



Social Security Scotland statistics

Social Security Scotland feedback statistics to 30 June 2019

Frequency of publications

The next publication, covering up to end September 2019 will be released in December 2019.

Under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics¹ we publish a timetable of statistical releases for the twelve months ahead².

¹ The Code of Practice is found online at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

² The forthcoming publication timetable is available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2005/03/18798>

Introduction

This report covers feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced on 4 September 2018 until 30 June 2019. Carer's Allowance Supplement (CAS) was launched in September 2018, followed by Best Start Grant (BSG) Pregnancy and Baby Payment (10 December 2018), Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment (29 April 2019) and Best Start Grant School Age Payment (3 June 2019). This publication does not cover feedback received for Best Start Foods, which launched on 12 August 2019. This will be covered in the next publication, which will be in November 2019.

All tables and charts relating to this publication can be found at:

www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland

These statistics are being published as experimental statistics. Experimental statistics are defined in the Code of Practice for Statistics as "*new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.*" These statistics have not yet been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority. They have not been designated as National Statistics³.

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³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/experimental-statistics-official-statistics-in-development/>

Related Social Security Scotland publications 14

Main findings

Complaints

- In total 145 complaints were received by 30 June 2019, including 60 for Carer's Allowance Supplement and 80 for Best Start Grant **[Table 1]**. This compares to 91,550 carers receiving Carer's Allowance Supplement payments by 30 June⁴ and 71,625 BSG applications made by 30 June 2019⁵.
- Overall, 13% of complaints reached stage 2 (either progressing from stage 1 to stage 2, or being received at stage 2 – the [background section](#) explains the difference between stage 1 and 2 complaints) **[Table 1]**. A higher proportion of Carer's Allowance Supplement complaints reached stage 2 (19%) than for Best Start Grant (8%) **[Chart 1]**. This difference may be due to clients using complaints in different ways for the two benefits. While Best Start Grant has a redeterminations and appeals process, for Carer's Allowance Supplement there is no statutory right to appeal. This could lead clients to make complaints about Carer's Allowance Supplement as a way of having their cases looked at again.
- No cases were referred to Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

Table 1: Complaints by benefit and stage

Benefit	Total	% of all benefits	Stage 1	Stage 2	% progressed to Stage 2
CAS	60	43%	60	10	19%
BSG	80	55%	75	5	8%
Not benefit specific	5	2%	5	0	*
Total	145	100%	140	20	13%

*suppressed for disclosure control

The majority of stage 2 complaints were initially received at stage 1 and later progressed to stage 2.

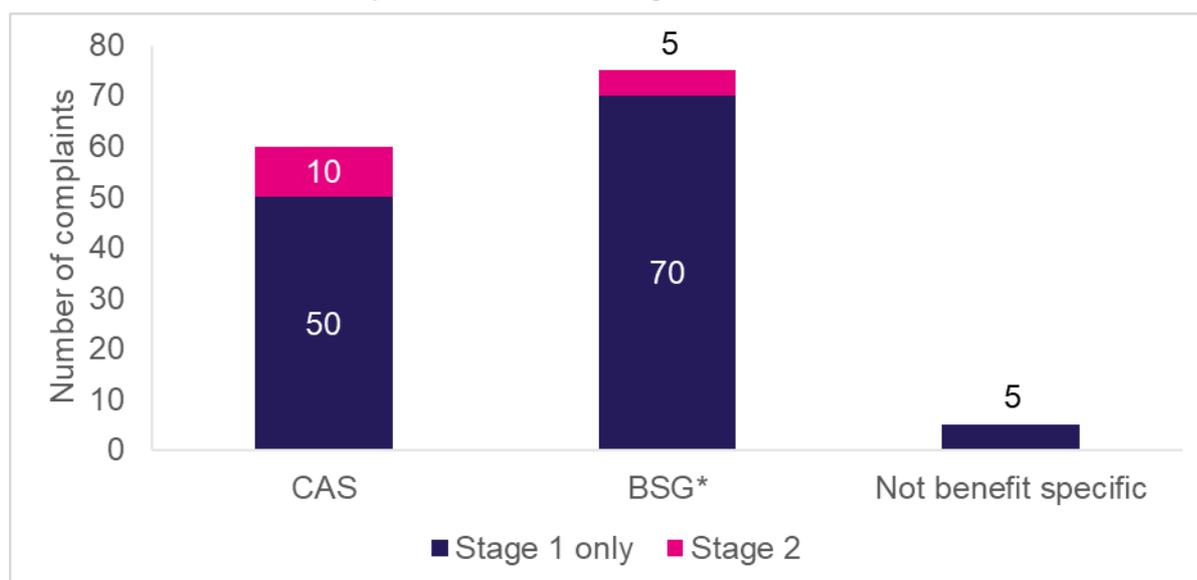
A small number of Best Start Grant complaints went straight to stage 2. These are counted in the stage 2 and Total columns but not the stage 1 column.

