



Social Security Scotland statistics

Social Security Scotland feedback statistics to 31 December 2019

Frequency of publications

The next publication, covering up to end March 2020 will be released in June 2020.

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: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/official-statistics-forthcoming-publications/>

Introduction

This report covers feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced on 4 September 2018 until 31 December 2019. It includes statistics for specific benefits (Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment and Young Carer Grant), as well as feedback that was not benefit specific.

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

<http://gov.scot/publications/social-security-feedback-stats-dec-2019>

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.

Contents

Introduction	2
Main findings	3
Complaints.....	3
Compliments.....	8
Suggestions.....	9
Background to Feedback	11
Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints.....	11
Complaint reasons.....	11
Complaint outcomes.....	12
Compliments and suggestions.....	12
About the data	13
How the data is collected.....	13
Quality assurance.....	13
Data Quality.....	13
Comparisons with DWP complaints statistics.....	15
Related Social Security Scotland publications.....	15

³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

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

Main findings

Complaints

- In total 215 complaints were received by 31 December 2019, including 75 for Carer's Allowance Supplement, 130 for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods and five for Funeral Support Payment **[Table 1]**. This compares to 98,275 carers receiving Carer's Allowance Supplement payments by December 2019⁴, 120,700 Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications made by 31 December 2019⁵ and 2,050 Funeral Support Payment applications made by 31 December 2019⁶. There were no complaints received for Young Carer Grant, which was introduced on 21 October 2019.
- Overall, 14% 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 (23%) than for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods (9%) **[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).

⁴ Summary statistics for Carer's Allowance at August 2019 and Carer's Allowance Supplement, October eligibility date 2019 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-for-carers-allowance-at-august-2019-and-carers-allowance-supplement-october-eligibility-date-2019/>

⁵ Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods: high level statistics to 31 December 2019 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-grant-and-best-start-foods-statistics-31-december-2019/>

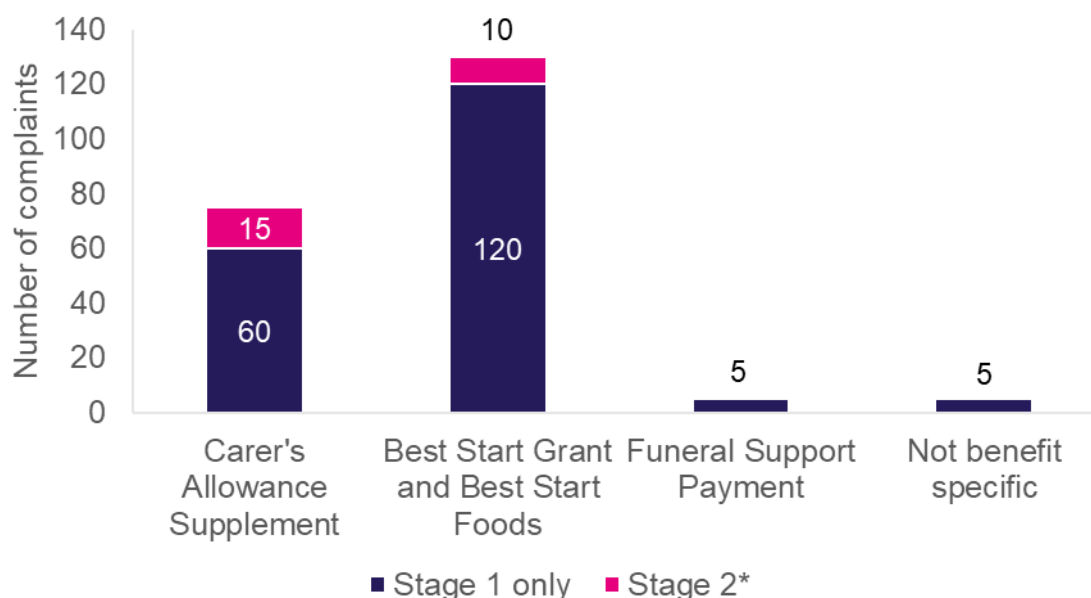
⁶ Funeral Support Payment: high level statistics to 31 January 2020 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/funeral-support-payment-high-level-statistics-to-31-january-2020/>

Table 1: Complaints by benefit and stage to 31 December 2019

Benefit	Total	% of all benefits	Stage 1	Stage 2	% progressed to Stage 2
Carer's Allowance Supplement	75	34%	75	15	23%
Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	130	61%	130	10	9%
Funeral Support Payment	5	*	5	0	*
Not benefit specific	5	*	5	0	*
Total	215	100%	210	30	14%

*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. The proportion progressing to Stage 2 includes complaints that went straight to Stage 2. There were no complaints about Young Carer Grant, which was introduced on 21 October 2019. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

Chart 1: Complaints by benefit and stage to 31 December 2019



*stage 2 figures for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods include a small number of complaints that went straight to stage 2, as well as complaints progressing from stage 1 to stage 2. Figures may not sum to those in Table 1 due to rounding.

