

## Social Security Scotland Statistics

# Best Start Grant: high level statistics to 28 February 2019

### Frequency of publications

The next publication, covering up to end May 2019 will be released in July 2019.

Under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics<sup>1</sup> we publish a timetable of statistical releases for the twelve months ahead<sup>2</sup>.

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

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

# Introduction

This publication provides information on applications and awards for Best Start Grant (BSG) Pregnancy and Baby Payment from 10 December 2018 to 28 February 2019. BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payment replaces the UK Government's Sure Start Maternity Grant. It provides lower-income families with financial support during the early years of a child's life. Social Security Scotland began taking applications on Monday 10 December 2018.

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

[www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland](http://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 Statistics<sup>3</sup>.

## Main findings

### Key figures

- From 10 December 2018 to 28 February 2019, 16,490 applications for BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payment were received **[Table 1]**.
- Around 14,935 (91%) applications had been processed by 28 February 2019. Of these, around two thirds (9,770, 65%) were authorised, one third (4,905, 33%) were denied, and a small proportion (260, 2%) were withdrawn **[Table 2]**.
- In total, £3.5 million of Best Start Grant payments had been paid to clients by 28 February 2019 **[Table 7]**.

### Application channel (method of application)

- Around 89% of applications were made online (14,710 applications). The remaining 1,780 applications were made through other channels such as phone or paper application form **[Table 1]**. It is not currently possible to provide a further breakdown of applications by channel.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on experimental statistics please see:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-and-designation-of-experimental-statistics.html>

## Age group

- Around 95% of applications were made by people aged 18 to 39. Only 2% of applications were made by people under 18, and 2% by people aged 40 or over **[Table 2]**.

## Local authority, health board and non-Scottish postcodes

- Applications were received from people in all local authorities, with the highest number of applications coming from Glasgow City (2,250), North Lanarkshire (1,200) and Fife (1,115), and the lowest number of applications coming from Shetland Islands (25), Orkney Islands (50) and Na h-Eileanan Siar (50) **[Table 3]**.
- Similarly, the highest total value of payments was made to people in Glasgow City (£557,100), North Lanarkshire (£284,100) and Fife (£269,100) and the lowest to people in Shetland Islands (£6,900), Orkney Islands (£7,200) and Na h-Eileanan Siar (£10,500) **[Table 7]**.
- While the average percentage of applications authorised at Scotland level was 65%, this varied from 49% in Orkney Islands local authority to 81% in Dundee City local authority **[Table 3]**.
- Around 1,630 (10%) applications were made by people living at non-Scottish postcodes. Of the applications from non-Scottish postcodes that had been processed by 28 February 2019, 100% were denied a payment **[Table 3 and Table 4]**.

## First and subsequent births

- More payments were made for subsequent births than first births. By 28 February 2019, 75% payments (7,305) were for subsequent births (i.e. to clients that already had children under 16 that lived with them and that they were responsible for), whereas 24% payments (2,310) were for first births. For a further 2% (155) authorised applications, it is unknown whether the application was for a first or subsequent birth **[Table 5]**. There is further detail about how first and subsequent births have been defined in the [Data quality](#) section.

## Processing times

- Just over half of applications received between 10 December 2018 and 28 February 2019 were processed within 10 working days (7,820, 52%). Around four out of five applications (11,775, 79%) were processed within 15 working days. Around 13% of applications took 21 days or more to be processed **[Table 6]**.

- Applications that were eventually denied were more likely to be processed quickly than applications that were eventually authorised. For example, the decision to deny an application was made on the same day that the application was received in 10% of cases. On the other hand, the decision to authorise an application was made on the same day in 6% of cases. It may take longer to process some applications that will eventually be approved as there can be a period of waiting for evidence to be supplied before the decision can be made **[Table 6]**.
- Around half of applications (47%) that were eventually withdrawn by the applicant were withdrawn within ten days, with around a third (33%) taking 21 days or more to be withdrawn **[Table 6]**.