Figures do not sum due to rounding.

⁴ Best Start Grant: high level statistics to 30 June 2019 <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland/BSGJune2019>

⁵ Carer's Allowance at February 2019 and Carer's Allowance Supplement, April 2019 eligibility date <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland/CASApr2019>

Chart 1: Complaints by benefit and stage



*stage 2 figures for BSG include a small number of complaints that went straight to stage 2, as well as complaints progressing from stage 1 to stage 2. Figures do not sum to those in Table 1 due to rounding.

- The most common reason for complaints was ‘Inadequate standard of service’ (90, 62%), followed by ‘Dissatisfaction with SG policy’ (20, 15%), and ‘Failure to provide a service’ (20, 13%) [Table 2, Chart 2]. The [background section](#) gives definitions for the different outcomes.

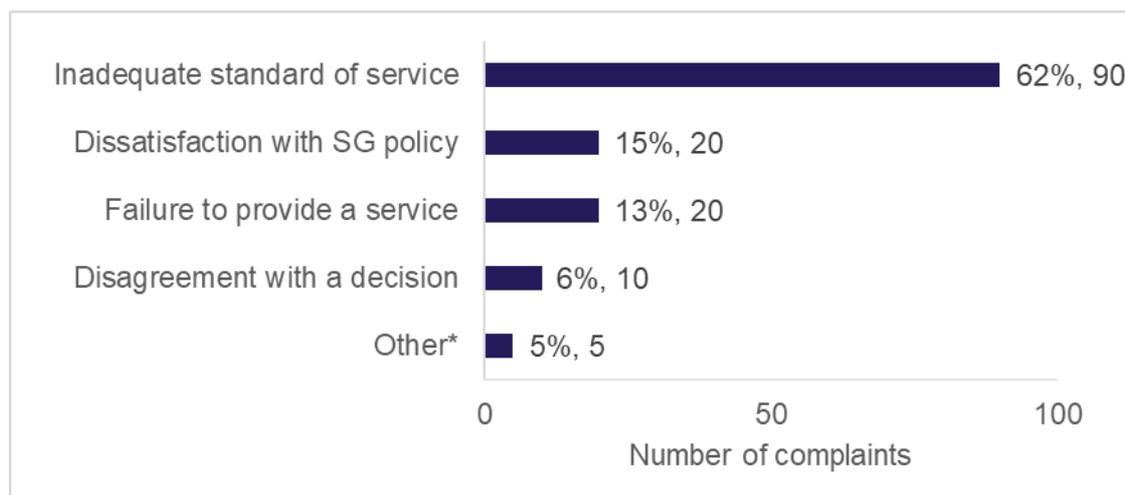
Table 2: Complaints by reason

Reason	Total	%
Inadequate standard of service	90	62%
Dissatisfaction with SG policy	20	15%
Failure to provide a service	20	13%
Disagreement with a decision	10	6%
Other*	5	5%
Total	145	100%

*Other includes 'Failure to follow the appropriate process' and 'Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff'.

