The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Scottish Welfare Fund Statistics: Annual Update: 2018/19

Introduction

This publication provides information on the Scottish Welfare Fund for the period 2018/19 (1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019). 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 16 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].

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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

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 2019, 336,880 individual households have received awards totalling £200.2 million. A third of households receiving an award were families with children, while just over half were single person households with no children.

- In 2018/19 Local Authorities received 70,425 applications for Community Care Grants (7% more than the previous year), made 40,485 awards (2% more than the previous year), and the acceptance rate was 58% (two percentage points lower than last year). Expenditure on Community Care Grant awards totalled £24.8 million, 5% more than in 2017/18. The average award was £614.

- In 2018/19 Local Authorities received 193,230 applications for Crisis Grants (11% more than the previous year), made 125,155 awards (5% more than the previous year), and the acceptance rate was 65% (three percentage points lower than last year). Expenditure on Crisis Grant awards totalled £10.4 million, 14% more than in 2017/18. The average award was £83.

- In 2018/19 90% of Community Care Grant applications and 96% of Crisis Grant applications were processed within the target time limits.

- The annual budget for Scottish Welfare Fund awards in 2018/19 (including underspend from previous years but excluding any additional funds provided by Local Authorities) was £35.3 million. By 31 March 2019, for the first time, 100% of this budget had been spent across Scotland as a whole. The proportion of the budget spent varied among Local Authorities, from 39% in Eilean Siar to 123% in Dumfries and Galloway.

- Since April 2013, there have been 19,650 Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants, and 14,625 for Crisis Grants. Just under half of decisions have been revised at this stage for both Community Care Grants (47%) and Crisis Grants (46%).

Contents

Applications

- A total of 263,655 applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund were received in 2018/19 (**Table 2**), the majority were for Crisis Grants (193,230, **Table 6**), and a smaller proportion were for Community Care Grants (70,425, **Table 4**).

- Compared to 2017/18, the number of Community Care Grant applications increased by 7% (4,655) (**Table 4, Chart 1**). At Local Authority level this varied from a 11% decrease in applications in Shetland to a 61% increase in applications in Eilean Siar (**Table 4**).

- Compared to 2017/18, the number of Crisis Grant applications increased by 11% (18,935) (**Table 6, Chart 1**), continuing the upward trend since 2015/16. At Local Authority level this varied from an 24% decrease in Shetland to a 51% increase in Clackmannanshire (**Table 6**).

- As in previous years, there was a decrease in both Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant applications in December 2018 followed by a peak in January 2019 (**Chart 1**). The peak in Crisis Grant applications was greater than previous years, which has been anecdotally reported by Local Authorities as being due to a delay in the payment of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

