



Social Security Scotland Statistics

Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 31 March 2021

Key figures

- From 9 November 2020 to 31 March 2021, 104,345 applications were received for Scottish Child Payment **[Table 1]**.
- In total, 81,730 applications had been processed as of 31 March 2021. Of these, 92% were authorised, 6% were denied and the remaining 2% were withdrawn **[Table 1]**.
- Between 15 February and 31 March 2021, the total value of Scottish Child Payments issued was £3.6 million **[Table 6]**.
- As of 31 March 2021, it is estimated that 78,775 children had benefited from at least one payment since Scottish Child Payment officially launched **[Table 7]**.

Frequency of publications

The next publication, covering up to 30 June 2021, will be released in August 2021.

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: <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

² The forthcoming publication timetable is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/official-statistics-forthcoming-publications/>

Introduction

Scottish Child Payment has been introduced for low-income families with children aged under six. It is intended to provide regular, additional financial support for families already in receipt of qualifying benefits to assist with the costs of caring for a child.

Social Security Scotland invited clients to apply from 9 November 2020 in advance of the benefit being launched on 15 February 2021 to help manage the expected demand. Applicants began to receive a decision from 15 February onwards, with the first payments made to clients from the end of February 2021.

This publication provides information on applications and payments for Scottish Child Payment from 9 November to 31 March 2021 and is the first publication to include information on application decisions and payments. It includes figures for approximately five months of applications, and around five weeks of payments.

Social Security Scotland processed applications throughout the application window, where the outcomes were temporary and subject to change until a final eligibility check on 15 February when the benefit officially launched. During this time if a client advisor assessed an application as authorised – subject to this check – the month of decision recorded would reflect the month the client advisor initially processed the application.

Due to the design of Social Security Scotland's case management system, denials were not processed during the application window and were instead flagged and set aside to be processed after the final eligibility check. Client advisors began formally denying these applications after the official launch of the benefit and had completed this undertaking by the end of March 2021.

The [Background](#) section has further detail about the payment.

As this publication reports on applications to the end of March 2021, it spans the period when the Covid-19 pandemic was present in Scotland.

All tables and charts referred to within this publication can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/>

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.*" The UK Statistics Authority has not yet assessed these statistics. They have not been designated as National Statistics³.

³ For more information on experimental statistics please see:

<https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/types-of-official-statistics/>

Main findings

Applications by month

- Overall, 104,345 applications were received up until 31 March 2021, with around 44% of these received in November 2020, the month in which the benefit opened for applications **[Table 1]**.
- 17,820 applications were received in January 2021, 23,965 in February – the month the benefit officially launched, and 6,085 in March **[Table 1]**.
- In the lead up to the official launch of the benefit on 15 February 2021, Social Security Scotland sent letters inviting eligible individuals to apply for Scottish Child Payment which may have contributed to the level of applications received in February 2021.
- In total, 81,730 applications had been processed as of 31 March 2021. Of these, 92% were authorised, 6% were denied and the remaining 2% were withdrawn **[Table 1]**.
- The monthly breakdowns of processed applications between November 2020 and March 2021 vary in part due to the way in which applications were processed throughout the application window. With denied applications being flagged and set aside for processing after the launch of the benefit on 15 February, there was a 99% authorisation rate in the months before February 2021 – all except a small number of withdrawals **[Table 1]**.
- In February and March 2021, as well as the standard processing of applications, client advisors worked their way through the batch of denials highlighted during the application window which resulted in the increased denial rate observed across these months **[Table 1]**.
- For more information on how applications were handled before the official launch of Scottish Child Payment, see the [Application authorisation and payment](#) section of the background notes.

Application channel (method of application)

- Around 94% of applications received by 31 March 2021 were made online and 4% were made through a telephone application. A small proportion of applications were made through paper application **[Table 2]**.

Applications by age of applicant

- Around 96% of applications were made by people aged 18 to 44 by end of March 2021. Less than 1% of applications were made by people under 18 and 3% by people aged 45 or over **[Table 3]** .