## Redeterminations

- Management information collected manually by the Client Experience team at Social Security Scotland indicates that around 240 redeterminations were requested by 28 February 2019. This represents around 1.4% of the total number of applications received during this period.
- By 28 February 2019, 145 redetermination requests had been decided, with just over half of these disallowed (80, 56%), around a third allowed (50, 32%) and 15 (12%) withdrawn. A further 95 redetermination requests (38% of the 240 received) were pending an outcome.
- All but five redeterminations that were closed up to 28 February 2019 were closed within the deadline of 16 working days from receiving the redetermination request. Where redeterminations were closed after the deadline of 16 working days, extensions were agreed with the client and the redeterminations were closed within the 20 working day deadline.

# Background to Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment

The Scotland Act 2016<sup>4</sup> gives Scottish Parliament powers over a number of social security benefits which had been administered to Scottish claimants by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). On 10 December 2018, Scottish Ministers initiated their competence to deliver the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment, a form of Early Years Assistance under the Social Security Scotland Act 2018. It is delivered by Social Security Scotland, the executive agency of Scottish Government which is responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland. Social Security Scotland began taking applications for BSG Pregnancy and Baby payment on Monday 10 December. This replaced the Sure Start Maternity Grant which the DWP ceased to deliver on the same day. Further information is available at: <https://www.mygov.scot/pregnancy-and-baby-payment/>.

## Payment amounts

BSG Pregnancy and Baby payment is a cash payment for the parents, or carers, of a baby. It is paid to help cover some of the costs of having children. These costs could be things like needing a pram or buying clothes. BSG Pregnancy and Baby payment provides eligible families with £600 on the birth of their first child and £300 on the birth of any subsequent children. There is an additional payment of £300 to help with the costs of having more than one baby, such as twins or triplets. There is no limit on the number of children that are supported.

For example, if someone has twins and one is their first child, they would receive £1200. This is made up of £600 for the first child, £300 for the second child and £300 for having twins. An applicant having twins where none of the children are their first child would get £900. This is made up of £300 for each child plus a £300 payment for twins.

## Eligibility

Applicants must live in Scotland and must not already be in receipt of the Sure Start Maternity Grant for the baby being applied for. Applications cannot be made for children who are looked after by local authority foster or residential care.

Applications can be made by the baby's birth mother; her partner (couple, married or civil partners); her parent or carer if she is dependent on them; or by people who have started looking after, and are responsible for, the baby e.g. kinship carers. Applicants who are not the birth mother or her partner must be getting Child Tax Credit, Child Benefit, Universal Credit (child element) or Pension Credit (child addition) payments for the baby or the baby's birth mother. Applications cannot be made by foster or residential carers.

To be eligible to apply, applicants over 18 must be getting at least one of: Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit, Income Support, Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit,

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<sup>4</sup> The Scotland Act 2016 webpage at <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/scotland.html>

Housing Benefit, Income-based, Jobseekers Allowance or Income-related Employment and Support Allowance. Applicants under 18 do not need to be getting any qualifying benefits. This also applies to some applicants aged 18 to 19 going to school or college for at least 12 hours a week.

## **Applications, decisions, redeterminations and appeals**

The application window is from 24 weeks pregnant to 6 months after the birth (or up to the baby's first birthday for people who take over looking after a baby, such as adopted parents or kinship carers). If a baby was stillborn or died after they were born, applications can still be made up to six months after their birth date.

Applications for BSG Pregnancy and Baby payment can be made online, by phone, by paper form, or in person ('application channel'). Social Security Scotland aims to process the application and make a decision – either to approve or deny the application – and provide a decision letter to the applicant within ten days of receiving an application. Applicants may also withdraw their application before a decision is made. Once an application is decided, Social Security Scotland then aims to provide payment within five working days of applicants receiving their decision letter.

In this publication, application processing time is calculated as the number of working days from the application being received by Social Security Scotland to the date that a decision was made or the application was withdrawn. We do not include time to make payments within processing time.

Applicants can ask Social Security Scotland to look again at what they have decided if their application is denied, or if they think the amount they are going to be paid is wrong. This is known as a redetermination. A request for a redetermination should be made within 31 calendar days of being notified of the determination. This is extended to up to 1 year if there is a good reason. Social Security Scotland then has 16 working days to make the new determination. Applicants also have the right to appeal to a Tribunal if they do not agree with Social Security Scotland's redetermination, or if social Security Scotland is not able to make a redetermination within 16 working days.

