

**EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

# **Scottish Welfare Fund Statistics: Update to 30 June 2020**

# Introduction

This publication provides information on the Scottish Welfare Fund for the latest quarter, 1 April to 30 June 2020. It also contains information from previous financial years dating back to 1 April 2013, when the scheme commenced its operation. The most recent quarter covers the period during which COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were in place. The next update of this publication, to be released in January 2021, will include applications received in July to September 2020. The publication also includes monthly management information for January to August 2020, broken down by local authority level. This is included for comparison with the Official Statistics and to provide more recent figures that show the impacts of COVID-19 on the Scottish Welfare Fund.

A supplementary spreadsheet containing 45 tables and 13 charts has also been published. Electronic versions of this document and accompanying tables and charts are available at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/sg-social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#scottishwelfarefundstatistics>.

These statistics are being published as experimental statistics. Experimental statistics are defined in the Code of Practice for Official 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 Statistics<sup>1</sup>.

## Summary of main points

- The Scottish Welfare Fund comprises of Community Care Grants – which help people to live independently – and Crisis Grants, which provide a safety net in a disaster or emergency.
- From when the Scottish Welfare Fund scheme began on 1 April 2013 until 30 June 2020, 393,350 individual households have received awards totalling £246.4 million. A third of households receiving an award were families with children, while just over half were single person households with no children.
- From April to June 2020, Local Authorities received 14,890 applications for Community Care Grants (21% fewer than the equivalent quarter in 2019). Decisions were made on 18,060 applications, with 8,250 awards made (26% fewer than the previous year) – an acceptance rate of 46% (11 percentage points lower than the previous year). The number of

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on experimental statistics please see:

[https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/images-assessmentanddesignationofexperimentalstatistic\\_tcm97-44327-1.pdf](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/images-assessmentanddesignationofexperimentalstatistic_tcm97-44327-1.pdf)

decisions exceeds the number of applications due to decisions being taken on applications received in previous quarters. Expenditure on Community Care Grant awards totalled £3.5 million, which is a 49% less than the previous year. The average award was £419.

- From April to June 2020, Local Authorities received 74,495 applications for Crisis Grants (46% more than the previous year). Decisions were made on 77,345 applications, with 53,590 awards made (63% more than the previous year), and the acceptance rate was 69% (5 percentage points higher than the previous year). The number of decisions exceeds the number of applications due to decisions being taken on applications received in previous quarters. Expenditure on Crisis Grant awards totalled £5.2 million, 77% more than the previous year. The average award was £97.
- In the latest quarter, 83% of Community Care Grant applications and 92% of Crisis Grant applications were processed within the target time limits.
- Local authorities have been allocated £57.5 million for Scottish Welfare Fund awards in 2020/21 so far, which includes a £22.0 million COVID-19 allocation. There was also an estimated underspend of £2.0 million carried forward from 2019/20. Of the estimated total £59.5 million available for awards this year, £8.7 million (15%) has been spent in the first three months of the financial year. At this time last year, more had been spent (£9.7 million), however a larger proportion of the budget had been spent (28%) because the available budget was lower (£34.9 million).
- Since April 2013, there have been 23,795 Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants, and 23,075 for Crisis Grants. Just under half of decisions have been revised at this stage for both Community Care Grants (46%) and Crisis Grants (45%).
- In our previous publication we highlighted data quality issues with the official statistics, and discrepancies between the official statistics and management information. While there are still data quality issues in the official statistics for certain local authorities (described in the [data quality section](#)), the discrepancies between the official statistics and management information have reduced in the most recent quarter at Scotland level. Overall, the monthly management information and quarterly data extracts have similar figures for Community Care Grant applications (0% difference), Community Care Grant awards (-2% in the quarterly extract compared to monthly management information) and Community Care Grant expenditure (+1% in quarterly extract). At Scotland level, there is a slightly larger discrepancy in Crisis Grant applications (-5% in quarterly extract), but awards (-2% in quarterly data) and expenditure (+1% in quarterly data) are relatively similar. Management information to August 2020 has been provided in **Tables 44 and 45** for comparison to the official statistics. However, the official statistics provide much more detailed

information and breakdowns that are not available from the monthly management information and remain the recommended primary source for analysis and commentary.

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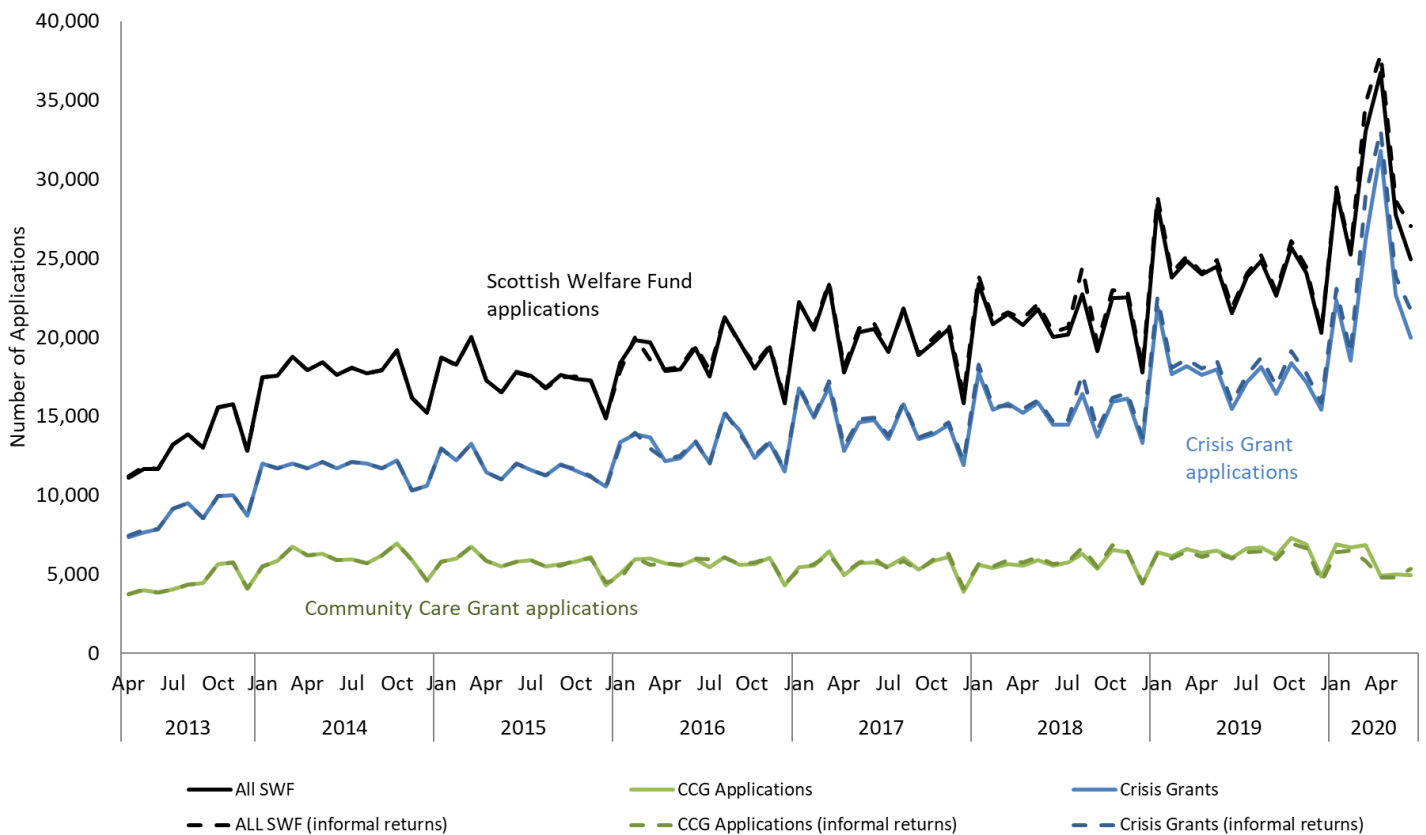
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# Applications

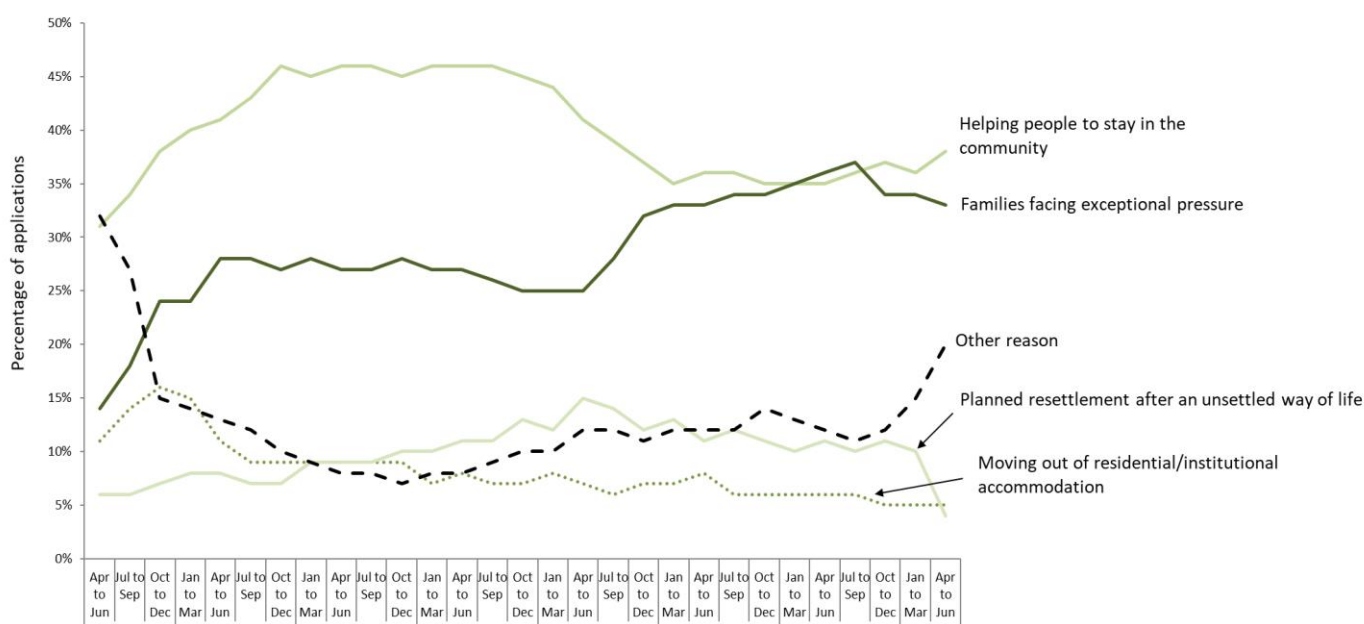
- From April to June 2020, a total of 89,385 applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund were received (**Table 1**), the majority were for Crisis Grants (74,495, **Table 3**), and a smaller proportion were for Community Care Grants (14,890, **Table 2**).
- Compared to the equivalent quarter in the previous year, the number of Community Care Grant applications decreased by 21% (4,040) (**Table 2, Chart 1**). At Local Authority level the change in application numbers varied from a 142% increase in Orkney (from 10 to 30 applications) to a 63% decrease in North Lanarkshire (from 1,105 to 415 applications). Community Care Grant applications decreased by 40% or more in three other local authorities, West Lothian (42% decrease), Glasgow City (45% decrease), and Shetland (48% decrease).
- Compared to the same quarter in the previous year, the number of Crisis Grant applications increased by 46% (23,435) (**Table 3, Chart 1**). At Local Authority level the change in number of applications varied from a 215% increase in Edinburgh (from 3,225 to 10,175) to a 58% decrease in Shetland (from 60 to 25 applications) (**Table 3**). Crisis Grant applications increased by 60% or more in nine Local Authorities (South Lanarkshire 62%, Glasgow City 62%, Dundee City 63%, Perth & Kinross 75%, East Dunbartonshire 87%, West Dunbartonshire 87%, Eilean Siar 116%, Orkney, 157% and Edinburgh 215%).
- Numbers of Crisis and Community Care Grant applications appear to have been affected by COVID-19, and the number of applications varied from month to month within the latest quarter (**Chart 1**). Crisis Grant demand increased sharply to 31,815 applications in April 2020, an 81% increase compared to April 2019. Fewer applications were received in May (22,700) and June (19,980), however demand remained higher in May (26% greater) and June (29% greater), compared to the same months in 2019. At the same time, there were fewer Community Care Grants applications in April (4,920, 23% fewer), May (5,015, 23% fewer) and June (4,950, 18% fewer), compared to the same months in 2019.
- Monthly management information suggests that the number of applications has been underestimated for June 2020 (**Chart 1**). Management information indicates that 5,351 Community Care Grant applications were received in June 2020, 8% more than in the official statistics for June. Similarly, management information indicates 21,709 crisis applications were received, 9% more than in the official statistics. This underestimation may be due to data quality issues unrelated to COVID-19, which are described in the [data quality section](#).

