The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Scottish Welfare Fund Statistics: Annual Update: 2017/18

Corrected 12 September 2018: Underspend from 2014/15 to 2017/18 was calculated incorrectly in Table 40. This in turn affected the calculation of available budget for 2015/16 to 2018/19 in Tables 40, 41 and 42, estimated monthly expenditure for 2017/18 in Table 41 and Chart 10, and proportion of budget spent for 2017/18 in Table 42 and Chart 9. These figures have now been corrected in the Excel tables, charts and in this publication.

The previous version of the publication also incorrectly used a crisis grant target processing time of two working days. Two working days was the original time frame for processing crisis grants, however this was changed to the end of the next working day with effect from April 2016. Tables 16,17, and 18 and Chart 8 have now been corrected to reflect the correct target processing time, along with commentary in this publication.

Users should be aware that North Lanarkshire have indicated that there is a discrepancy between the number of Community Care Grant applications included in their latest quarterly data extract supplied to Scottish Government compared to the council's own figures for the quarter. The number of applications included in the quarterly extract is around 400 lower than in the council's own figures. At Scotland level this would equate to approximately 2.5% of Community Care Grant cases being missing from the latest quarterly totals and 0.6% of Community Care Grant cases being missing from 2017/18 totals. We are working with the council and their software supplier 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.

Introduction

This publication provides information on the Scottish Welfare Fund for the period 2017/18 (1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018). It also contains information from previous financial years dating back to 1 April 2013, when the scheme commenced its operation. A supplementary spreadsheet containing 71 tables and 19 charts has also been published.

Electronic versions of this document and accompanying tables and charts are available at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/swf.

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[1].

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 31 March 2018, 296,520 individual households have received awards totalling £164.8 million. A third of households receiving an award were families with children, while just over half were single person households with no children.

- In 2017/18 Local Authorities received 65,035 applications for Community Care Grants (4% fewer than the previous year), made 39,410 awards (8% fewer than the previous year), and the acceptance rate was 60% (three percentage points lower than last year). Expenditure on Community Care Grant awards totalled £23.6 million, 7% less than in 2016/17. The average award was £599.

- In 2017/18 Local Authorities received 174,155 applications for Crisis Grants (6% more than the previous year), made 118,750 awards (2% more than the previous year), and the acceptance rate was 68% (three percentage points lower than last year). Expenditure on Crisis Grant awards totalled £9.1 million, 1% less than in 2016/17. The average award was £77.

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[1] For more information on experimental statistics please see:

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

- In 2017/18 92% of Community Care Grant applications and 95% Crisis Grant applications were processed within the target time limits.

- The annual budget for Scottish Welfare Fund awards in 2017/18 (including underspend from previous years but excluding any additional funds provided by Local Authorities) was £34.5 million. By 31 March 2018, 95% of this budget had been spent.

- Since April 2013, there have been 16,475 Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants, and 9,835 for Crisis Grants. Just under half of decisions have been revised at this stage for both Community Care Grants (46%) and Crisis Grants (47%).

Contents

Background to the Scottish Welfare Fund

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, and;
- 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 2018/19 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.

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.
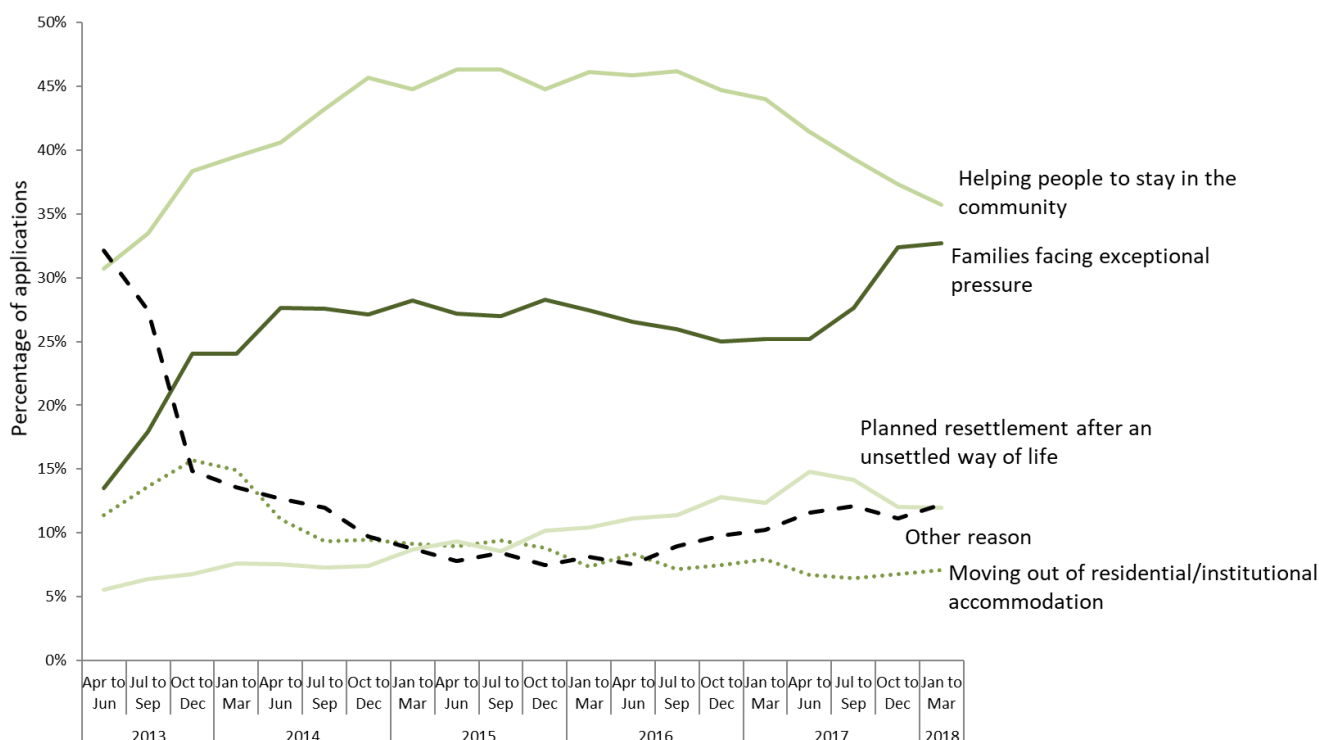
Applications

- A total of 239,190 applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund were received in 2017/18 (**Table 2**), the majority were for Crisis Grants (174,155, **Table 6**), and a smaller proportion were for Community Care Grants (65,035, **Table 4**). North Lanarkshire have indicated that this figure may not include all Community Care Grant applications made during January to March 2018, see the Data Quality section for further details. In this publication we have changed the way in which total number of applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund is calculated, now simply adding together the number of Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant applications regardless of whether they were made at the same time or separately. This is described further in the Data Quality section.

- Compared to 2016/17, the number of Community Care Grant applications decreased by 4% (2,785) (**Table 4, Chart 1**). At Local Authority level this varied from a 34% decrease in applications in Eilean Siar to a 25% increase in applications in Shetland (**Table 4**).

- Compared to the same quarter last year, the number of Crisis Grant applications increased by 6% (9,100) (**Table 6, Chart 1**). At Local Authority level this varied from an 11% decrease in Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire, to a 33% increase in Clackmannanshire (**Table 6**).