## **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 applications received, decisions and payments. Data about the applicant, their partner, and their children is collected through the online application form or is entered by client advisors during telephone applications or processing of paper applications. Information about the application outcome and payments is created in the case management system as an application is processed.

The information is held across multiple tables within the system. 100% extracts of administrative data are taken from this system every day for internal reporting purposes. Data cuts combine information from the different tables in the system into one daily extract which includes details of all applications made since 10 December.

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, the data cut from 5<sup>th</sup> April has been used to produce statistics on applications received and decisions made up to 11.59pm on 28 February 2019. Later data cuts may include additional retrospective changes to application details.

Redeterminations and appeals management information is collected manually by the Client Experience team at Social Security Scotland. It is currently not possible to link this management information to data extracted from the case management system. However, in future updates to these statistics, information on redeterminations and appeals will be available for each application directly from the case management system.

## **Quality assurance**

The data used to produce the official statistics are the same as the data extracted from the case management system on a daily basis that is used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland. As such, the data is checked daily for consistency with previous extracts (i.e. do applications, decisions and payments figures increase as expected over time, and are they in proportion to each other) and compared to other sources of information such as the number of payment instructions reported by the finance team.

Additional quality assurance and cleaning has been carried out on the variables used in the official statistics:

- Checking application dates and processing times are within the expected ranges
- Checking applicant and child dates of birth are within the expected ranges – see [Age and Gender](#) section
- Checking postcodes that do not match to local authorities – see [Geography](#) section
- Checking payment values match to expected number of children – see [First and Subsequent birth](#) section

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**

*Rounding and disclosure control*

Application and outcome figures have been rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control. In table 6, payments data has been suppressed where it would disclose fewer than five payments.

### *Missing and duplicate applications*

The data comes from 100% data cut of the case management system.

The data cut contained a small number of applications where the fields relating to application date and the outcome and payment of the application were blank. These applications represent temporary 'prospect cases', which are created when clients contact Social Security Scotland without a National Insurance number, and are later replaced once a National Insurance number is received from the applicant. These applications are therefore duplicates have been excluded from the statistics.

Of the remaining data in the cut taken on 5 April 2019, around 465 (3%) of applications made to 28 February appear to be a second or third applications from clients who have already made a first application during that period. These may be repeat applications submitted by clients (e.g. if they made their first application too early to be eligible and subsequently re-applied), and they may also include cases where the client's details have been registered on the system multiple times by client advisors in error. For this publication we have retained all these applications.

### *Delay between application authorised and payment*

Payments are issued from the case management system on the same day that applications are authorised, and clients should receive money in their nominated account four working days after payment is issued. Therefore, in order to estimate the value of payments made by 28 February 2019, we have included all payments that had been authorised by 24 February 2019.

### *Age and gender*

For around five cases, in the data cut taken from the case management system the date of birth of the child or the application date has been entered in the parent date of birth field. In these cases the date of birth of the parent has been changed to 'unknown'. Further dates of birth of the parent showed very young ages. For these applicants, we have assumed that the dates contained typographical errors and have classed age as 'unknown', although we cannot be certain that their date of birth contained an error.

We are not currently able to provide figures on the gender of applicants.

### *Geography*

Applications are assigned to local authority and health board by postcode using a Scottish Government lookup file. For some applications, the postcode will not match to the lookup file. This can be because the postcode is not in a Scottish local authority, or because the postcode has been introduced too recently to appear on the lookup file, for example if a property is in a new development. For postcodes

that could not be matched to a Scottish local authority or health board, the postcode area was used to check whether the postcode was in Scotland or elsewhere. Non-matching postcodes from Scottish border postcode areas (postcodes starting 'DG' and 'TD') were also checked individually and assigned to Scottish local authorities or health boards or as 'non-Scottish postcodes' manually.