- The most common reason for complaints was 'Inadequate standard of service' (150, 69%), followed by 'Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy' (25, 11%), and 'Failure to provide a service' (20, 10%) [Table 2, Chart 2]. Most complaints for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods related to 'Inadequate standard of service' (95, 74%). For Carer's Allowance Supplement there were relatively fewer complaints about 'Inadequate standard of service' (45, 60%) and more relating to 'Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy' (15, 21%). The [background section](#) gives definitions for the different reasons.

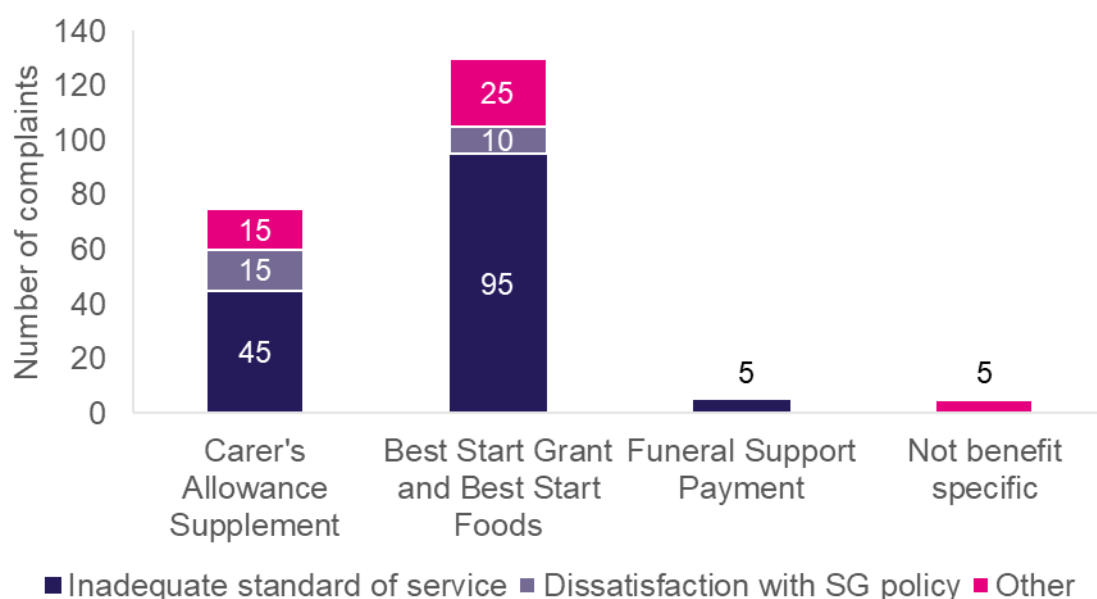
Table 2: Complaints by reason

Reason	All benefits	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	Funeral Support Payment	Not benefit specific
Inadequate standard of service	150	45	95	5	0
Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy	25	15	10	0	0
Failure to provide a service	20	10	10	0	0
Disagreement with a decision	10	5	5	0	0
Failure to follow the appropriate process	10	0	5	0	0
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	5	0	5	0	0
Total	215	75	130	5	5

Reason	% All benefits	% Carer's Allowance Supplement	% Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	% Funeral Support Payment	% Not benefit specific
Inadequate standard of service	69%	60%	74%	*	*
Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy	11%	21%	6%	*	*
Failure to provide a service	10%	12%	8%	*	*
Disagreement with a decision	4%	*	5%	*	*
Failure to follow the appropriate process	*	*	*	*	*
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	*	*	*	*	*
Total	100%	100%	100%	*	*

* suppressed for disclosure control. Complaint reason is based on the first reason given for a complaint when it was received. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