Chart 1: Applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund – Scotland – Monthly
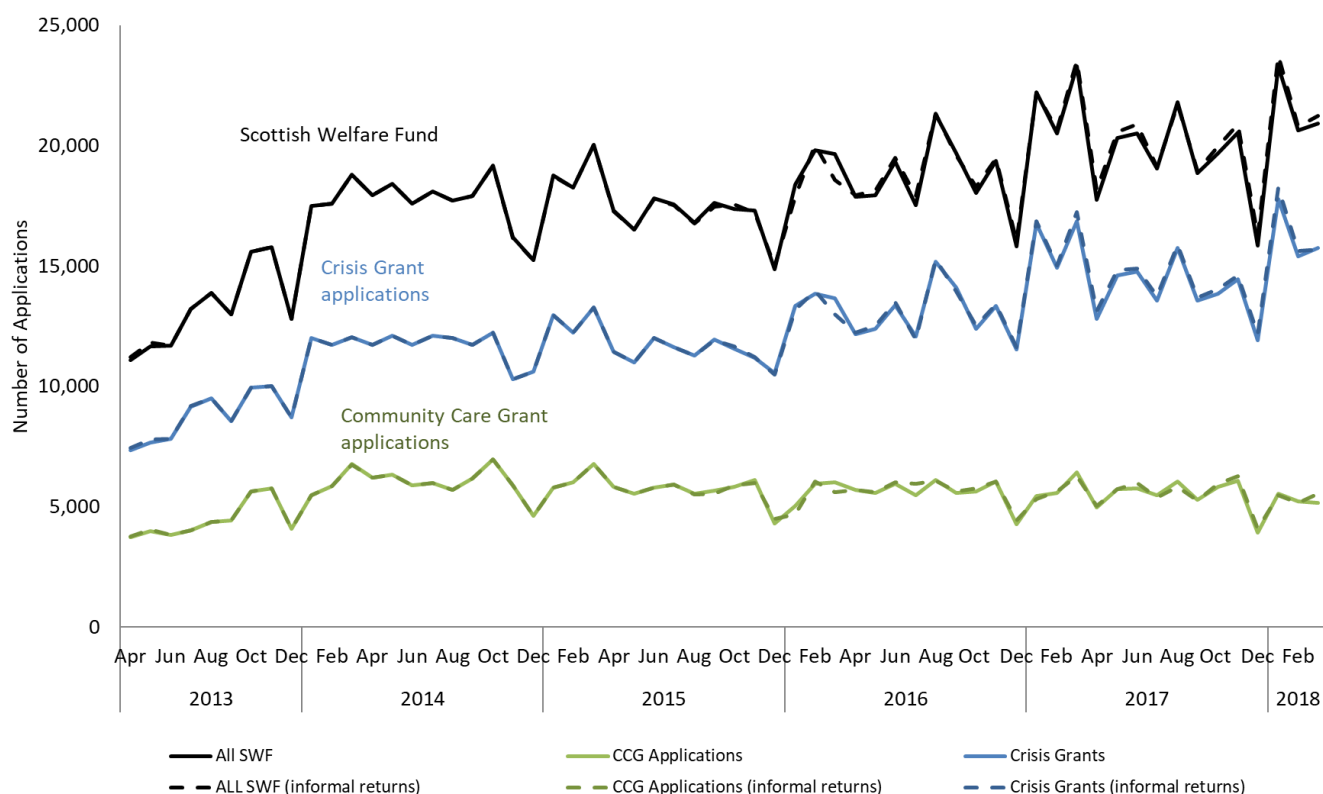
- Local Authorities also submit informal monthly returns to the Scottish Government and this serves as a valuable way of checking data quality. **Chart 1** shows how the quarterly data submitted to the Scottish Government compares with these informal returns. For Scotland as a whole there is broad agreement between the two data sources for 2017/18. For most Local Authorities there is agreement between the monthly and quarterly returns, however in North Lanarkshire in particular there was a discrepancy, with the monthly returns being much lower than the quarterly figures. This is part of an ongoing issue described in the [Data Quality](#) section.

- 'Helping people to stay in the community' remains the most common reason for Community Care Grant applications (38% applications in 2017/18), although the number of applications for this reason have decreased by 18% since 2016/17 (**Table 8, Chart 2**). The second most frequent reason for application, 'Families facing exceptional pressure', increased by 10% from 2016/17 to 2017/18. Within the broader category of 'Families facing exceptional pressure', the sub-reason which increased the most was 'There has been a breakdown of relationships resulting in a move' (up 24% since 2016/17).

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

- The most common reasons for Crisis Grant applications are different types of emergency (86% applications in 2017/18), whereas disasters such as fires and floods are less common (less than 1% applications) (**Table 11, Chart 3**). The number of applications due to delay in payment of benefits gradually increased after this reason was introduced in 2016, peaked in July to

September 2017 (6,100 applications) and has decreased over the last two quarters to 5,095 applications in January to March 2018, which was 10% of all Crisis Grant applications (**Table 10, Chart 3**).

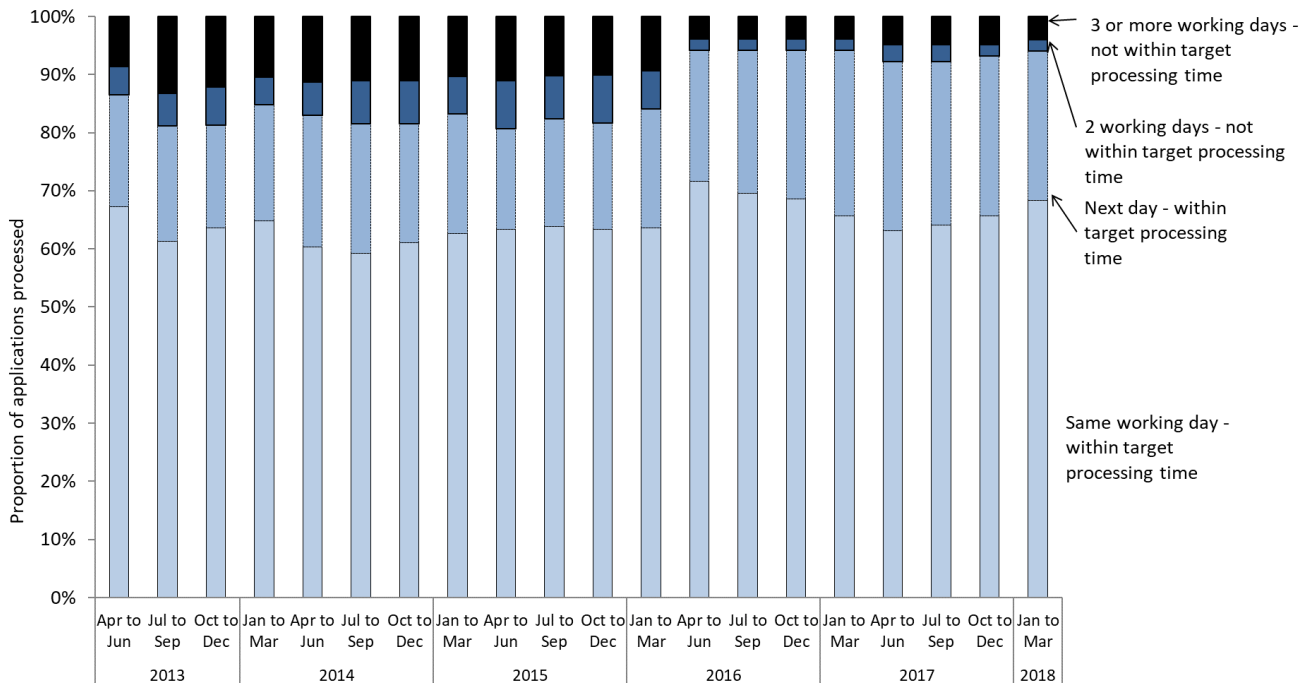**Chart 3: Reasons for Application – Crisis Grants – Quarterly**
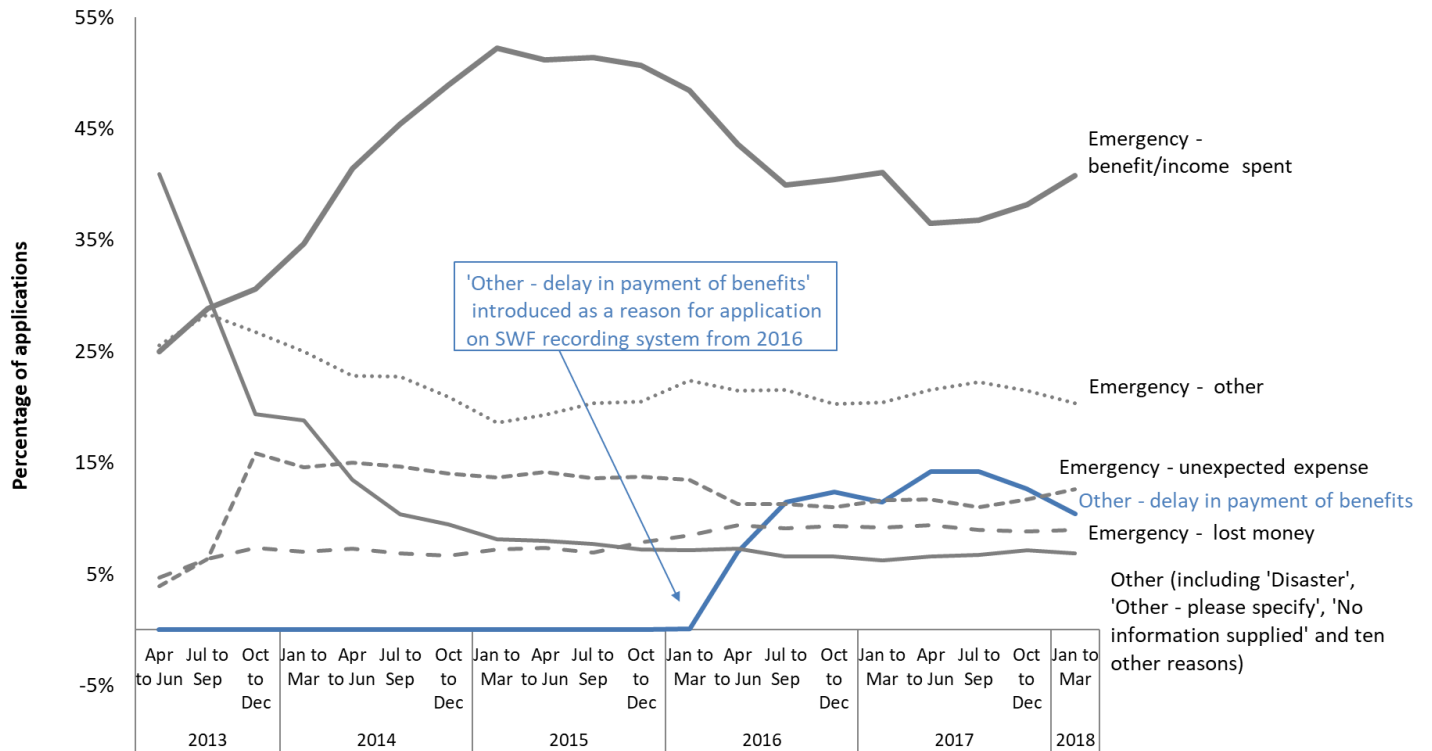
Processing Times

- 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.

