland User Research Team regularly engage with a wide variety of clients to understand how people learn about Social Security Scotland and their experience of the service. Recent research has included people where English is a second language, British Sign Language users and people with experience of a range of health conditions including complex PTSD, stroke and chronic fatigue. Research was also conducted this year with a perinatal mental health group, young mums (16–20-year-olds) and a range of parent groups to explore barriers to take-up of Best Start Foods. Working with communications teams, insights are shared through regular engagement to ensure learning about different client groups is fed into communication strategies. User research findings are also shared to help shape policy development. For example, the Best Start Foods benefit take-up research was shared across relevant Scottish Government policy areas and with UK policy officials to provide insight into the barriers that people face in accessing this payment.

The Scottish Government has acted on Job Start Payment evaluation findings showing low levels of awareness and high application denial rates could be impacting take-up rates. In 2023 Social Security Scotland implemented operational and guidance changes to address high application denial rates, including: redirecting people who don't meet eligibility criteria to call Social Security Scotland, extending the application window from within 3 months of a job offer to 6, disregarding income from a work trial, and simplifying evidence requirements for job offers.

The Social Security Charter sets out what people can expect from the Scottish social security system. As part of the first review of the Charter since its introduction in 2019, the Scottish Government adopted a co-design approach, working with people with lived experience of the Scottish social security system. This involved clients, including from groups who may experience barriers when engaging with public services, partner organisations, colleagues in Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Commission on Social Security. The revised commitments contained within the updated Charter, including our commitment to help people to receive everything they are entitled to, reflect the priorities identified by those engaged and demonstrates the experience gained now Scotland's social security system is operational.

Methodology

There are three steps to estimating take-up rates, summarised below.



Step 1. All benefits

- Published data or monitoring information requested from Social Security Scotland is used to calculate the number of recipients for each benefit.

Step 2. Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

- Data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on the number of children by age group in families claiming Universal Credit or Tax Credits is used to calculate the proportion of children these Scottish benefits can be claimed for.
- This proportion is then multiplied by the total number of births or children in the specific age range for each of these Scottish benefits. This produces our estimate of the number of children these benefits can be claimed for.

Step 2. Scottish Child Payment (local authority estimates)

- Data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on the number of children by age group, and local authority, in families claiming Universal Credit or Tax Credits is used to estimate the number of children in each local authority these Scottish benefits can be claimed for.

Step 2. Young Carer Grant

- Data from the Scottish Surveys Core Questions from 2019-22 is used to estimate the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds providing at least 16 hours of unpaid care per week.
- This is multiplied by the number of people aged 16 to 18, to estimate the number of young people eligible to claim the benefit.
- Young carers who claim Carer's Allowance or provide care to someone not in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit are subtracted from the estimate of the eligible population, as they are not eligible for the benefit.

Step 2. Job Start Payment

- DWP provided aggregated estimates of the number of Universal Credit claimants living in Scotland aged 16 to 24, who had no earned income (according to HMRC earnings data) for a period of at least six months prior to receiving some income from employment. We believe this provides the best available estimate for the number of people eligible for the Job Start Payment.
- An adjustment is made to account for the requirement to work 12 or more hours per week.

Step 2. Funeral Support Payment

- Data from DWP's statxplore and the Family Resources Survey (FRS) is used to estimate all people in Scotland who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit, and the status of their household as a single person or a couple.
- This is then used to estimate an eligibility rate for single person households, couple households and households overall. Eligibility rates are defined in this way as single households are more likely to claim benefits than couple households and it is assumed that for couple households, a partner is likely to be the person responsible for organising a funeral in the event of a death.
- These eligibility rates are then multiplied by the corresponding number of deaths estimated to occur in single, couple and households overall, to estimate the number of people eligible to claim Funeral Support Payment.

Step 3. All benefits

- Divide the number of benefit recipients by the estimate of the eligible population to estimate the take-up rate.

Further Information

Further information about these benefits and how to apply can be found on the Scottish Government's website:

- [Scottish Child Payment](#)
- [Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods](#)
- [Funeral Support Payment](#)
- [Job Start Payment](#)
- [Young Carer Grant](#)

[Interim evaluations](#) of these benefits have been published by the Scottish Government. Social Security Scotland publish [annual statistics](#) about the number of applications and payments made for these benefits. Due to revisions to previous take-up rate estimates, comparisons over time should be made with the latest figures in this year's publication rather than [last year's publication](#).

The DWP publish information on the number of young children in families claiming Universal Credit on their data-sharing platform, [Stat-Xplore](#). These statistics are available from June 2020; prior to this, specific monitoring information shared by the DWP has been used. HMRC publish [similar information for Tax Credits](#).

The aggregated estimates provided by DWP for estimating take-up of Job Start Payment have the following caveats:

- The estimates exclude self-employed people and those employed by small businesses that are not enrolled on RTI systems.
- The estimates only count people the first time they meet the specified criteria. However, while people can become eligible more than once, a person cannot reapply for Job Start Payment within two years of receiving the benefit.

[UKMOD](#) is maintained, developed and managed by the Centre for Microsimulation and Policy Analysis at the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), University of Essex. The results and their interpretation are the Scottish Government's sole responsibility.

Any questions about this publication can sent by email to the Scottish Government's Central Enquiry Unit mailbox (ceu@gov.scot), addressed to:

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