Chart 2: Complaints by reason to 31 December 2019



- By 31 December 2019, of the 215 complaints received around five were outstanding and did not have an outcome.
- For stage 1, the median average processing time was two working days (meaning that on average complaints were decided on the next working day after they were received). A small number of stage 1 complaints were not dealt with within the initial five working day timescale, in which case an extension was agreed with the client as explained in the [background section](#). Taking into account these extensions, all stage 1 complaints were dealt with within agreed timescales. For stage 2, the median average processing time was 18 working days. All stage 2 complaints were dealt with within the appropriate timescales as explained in the [background section](#). In this version of the publication the method for calculating processing time has changed, which has impacted average processing times as explained in the [background section](#).
- In total, over all benefits and both stages, 145 complaints were upheld (61%), 70 were not upheld (29%), 15 were partially upheld (7%), and 10 were withdrawn (3%). For Carer's Allowance Supplement, the majority of complaints were not upheld (55%), while for Best Start Grant the majority were upheld (77%) **[Table 3(i), Chart 3(i)]**. The majority of complaints about 'Inadequate standard of service' were upheld (115, 71%), whereas the majority of complaints about 'Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy' were not upheld (20, 74%) **[Table 3(ii), Chart 3(ii)]**. Therefore, one of the reasons for more Best Start Grant complaints being upheld than for Carer's Allowance Supplement could be the different types of reasons that clients complain about each of these benefits – relatively more clients complained about 'Inadequate standard of service' for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods **[Table 2]**, and these complaints were relatively more likely to be upheld. Figures for Funeral Support Payment have been suppressed for disclosure control but will be available by outcome in future updates to the statistics when numbers are sufficiently high. 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 to 31 December 2019

(i) Complaints by benefit and outcome

Outcome	All benefits	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	Funeral Support Payment	Not benefit specific
Upheld	145	30	110	5	0
Partially upheld	15	5	10	0	0
Not upheld	70	50	20	0	0
Withdrawn	10	0	5	0	0
Total	230	85	135	5	0

Outcome	% All benefits	% Carer's Allowance Supplement	% Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	% Funeral Support Payment	% Not benefit specific
Upheld	61%	35%	77%	*	*
Partially upheld	7%	*	6%	*	*
Not upheld	29%	55%	13%	*	*
Withdrawn	3%	*	4%	*	*
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