- 92% of Community Care Grant applications were processed within the target time of 15 working days in 2017/18. This is an increase of one percentage point compared to 2016/17 (**Table 14, Chart 4**). In the latest quarter, processing time varied by Local Authority, from 60% in Orkney to 100% in five Local Authorities (**Table 15**).

- 95% of Crisis Grant applications were processed within the target time, by the end of the next working day, which is one percentage point lower than in 2016/17 (**Table 17, Chart 5**). In the latest quarter, processing times varied from 81% in Shetland to 100% in five Local Authorities (**Table 18**).

- Charts showing the variation in processing times for applications within each Local Authority are included in the separate tables file that accompanies this publication (**Charts 4b, 4c, 5b and 5c**). These charts illustrate that as well as there being a variation in the proportion of applications processed on time between Local Authorities (**Tables 15 and 18**), there can be considerable variation within Local Authorities. For example, for Community Care Grants in the latest quarter, Renfrewshire processed 84% applications within the time limit of 15 working days (**Table 15**). **Chart 4b** shows that the median processing time (or the middle value of processing times if all applications were ranked from highest to lowest) was lower than the target at nine working days. However, some applications took much longer than the target time. The chart shows that 95% applications took up to 29 days to process, with 5% applications taking 29 days or more.

Chart 4: Initial Processing Times for Community Care Grants - Quarterly

Legend:
- 16 working days or more - not within target time
- Up to 15 working days - within target time

Y-axis: Proportion of applications processed (0% to 100%)

X-axis:
- 2013: Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2014: Jan to Mar, Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2015: Jan to Mar, Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2016: Jan to Mar, Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2017: Jan to Mar, Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2018: Jan to Mar

Chart 5: Initial Processing Times for Crisis Grants – Quarterly

Legend:
- 3 or more working days - not within target processing time
- 2 working days - not within target processing time
- Next day - within target processing time
- Same working day - within target processing time

Y-axis: Proportion of applications processed (0% to 100%)

X-axis:
- 2013: Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2014: Jan to Mar, Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2015: Jan to Mar, Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2016: Jan to Mar, Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2017: Jan to Mar, Apr to Jun, Jul to Sep, Oct to Dec
- 2018: Jan to Mar

Decisions and awards

- Decisions were made on 65,735 Community Care Grant applications in 2017/18. The decision was to make an award in 60% of cases (39,410 awards), while the remaining 40% applications were rejected (26,325 unsuccessful applications) (**Table 19**). The acceptance rate decreased by three percentage points compared to last year (**Table 23, Chart 7**).

- At Local Authority level, the greatest relative increase in Community Care Grant awards since 2016/17 was in Shetland (42% increase in awards, although this was only an increase from 55 to 80 awards, **Table 21**, and a 7% increase in acceptance rate, **Table 23**) and the greatest decrease was in Clackmannanshire (46% decrease in awards and 25% decrease in acceptance rate). The highest acceptance rate was 82% in Orkney, and the lowest was 36% in Aberdeenshire. Acceptance rates fell in most Local Authorities compared to 2016/17.

- Decisions were made on 174,315 Crisis Grants in 2017/18. The percentage of successful cases was slightly higher than for Community Care Grant applications, at 68% (118,748 awards) (**Table 24**). The percentage of successful cases has decreased by three percentage points since last year (**Table 28, Chart 7**).

- At Local Authority level, the greatest increase in Crisis Grant awards since 2016/17 was in Clackmannanshire (44% increase) and the greatest decrease was in Scottish Borders (21% decrease). The highest acceptance rate was 94% in Orkney, and the lowest was 43% in Scottish Borders. Acceptance rates fell in most Local Authorities compared to 2016/17.

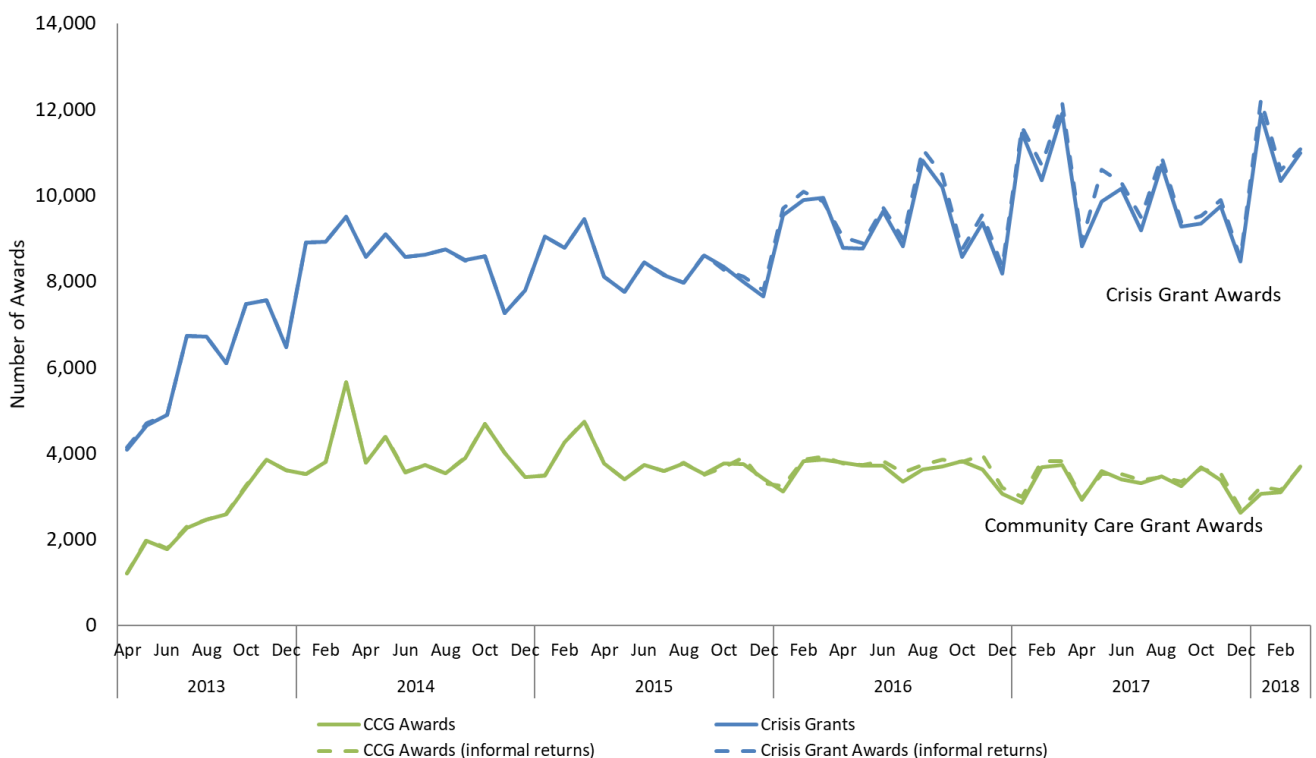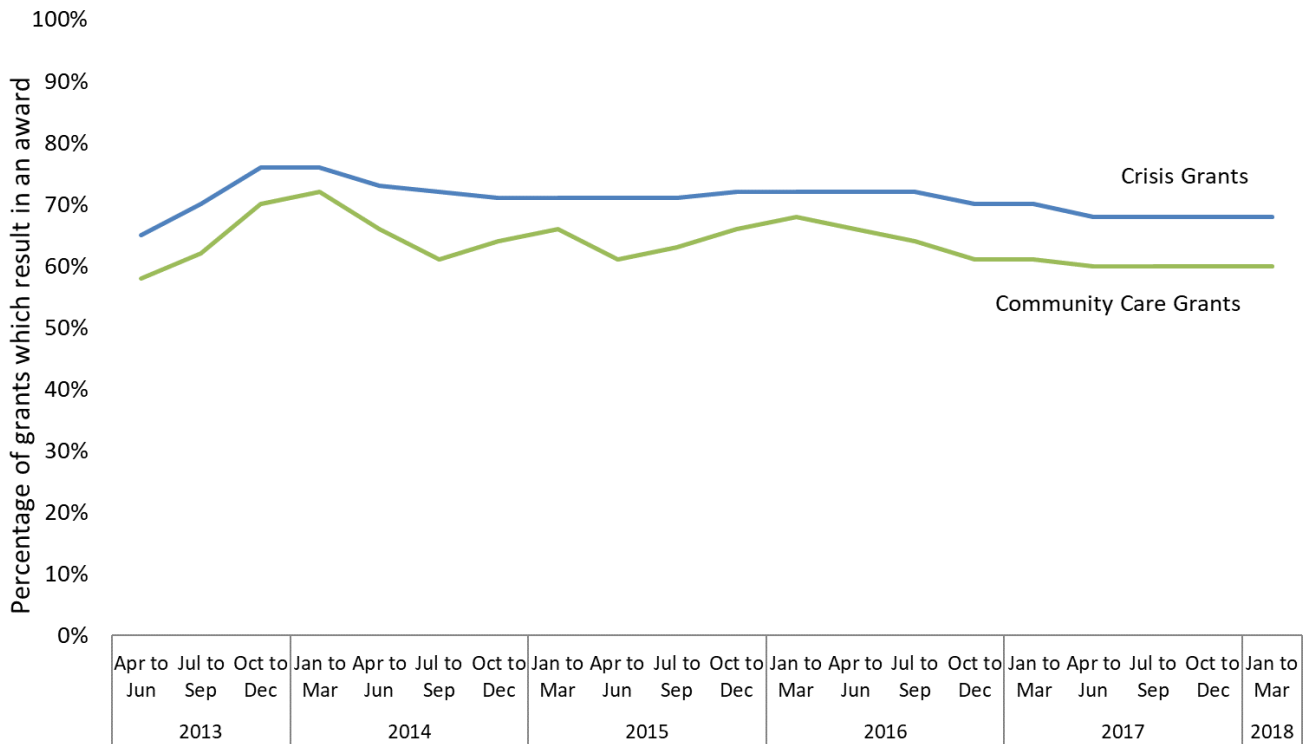**Chart 6: Number of Scottish Welfare Fund Awards – Scotland - Monthly**