- Monthly management information also suggests that the effect of COVID-19 on Scottish Welfare Fund demand may have decreased in July and August 2020 (**Tables 44 and 45**). Crisis Grant demand in July (19,479 applications) and August (20,615 applications) was lower than in April to June. At the same time Community Care Grant applications increased in July (6,373 applications) and August (6,479 applications) compared to April to June, reaching roughly the same numbers of applications as July and August 2019.

**Chart 1: Applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund – Scotland – Monthly**



**Chart 2: Reasons for Application – Community Care Grants - Quarterly**

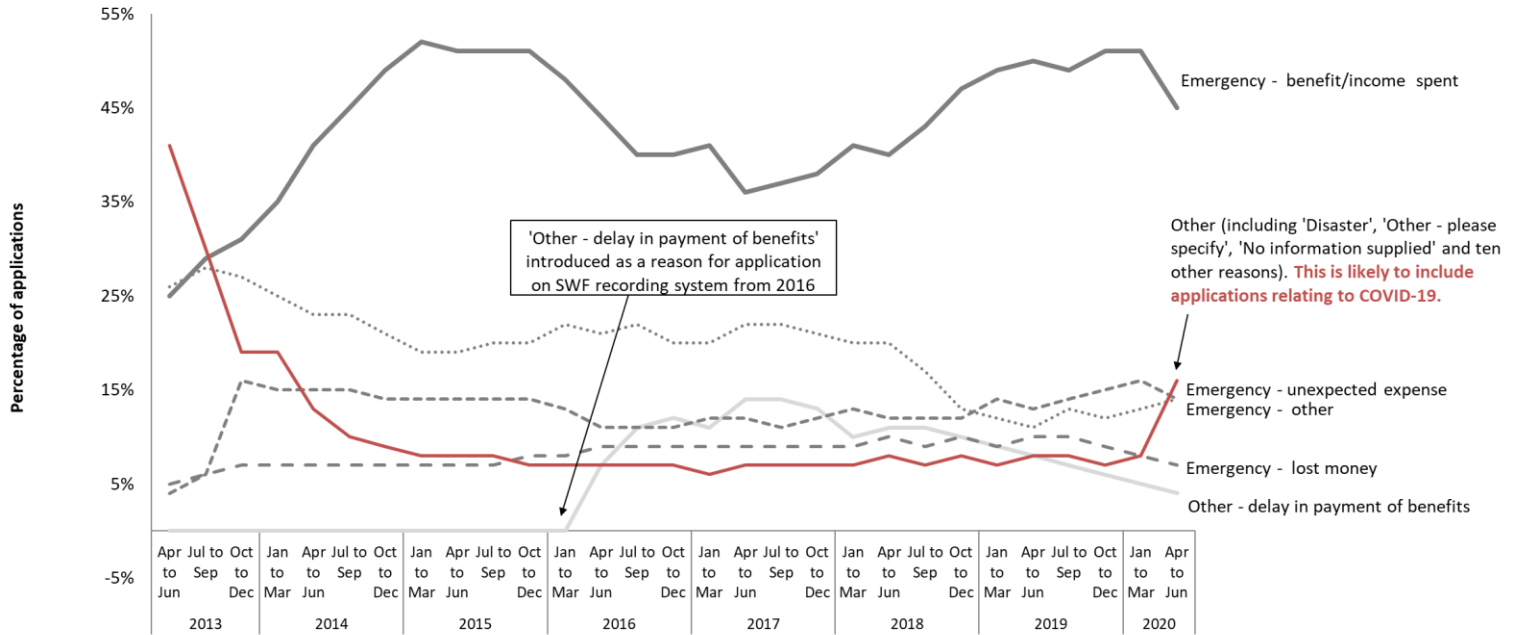


Note: “Caring for a prisoner/offender on temporary release” and “No information” are not shown – in the most recently quarter these accounted for 0% applications.

- During April to June 2020, ‘Helping people to stay in the community’ was the most common reason for Community Care Grant applications (5,585, 38%) (Table 4, Chart 2). This was followed by ‘Families facing exceptional pressure’ (4,960, 33%). The next most frequent reason for applications was ‘Other reason’ (2,985, 20% of applications). While overall the number of Community Care Grant applications has decreased, applications for ‘Other reason’ increased by 32% compared to April to June 2019. This increase may be due to COVID-19 related applications being recorded as ‘Other reason’.
- In the most recent quarter, the most common reasons for Crisis Grant applications were different types of emergency (62,000, 83% of applications), whereas disasters such as fires and floods are less common (405, 1% of applications) (Table 6, Chart 3).
- Within the broader category of ‘Emergency’, the most common sub-reason remained ‘benefit/income spent’ (33,765, 45% of applications). While use of this reason for Crisis Grants increased by 33% compared to April to June 2019, the proportion of applications with this reason actually decreased slightly by five percentage points. On the other hand, crisis applications due to ‘Other – please specify’ increased from being 3% of applications to 13% of applications. This increase may be due to COVID-19 related applications being recorded as ‘Other’.