Complaint reason is based on the first reason given for a complaint when it was received.

Chart 2: Complaints by reason



*Other includes 'Failure to follow the appropriate process' and 'Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff'.

- By 30 June 2019, of the 140 stage 1 complaints received around five were outstanding and did not have an outcome. Of the 20 stage 2 complaints received around five were outstanding.
- All complaints were dealt with within the appropriate timescales as explained in the [background section](#). For stage 1, the median average processing time was zero working days (meaning that on average complaints were decided on the same day they were received). For stage 2, the median average processing time was 16 working days.
- In total, over all benefits and both stages, 80 complaints were upheld (52%), 60 were not upheld (42%), and 10 were partially upheld (6%). For Carer's Allowance Supplement, the majority of complaints were not upheld (64%), while for Best Start Grant the majority were upheld (75%) [Table 3, Chart 3]. Complaint outcomes are counted separately for stage 1 and 2 – a complaint that progressed from stage 1 to stage 2 will have two outcomes.

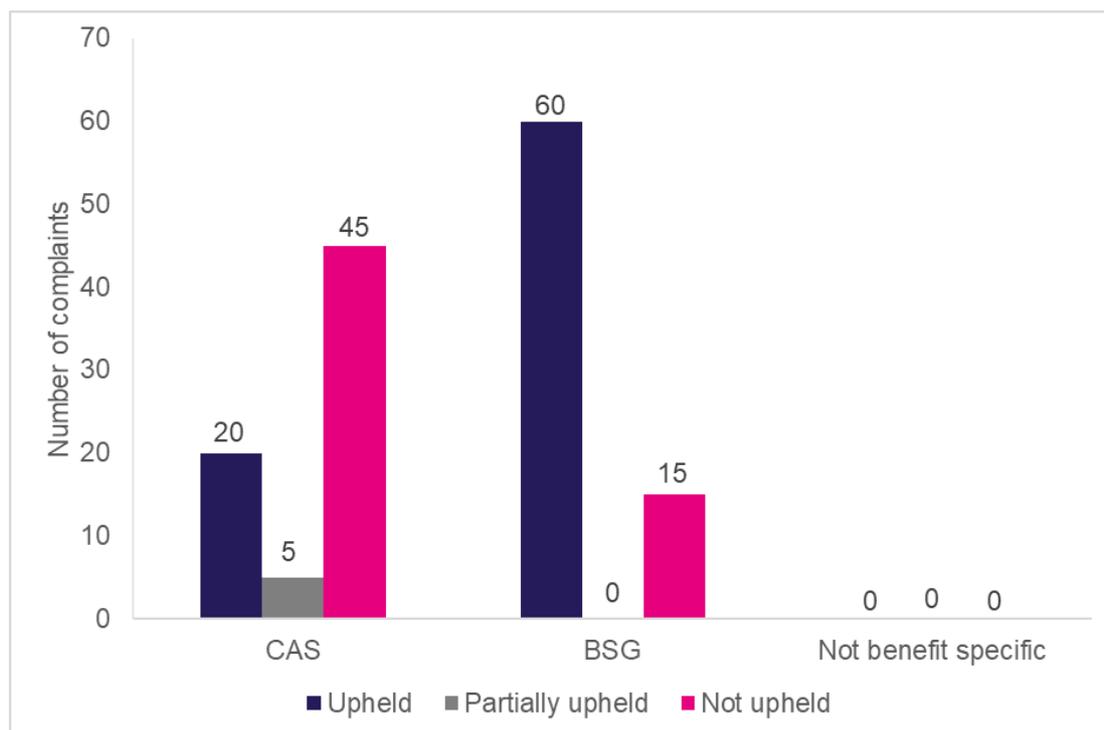
Table 3: Complaints by outcome

Outcome	All benefits	CAS	BSG	Not benefit specific	% all benefits	% CAS	% BSG	% Not benefit specific
Upheld	80	20	60	0	52%	28%	75%	*
Partially upheld	10	5	0	0	6%	9%	*	*
Not upheld	60	45	15	0	42%	64%	*	*
Total	150	70	75	5	100%	100%	100%	100%