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Figure 7: Community Care Grant and Crisis grant acceptance rates - Quarterly

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. 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.

In previous publications, we have included funds provided by Local Authorities in the available Scottish Welfare Fund 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.

Chart 8: Expenditure on the Scottish Welfare Fund – Comparison of quarterly data and informal monitoring – Scotland - Monthly
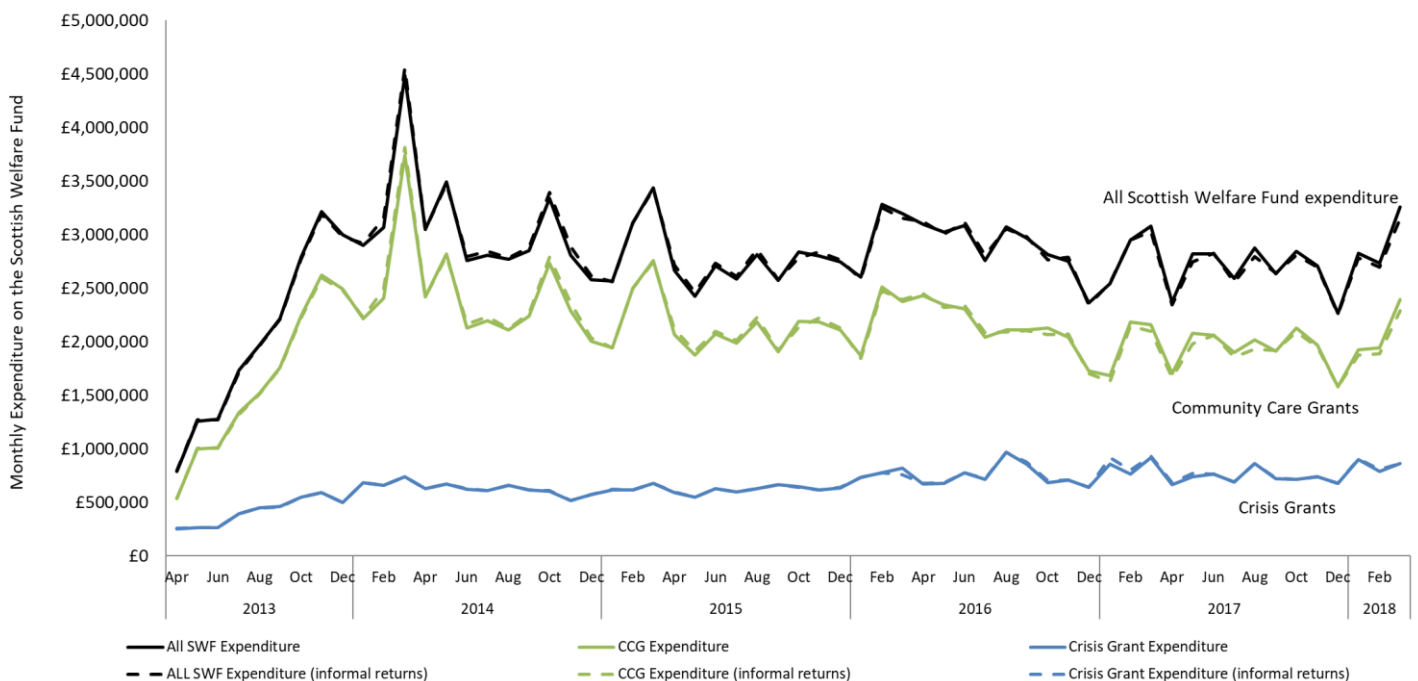
Between 1 January and 31 March 2018:

- £8.8 million was spent through the Scottish Welfare Fund, more than in January to March 2017 (£8.6 million) (**Table 39, Chart 8**). Although Community Care Grants accounted for a smaller proportion of awards, they accounted for a larger proportion of expenditure (£6.3 million, **Table 39, Chart 8**), due to a high average award value (£637, **Table 19**). The remaining £2.5 million was spent on Crisis Grants, with an average award value of £77 (**Table 24**).

During 2017/18:

- The available budget for awards in 2017/18 was £34.5 million, which included £33.0 million allocated by Scottish Government, and £1.5 million of underspend carried forward from 2016/17 (**Table 40**).

- A total of £32.7 million was spent on Scottish Welfare Fund awards (**Table 38**), including £23.6 million on Community Care Grants (**Table 34**) and £9.1 million on Crisis Grants (**Table 36**). This is 5% less than was spent in 2016/17 (£34.5 million, **Table 38**, which included £25.3 million on Community Care Grants and £9.2 million on Crisis Grants).

- Expenditure on Community Care Grants increased compared to 2016/17 in 12 Local Authorities, the greatest relative increase being in Shetland (51%, **Table 34**). Expenditure decreased in 20 Local Authorities, the greatest relative decrease occurring in Aberdeenshire (-63%). Aberdeenshire have indicated that this was partly due to a combination of high expenditure in 2016/17, due to outstanding payments from the previous year, plus a backlog in processing Community Care Grants since December 2017 due to the volume of applications received for both Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants. Expenditure on Crisis Grants increased compared to 2016/17 in 13 Local Authorities, the greatest relative increase being in Clackmannanshire (88%, **Table 38**). Expenditure decreased in the remaining Local Authorities, with the greatest relative decrease in Scottish Borders (-25%).

- In 2017/18, 95% of the available budget (including the amount allocated by Scottish Government plus underspend from previous years) was spent (**Table 42, Chart 9**). In comparison, at the end of 2016/17 98% of the available budget had been spent (**Table 42**).

- The Local Authorities which spent proportionately the least of their available budget were Eilean Siar (41%), followed by Scottish Borders (64%) and Aberdeenshire (67%, **Table 42, Chart 10**). In total, the Local Authorities which underspent their available budget in 2017/18 will have £2.3 million of underspend to carry forward into 2018/19. This is an increase from the underspend carried forward from 2016/17 to 2017/18 (£1.5 million).

- Eight Local Authorities have spent more than 100% of the available budget for 2017/18: City of Edinburgh (101%), North Ayrshire (101%), Dumfries and Galloway (102%), West Dunbartonshire (103%), Dundee City (108%), North Lanarkshire (109%), East Dunbartonshire (110%) and Inverclyde (110%)

(**Table 42, Chart 10**). In total Local Authorities overspent their available budgets for 2017/18 by around £564,000 (**Table 40**).

- Of the four Local Authorities that spent most of their budgets this year (Dundee City 108%, North Lanarkshire 109%, Inverclyde 110%, East Dunbartonshire 110%), only two overspent last year (Dundee City 103% and North Lanarkshire 107%). However, last year's highest overspenders (Aberdeenshire 117% and Clackmannanshire 114%) went on to underspend this year (Aberdeenshire 67% and Clackmannanshire 87%). Of the ten other Local Authorities which spent less than 90% of their budgets in 2017/18, six also spent less than 90% of their budgets last year.