**Chart 3: Reasons for Application – Crisis Grants – Quarterly**

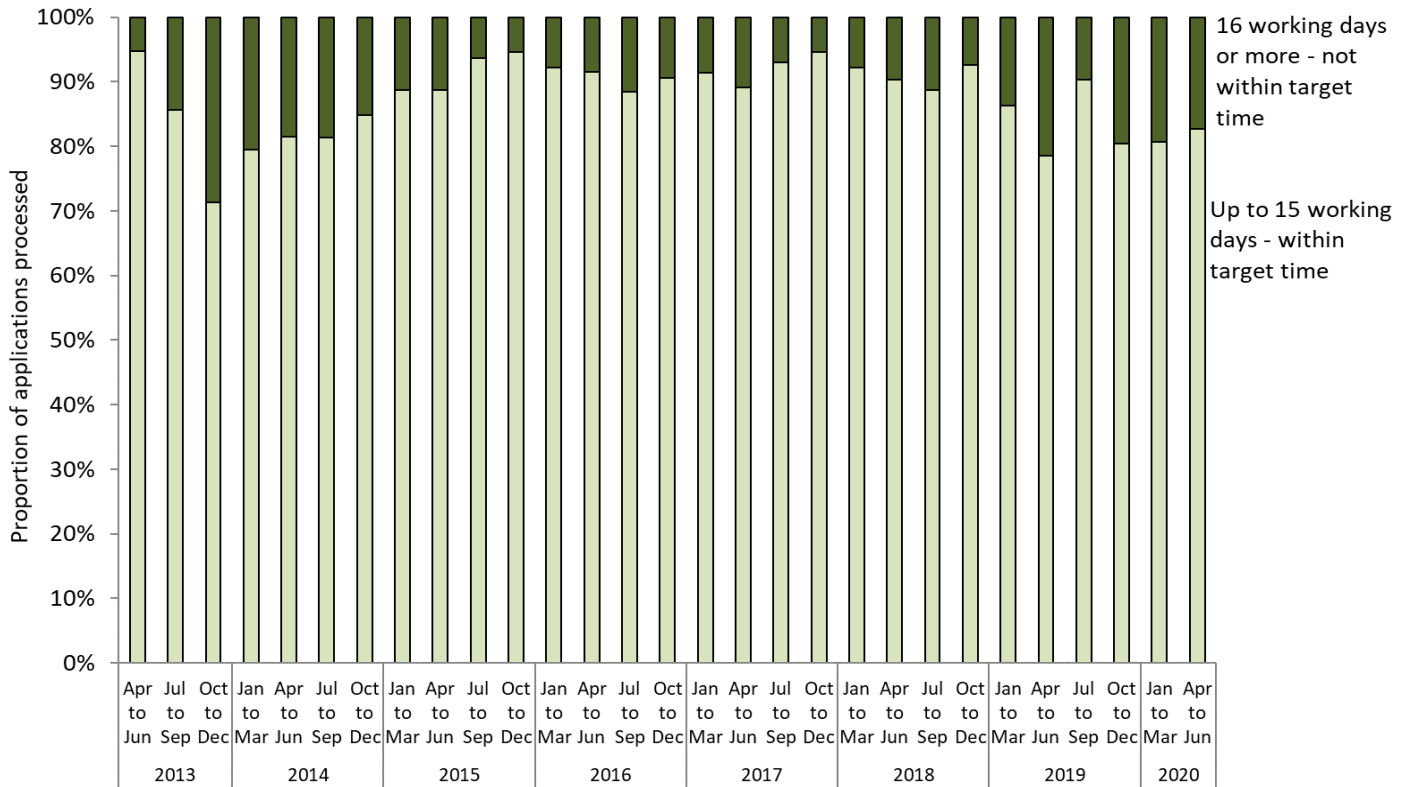


# Processing Times

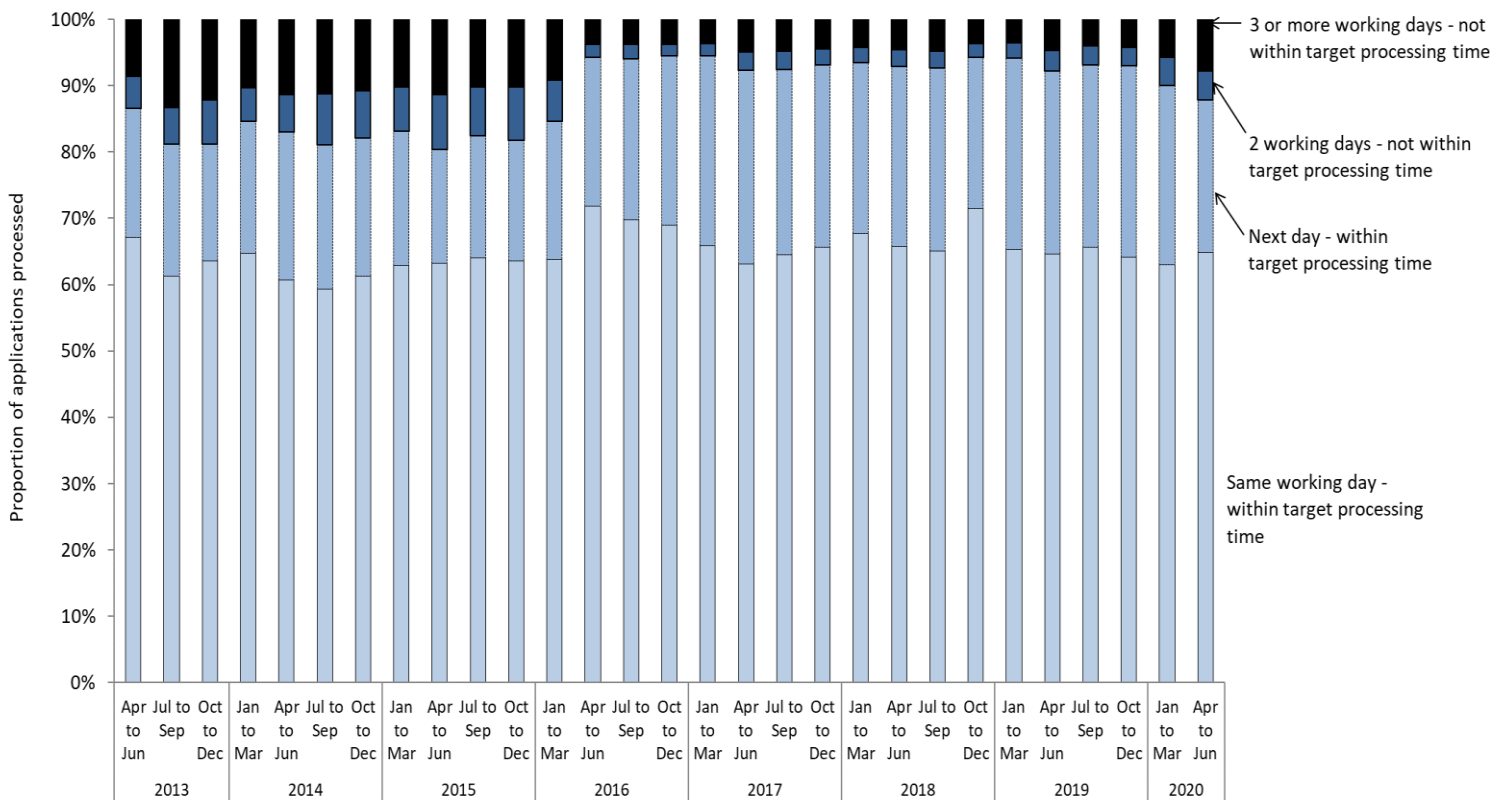
In the latest quarter:

- Overall, Local Authorities processed 83% of Community Care Grant applications within the target time of 15 working days, an increase of four percentage points compared to the same quarter in 2019 (**Table 8, Chart 4**).
- Seven local authorities processed 100% of Community Care Grants within target times, and most others processed around 90% or more on time. Two local authorities processed around 80% on time (Shetland 79%, Dundee City 82%), and two processed a much lower proportion on time (Aberdeen City 57%, Glasgow City 36%) (**Table 9**). The proportion of applications processed on time has been low for Glasgow City in previous quarters in 2019/20, and the council have indicated this has been due to high demand. Processing times may have been affected by increased demand due to COVID-19.
- Overall, Local Authorities processed 92% of Crisis Grant applications within the target time, by the end of the next working day. This is a decrease of three percentage points compared to the same quarter in 2019 (**Table 10, Chart 5**).
- At Local Authority level (**Table 11**), seven local authorities processed 100% of crisis applications within target timescales, and most others processed around 90% or more on time. However, two local authorities processed a lower proportion on time (Glasgow City 77%, Shetland 43%).
- It is possible that cases are currently missing from the dataset used to produce this publication due to processing delays, or due to cases being awarded in principle or 'pending' on local authority systems. It is therefore possible that estimates of the proportion of cases processed on time could change for the latest quarter once these cases are received.

**Chart 4: Initial Processing Times for Community Care Grants – Quarterly**



**Chart 5: Initial Processing Times for Crisis Grants – Quarterly**



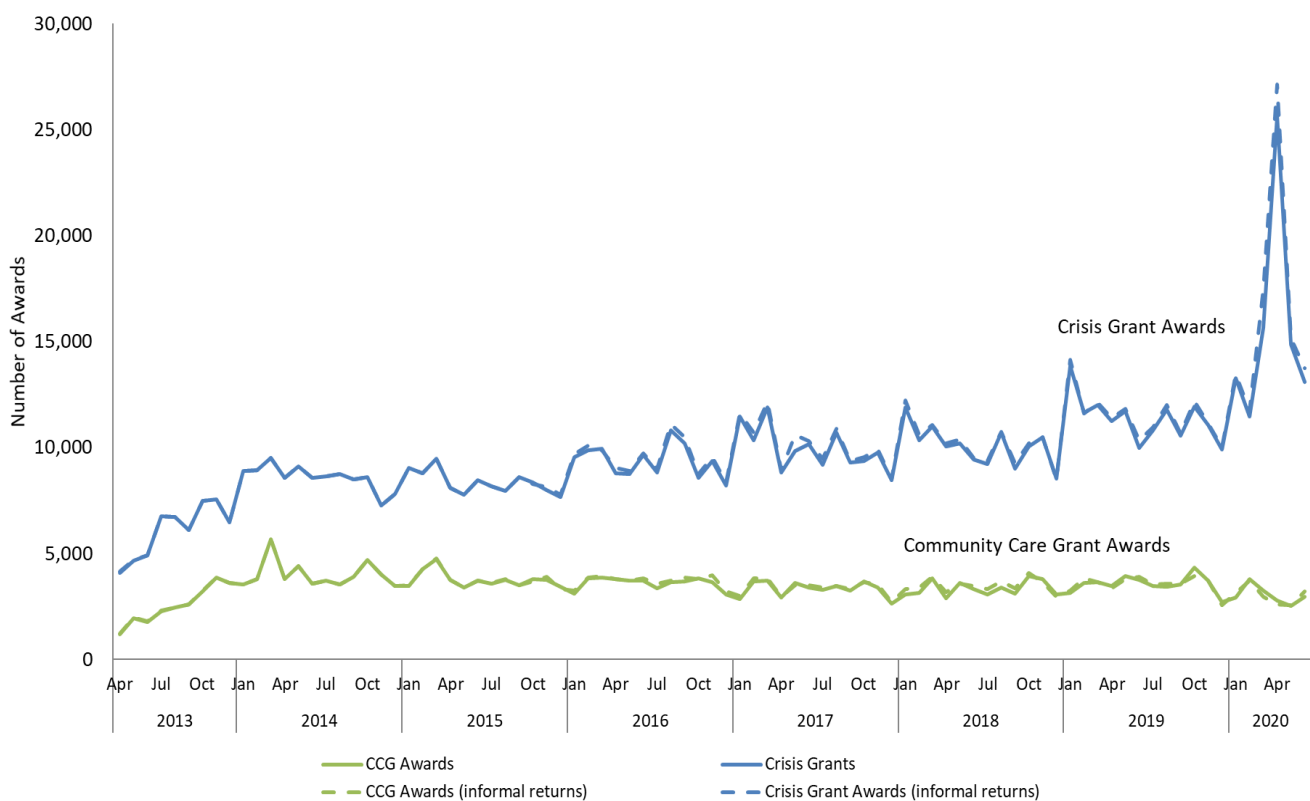
Note: The target processing time for Crisis Grants changed from two working days to the end of the next working day in April 2016.

## Decisions and awards

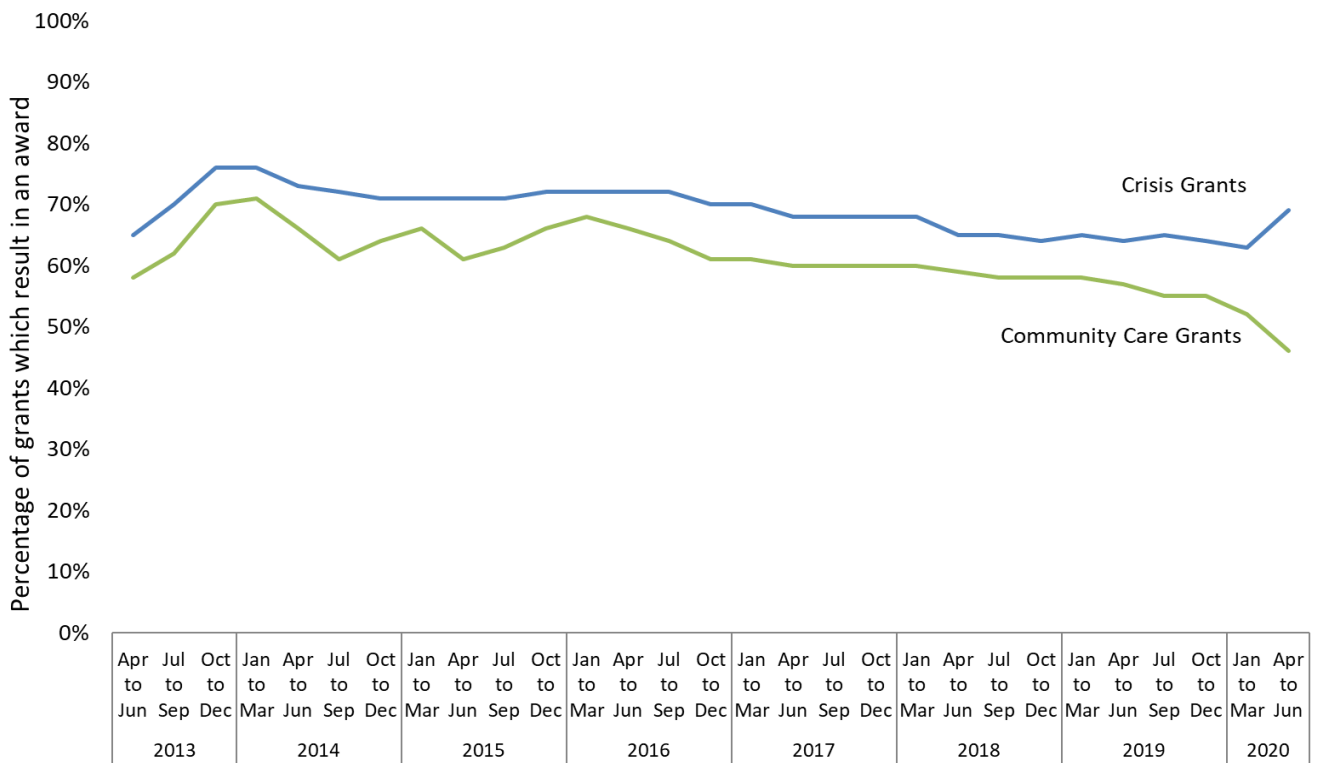
- In the latest quarter, fewer Community Care Grant awards and more Crisis Grant awards were made, compared to the same quarter last year, reflecting the impact of COVID-19.
- Fewer Community Care Grants were awarded than in April to June 2019 as a combination of fewer applications being received, fewer applications being decided, and the acceptance rate being lower. Decisions were made on 18,060 Community Care Grant applications in April to June 2020, and the acceptance rate was 46%, 11 percentage points lower than the acceptance rate in same quarter in 2019 (**Table 12, Table 14, Chart 7**). This resulted in 8,250 awards being made, 26% fewer than in April to June 2019 (**Table 13, Chart 6**).
- Conversely, more Crisis Grants were awarded than in April to June 2019 as a combination of more applications being received, more applications being decided, and the acceptance rate being higher. Decisions were made on 77,345 Crisis Grants, and the acceptance rate was 69%, 5 percentage points higher than in the same quarter last year (**Table 15, Table 17, Chart 7**). This resulted in 53,590 awards being made, 63% more than in April to June 2019.
- Decisions figures were higher than the numbers of applications received because decisions were also made on applications received in previous quarters.
- While Community Care Grant awards fell overall, there was variation among the local authorities (**Table 13**). Number of awards increased in ten local authorities, with the greatest relative increase in East Dunbartonshire (38% increase, from 70 to 95). The greatest decrease was in Glasgow City (68% decrease, from 2,570 to 815), followed by East Renfrewshire (53% decrease, from 115 to 55). The highest acceptance rate was 75% in Inverclyde, and the lowest was 28% in Glasgow City (**Table 14**). Although acceptance rates fell overall, acceptance rates rose in 14 out of 32 Local Authorities, compared to the same quarter in 2019.
- Crisis awards more than doubled in six local authorities, and only fell in two local authorities. At Local Authority level (**Table 16**), the greatest increase in Crisis Grant awards, compared to the same quarter in 2019, was in City of Edinburgh (252% increase, from 2,280 to 5,735 awards). The greatest decrease in awards was in Shetland (68% decrease, from 40 to 15 awards). Although acceptance rates increased slightly overall, they fell in 8 out of 32 Local Authorities compared to the same quarter in the 2019 (**Table 17**). In the latest quarter, the highest acceptance rate was 88% in Eilean Siar, and the lowest was 43% in Shetland.