*suppressed for disclosure control

Five complaints were outstanding as of 30 June 2019, and therefore are not counted in this table. Additionally a small number of complaints were withdrawn. Outcomes for stage 1 and stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

Chart 3: Complaints by outcome



Outcomes for stage 1 and stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received.

Five complaints were outstanding as of 30 June 2019, and therefore are not counted in this table.

Additionally a small number of complaints were withdrawn.

Figures do not sum due to rounding.

Compliments

- From September 2018 to 30 June 2019 a total of 90 compliments were received, including 55 (65%) for Carer’s Allowance Supplement, 25 (31%) for Best Start Grant, and 5 (5%) that were not specific to a benefit [Table 4].
- The most common reason for compliments was ‘Thank you for being so helpful’ (40, 48%), followed by ‘Thank you for getting it right (25, 28%) [Table 5, Chart 4].

Table 4: Compliments by benefit

	All Benefits	CAS	BSG	Not benefit specific
Number	90	55	25	5
%	100%	65%	31%	5%

Figures do not sum due to rounding.

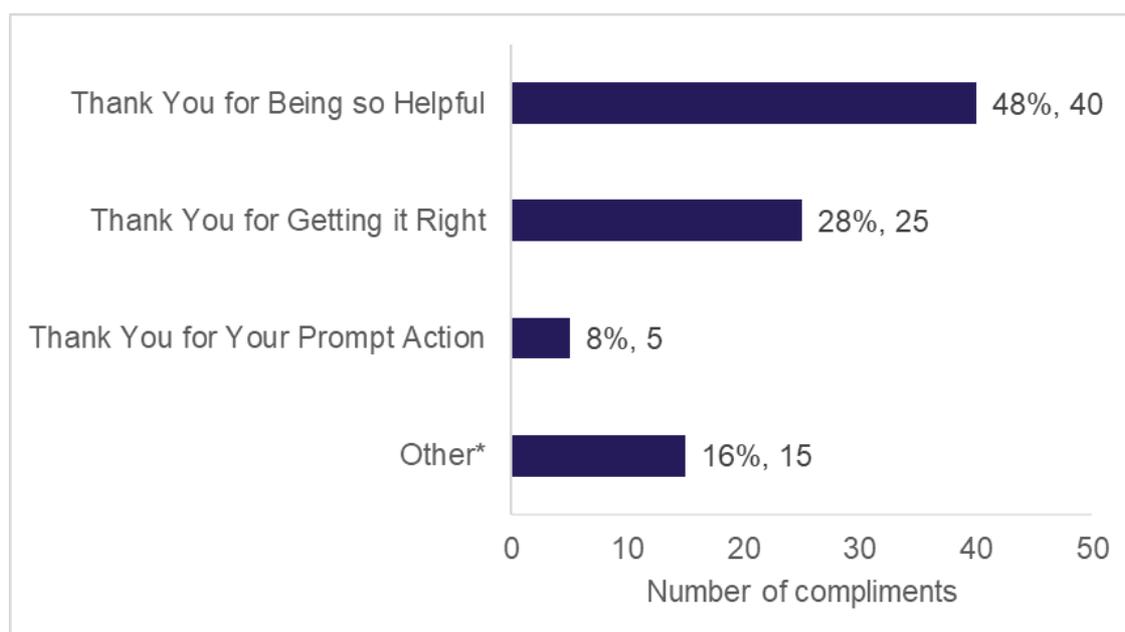
Table 5: Compliments by reason

Reason	Number	%
Thank You for Being so Helpful	40	48%
Thank You for Getting it Right	25	28%
Thank You for Your Prompt Action	5	8%
Other*	15	16%
Total	90	100%

*Other includes 'Standard of facilities', 'Thank you for your courtesy', and 'I found the process simple and straightforward'.