Chart 9: Proportion of 2017/18 budget spent as at 31 December 2017

Proportion of 2017/18 budget spent as at 31 March 2018
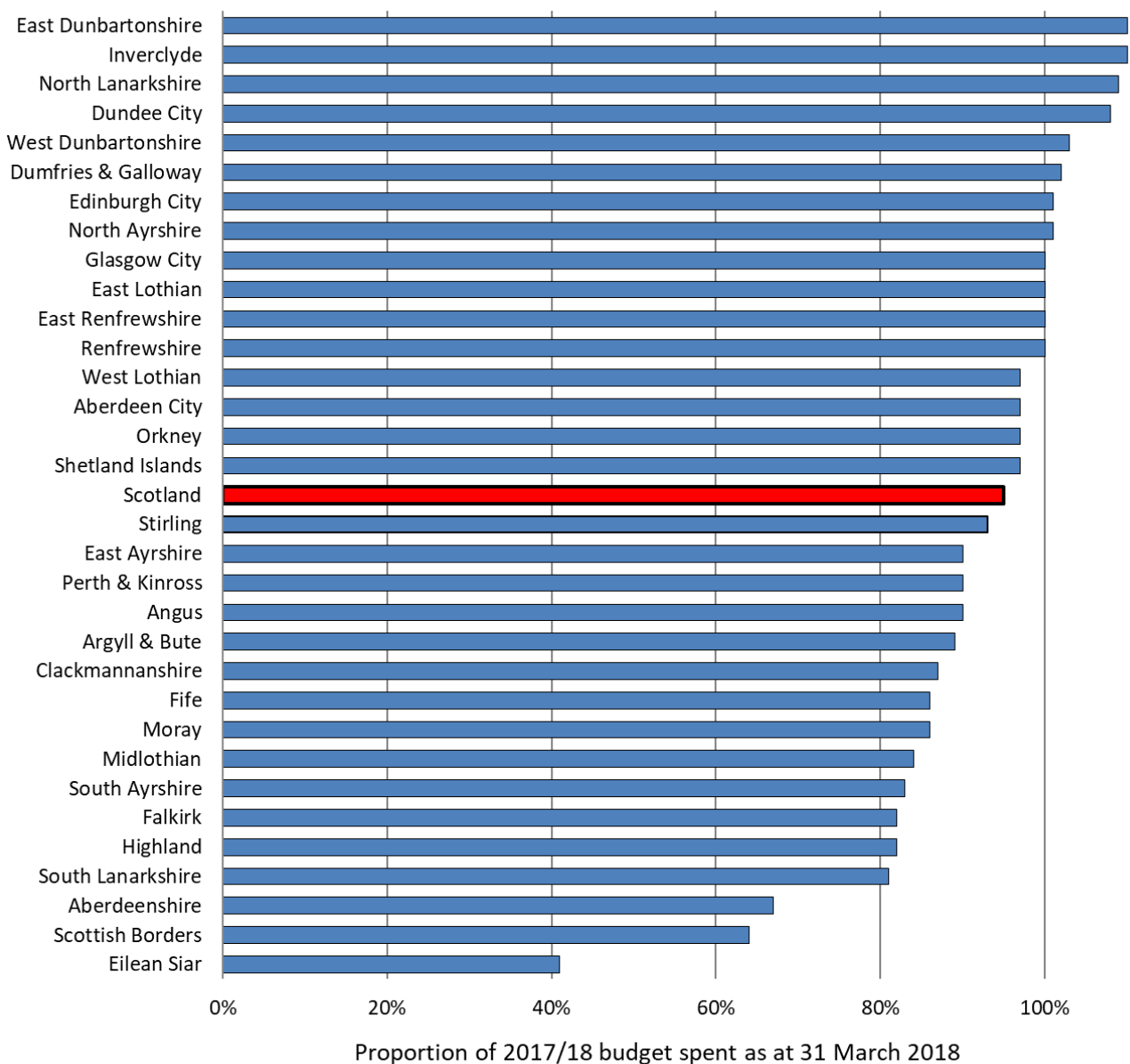
Expenditure patterns within year:

- As in previous years, monthly expenditure at Scotland level was fairly volatile, particularly for Community Care Grants (**Chart 8**). In 2017/18, expenditure was low in December, as in previous years. Additionally, there was a peak in expenditure at the end of the financial year, which may be due to Local Authorities attempting to make the most of their budgets.

- **Chart 10** shows an estimated flat spend profile based on total budget available for 2017/18 divided equally between months. This spend profile estimates how much of the budget should be spent by the end of each month for each Local Authority, in order to ensure that the budget is fully committed by the end of the financial year. In effect, it assumes that Local Authorities spend the same amount each month. Local Authorities may have drawn up their own, more detailed spend profiles to take into account local and seasonal factors. Actual expenditure for Scotland diverged from this estimated spend profile particularly around December when expenditure was lowest, and moved nearer to the estimated spend profile at the end of the year as expenditure peaked. However, at Scotland level the budget was underspent throughout the year.

Chart 10: Cumulative expenditure on the Scottish Welfare Fund – Monthly – 2017/18
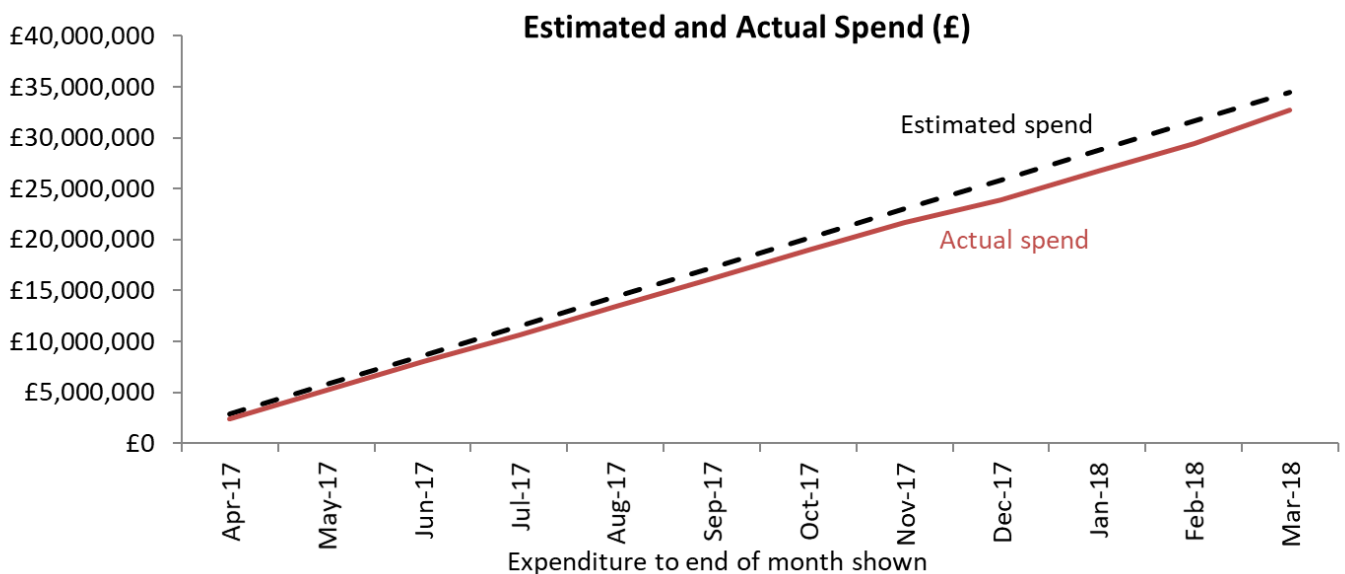
Informal monitoring returns:

- Local Authorities submit informal monthly returns to the Scottish Government. These returns also 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 informal monthly returns at Scotland level. For most Local Authorities there is agreement between the monthly and quarterly returns, however in North Lanarkshire in particular there was a discrepancy, with the monthly returns being much lower than the quarterly figures. This is part of an ongoing issue described in the Data Quality section.

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[2]. 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[3]. From 1 April 2017 to 31 December 2017, Local Authorities spent just over £3,100 on Community Care Grants for this purpose. On 29 March 2018, it was announced that the UK government will amend regulations so that all 18-21 year olds will be entitled to claim support for housing costs in UC[4].

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-costs-for-18-to-21-year-olds

[3] http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/fairerscotland/scottishwelfarefund/socialfund/18to21assistancewithhousingcosts

[4] https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-03-29/HCWS611

Items and Payments

- In 2017/18 the most common Community Care Grant expenditure was on floor coverings, beds and bedding, and kitchen appliances such as cookers, fridges and freezers (**Table 44**). In general, the most commonly awarded items and the numbers of these items awarded remain similar quarter to quarter. However, over the last year there was a 97% increase in the number of saucepans awarded, with 3,625 awarded in 2017/18.