Applications by local authority and non-Scottish postcodes

- Applications were received from people living in all 32 local authorities in Scotland. The highest number of applications were 17,330 from Glasgow City, 8,395 from North Lanarkshire, and 7,815 from Fife **[Table 4]**.
- The percentage of processed applications authorised was fairly consistent across all local authorities, ranging from 90% to 93% in comparison to an overall average of 92% **[Table 4]**.
- Of all applications received, less than 1% were made by people living at non-Scottish postcodes **[Table 4]**.
- More information on deriving the local authorities for applications can be found in the [Geography](#) section.

Processing Times

- Social Security Scotland invited clients to apply in advance of Scottish Child Payment being launched on 15 February 2021 to help manage the expected demand and allow more time to process applications. Anyone applying during the application window was made aware that they would not receive a decision until after 15 February 2021, and that the first payments would be made to clients from the end of February 2021 onwards.
- Processing times for any applications processed during the application window are calculated between the application date and the date the client advisor processed the application – meaning they do not include the final automatic eligibility check that was undertaken when the benefit officially launched on 15 February 2021.
- In total, around 6% of applications that were received since 9 November 2020 and decided by 31 March 2021 were processed within ten working days. Around 75% of all applications took 21 days or more to be processed **[Table 5]**.
- The median⁴ average processing time for applications rose month on month from November 2020 to February 2021 as Social

⁴ The median average is the middle value of an ordered dataset, or the point at which half of the values are higher and half of the values are lower.

Security Scotland worked through the large volume of applications which were received in the early period of the application window. March 2021 showed the first decrease in median processing time **[Table 5]**.

Payments

- Between 15 February when the benefit officially launched and 31 March 2021, the total value of Scottish Child Payments issued was £3.6 million **[Table 6]**.
- As of 31 March 2021, Social Security Scotland had issued 93,060 payments to 60,920 individual clients. An estimated 78,775 children have benefited from at least one payment since Scottish Child Payment launched on 15 February 2021 **[Table 6, Table 7]**.
- More information can be found in the [Number of individual children to have benefited from Scottish Child Payment](#) section of the background notes.
- Payments were issued to clients living in all 32 local authorities in Scotland. The highest total value of payments was made to clients in Glasgow City at £590,930, North Lanarkshire at £289,860 and Fife at £270,910 **[Table 8]**.

Redeterminations and appeals

- Management information collected manually by the Client Experience team at Social Security Scotland indicates that 105 redeterminations were requested by 31 March 2021. This represents around 1.0% of the total number of decisions made during this period **[Table 9]**.
- By 31 March 2021, 65 redetermination requests had been decided. Of these 15 were allowed or partially allowed, 15 were disallowed, and 30 were withdrawn **[Table 9]**.
- The median average number of days to respond to a redetermination request was eight working days **[Table 9]**.
- Fewer than five appeals were received by 31 March 2021. Management information on appeals has therefore not been included in this publication to prevent the disclosure of small cohorts.

Background to Scottish Child Payment

As a result of the Scotland Act 2016 a wide range of powers, including welfare powers, have now been transferred to the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament.

Scottish Child Payment was introduced through secondary legislation, using the powers to top up a reserved benefit contained in section 79 of the Social Security Scotland Act 2018.

Social Security Scotland is the executive agency of Scottish Government responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland.

On 3 November 2020 the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People announced that Scottish Child Payment would open for applications from 9 November and the benefit would start from 15 February 2021.

Further details about the benefit can be found at <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment/>.

Scottish Child Payment

Scottish Child Payment is a new benefit which has been introduced to tackle child poverty in Scotland. It is intended to help low-income families with the costs of raising a child.

Initially the payment will be available to parents or carers with one or more children under the age of six. There are no limits on the number of eligible children supported by Scottish Child Payment and families will be able to apply for £10 per child, per week.

Scottish Child Payment will be administered by Social Security Scotland through an application-based process, and will be paid on a four-weekly basis.