Figures do not sum due to rounding.

Chart 4: Compliments by reason



Suggestions

- In total 25 suggestions were received, mostly on 'Improving information available' (15 suggestions, 63%) **[Table 7]**.
- There were 15 suggestions about Best Start Grant (59%), five about Carer's Allowance Supplement (26%) and five that were not specific to a benefit (15%) **[Table 6]**.

Table 6: Suggestions by benefit

	All Benefits	CAS	BSG	Not benefit specific
Number	25	5	15	5
%	100%	26%	59%	15%

Table 7: Suggestions by reason

Reason	Number	%
Improving information available	15	63%
Client Experience	5	19%
Other	5	19%
Total	25	100%

*Other includes 'Timescales' and 'Administration process'.

Background to Feedback

Social Security Scotland is the executive agency of Scottish Government which is responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland. Social Security Scotland was introduced on 4 September 2018 and began making Carer's Allowance Supplement payments in September. Following this, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby payment on 10 December 2018, followed by Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment on 29 April 2019, School Age Payment on 3 June 2019 and Best Start Foods on 12 August 2019. Feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) has been received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced in September 2018.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints

Complaints fall under the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and their complaints handling procedure. This sets out a 2 stage internal complaints process. Frontline resolution – stage 1, allows 5 working days to respond to the client's complaint. Where a client remains unhappy with this response they can proceed to investigation – stage 2, which allows 20 working days to investigate and provide a response. If the client still remains unhappy then they can choose to take their complaint to the SPSO.

A small number of complaints went straight to investigation – stage 2. Not all complaints are suitable for frontline resolution and not all complaints will be satisfactorily resolved at that stage. Complaints handled at the investigation stage of the complaints handling procedure are typically complex or require a detailed examination. Examples of this include:

- the client/appointee refuses to take part in frontline resolution
- the issues raised are complex and require detailed investigation
- the complaint relates to serious, high-risk, or high-profile issues

Complaint reasons

Complaint reasons are categorised by Social Security Scotland staff based on the information received from clients. These categories are:

- Failure to provide a service - where a service was not delivered, for example, where an application was not processed or an online application form was unavailable.
- Inadequate standard of service – where a client has been provided with a service that is below standard.
- Failure to follow process – where published timescales were not met.
- Disagreement with a decision.
- Dissatisfaction with SG policy.

- Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff.

Complaint outcomes

Possible outcomes for complaints are:

- Upheld – the client's complaint has been upheld, as it meets the terms in the definition of a complaint.
- Not upheld – the client's complaint was not upheld because it did not meet the terms in the definition of a complaint.
- Partially upheld – if the client makes a complaint raising more than one issue, one part (or parts) of the complaint may meet the terms in the definition of a complaint, and other(s) do not. In this case the complaint would be partially upheld.

In this publication complaint outcomes are counted separately for stage 1 and stage 2. A complaint that progressed from stage 1 to stage 2 will have two outcomes.

Compliments and suggestions

Compliments and suggestions should be recorded within five working days.

Suggestions are investigated and the outcome is provided directly to the client.

About the data

How the data is collected

The data in this publication is sourced from Social Security Scotland's case management system. The system holds information on all feedback received, and includes type of feedback (complaint, compliment, suggestion), date received, channel by which feedback was received (e-mail, telephone, letter), benefit (Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant, or no specific benefit), reason for feedback (chosen from defined lists of possible categories), and where applicable, the date that feedback was actioned and the outcome of any decisions (again selected from a defined list of possible outcomes).

The information is held across multiple tables within the system. 100% extracts of administrative data are taken from this system every month for internal reporting purposes. Data cuts combine information from the different tables in the system into one monthly extract which includes details of all feedback made since September 2018. The data cut used to produce statistics for this publication was taken on 28 July 2019.