- The most common Crisis Grant expenditure was on food, essential heating expenses and other living expenses (**Table 48**). Since 2016/17 the number of awards of food has increased by 16%, and other living expenses by 6%, while the number of awards for essential heating costs decreased by 2%.

- The most common payment method for Community Care Grants in 2017/18 remained provision of new goods (50% of payments, **Table 52**). The use of previously used goods as a method of Community Care Grant payment has been increasing since the introduction of a re-use scheme in Fife, and in 2017/18 5% of payments were made in previously used goods. For Crisis Grants cash remained the most common payment method (45% payments) (**Table 54**).

- The time taken to receive a payment was calculated for all payments made between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, based on the date all information was received to the date of the last payment. If the 'all information date' is missing, the date of application is used instead. Last payment date includes payments made as part of reviews. In 2017/18 just over half of payments were made within one week (51%), which is higher than in 2016/17 (46%) (**Chart 11**). Payment times for Crisis Grants remained similar in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17, with 66% Crisis Grants paid on the same day as all information being received (compared to 67% the previous year) (**Chart 12**).

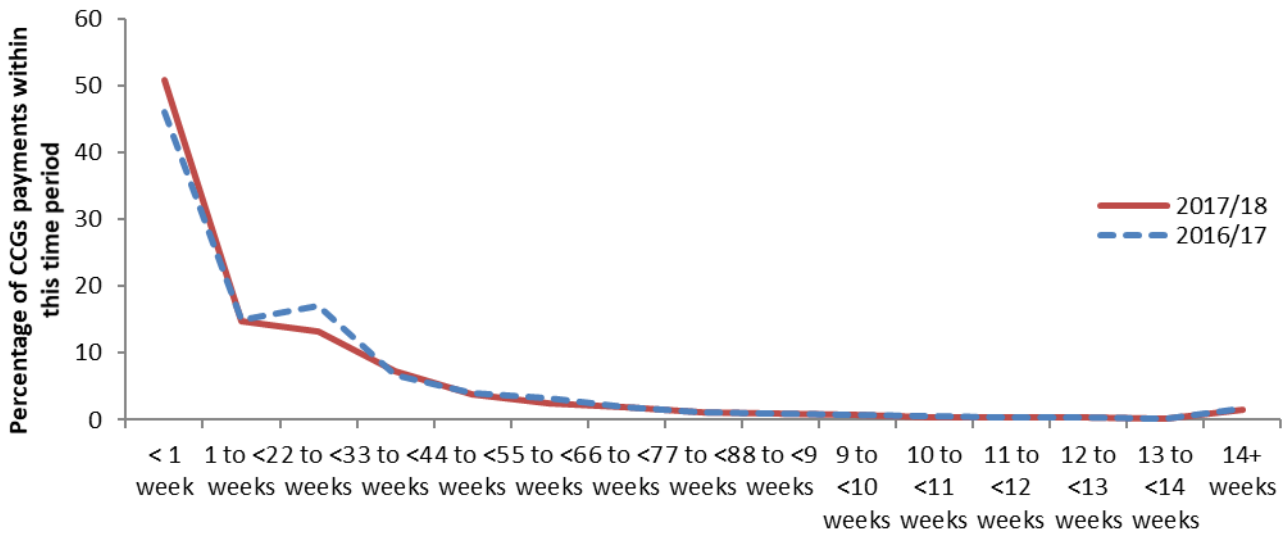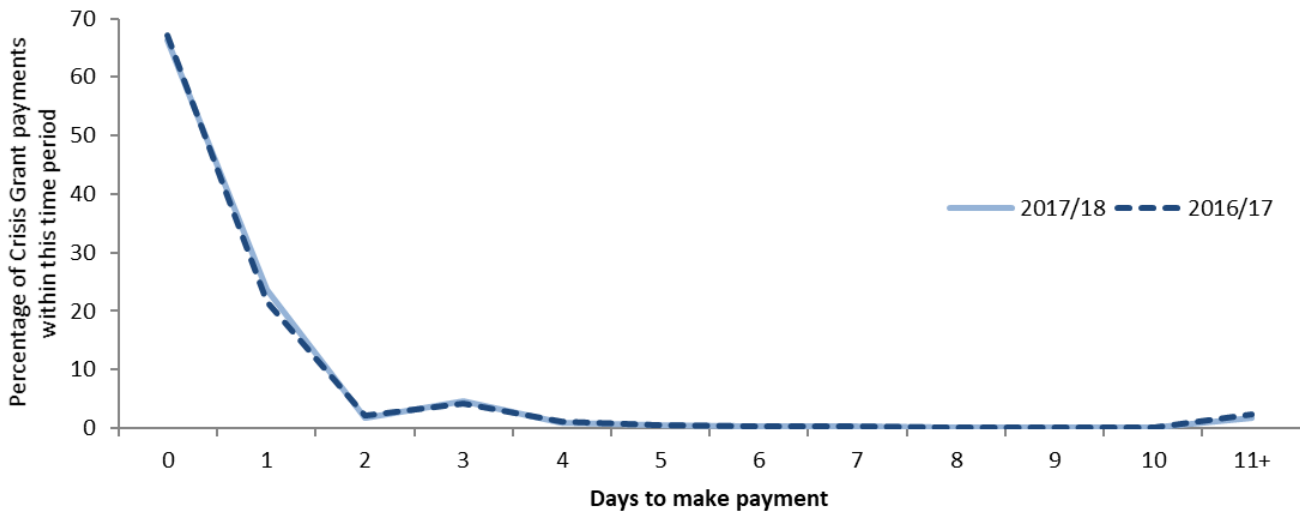**Chart 11: Distribution of time to make Community Care Grant payments (comparing 2016/17 with 2017/18)**

Chart 12: Distribution of time to make Crisis Grant payments (comparing 2016/17 with 2017/18)

Repeat Applications and Awards

- An application is defined as a repeat application if the household made another Community Care Grant/Crisis Grant application within the 12 months of the 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. In this section repeat applications or awards are defined as such if a household applied for/received another Crisis Grant award or Community Care Grant award within the previous 12 months of the current award date.

- There is a higher rate of both repeat applications and repeat awards for Crisis Grants compared to Community Care Grants (**Chart 13**).

- In 2017/18, nearly a quarter of Community Care Grant applications were repeats (24%, **Table 65**) compared with two thirds of Crisis Grant applications (65%, **Table 69**).

  For awards, 13% of Community Care Grant awards were repeats (**Table 67**), compared with over half of Crisis Grants (55%, **Table 71**). The number of repeat Community Care Grant awards decreased by 9% from 2016/17 to 2017/18, while the number of repeat Crisis Grant awards increased by 7%.

Chart 13: Repeat applications and awards for Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants - Quarterly
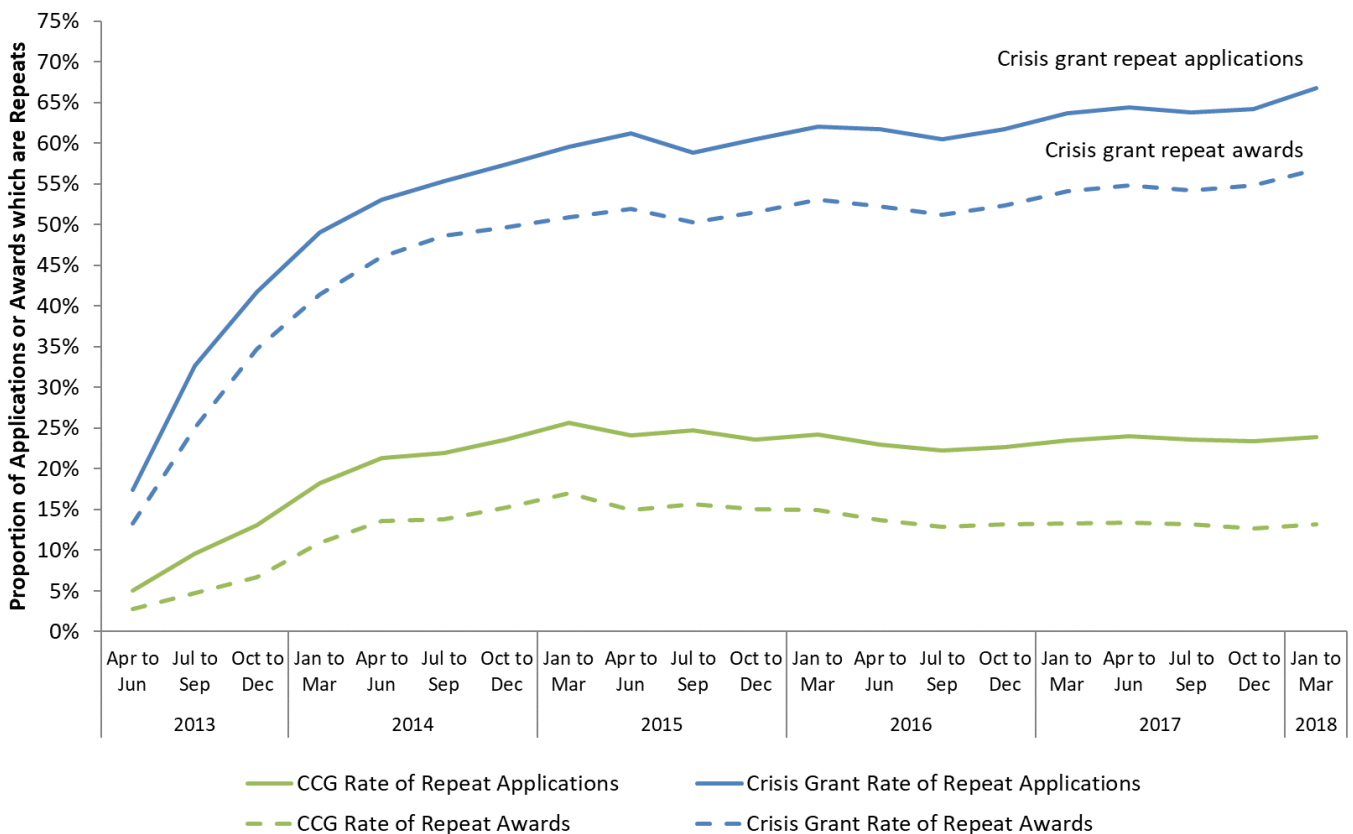
Reviews