Chart 1: Applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund – Scotland – Monthly
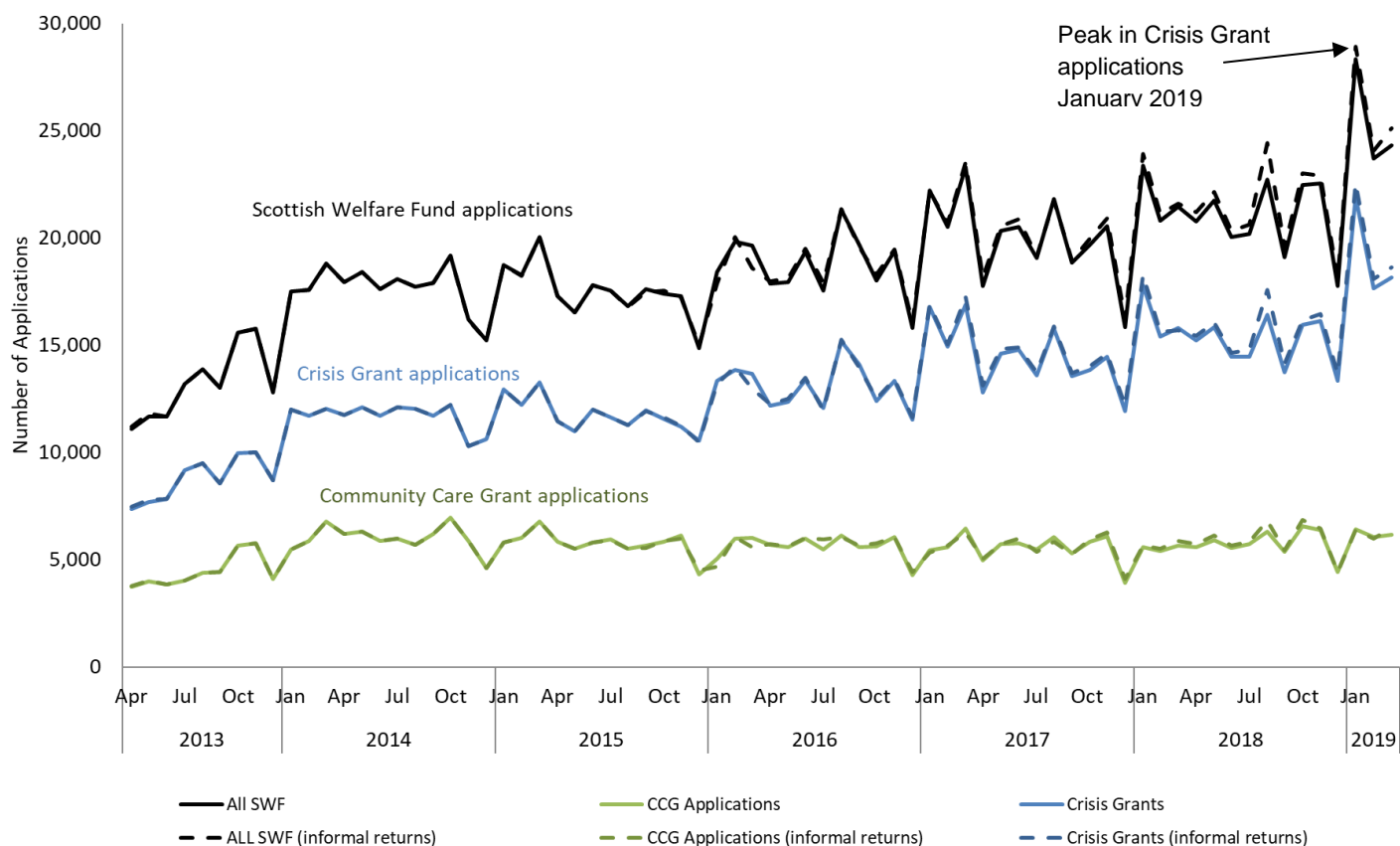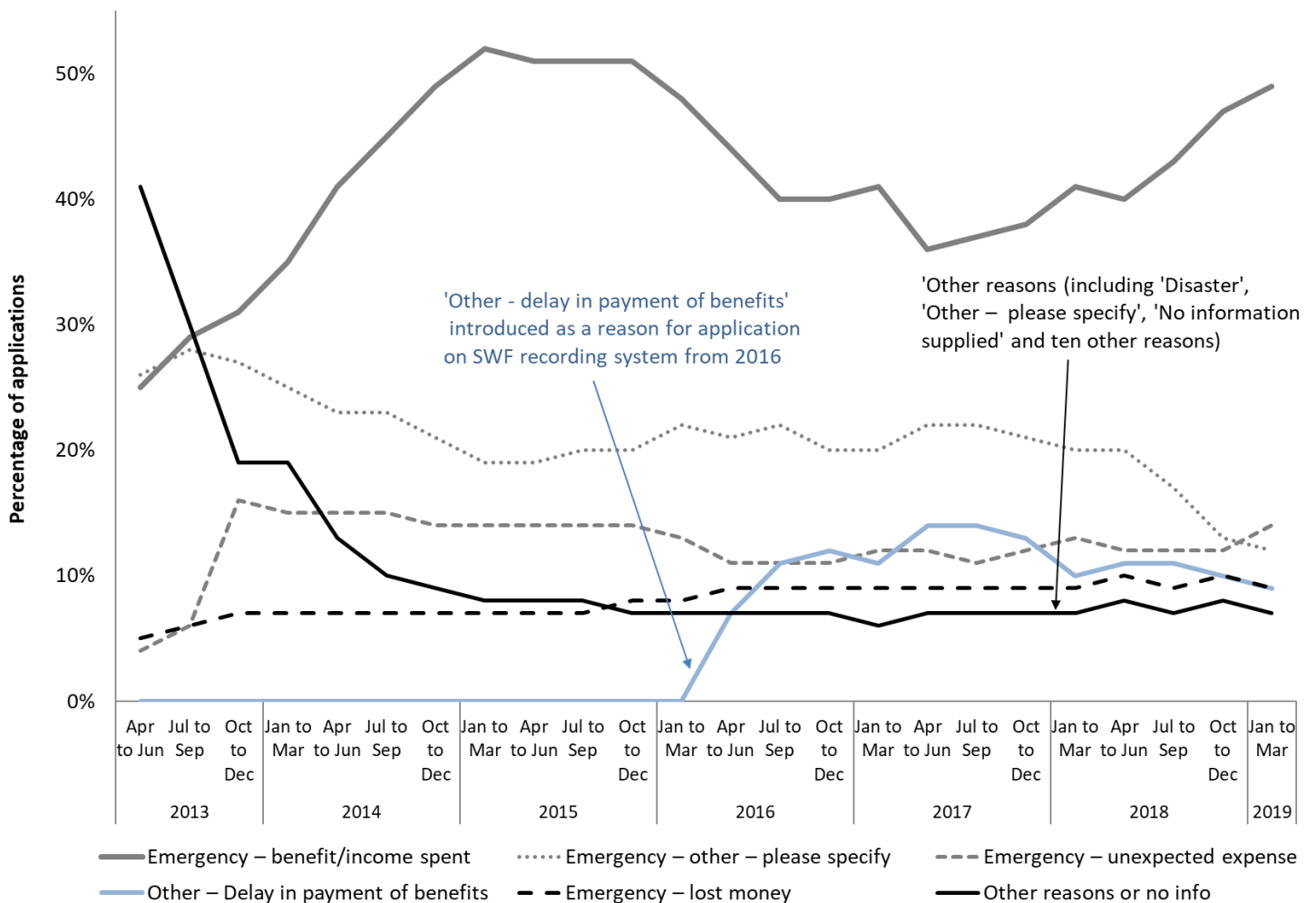
- Local Authorities also submit informal monthly returns to the Scottish Government and this serves as a valuable way of checking data quality. **Chart 1** shows how the quarterly data submitted to the Scottish Government compares with these informal returns. For Scotland as a whole there is broad agreement between the two data sources for 2018/19.