- Monthly awards figures varied within the latest quarter due to the effects of COVID-19. According to the Official Statistics, the peak of crisis awards was 25,640 made in April 2020, an increase of 128% compared to April 2019 (**Chart 6, Table 45**). This figure may have been even higher according to the monthly management information. The Official Statistics may have been affected by missing cases and data quality issues as described in the [data quality](#) section.
- At the same time, the Official Statistics suggest that Community Care Grant awards reached their lowest point in May 2020 (2,520), a decrease of 36% compared to May 2019. Awards then increased to 2,945 in June 2020, 22% lower than June 2019 (**Chart 6, Table 44**). Again, this increase in awards was larger in the monthly management information than official statistics.
- Monthly management information suggests that in July and August 2020 Community Care Grant awards continued to increase, while Crisis Grant awards continued to decrease, both moving to similar levels to July and August 2019 (**Table 44, Table 45**).

**Chart 6: Number of Scottish Welfare Fund Awards – Scotland – Monthly**



**Chart 7: Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant acceptance rates – Quarterly**

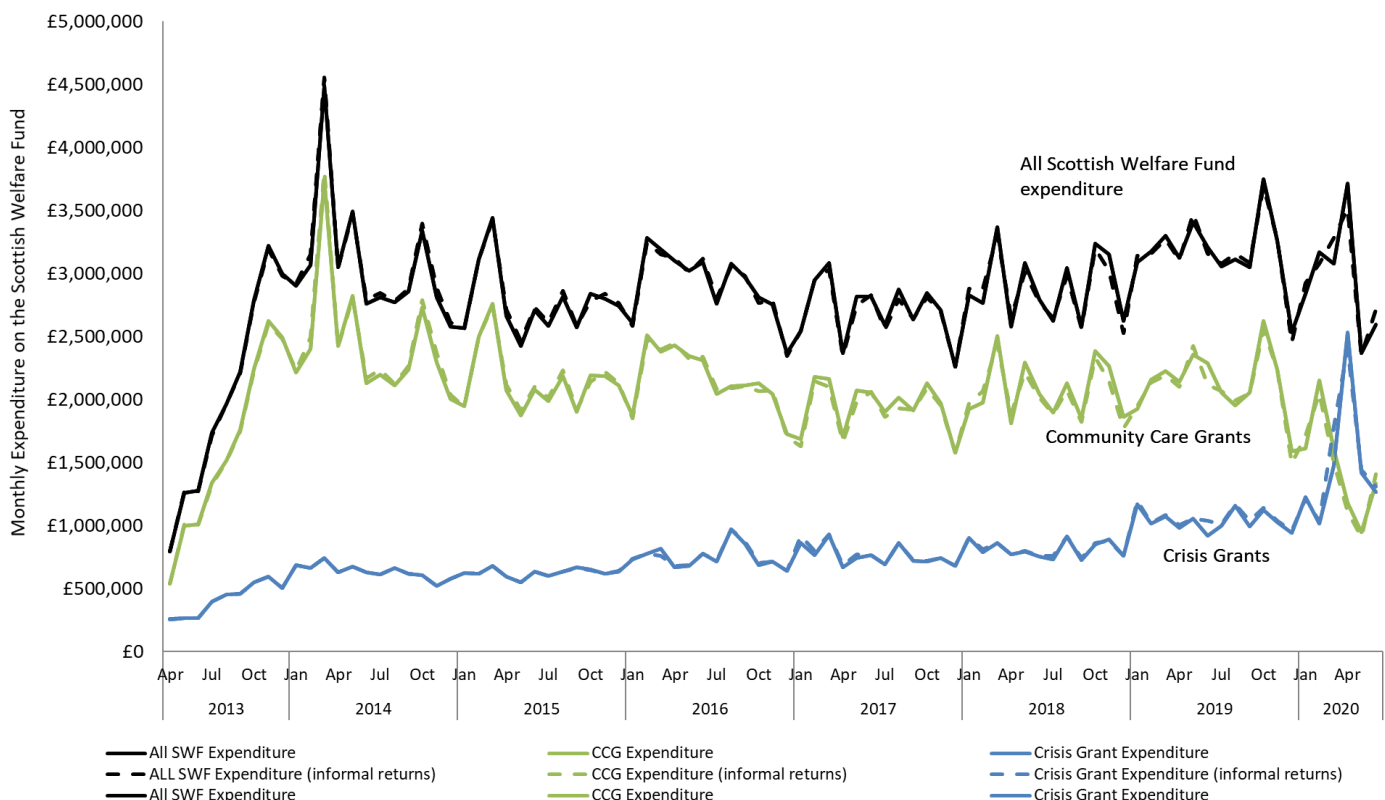


- In the latest quarter there were 17% more rejections for Community Care Grants than in the same quarter last year, although the distribution of rejections reasons remained similar (**Table 18**). There were 30% more rejections for Crisis Grants, and the proportion of rejections due to previous application history decreased from 32% in April to June 2019, to 26% by April to June 2020 (**Table 19**).

# Expenditure and budgets

- Unless otherwise stated, all expenditure information in this publication is based on the date of decision. As such it should be regarded as committed spend, rather than actual spend. Where a case has been reviewed, expenditure is assigned to the quarter of the initial decision rather than the review date. Further discussion of expenditure data quality is included in the [Data Quality](#) section of the publication.
- Local Authorities submit monthly management information to the Scottish Government. These returns contain expenditure information on Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants. **Chart 8** shows that expenditure recorded in the quarterly monitoring matches closely with the information in the management information at Scotland level. For most Local Authorities there is agreement between the monthly and quarterly returns, and agreement is closer for expenditure data than for applications or awards figures in the latest quarter.

**Chart 8: Expenditure on the Scottish Welfare Fund – Comparison of quarterly data and monthly management information – Scotland – Monthly**



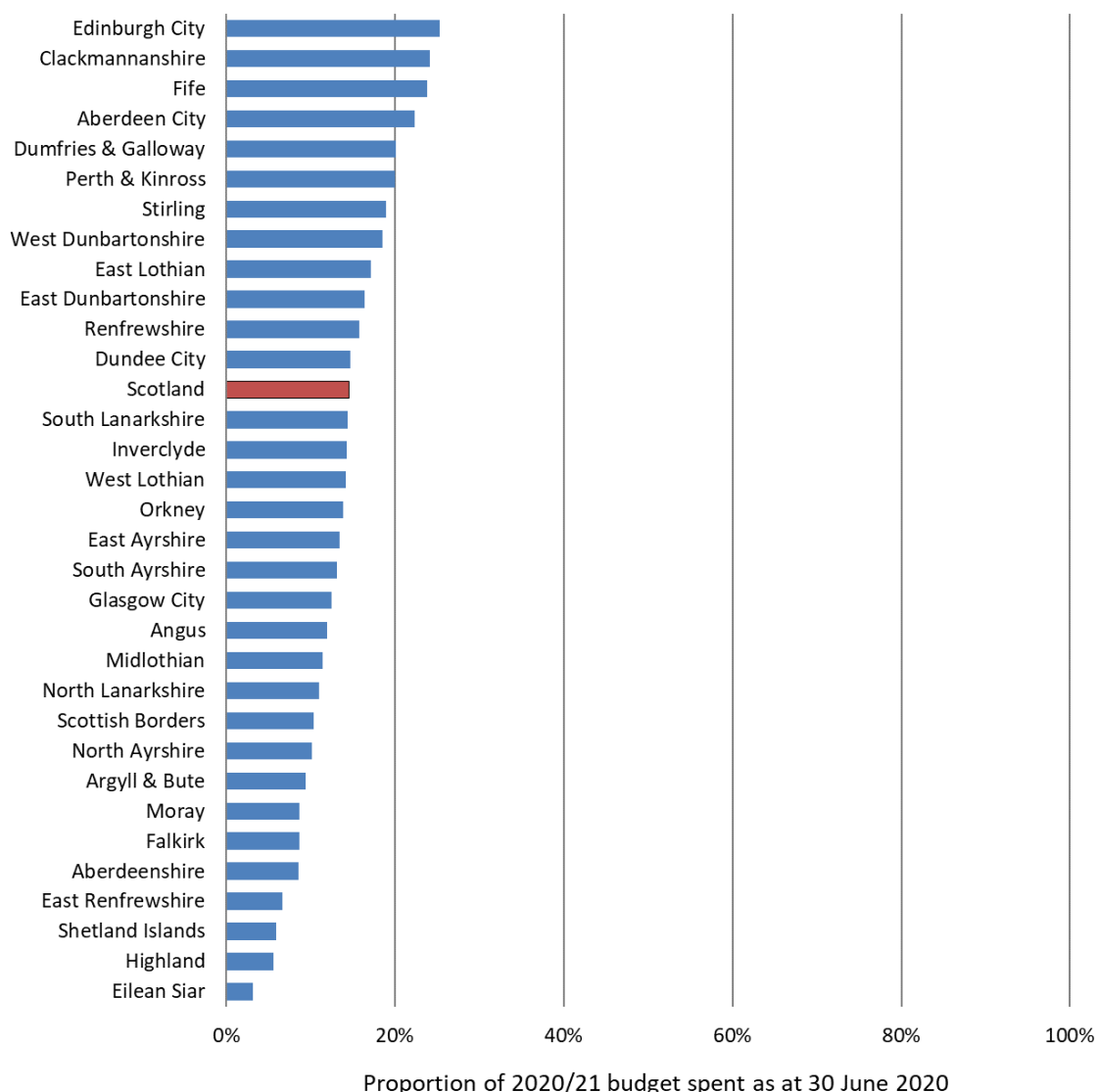
- In the latest quarter, £8.7 million was spent through the Scottish Welfare Fund, 11% less than the same quarter in 2019 (£9.7 million). Lower overall expenditure was driven largely by lower Community Care Grant

expenditure, due to lower demand, acceptance rates and average award value due to COVID-19 (**Table 23, Chart 8**).