Social Security Scotland remain committed to rolling out the benefit to families with children under 16, planned for the end of 2022. This is subject to data on qualifying benefits being received from the Department for Work and Pensions to allow us to make top-up payments.

Scottish Child Payment does not count as earned income in the calculation of any other UK or Scottish Government benefits that the applicant, or any person in their household, currently receive.

The payment can be used for any purpose by the recipient and for example could help with the cost of childcare, nappies or other essentials.

Eligibility

A person may be eligible for Scottish Child Payment if all of the following apply:

- They live in Scotland
- They or their partner are getting certain benefits or payments
- They or their partner are the main person looking after a child who's under 6 years old

The main person looking after the child (if any) might want to complete the application form, and use their bank details for payment.

The qualifying benefits are:

- Child Tax Credit
- Income Support
- Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

Application and decision making process

Applications can be made online, by phone, and by paper form ('application channel').

At the beginning of the application process, applicants are asked whether they would like to also apply for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods at the same time as they apply for Scottish Child Payment. To keep things as simple as possible for the client, if they choose to also apply for Best Start Grant and Best Start foods they are required to complete only one application form. Applicants can also apply for Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods separately should they wish to do so.

In terms of processing and the subsequent reporting of Official Statistics, the joint application can be thought of as two separate applications; one for Scottish Child Payment and one for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods. For this reason, only Scottish Child Payment applications are reported on in this publication. Official Statistics on Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications can be found at: <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications>.

Social Security Scotland processes each application received and makes a decision whether to approve or deny the application. An application will be denied if the client is not eligible to receive Scottish Child Payment. An application will be authorised if the client is eligible and provides the appropriate evidence to receive Scottish Child Payment. Applicants may also withdraw their application before a decision is made.

Applicants can choose to provide supporting evidence when making an application by post or through online document upload. If an applicant does not provide all the evidence required for an application, they will be contacted by a client advisor and asked to provide this. Once this evidence has been received, Social Security Scotland aims to make a decision as soon as possible with payments following soon thereafter.

To help manage the demand expected when Scottish Child Payment officially launched on 15 February 2021, Social Security Scotland invited clients to apply in advance of the benefit being introduced, from 9 November 2020. Anyone applying for Scottish Child Payment in this application window was made aware that they would not receive a decision until after 15 February 2021, and that the first payments would be made to clients from the end of February 2021 onwards.

Redeterminations and appeals

Scottish Child Payment 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 under extenuating circumstances. Social Security Scotland then has 16 working days to make the new determination. Scottish Child Payment 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.

Social Security Scotland has a working agreement that allows it to offer an extension of 5 days to clients should they be waiting on documentation/evidence being sent in. This is to allow Social Security Scotland to process a client application rather than make a decision without any evidence.

Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020

On 1 April 2020, the Scottish Parliament approved emergency legislation to help businesses, public services and people through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Measures include helping to ensure that Social Security Scotland clients are not disadvantaged as a result of the coronavirus outbreak and are able to claim assistance to which they are entitled and which they may have missed out on if late applications were not allowed.

Changes, which came into force on 7 April 2020, include temporarily relaxing certain time limits. Where original time limits have not been met directly as a result of Covid-19, the measures temporarily relax time limits in relation to:

- Making an application for assistance
- A request by a client for a redetermination

- A decision on a redetermination
- Appealing to the First tier Tribunal

Additionally, the Coronavirus (Scotland) 2020 Act provides Social Security Scotland extra time to complete a re-determination. Social Security Scotland will continue to make all re-determinations as quickly as is possible under the circumstances, as the Act requires Social Security Scotland to make the re-determination as soon as reasonably practicable within a new extended timescale of an additional 9 weeks on top of the current 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 Scottish Child Payment applications made since 9 November 2020. An additional child extract containing details about children listed in the application forms is also available for reporting purposes. A payments extract which contains information on the financial aspects of applications is used for calculations in this publication.

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, a data cut from 25 April 2021 has been used to produce statistics on applications received and decisions made up to 11.59 pm on 31 March 2021. Later data cuts may include retrospective changes to application details, including corrections to details in the case management system, and changes that have resulted from redeterminations and appeals.