- 'Helping people to stay in the community' remains the most common reason for Community Care Grant applications (36% applications in 2018/19). The number of applications for this reason has decreased by about a fifth since 2014/15 to 2017/18 and has remained stable since (**Table 8, Chart 2**).

- The second most frequent reason for application, 'Families facing exceptional pressure' increased by 23% from 2017/18 to 2018/19, stabilising at around 34% of applications, almost to the same level as 'Helping people stay in the community'. 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 36% since 2017/18) (**Table 8**).

Chart 2: Reasons for Application – Community Care Grants - Quarterly
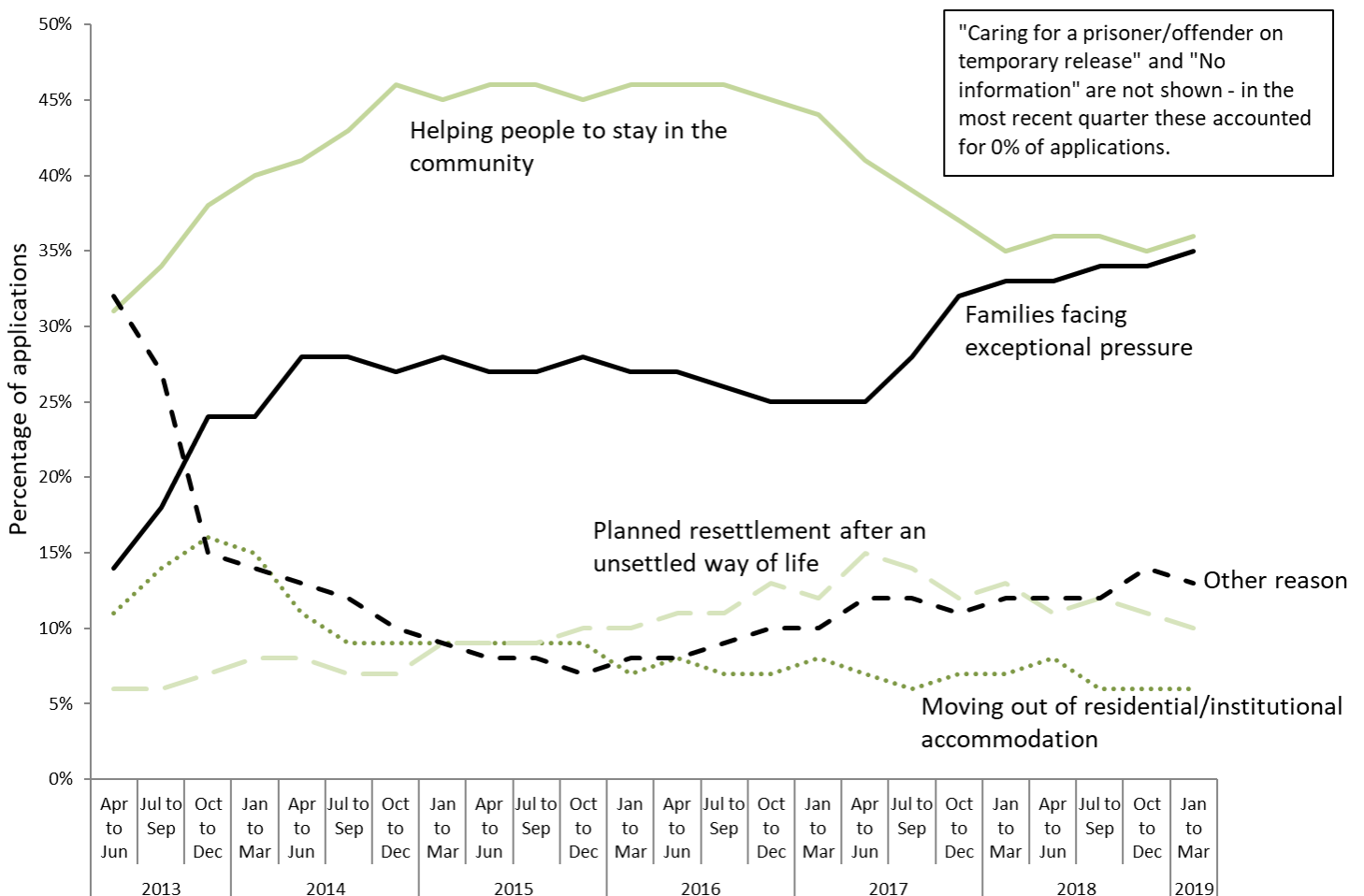
- The most common reasons for Crisis Grant applications are different types of emergency (86% applications in 2018/19), whereas disasters such as fires and floods are less common (less than 1% applications) (**Table 11, Chart 3**).

- Within the broader category of 'Emergency', the most common sub-reason was 'benefit/income spent' (45% of applications) which has increased by 31% (20,495 applications) since 2017/18. This category increased to 28,450 applications in the most recent quarter, an increase of 42% since January to March 2017/18. During the same quarter the sub-reason 'Emergency- other' declined by 31%. Some of the increase in 'benefit/income spent' may therefore be due to improvements in data quality, with specific reasons being selected over 'other'.

- 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 2018 (6,100 applications) and has decreased over the last two quarters to 5,070 applications in January to March 2019, which was 9% of all Crisis Grant applications (**Table 10, Chart 3**).

Chart 3: Reasons for Application – Crisis Grants – Quarterly

'Other - delay in payment of benefits' introduced as a reason for application on SWF recording system from 2016

'Other reasons (including 'Disaster', 'Other – please specify', 'No information supplied' and ten other reasons)

Legend:
- Emergency – benefit/income spent
- Emergency – other – please specify
- Emergency – unexpected expense
- Other – Delay in payment of benefits
- Emergency – lost money
- Other reasons or no info

Processing Times

- 90% of Community Care Grant applications were processed within the target time of 15 working days in 2018/19. This is a decrease of two percentage points compared to 2017/18 (**Table 14, Chart 4**). In the latest quarter, processing time varied by Local Authority, from 54% in Dumfries and Galloway to 100% in five Local Authorities: Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, Eilean Siar, Midlothian and North Lanarkshire (**Table 15**). The low value for Dumfries and Galloway may have been due to a nearly 50% increase in SWF applications for that quarter (**Table 1**).

- 96% of Crisis Grant applications were processed within the target time of the next working day, which is one percentage point greater than 2017/18 (**Table 17, Chart 5**). In the latest quarter, processing times varied from 71% in Shetland to 100% in eight Local Authorities (**Table 18**).