- The average Community Care Grant award value was £419 (**Table 12**), and Community Care Grant expenditure was £3.5 million, 49% lower than the same quarter in 2019 (**Table 23**).
- Most Local Authorities (29 of 32) spent less on Community Care Grants than in the same quarter in 2019 (**Table 23**), with the greatest decrease in Glasgow City (-81%). Of the remaining three local authorities, the greatest increase in spend was 9% in Aberdeen City.
- In the latest quarter, Crisis Grant awards accounted for the majority of Scottish Welfare Fund expenditure, in contrast to previous quarters when Community Care Grant expenditure has been greater than Crisis Grant expenditure (**Table 15, Chart 8**). The average Crisis Grant value was £97 (**Table 15**), and Crisis Grant expenditure was £5.2 million, 77% greater than the same quarter of 2019 (**Table 23**). Increased Crisis Grant expenditure was driven largely by more applications and awards being made as a result of COVID-19.
- At Local Authority level, expenditure increased in 30 out of 32 local authorities compared to last year (North Lanarkshire -3%, Shetland -28%). Expenditure more than doubled in nine local authorities, with the greatest relative increase in Orkney (606%)(**Table 23**).
- As with the monthly awards figures, official statistics indicate that monthly Crisis Grant expenditure peaked at £2.5 million in April 2020, 158% more (£1.5 million) than April 2019, then decreased to £1.3 million in June 2020, 38% more than in June 2019 (**Chart 8**). At the same time Community Care Grant expenditure fell to £0.9 million in May 2020, 60% less (£1.4 million) than May 2019, then increased to £1.3 million, 42% less than June 2019 (**Chart 8**).
- Monthly management Information suggests that in July and August 2020 Community Care Grant expenditure continued to increase, while Crisis Grant expenditure continued to decrease, both moving to levels more similar to July and August 2019 (**Table 44, Table 45**).



**Chart 9: Proportion of annual budget spent as at 30 June 2020**

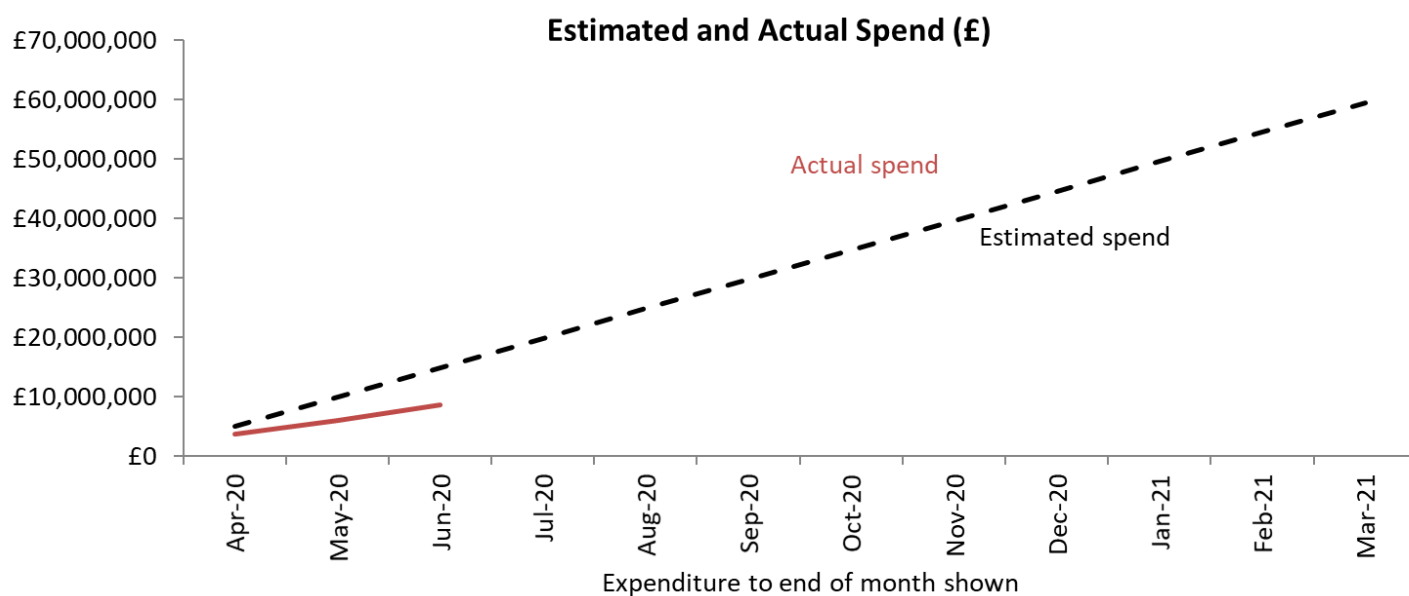


During 2020/21:

- Local authorities have been allocated £57.5 million for Scottish Welfare Fund awards in 2020/21 so far, which includes a £22.0 million COVID-19 allocation. There was also an estimated underspend of £2.0 million carried forward from 2019/20 (see the [Data Quality](#) section for issues relating to estimation of underspend). Of the estimated total £59.5 million available for awards this year, £8.7 million (15%) has been spent in the first three months of the financial year. At this time last year, more had been spent (£9.7 million), and a larger proportion of the budget had been spent (28%) because the available budget was lower (£34.9 million). (**Table 25, Chart 9, Chart 10**).
- At this point in the year, percentage of budget spent (including estimated previous underspend) ranges from 3% in Eilean Siar to 25% in Edinburgh (although there are specific data quality issues for Edinburgh that will have meant some expenditure was recorded in April 2020 that should have been

recorded in March 2020, see the [data quality section](#)). (Table 26, Chart 9). None of the Local Authorities have spent more than their estimated budget for the year by the end of June, and three local authorities (Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire and Fife) had spent around 24-25% indicating that they may be on track to spend all of their allocated funds during 2020/21 at current rates of expenditure

**Chart 10: Cumulative Expenditure on the Scottish Welfare Fund – Monthly**



#### Housing costs within Universal Credit:

- From 1 April 2017, the UK Government introduced a change to the entitlement for housing costs within Universal Credit (UC), resulting in people aged 18-21 years no longer being eligible, unless the individual is covered by an exemption<sup>2</sup>. The policy applies to new claimants, claiming UC on or after 1 April 2017, in an area using the full, digital service. To mitigate against this, the Scottish Government extended the Scottish Welfare Fund on an interim basis to provide Community Care Grants to 18-21 year olds affected by this change<sup>3</sup>. Based on management information supplied to Scottish Government by Local Authorities, these grants amounted to around £14,000 from 1 April 2017 to 31 December 2018. Applications, awards, expenditure and review data relating to these grants have been excluded from the rest of this publication. On 5 November 2018 the UK Government laid regulations coming into force on 31 December 2018 revoking the removal of assistance with housing costs

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-costs-for-18-to-21-year-olds>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/fairerscotland/scottishwelfarefund/socialfund/18to21assistancewithhousingcosts>

for those aged 18-21. We have not received any further management information on these grants since December 2018.

#### Family Reunion Crisis Grants:

- Delivery of Family Reunion Crisis Grants commenced on 14 May 2018. The grants support refugee families arriving in Scotland under family reunion rules to settle with their family member already resident in the Local Authority area. Applicants can apply for both Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants through this scheme. Based on management information supplied to Scottish Government by Local Authorities, these grants have amounted to around £151,500 from 14 May 2018 to 31 March 2020. Information for April to June 2020 is currently unavailable.