When a redetermination or appeal is requested, the data in this publication will show the decision date, outcome, payment date and payment value after a redetermination or appeal has been decided. Where a redetermination or appeal has been requested but not decided, decision date, outcome, payment date and payment value will be updated to reflect information about the redetermination or appeal, rather than the original application.

Detailed redeterminations and appeals management information is collected manually by the Client Experience team at Social Security Scotland. This

management information has been used to produce statistics on the number of redetermination requests received and decided up to 23:59 on 31 March 2021.

Within our statistical reporting, key dates are used to assign applications received, applications processed and payments issued to time periods. This is a different methodology to that used in financial reporting and, as a result, there may be differences in the values reported for a given time period.

Quality assurance

The data used to produce 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 to:

- check for duplicate and missing application references
- check application dates, processing times and payment times are within the expected ranges
- check that payment date is present where a payment value is present
- check applicant dates of birth are within the expected range – see [Age of applicant](#) section
- check postcodes that do not match to local authorities – see [Geography](#) section
- removal of a small number of test applications which were used to test the case management system.

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.

Revisions

Each updated publication of Scottish Child Payment statistics can include revisions of numbers of applications received, processed, processing times and payment values going back to November 2020. This is because each time figures are published they will be based from a new 100% data cut from the case management system, which can include retrospective changes to data going back to November 2020 as described in the [How the data is collected](#) section.

More recent months tend to be subject to a greater degree of revision than more distant ones.

Compared to the previous publication, there has been an increase in number of applications received in the months of November and December 2020 which is reflected in Table 1 and Table 2 of the publication tables.

Data Quality

Rounding and disclosure control

Application and outcome figures have been rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control. Data has been suppressed where it would disclose fewer than five applications or payments.

Incorrect application dates

Quality assurance checks highlighted that a small number of cases (50) had an application date prior to the benefit opening for applications on 9 November 2020. These cases were confirmed by operational colleagues to be genuine applications with an application date entered in error. For the purpose of this publication these cases have been reported as having been received in the month of November 2020.

Missing and duplicate applications

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

The data cut was checked for applications where the field relating to application date and the outcome and payment of the application was 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. Any such applications are therefore duplicates and are excluded from the statistics.

Unverified information from application form

Information about the client and their children is taken from the application form completed by the client or by a client advisor over the telephone. This information may contain errors because it has not been verified by comparison to other sources of information such as records held by the Department for Work and Pensions. This means for example that it is possible to have authorised applications where the original application form did not include details of any eligible children, because the date of birth of any children was originally incorrect but was later amended as the application was processed.

Application authorisation and payment

To manage the anticipated demand, Scottish Child Payment opened for applications from 9 November 2020, ahead of its official launch on 15 February 2021. Anyone applying for Scottish Child Payment in this application window was made aware that they would not receive a decision until after 15 February 2021, and that the first payments would be made to clients from the end of February 2021 onwards.

Throughout the application window, client advisors began processing applications subject to an eligibility check on 15 February. The outcomes of all applications processed during this time were temporary and subject to change until the benefit officially launched and a final check was carried out to establish the entitlement for each case.

If a client advisor assessed an application and processed it as approved – subject to an automatic eligibility check on 15 February – then the month of decision would reflect the month the client advisor originally processed the application. This is why there are applications attributed to the months before the official launch of the benefit throughout this publication.

If a client advisor assessed an application as a denial – subject to the final check on 15 February – then the application was flagged but not processed. Due to the design of Social Security Scotland's case management system, these applications had to be formally denied on or after the 15 February to avoid denial letters being issued to clients before the final eligibility check had taken place. This is why there are no processed denials in the months before the official launch of the benefit.

For all applications, the date that applications were processed by client advisors is the date used to produce statistics of processed applications by month. After applications are authorised for payment by client advisors, the decision is approved by a manager, and then a payment is issued. In some cases, payments will be issued on the same day that payments are authorised by client advisors, however in other cases there can be a delay before payments are issued. Clients should receive money in their nominated account within four working days after payment is issued.