Quality assurance

The data used to produce the figures are the same as the data extracted from the case management system on a monthly basis that is used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland. As such, the data is checked monthly for consistency with previous extracts (for example, do numbers of complaints, compliments, and suggestions received increase as expected over time). Summary figures for number of complaints, compliments, and suggestions have been compared to equivalent summary figures produced from clerical records, and discrepancies investigated.

Additional quality assurance and cleaning has been carried out on specific variables:

- The dataset has been checked for duplicate records based on Case ID number.
- Variables have been checked for missing information.
- Feedback received dates and decisions dates have been checked to see whether they fall within expected ranges (e.g. after September 2018) and are consistent with those produced by clerical records.
- For complaints, the benefit that a complaint refers to and reason for the complaint have been checked for consistency between stage 1 and stage 2.

Once the data is aggregated and copied into the publication and supporting Excel tables, the final statistics are quality assured by a different member of the statistics team. The final documents are checked by the lead statistician.

Data Quality

Comparison to clerical data

Comparison of data from the case management system to clerical records showed several discrepancies. These discrepancies have been investigated with the Client Experience team, and errors in case management system data have been manually fixed to match the clerical record:

- In a small number of cases the stage 1 and stage 2 of one complaint have been recorded as two separate complaints on the case management system. These have been merged back into one complaint where necessary.
- A small number of items of feedback received had a date before September 2018, and these have been corrected.
- There were errors in date feedback was received and decisions were made on the case management system in comparison to clerical records for Carer's Allowance Supplement (stage 1 complaints, stage 2 complaints, compliments, and suggestions). This may have been due to migration of feedback information onto the case management system during the first months following the launch of Carer's Allowance Supplement. Dates have been amended back to the original dates received and decided with reference to the clerical records.
- Some feedback on the case management system is recorded as being not benefit specific. While this is true in some cases, in others this occurs where benefit information is missing. Missing benefit information has been completed with reference to clerical records.
- The case management system includes a small number of complaints where the outcome is recorded as 'Deleted'. In some cases these are complaints that have been created in error, and these have been removed from the dataset used to produce the figures in this publication. In others cases the outcome of the complaint has been amended from 'Deleted' to the correct outcome of the complaint.

Rounding and disclosure control

Feedback numbers have been rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control. Figures may not sum due to rounding. Percentages are based on actual figures and rounded to the nearest percent. Some percentages have been suppressed to prevent back-calculation of small numbers. The number of suggestions is very small and therefore cannot currently be broken down by benefit or reason.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints

For complaint benefit and reason, we have used the first recorded benefit or reason with a complaint. For complaint outcomes, if an application had both a stage 1 and stage 2 complaint outcome, we have counted this as two separate outcomes – a complaint that progressed from stage 1 to stage 2 will have two outcomes.

Complaints that went straight to stage 2 are included in total complaints and stage 2 complaints figures, and used to calculate the percentage of complaints reaching stage 2.

Processing time

Processing time is the number of days from the application being received to a decision being made or the application being withdrawn. It is calculated in working days. Weekends and public holidays are excluded. The time of day that an application was received or processed is not taken into account. Processing times are calculated separately for each complaint stage.

Comparisons with DWP complaints statistics

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has a different complaints process to Social Security Scotland, and as such, DWP complaints statistics are not directly comparable to these statistics. Further information about complaints at DWP and links to their latest statistics are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/complaints-about-the-department-for-work-and-pensions>.

Related Social Security Scotland publications

Future research and statistics publications will be available through the Social Security Scotland 'Reporting' webpage at: <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/what-we-do/reporting>.

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot

are available via an alternative route. Summary tables are available at:

[//www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland](http://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland)

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact SocialSecurityStats@gov.scot for further information.

cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

Complaints and suggestions

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Details of forthcoming publications can be found at www.gov.scot/statistics

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