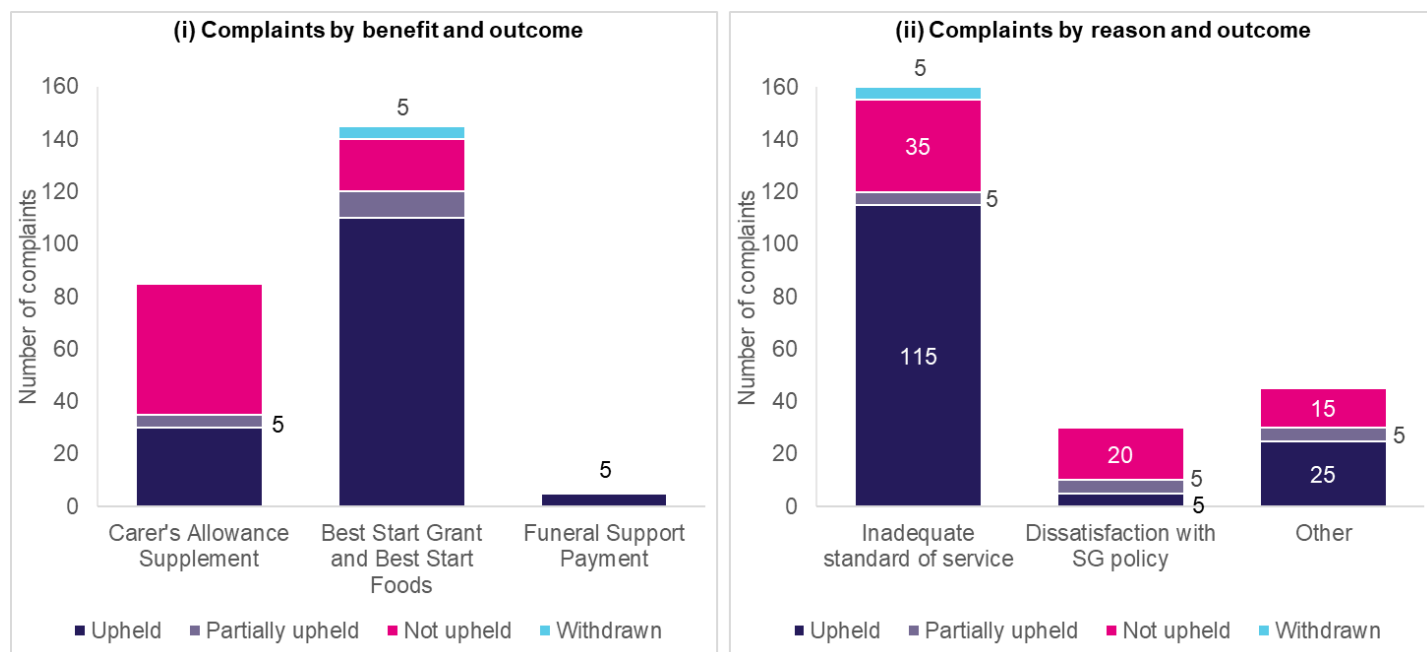
(ii) Complaints by reason and outcome

Outcome	All reasons	Inadequate standard of service	Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy	Other
Upheld	145	115	5	25
Partially upheld	15	5	5	5
Not upheld	70	35	20	15
Withdrawn	10	5	0	0
Total	240	165	25	50

Outcome	% All reasons	% Inadequate standard of service	% Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy	% Other
Upheld	61%	71%	15%	54%
Partially upheld	7%	4%	*	*
Not upheld	29%	20%	74%	31%
Withdrawn	3%	4%	*	*
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

*suppressed for disclosure control. Around five complaints were outstanding as of 31 December 2019, and therefore are not counted in this table. Outcomes for stage 1 and stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints changed reason between Stage 1 and Stage 2. Figures do not sum due to rounding. There were no complaints about Young Carer Grant, which was introduced on 21 October 2019.

Chart 3: Complaints by outcome to 31 December 2019



Outcomes for stage 1 and stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints changed reason between Stage 1 and Stage 2. Around five complaints were outstanding as of 31 December 2019, and a small number were not benefit specific – these have not been shown in the chart. Figures do not sum due to rounding. SG = Scottish Government.

Compliments

- A total of 130 compliments were received by 31 December 2019, including 65 (48%) for Carer's Allowance Supplement, 45 (36%) for Best Start Grant, and 20 for Funeral Support Payment [Table 4].
- The most common reason for compliments was 'Thank you for being so helpful' (65, 50%), followed by 'Thank you for getting it right (35, 28%) [Table 5, Chart 4].

Table 4: Compliments by benefit to 31 December 2019

	All Benefits	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	Funeral Support Payment	Not benefit specific
Number	130	65	45	20	0
%	100%	48%	36%	*	*

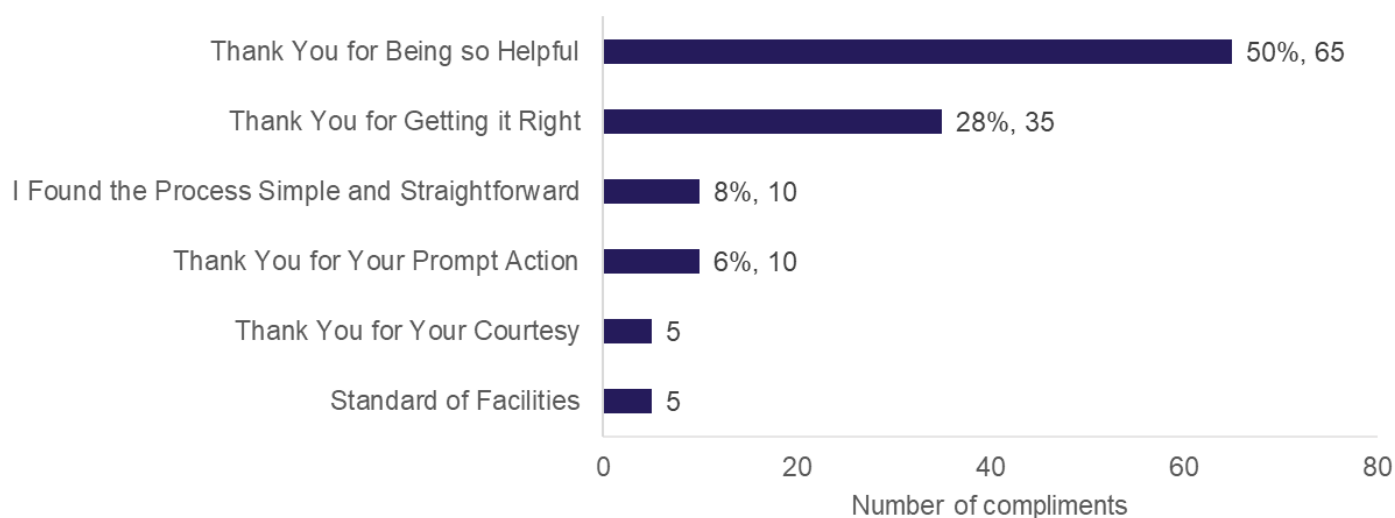
* suppressed for disclosure control. Figures do not sum due to rounding. There were no compliments about Young Carer Grant, which was introduced on 21 October 2019.