In this publication, we report on the value of payments that have been issued by the end of each month and not the payments successfully received by the applicants.

Application channel

Application channel is automatically entered into the case management system for online applications, and manually entered for applications taken by phone or paper. If ever an application channel has been manually entered incorrectly, the application channel will be classed as 'unknown'.

Age of applicant

In a small number of cases the date of birth of the child or the application date has been entered in the parent date of birth field in the case management system. 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.

Geography

Applications are assigned to local authority 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, 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 as 'non-Scottish postcodes' manually.

Postcodes are linked to client profiles and data extracts are automatically updated in the case of a client changing address. As a result, postcodes reflect the latest address of clients and may not be the same as the address at the time of application. Therefore a small number of addresses may not reflect the correct local authority at the time of application, decision or payment.

A small number of applications did not include address information and therefore could not be matched to a local authority or country.

Number of individual children to have benefited from Scottish Child Payment

The total number of children to have benefited from Scottish Child Payment is estimated by calculating the number of children attached to a paid application who were under the age of six at the time the application was received. This ensures that any child who received a payment before subsequently becoming ineligible (e.g. if the child turned six shortly after receiving a payment) is counted.

The process of estimating this figure involves merging the primary application data extract with a child extract containing details about children listed in the application form. The child extract is known to contain a small number of duplicate records of children and so to avoid the risk of double counting any children and overestimating the number of children who have benefited from Scottish Child Payment, a decision was made to retain only one instance of any child record with the same application reference, adult National Insurance number and child date of birth.

As a result, any potential instances of multiple birth e.g. twins or triplets, are counted as one child. It is therefore possible that the published figure slightly underestimates the total number of children who have benefited from at least one Scottish Child Payment.

Effect of redeterminations

Application decision dates, outcomes and payment amounts are updated to reflect information about redeterminations and appeals as described in the [How the data is collected](#) section. Information in tables about decisions, outcomes and payments should therefore be viewed as the final decision, outcome and payment value, after a redetermination request or appeal has been received and/or decided. This excludes the processing times table, where applications with redeterminations and appeals have been removed from the processing times calculations.

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 includes time spent waiting to receive evidence from clients through online upload or by post, but does not include additional time to make payments. It is calculated in working days. Weekends and public holidays are excluded from calculations, even if applications were processed by staff working overtime on these days. The time of day that an application was received or processed is not taken into account.

Processing times for any Scottish Child Payment applications processed during the application window are calculated between the application date and the date the client advisor processed the application – meaning they do not include the final automatic eligibility check that was undertaken when the benefit officially launched on 15 February 2021.

Processing times data does not include any applications that are flagged as having had a redetermination request because the decision date for these applications will represent the redetermination decision date, which can be some time after the original decision date. The number of applications in the processing times table is therefore lower than the number of applications shown as processed or decided in other tables.

Redeterminations are a small proportion of the total applications processed, and the average processing times for applications that go on to redetermination or appeal compared to other applications should not differ from all other applications. Therefore, removal of these should not impact the average processing times shown in the table.

Processing time is only calculated for applications that were decided within the period being reported on. Data is presented by the month of decision rather than month the application was received.

Future Developments

We will be seeking users' views on the content of this publication to ensure it best meets their requirements. If you have any comments or suggestions that you would like to provide us please email MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot.

Related Social Security Scotland Publications

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

Statistics on Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods are published by Social Security Scotland at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#beststartgrantandbeststartfoodsstatistics>.

Statistics on Scottish Child Payment feedback (complaints, compliments and suggestions) are due to be published in the next release of the Social Security Scotland feedback statistics published at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#socialsecurityscotlandfeedbackstatistics>.

Information on client diversity and equality of application outcomes for clients applying to Social Security Scotland is published at:
<https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-scotland-stats-publications/#clientdiversityandequalitiesanalysis>.

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot

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

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/>.

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

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