- 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. 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 during 2017/18 can be found in the *SPSO's Annual Report on the Scottish Welfare Fund Independent Review Service 2017-18* and *Annual Statistics 2017-18*. In 2017/18 the SPSO handled 764 applications, a similar number to 2016/17 (768).

- Since April 2013, there have been 16,475 Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants, and 9,835 for Crisis Grants (**Table 55**)[5]. Just under half of decisions have been revised at this stage for both Community Care Grants (46%) and Crisis Grants (47%) (**Table 56**).

- Since April 2013, around 78% of Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants have been made within the 15 working day target, while around 86% of Tier 1 reviews for Crisis Grants have been made within the two working day target (**Table 57**). East Ayrshire have not been able to supply information on review processing times, which accounts for a further 3% Community Care Grants and 1% Crisis Grants where it is unknown if reviews were made within target times.

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[5] These figures do not include Tier 1 reviews for East Ayrshire for 2013.

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 2017/18 over half of Community Care Grants (56%) and Crisis Grants (54%) were awarded to applicants living in these areas. In comparison, around 2% of Community Care Grants and 2% of Crisis Grants were awarded to applicants from the 20% least deprived areas (**Table 59 and Table 61**).

- Community Care Grant applicants in more deprived areas also tend to receive a higher average award value than applicants in less deprived areas (**Chart 14**). In 2017/18 applicants in the 20% most deprived data zones received an average award that was around £146 higher than applicants in the 20% least deprived data zones (£617 compared to £470, **Table 59**). For Crisis Grants, average awards were similar across the different SIMD rankings (**Table 61**).

Chart 14: Distribution of average award value by SIMD 2016 Quintile rankings of applicant's postcode – 2017/18

Average value of CCG award
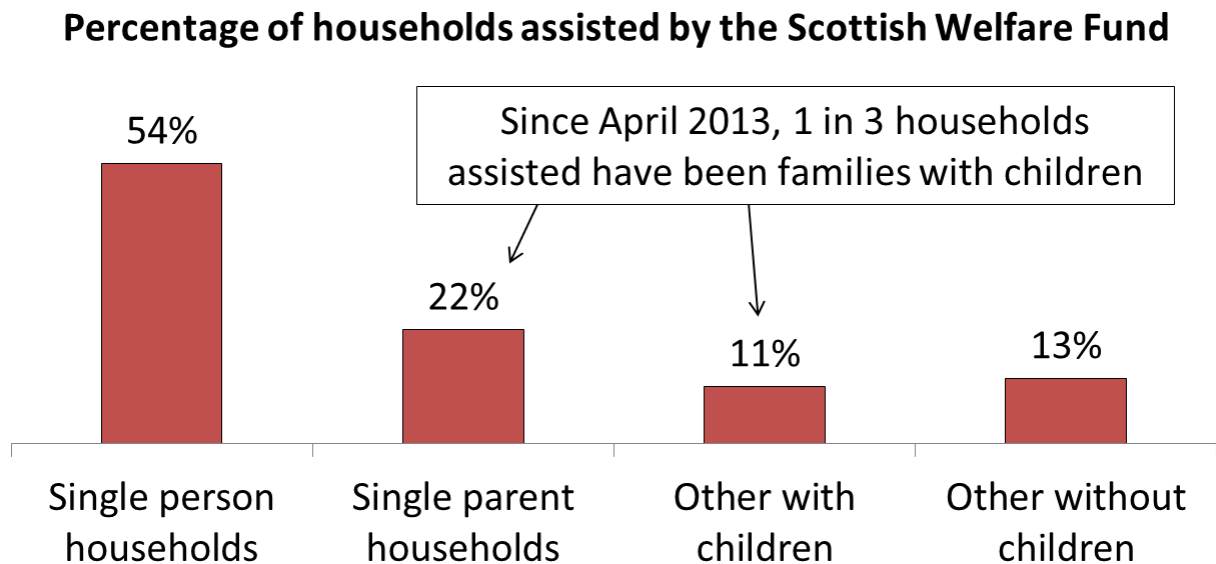

Average value of Crisis Grant award
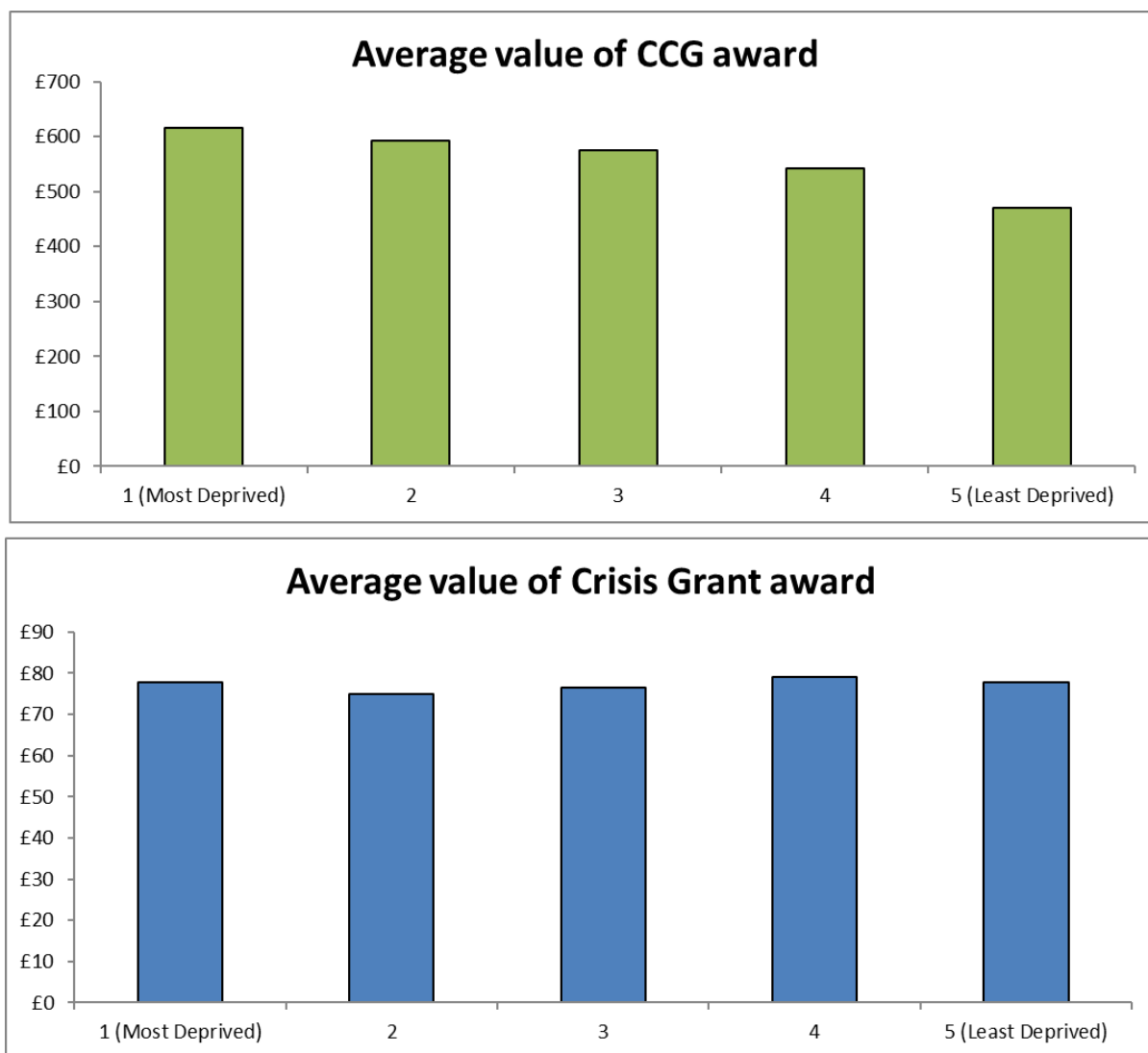
Characteristics of Households in Receipt of Awards

- Since the scheme began in April 2013, 296,520 unique households received at least one award from the Scottish Welfare Fund. More households have received a Crisis Grant (210,860) than a Community Care Grant (158,505) (**Table 62a**).