Table 5: Compliments by reason to 31 December 2019

Reason	Number	%
Thank You for Being so Helpful	65	50%
Thank You for Getting it Right	35	28%
I Found the Process Simple and Straightforward	10	8%
Thank You for Your Prompt Action	10	6%
Thank You for Your Courtesy	5	*
Standard of Facilities	5	*
Total	130	100%

* suppressed for disclosure control

Chart 4: Compliments by reason to 31 December 2019



Suggestions

- In total 55 suggestions were received, mostly on 'Improving information available' (35 suggestions, 59%) [Table 7].
- There were 30 suggestions about Best Start Grant (52%), ten about Carer's Allowance Supplement (18%), ten about Funeral Support Payment (14%) and ten that were not specific to a benefit [Table 6].

Table 6: Suggestions by benefit to 31 December 2019

	All Benefits	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	Funeral Support Payment	Young Carers Grant	Not benefit specific
Number	55	10	30	10	0	10
%	100%	18%	52%	14%	*	*

* suppressed for disclosure control

Table 7: Suggestions by reason to 31 December 2019

Reason	Number	%
Improving information available/Communications	35	59%
Client Experience	5	13%
Systems and/or Accessibility of services	5	*
Timescales	5	*
Other*	5	13%
Total	55	100%

*Other includes 'Administration process'. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

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, Best Start Foods on 12 August 2019, Funeral Support Payment on 16 September 2019 and Young Carer's Grant on 21 October 2019.

Feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) has been received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced in September 2018. Feedback can be about a particular benefit or not specific to a benefit.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints

Complaints fall under the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and their complaints handling procedure. This sets out a two stage internal complaints process. Frontline resolution – stage 1, allows 5 working days to respond to the client's complaint unless an extension is agreed. Extensions are requested by Social Security Scotland's client experience team only in exceptional circumstances, and only when an extension will make it more likely that the complaint will be resolved (for example, if staff are unavailable). For stage 1 complaints it may be more appropriate to escalate the complaint to stage 2 rather than agreeing an extension. Where a client remains unhappy with the response to a stage 1 complaint, they can proceed to investigation – stage 2, which allows 20 working days to investigate and provide a response unless an extension is agreed. 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 Scottish Government 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 primarily 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 (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 1 February 2020.

Quality assurance

The data used to produce the figures has been checked on a case by case basis with clerical records used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland, 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

Data from the case management system has been compared to clerical records. 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 where necessary. Discrepancies included:

- A small number of items of feedback received had a date before September 2018, or had the date of feedback being recorded rather than date received. There were also errors in date feedback was received and decisions were made on the case management system 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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. 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.

In this version of the publication we have made several changes to the processing time calculation, to be consistent with how processing times are calculated for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland:

- The day the application was received is now counted as 'day one' of processing, regardless of the time of day an application was received. For example, an application received and processed on the same day would have a processing time of one working day. An application received on one day and processed on the next working day would have a processing time of two working days. This has increased the processing time of all complaints previously reported on from earlier quarters by one working day. This has also increased the median average processing times for both stage 1 and stage 2 complaints by one day compared to the previous publication.
- Withdrawn applications have not been included in processing times statistics, including numbers processed within timescales, and average processing time. Numbers of withdrawn complaints are relatively small [Table 3], therefore this has had little impact on average processing times.
- Where an extension has been agreed on a stage 1 or stage 2 complaint, complaints will be classed as having been processed 'within agreed timescales' if they were processed within these extensions.

Comparisons with DWP complaints statistics

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has a different feedback process to Social Security Scotland, and as such, DWP complaints, compliments and suggestions 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

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

Correspondence and enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Amelia Brereton

Social Security Statistics

Telephone: 0131 244 5464

e-mail: MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,

e-mail: statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

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:

<http://gov.scot/publications/social-security-feedback-stats-dec-2019>

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

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

If you would like to be consulted about statistical collections or receive notification of publications, please register your interest at www.gov.scot/scotstat

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

Crown Copyright

You may use or re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. See:

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/