Following these checks on postcodes, in this publication a small proportion of applications (45, less than 1%) were made by people with Scottish postcodes that could not be matched to local authority or health board **[Table 3 and Table 4]**. A similar proportion (45, less than 1%) did not include address information and therefore could not be matched to local authority, health board or country. Around two thirds (30, 63%) of these applications had subsequently been withdrawn by 28 February 2019 **[Table 3 and Table 4]**.

### *First and subsequent births*

A birth is a 'first birth' if there are no other children under 16 in the household who the applicant is responsible for. This means that there are no other children for whom the applicant is receiving responsibility benefits (Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit (child element) or Pension Credit (child addition)). There are some exceptions to this where the parent is under 16, because they may have a brother or sister in the house who is under 16. 'Subsequent' births are births of either one or multiple children to an applicant who already has dependent children.

When the first birth in a household is a multiple birth (e.g. twins), for the purposes of calculating payment values the first baby to be born (e.g. the first of two twins) would be the 'first birth' and any other babies (e.g. the second of two twins) would be 'subsequent births' (the [Payment amounts](#) section has further detail on how this would be calculated). However, for the purpose of these statistics, we have counted first births of multiple babies as one 'first birth'. Similarly, multiple births to a household that already includes children under 16 would be counted as one 'subsequent birth'.

Awards have been classed as 'first births' or 'subsequent births' based primarily on the value of the payment made. For payment values of £900 or more the number of expected children in the birth has also been used (e.g. to distinguish a first birth of twins from a subsequent birth of triplets - the [Payment amounts section](#) above has further detail).

Currently it is only possible to provide information about first and subsequent births where the application was approved and paid. This is because information on first and subsequent births is derived from payment amounts. As a result, whether an application was for a first or subsequent birth is unknown for the remaining 6,240 (38%) applications made by 28 February 2019 where the application was denied, withdrawn, is currently pending a decision, or where a payment has not yet been made **[Table 5]**.

### *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 (Christmas, Boxing Day, New Year, 2nd January) are excluded. The time of day that an application was received or processed is not taken into account.

## **Future developments**

It is not currently possible to provide a breakdown of applications by any channel other than online. This will be included in future updates to these statistics when available.

Because the payment value information is required, we are not currently able to provide figures on first or subsequent births for applications that were denied, withdrawn, pending or authorised but not yet paid. This information may be available in the next update to this publication in July 2019. Further information, such as the number of dependent children that applicants have, is not currently available due to issues with data quality. This may be included in the next update to this publication in July 2019 once better quality data is available.

In future, information on redeterminations will be available for each application directly from the case management system. Information about appeals cannot be provided in this publication due to the risk of disclosing information about individual applicants. Information will be provided in future updates to the statistics when this becomes possible.

## **Comparisons with DWP Sure Start Maternity Grant statistics**

DWP publish information about Sure Start Maternity Grant in the Social Fund annual report 2017 to 2018 at Great Britain level only:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-fund-annual-report-2017-to-2018>. DWP also publishes annual expenditure for Sure Start Maternity Grants at Great Britain level in their Benefit expenditure and caseload tables:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-expenditure-tables>.

Information about Sure Start Maternity Grants in Scotland in 2017/18 was also published as part of correspondence between DWP and Scottish Fiscal Commission: <http://www.fiscalcommission.scot/about-us/correspondence/correspondence-response-from-dwp-on-social-fund-figures-for-scotland-4-september-2018/>

Key differences between any figures for Sure Start Maternity Grant and BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payment are:

- Applicants can only apply for Sure Start Maternity Grant for their first child. No payments are made for subsequent children (with some exceptions for multiple births) whereas BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payments is applicable for first children and subsequent children.

- Sure Start Maternity Grant payments are £500 for the first child, whereas BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payments are £600 for the first child, £300 for subsequent children and £300 for multiple births.
- The Sure Start Maternity Grant application window is from 11 weeks before due date to 6 months after birth, whereas BSG Pregnancy and Baby is from 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy to 6 months after birth.

Additionally, in 2018/19 it is possible that some applicants delayed applying for Sure Start Maternity Grant because they were aware that they could wait for the launch of BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payments on 10 December. This would affect numbers of people applying for both Sure Start Maternity Grant and BSG Pregnancy and Baby Payments in Scotland.

### **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](http://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](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**

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