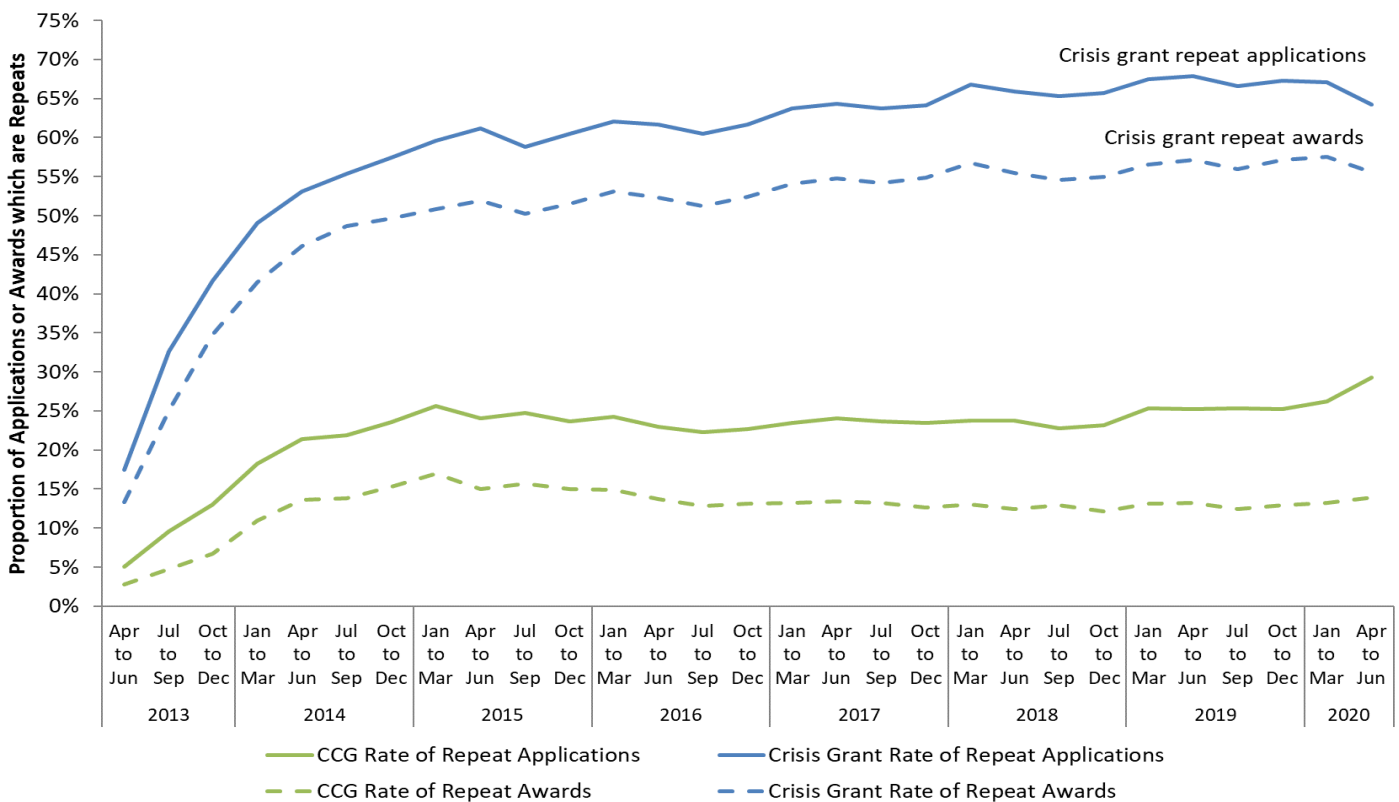
## Items and Payments

- In the latest quarter the most common Community Care Grant expenditure was on floor coverings (5,960, 19% of items), beds and bedding (6,355, 21% of items in total), and kitchen appliances such as cookers, fridges, freezers and washing machines (9,360, 31% of items in total) (**Table 27**). Almost all items were less frequently awarded in April to June 2020 than in April to June 2019, in line with the decrease in Community Care Grants awarded overall. There were only small changes in the proportions that different items accounted for out of all items awarded. Trends were similar for the value of Community Care Grant items.
- The most common Crisis Grant expenditure was on food, essential heating expenses and Other living expenses, as in previous quarters (**Table 29**). Expenditure on all of these items increased in April to June 2020 in comparison to last year, as expected given the increase in Crisis Grants awarded. Expenditure on food in particular increased more than the other top items (94% increase compared to last year, +£1.7 million), and in the latest quarter food accounted for two thirds of expenditure (66%, up from 60% last year, **Table 30**). Essential heating costs increased by 30%, and expenditure on Other living expenses has increased by 79%, since the previous year (**Table 30**). There was also a large relative increase in expenditure on 'Other' items (+186%), which may reflect decreasing data quality due to COVID-19. However, in the latest quarter 'Other' items still only accounted for 2% of expenditure on Crisis Grants.
- The most common payment method for Community Care Grants remained provision of new goods (51% of payments, **Table 31**), although this accounted for slightly lower proportion of payments than last year, and the proportion made through 'payment into bank' and 'other' methods increased. For Crisis Grants cash remained the most common payment method (46% payments, a similar proportion to last year) (**Table 32**). However there was an increase in the number and value of payments made by 'payment into bank' in particular, which is likely to be an effect of COVID-19.

# Repeat Applications and Awards

- There is a higher rate of both repeat applications and repeat awards for Crisis Grants compared to Community Care Grants (**Chart 11**).
- In the latest quarter, 29% of Community Care Grant applications were repeats, an increase of four percentage points since last year, and the highest proportion in any quarter since the start of the Scottish Welfare Fund (**Table 40**). This may be an effect of COVID-19, and suggests that although the overall number of applications decreased, the applications that were received were slightly more likely than usual to have come from people who had applied in the previous 12 months. Additionally, 14% awards were repeats, an increase of one percentage point since last year (**Table 41**).
- In the latest quarter, 64% of Crisis Grant application were repeats, a decrease of four percentage points compared to last year, and the lowest for any quarter since 2017 (**Table 42**). It is possible that COVID-19 has led to more people applying to the Scottish Welfare Fund for the first time, decreasing the proportion of repeat applications. Additionally, 56% awards were repeats, a decrease of one percentage point compared to last year (**Table 43**).

**Chart 11: Repeat applications and awards for Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants – Quarterly**



## Reviews

- Since April 2013, there have been 23,795 Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants, and 23,074 for Crisis Grants (**Table 33**)<sup>4</sup>. Overall, less than half of decisions have been revised at this stage for both Community Care Grants (46%) and Crisis Grants (45%) (**Table 34**).
- Since April 2013, 75% of Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants have been made within the 15 working day target, while 88% of Tier 1 reviews for Crisis Grants have been made within the two working day target (**Table 35**). East Ayrshire have been unable to supply information on review processing times for some reviews made before September 2018, which accounts for a further 2% Community Care Grants and less than 1% Crisis Grants where it is unknown if reviews were made within target times.

## Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

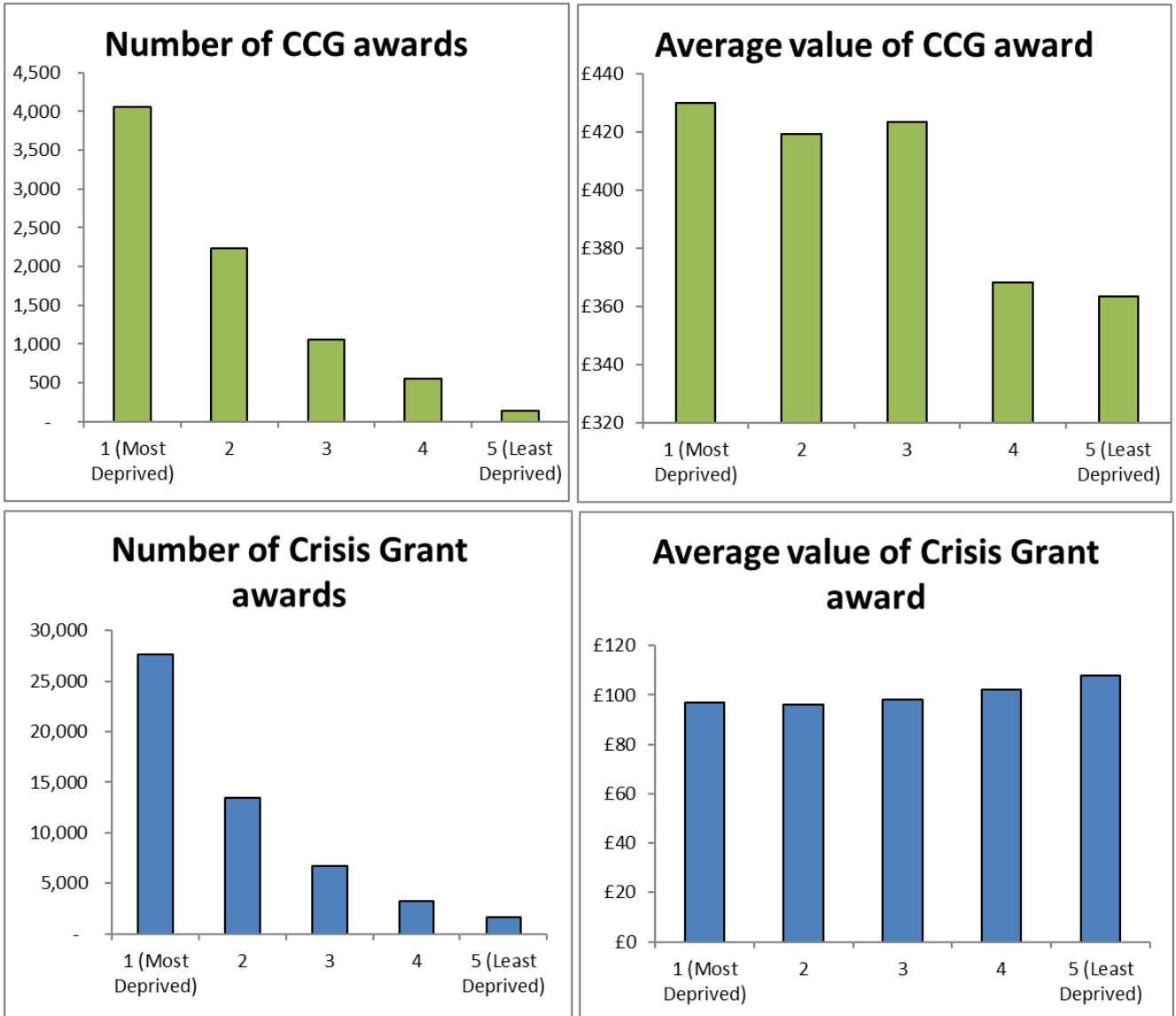
- Scottish Welfare Fund awards tend to go to applicants living in more deprived areas of Scotland. Around one in five people in Scotland live in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). However, in the latest quarter around half of Community Care Grants (49%) and Crisis Grants (51%) were awarded to applicants living in these areas. In comparison, around 2% of Community Care Grants and 3% of Crisis Grants were awarded to applicants from the 20% least deprived areas (**Table 36, Table 37, Chart 12**).
- The proportion of Community Care Grants awarded to those in the 10% most deprived areas in Scotland was lower in April to June 2020 (28%) compared to last year (35%). In contrast, the proportion of awards made to people in less deprived areas increased slightly.
- Community Care Grant applicants in more deprived areas also tend to receive a higher average award value than applicants in less deprived areas (**Table 36, Table 37, Chart 12**). In the latest quarter, Community Care Grant applicants in the 20% most deprived data zones received an average award that was around £67 higher than applicants in the 20% least deprived data zones (£430 compared to £363, **Chart 12**). It also appears that as the overall average award value has dropped over the last two quarters, the difference between average award in the most and least deprived areas has also decreased (**Table 36**).
- For Crisis Grants, there has been much less change in the distribution of awards among SIMD deciles (**Table 37**). As in previous quarters, average

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<sup>4</sup> These figures do not include Tier 1 reviews for East Ayrshire for 2013.

awards were more similar across the different SIMD rankings than for Community Care Grants (**Chart 12**). However, in the latest quarter the average award value in the less deprived areas appears to have increased slightly.