- Since the scheme began in April 2013, over half of all awards have gone to single person households, and over a fifth to single parent households (**Table 62b, Chart 15**). In comparison, the latest household estimates for Scotland indicate that only 37% of households are single people, and 6% of households are single parent families[6]. Less than a quarter of Scottish Welfare Fund awards have gone to couples, couples with children or other

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6 National Records of Scotland 'Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2017', https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/households/household-estimates/2017

types of household, whereas over half of households in Scotland are estimated to fall into these categories. In total around a third (33%) awards have gone to households containing children.

Chart 15: Household types of unique households receiving funds from the Scottish Welfare Fund 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2018

Percentage of households assisted by the Scottish Welfare Fund

54%

Since April 2013, 1 in 3 households assisted have been families with children

22%

11%

13%

Single person households | Single parent households | Other with children | Other without children

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](#). This data is then uploaded to the Scottish Government's ProcXed[7] website. Once the data has been validated by our software, the data is passed over to the Scottish Government's Communities Analytical Division. Four IT companies provide IT systems which underpin the provision of the Scottish Welfare Fund. These companies are Capita, Civica, Northgate IS and IEG4.

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

Calculation of 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.

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 informal monitoring returns 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.

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[7] ProcXed.NET is Scottish Government's on-line validation software that supports Local Authorities in collecting and validating data.

Known data issues are as follows:

- North Lanarkshire have indicated that there is a discrepancy between the number of Community Care Grant applications included in their latest quarterly data extract supplied to Scottish Government compared to the council's own figures for the quarter. The number of applications included in the quarterly extract is around 400 lower than in the council's own figures. At Scotland level this would equate to approximately 2.5% of Community Care Grant cases being missing from the latest quarterly totals and 0.6% of Community Care Grant cases being missing from 2017/18 totals. We are working with the council and their software supplier 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.

- 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 have experienced backlogs in entering data into their IT systems. 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 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.

- 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.

- Clackmannanshire Council have a known issue which means that their processing times are longer than for other councils. This is due to a local policy of keeping applications open on the Scottish Welfare Fund IT system after a decision is made. The Scottish Government are working with

Clackmannanshire Council to resolve this issue going forward so that an accurate estimate of processing times can be made.

- East Ayrshire and Orkney councils have been unable to submit data on Tier 1 reviews via the ProcXed system. Information on reviews from these Local Authorities has only been included in this publication since the July to September 2017 version of the publication. In the present version of the publication we have incorporated information on reviews for these Local Authorities where they have kept their own records. Orkney have supplied full details about all reviews carried out, however numbers are small. East Ayrshire were able to supply information for 2014 onwards only, and cannot supply information on reasons for reviews, review decisions or processing times.

- We also receive reconciliations from Local Authorities. 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. 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.

- Community Care Grants for 18-21 year olds affected by the change to the entitlement for housing costs within Universal Credit are processed by councils 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, Community Care Grants for these 18-21 year olds are not funded through the main Scottish Government allocation for awards – Local Authorities are reimbursed separately for these awards. However, in this publication, data for Community Care Grants for these 18-21 year olds has been included in the statistics, including for expenditure, budgets, over- and underspends. Expenditure on these awards has been very small compared to the overall expenditure on awards and thus will have minimal impact on the statistics for individual Local Authorities' expenditure and any underspend carried forward.

- Households can apply for both Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants in the same application. In previous versions of the publication, 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. For all Local Authorities, we have now reported 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. This affects the time series of applications figures back to 2013.

- We are actively working with Local Authorities to improve the quality of data collected. We are reviewing completion of different question across Local Authorities and identifying issues common to IT systems and those that are Local Authority specific.

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.

Boxplots

Boxplots have been included to show the variation in processing times for applications within each Local Authority (**Charts 4b, 4c, 5b and 5c**). For each application received to the Scottish Welfare Fund, processing time has been calculated based on the number of working days between the date all information was received and the date the initial decision was made. A processing time of zero days indicates the application was processed on the same day that all information was received. The boxplots show (i) the average value (this is the median, or middle ranked value) of processing times across all applications within a particular Local Authority, and (ii) the variation in processing times among the applications within a Local Authority.

The variation among processing times is shown using a 'box' and lines extending out from the box (illustrated in the example below). The box shows the range of values around the median within which half of the processing times from a particular Local Authority fell. The lines extend out from the box to show the range of values within which 90% of the processing times from a particular Local Authority fell. The larger the box, and the longer the lines, the more variation there is among the processing times within the Local Authority.

Example of a boxplot showing processing times within a Local Authority
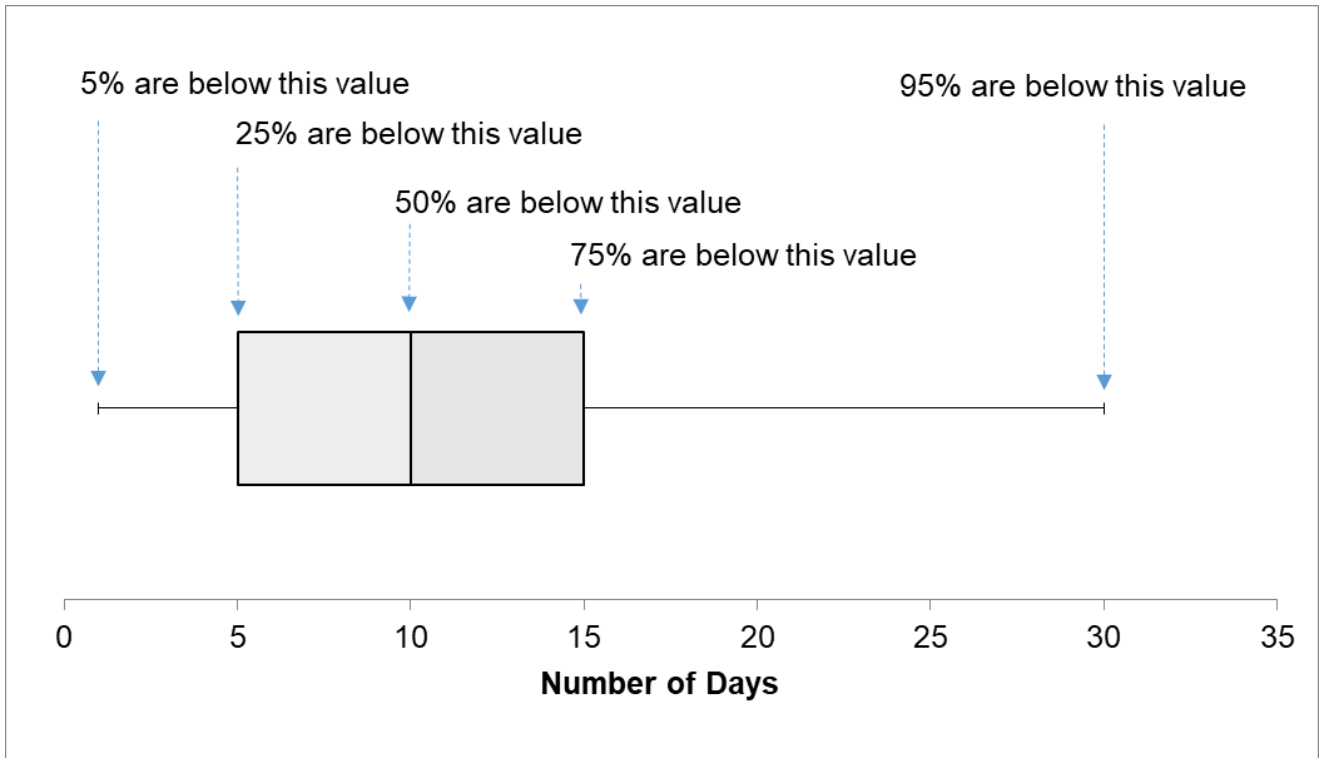
In the example above:

• The median value for processing times was ten days. When all the applications' processing times were ranked in order, the middle value was ten days. Half of the processing times fell below this and half above this.

• The width of the box was relatively small, indicating that half of the applications were processed in five to 15 days.

• However, some applications took much longer to process. The end of the line to the right of the chart indicates that 95% of applications took up to 30 days to process.

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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:

http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/swf

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

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

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