**Chart 12: Distribution of awards and average award value by SIMD 2020 Quintile rankings of applicant's postcode – latest quarter**

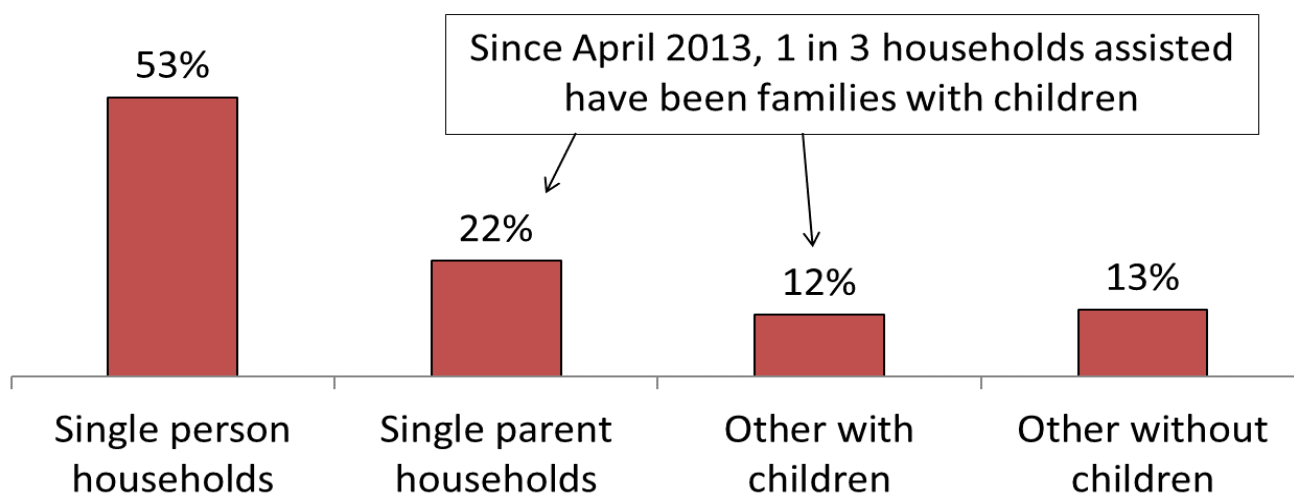


# Characteristics of Households in Receipt of Awards

- Since the scheme began in April 2013, 393,350 unique households received at least one award from the Scottish Welfare Fund. Based on the most recent award received by these households, more have received a Crisis Grant (288,740) than a Community Care Grant (212,370) (**Table 38a**).
- Since the scheme began in April 2013, of the 393,350 unique households which have received at least one award, just over half were single person households, and over a fifth were single parent households (**Table 38b, Chart 13**). In comparison, the latest household estimates for Scotland indicate that only 37% households are single people, and 6% households are single parent families<sup>5</sup>. Around a quarter of households receiving awards were couples, couples with children or other types of household, whereas over half of households in Scotland are estimated to fall into these categories (58%).
- In total since the scheme began a third (34%) of households receiving awards have contained children (**Table 38b**). Of the total £246.4 million which has been awarded, £104.8 million has been awarded to households containing children.

**Chart 13: Household types of unique households receiving funds from the Scottish Welfare Fund – all time**

## Percentage of households assisted by the Scottish Welfare Fund



<sup>5</sup> National Records of Scotland 'Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2019', <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/households/household-estimates/2019>



# Background

On 1 April 2013, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) abolished two elements of the Social Fund - Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans - and transferred funds previously spent on them to Scottish Ministers. In its place, the Scottish Government established the Scottish Welfare Fund. The Scottish Welfare Fund is a national grant scheme run by Local Authorities, based on [guidance](#) from Scottish Ministers. The guidance has been developed in partnership with COSLA, Local Authorities and other stakeholders.

The objectives of the scheme are to:

- provide a safety net in a disaster or emergency, when there is an immediate threat to health or safety.
- enable people to live independently or continue to live independently, preventing the need for institutional care.

There are two types of grants in the Scottish Welfare Fund – Crisis Grants, and Community Care Grants.

A Crisis Grant aims to help people on a low income who are in crisis because of a disaster or an emergency. A disaster is something like a fire or a flood. An emergency might be when money has been stolen.

A Community Care Grant aims to:

- help people establish themselves in the community following a period of care, where circumstances indicate that there is a risk of the person not being able to live independently without this help.
- help people remain in the community rather than going into care where circumstances indicate that there is a risk of the person not being able to live independently without this help.
- help people set up home in the community, as part of a planned resettlement programme, following an unsettled way of life.
- help families facing exceptional pressures, with one-off items, like a cooker or a washing machine.
- help people to care for a prisoner or young offender on release on temporary licence.

The Scottish Welfare Fund is a discretionary, budget-limited grant scheme that prioritises applications according to need. It provides grants that do not have to be repaid. It does not provide loans.

The DWP transferred the funding spent in Scotland on its Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses to the Scottish Government. For 2013/14 and 2014/15 this amounted to £23.8 million. The Scottish Government topped this amount up by a further £9.2 million, giving the Scottish Welfare Fund a total budget of £33 million for both these years. This level has been maintained at £33 million from 2015/16 to 2019/20 by the Scottish Government. Local Authorities have been able to top this up with their own funds, together with any underspends carried forward from previous years. There is no statutory limit on the amount of money which can be spent on the Scottish Welfare Fund.

In 2020/21 the programme budget for the Scottish Welfare Fund was increased to £35.5 million. In addition, £22 million was allocated in response to COVID-19 in March 2020.

The Scottish Welfare Fund was introduced on an interim basis for the first three years, prior to setting the Fund out in law. The [Welfare Funds \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) received Royal Assent on 8 April 2015 and placed the Scottish Welfare Fund into law from 1 April 2016. The Act is supported by the [Welfare Funds \(Scotland\) Regulations 2016](#), and statutory guidance.

### **Local Authority delivery**

- Local Authorities have the discretion to provide support in different ways. Not all grants will be cash payments. They may provide vouchers, a fuel card, or goods if they think that is the best way to meet the need.
- Local Authorities also have discretion on where in their organisation they process applications and how they link the scheme to existing services.
- A Local Authority may provide assistance out of its SWF only to a person who is resident in the Local Authority area, is about to become resident in the Local Authority area, or a person who is homeless. Applicants should apply to the appropriate Local Authority. The application process will depend on the Local Authority's approach to wider service delivery and the infrastructure it has in place. Local Authorities must make provision for applications to be taken via three delivery channels, for example, online, on the phone and face-to-face.
- Details of applications, how they were processed, and the outcomes and expenditure associated with applications are stored on Local Authorities' IT systems. Four IT companies provide IT systems which underpin the provision of the Scottish Welfare Fund.

## Application process

- Applications are processed by decision makers within Local Authorities. Scottish Government produces statutory guidance to provide a framework for decision makers to promote consistency in decision making. In making decisions, Local Authorities need to balance the needs of the applicant against the remaining budget. Joint applications for a Crisis Grant and Community Care Grant are treated as two separate applications. In these statistics they are also counted as two separate applications. It is for the Local Authority to determine whether a grant should be made as a Crisis or a Community Care Grant. If an applicant applies for one, the Local Authority may decide to award the other if it is more appropriate to the applicant's circumstances.
- Applicants can make repeated applications for the Scottish Welfare Fund. A Local Authority does not need to consider an application if a person has applied for a Community Care Grant or a Crisis Grant for the same items or services within the last 28 days, where a decision has already been made and there has not been a relevant change of circumstances. Additionally, the number of Crisis Grant awards should normally be limited to three per person in any rolling 12 month period across all Local Authorities, although there can be exceptions.
- An initial decision will be made on the application, either to make an award for all or some of the requested items, or to not make any award. In these statistics we refer to these outcomes as 'accepted' and 'rejected' respectively. Crisis Grants are typically made in cash or cash equivalent. Community Care Grants can be fulfilled in cash, cash-equivalent or in kind, for example by providing white goods or furnishings.
- The target time for processing applications is 15 working days after receiving all the information allowing a decision to be made for Community Care Grants and by the end of the next working day for Crisis Grants.

## Review process

- If an applicant disagrees with the outcome of their application, there are two possible review stages. Firstly, a Tier 1 review will be carried out by the Local Authority. The target time for processing Tier 1 reviews is the end of the second working day for crisis reviews, and 15 working days for Community Care Grant reviews. At this point the original decision will either be 'revised' or 'not revised'.
- Following this, an independent Tier 2 review may be carried out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Tier 2 reviews have been carried out by the SPSO since 1 April 2016 (previously this was done by Local Authorities). Information on tier 2 reviews carried out by SPSO can be found in the [SPSO's Annual Reports](#) and [Annual Statistics 2018-19](#).

## Family Reunion Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants for 18-21 year olds

- Family Reunion Crisis Grants, and Community Care Grants for 18-21 year olds affected by the change to the entitlement for housing costs within Universal Credit, are processed by Local Authorities using the same IT systems as other Scottish Welfare Fund awards. We therefore receive data for these Community Care Grant applications in monthly and quarterly data returns. However, these specific types of grants are not funded through the main Scottish Government allocation for awards. Local Authorities are reimbursed separately for these awards. Local Authorities send separate quarterly returns detailing the application reference numbers of applications for Family Reunion Crisis Grants, and 18-21 year olds affected by the change to the entitlement for housing costs. We have then excluded these applications from the analysis when producing this publication and accompanying publication tables.

## About the Data

### How the data is collected

One month after the end of each quarter, Local Authorities are asked to submit an XML file containing the information as set out in the data specification.

The data specification for the Scottish Welfare Fund is available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/swf-dataspec>

Guidance to help Local Authority officers to record information is available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/swf-data-guidance>

and guidance for Family Reunion Crisis Grants at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-welfare-fund-family-reunion-crisis-grant-guidance/>

The data sent to Scottish Government each quarter should include all applications where an initial decision, Tier 1 review or Tier 2 review have been completed, plus any updates to previous cases (e.g. where information within a case has been revised, or a case has reached a different stage). To take account of delays between applications being received and decisions made, and retrospective changes in award values, the data cuts that are sent to Scottish Government each quarter should be sent at least a month after the end of the quarter that will be reported on.

This data is then uploaded to the Scottish Government's ProcXed<sup>6</sup> website. Once the data has been validated by our software, the data is passed over to the Scottish Government's Communities Analysis Division.

## Revisions

Each updated publication of statistics will include revisions to figures for previous quarters, with more recent quarters being subject to a greater degree of revision than more distant ones. There are several reasons for this:

(i) the cuts of data received by Scottish Government each quarter will include retrospective changes to past applications. For example, where the actual amount spent on an item was different to the amount initially awarded, this expenditure will be updated in the new data cut.

(ii) the cuts of data received by Scottish Government only include information about applications that have at least reached the stage of having an initial decision made. Some applications may therefore be received by the Local Authority in one quarter and decided in the next quarter. Scottish Government would only receive details about these applications in the next quarter's data cut, at which point the application will be added into the previous quarter's application statistics retrospectively.

(iii) Tier 1 and Tier 2 reviews can lead to changes in final outcome and final award amount. Where a case has been reviewed, expenditure is assigned to the quarter of the initial decision rather than the review date.

## Processing times

Initial Processing Time is the number of working days between the date all information was received and the initial decision. Our count of working days counts the number of Mondays to Fridays between these two dates. No allowance is made for local holidays and bank holidays. If the date all information was provided is missing, the application date is used instead.

## Households

We collect information on all people within each application. To group people into household units we filter the people table to contain only the main applicant and their partner. We ensure that there is no more than two people for each application. We generate a unique household reference based on the hashed National Insurance Number, gender and date of birth of the main applicant, and if applicable, their partner.

## Repeat applications and awards

An application is defined as a repeat application if the household made another Community Care Grant or Crisis Grant application within the 12 months of the

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<sup>6</sup> [ProcXed.NET](#) is Scottish Government's on-line validation software that supports Local Authorities in collecting and validating data.

current application. Similarly a repeat award occurs if an award was made within 12 months of the current award. While there is no limit on the number of Community Care Grants an individual can receive in any one year, Crisis Grants are normally limited to three in a rolling 12 month period.

## Data quality

To ensure the data we receive is of the highest quality, we have asked all IT providers to implement the data specification as fully as possible. The data specification includes a number of validations. These validations are provided through an XSD schema and have also been implemented into the ProcXed system. Once Local Authorities submit data to the ProcXed system, a number of validations are triggered and warning messages appear. Local Authorities may re-submit data to fix these errors or they can comment them to explain why they believe the data to be valid. On submission of the data to the Scottish Government, each Local Authority is sent a detailed automatic report showing the contents of the data and any remaining errors.

To ensure sufficient data has been submitted, we cross check all submitted data with the monthly management information submitted to the Scottish Government (**Chart 6, Chart 8**). The automatic reports sent to Local Authorities contain charts which allow them to easily see if there is a discrepancy between these two data sources.

Known data issues March to June 2020:

- City of Edinburgh experienced a software issue in March 2020 that has caused some Crisis Grant awards and expenditure from March 2020 to be recorded in April 2020 in the quarterly data extract supplied to Scottish Government. Comparison of the quarterly data to monthly management information (**Table 45**) indicates that around 1,335 crisis awards and £141,000 associated expenditure made in March 2020 has been shifted into April 2020 in the quarterly data extract used to produce this publication. This means that in Edinburgh in Jan-Mar 2020 around 33% crisis awards and 38% expenditure are missing, and in Apr-Jun 2020 around 17% of crisis awards and expenditure should have been recorded in the previous quarter. Scotland totals will also be affected. It is not currently possible to amend case details so that they appear against the correct month/quarter/financial year.
- In March 2020, some COVID-19 related Crisis Grant applications received by Glasgow City were recorded as Community Care Grant applications in the quarterly data extract supplied to Scottish Government. Comparison to the monthly management information (**Tables 44 and 45**) supplied separately by the local authority indicates that in March 2020, around 1,000 applications, 400 awards and £60,000 associated expenditure has been recorded as Community Care Grants rather than Crisis Grants. However, this is difficult to quantify exactly due to ongoing and pre-existing discrepancies between the monthly management information and quarterly extract. These issues will also affect Scotland totals. From April 2020 onwards the issue of COVID

related Crisis Grants being recorded as Community Care Grants appears to have been resolved.

- In our previous publication we reported discrepancies between North Lanarkshire's management information and their quarterly data extract. These issues appear to have been resolved in the latest quarter Apr-Jun 2020, however there is still a discrepancy in the data for March 2020. Comparison to monthly management information (**Tables 45**) indicates that around 1,100 Crisis Grant applications, 880 awards and £73,000 associated expenditure are missing from the quarterly extract used to produce this publication. These issues will also affect Scotland totals. We are working with the council to identify the cause of this discrepancy. We have provisionally included the figures supplied by North Lanarkshire in their quarterly extract in this publication, however these figures may subsequently be revised if North Lanarkshire supply an updated extract which includes additional applications.
- Comparison of monthly management information (**Table 45**) and data from the quarterly extract supplied by local authorities indicates that around 1,000 crisis applications, 700 awards and £60,000 associated expenditure are missing from West Lothian in Apr-Jun 2020, with the majority of cases being missed from June specifically. This equates to 32% of crisis applications, awards and expenditure being missing from the latest quarter. This also affects Scotland totals. It is unclear why these cases are missing, however they should be received when the next quarterly extract is supplied.
- Scotland level figures are affected by specific issues described for Edinburgh, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and West Lothian. There may be additional issues with data quality related to COVID-19. For example, comparison of management information (**Tables 44 and 45**) and figures derived from quarterly data extracts indicates discrepancies in numbers of applications, awards and expenditure for several local authorities. In many cases, the quarterly extract included fewer Community Care Grants and/or Crisis Grants than the monthly figures. This could be due to delays in applications being processed, or awards being kept as 'pending' or 'in principle' on local authority systems until they can be delivered/installed etc. However, overall at Scotland level, the monthly management information and quarterly data extracts have similar figures for Community Care Grant applications (0% difference), Community Care Grant awards (-2% in the quarterly extract compared to monthly management information) and Community Care Grant expenditure (+1% in quarterly extract). At Scotland level, there is a slightly larger discrepancy in Crisis Grant applications (-5% in quarterly extract), but awards (-2% in quarterly data) and expenditure (+1% in quarterly data) are relatively similar. Any issues caused by processing or delivery/installation delays should be resolved in future updates to the publication as more data extracts are received.

Missing information/delays in receiving information:

- An application is included in the quarterly data extract to the Scottish Government only when an application has been decided and when a payment has been made. For Crisis Grants, applications are less complex and payments are made quickly, resulting in almost no lag between cases being decided and being included in the data extract. However, for Community Care Grants, a large number of items may need to be ordered and payment may not occur until up to one month later, when invoices arrive. This results in a lag time between applications beginning in the Local Authority and applications being included in the extract to the Scottish Government. To rectify this problem, we are asking Local Authorities to submit data one to two months after the end of the quarter. This will ensure that, as far as possible, all relevant cases are included in the data extract.
- Some Local Authorities may not have been able to enter all of their data in time to include in this publication. Late entry of data may mean that this data appears in subsequent quarters, rather than in the quarter when the case was actually dealt with. As dates are automatically system generated, late entry of data has a knock on effect on any calculation which involves processing times or payment times.
- Some question responses may default to “Other” in some IT systems. This particularly applies for reasons for applications, rejections, reviews and review decisions. We are currently working with IT providers and Local Authorities to ensure that the full range of questions and responses are available in all Local Authority IT systems. Some questions may not be completed at all. This includes the vulnerability and referrals questions for some Local Authorities.

#### Expenditure:

- Unless otherwise stated, all expenditure information in this publication is based on the date of decision. As such it should be regarded as committed spend, rather than actual spend. For example, a Local Authority may commit to purchasing floor coverings for a household and set aside money for this (on the decision date). In practice, it may be some time later before the Local Authority is invoiced and pays the money to the supplier (on the payment date). Overall, there is very little difference between analysing expenditure information using payment dates as opposed to decision dates. Where a case has been reviewed, expenditure is assigned to the quarter of the initial decision rather than the review date. This means that if the initial decision took place in 2016/17 but a review decision is made in 2017/18, all of the expenditure for the case is counted in 2016/17.
- It is possible for the value of an award to increase or decrease between the decision and payment date. For example, Local Authorities may estimate the cost of carpets and the final invoice for these may be less



than originally thought. This results in money being paid back into their systems. Where we receive updated information about this change in expenditure in quarterly data returns, the statistics for previous quarters are updated to reflect this. We also receive separate reconciliations information from some Local Authorities. Over time, the expenditure data in the quarterly monitoring may exceed monies actually spent if reconciliations are not applied. Most recently, reconciliations have been applied to South Lanarkshire data from January to March 2018.

- West Lothian have indicated that the expenditure for 2013/14 is an underestimate. This appears to have been due to issues in setting up the IT system for this data collection at the start of the scheme in 2013. Information about expenditure was collected manually rather than through ProcXed and cannot now be updated. West Lothian have indicated that this has led to an ongoing underspend being calculated for the Local Authority. Additionally, other Local Authorities have indicated that the figures published for annual over- and underspend do not always match Local Authorities' own accounts.
- Where Scottish Government receive updated information about expenditure from Local Authorities, the statistics for previous quarters are updated to reflect this. However, Local Authorities have a cut off point after the end of a financial year at which point they have to produce accounts. At this point, expenditure for the year is calculated, and over- or underspend is calculated. At this point the council meets the overspend, or rolls forward the underspend to the next financial year's budget. If there is a change in the value of an award after this date, this will not be reflected in Local Authority calculation of the available budget for the next financial year. Additionally, some Local Authorities may choose to top up the budget for the fund at the start of a financial year with additional funds.
- In previous publications, we have included funds provided by Local Authorities in the available budget, however for this version of the publication this funding has been removed from calculations. Available budget therefore only represents the amounts allocated by Scottish Government plus any underspend from previous years, and it is assumed that Local Authorities meet any overspend each year.
- Each year the discrepancies between these annual expenditure figures and Local Authorities' accounts are compounded. We are reviewing these differences and to realign our calculation of Local Authorities' over- or underspend.
- In our tables presenting the 2020/21 funding allocations and total budgets including underspend, the amount allocated in 2020/21 to date includes the initial SWF allocation for the year (£35.5 million) and an additional COVID-19 allocation (£22.0 million). The COVID-19 allocation was actually distributed in March 2020, prior to the start of the 2020/21

financial year. It is possible that some local authorities began spending this allocation prior to 2020/21, however, information on this is currently unavailable and in our tables we have assumed that COVID-19 funding has only been spent during 2020/21.

Joint Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant applications:

- Households can apply for both Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants in the same application. In versions of the publication covering the period up to December 2017, total applications reported were the total number of applications recorded on Local Authority IT systems. In some Local Authorities, these applications in some cases will include both a Community Care Grant and a Crisis Grant element. However, some Local Authorities now have a facility to split a single application into the Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant elements, and treat these as two separate applications. Where Local Authorities have used this facility on their IT system, Scottish government would receive this as two separate applications, with no information about whether they had originally been made together as one application. Because of this, we have changed the methodology for how total applications to Scottish Welfare Fund are reported, from the 2017/18 publication onwards. For all Local Authorities, we now report the number of Community Care Grants and number of Crisis Grant applications added together. Therefore, joint applications for Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants will now be counted in the figures as two applications. This makes the figures for total Scottish Welfare Fund applications consistent across all the Local Authorities. In addition to the issue described above, Local Authorities have informed us that on some occasions, applicants may tick boxes on their application forms to apply for both a Community Care Grant and a Crisis Grant, but based on the types of item that have been requested, the Local Authority may process this application as only a Community Care Grant (e.g. if only flooring requested) or only a Crisis Grant (e.g. if only food requested). In these cases, the statistics in this publication reflect the way in which an application has been processed by the Local Authority, rather than the original tick boxes selected by an applicant.

Payment Methods:

- An error in data processing was discovered in regard to the Payment Method categories of 'Cash alternative' and 'Payment into bank'. This error has now been fixed and the time series has been revised to reflect this update.

Reviews:

- Orkney are unable to supply Tier 1 review information via the ProcXed system. Orkney have supplied full details about all reviews carried out separately, however numbers are small.

- East Ayrshire were unable to submit data on Tier 1 reviews via the ProcXed system until July 2018, but were able to supply summary information about numbers of review applications and decisions separately for 2014 onwards, which is included in the publication tables. From July 2018 onwards East Ayrshire have supplied full review information via ProcXed.

#### Improvements:

- We are working with Local Authorities to make the data more consistent across data fields and Local Authorities. We are reviewing how Local Authorities interpret the guidance and record information and also identifying issues that are due differences in IT systems.

#### **Comparisons with other UK Statistics**

Annual reports by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the Social Fund for the period prior to 1 April 2013 are available from the Department for Work and Pensions. The most recently available report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-report-by-the-secretary-of-state-for-work-and-pensions-on-the-social-fund-2012-to-2013>

On 1 April 2013, the Department for Work and Pensions devolved the responsibility for Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans to the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and directly to English Local Authorities.

As a single national scheme covering the UK is no longer in operation, comparable statistics for other parts of the UK are not available.

## **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 - Telephone: 0131 244 5464

Social Security Statistics

e-mail: [SocialSecurityStats@gov.scot](mailto:SocialSecurityStats@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](mailto: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](http://statistics.gov.scot)

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

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/sg-social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#scottishwelfarefundstatistics>  may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [SocialSecurityStats@gov.scot](mailto: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](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

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