- A chart showing the variation in processing times for Community Care Grant applications within each Local Authority is included in the separate tables file that accompanies this publication (**Chart 4b**). This 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 during 2018/19, East Lothian processed 98% 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 five working days. However, some applications took much longer than the target time. The chart shows that 95% of applications took up to 35 days to process, with 5% of applications taking 35 days or more.

- There is much lower variation in processing times for Crisis Grants. The median processing time (or the middle value of processing times if all applications were ranked from highest to lowest) for all Local Authorities was the same working day.

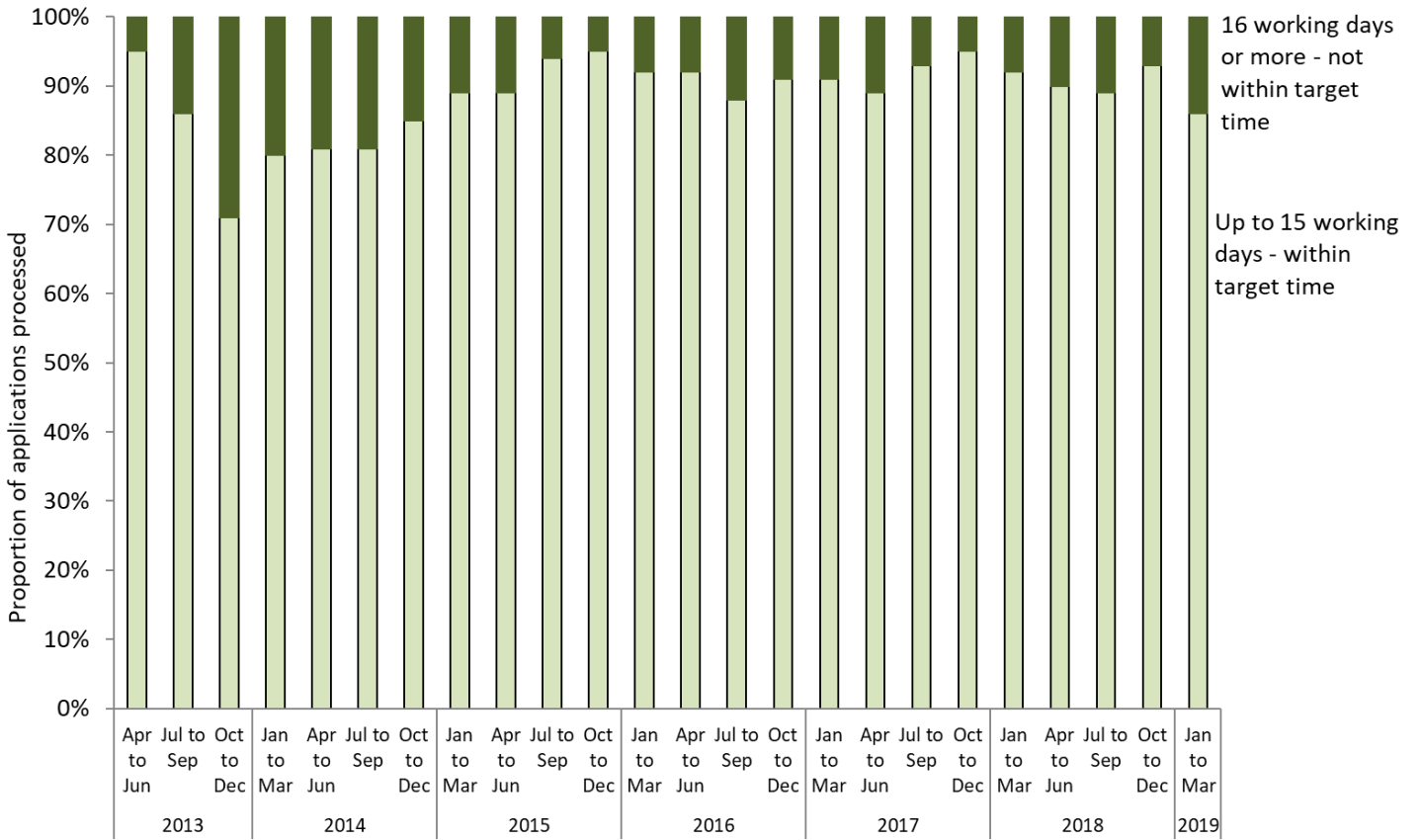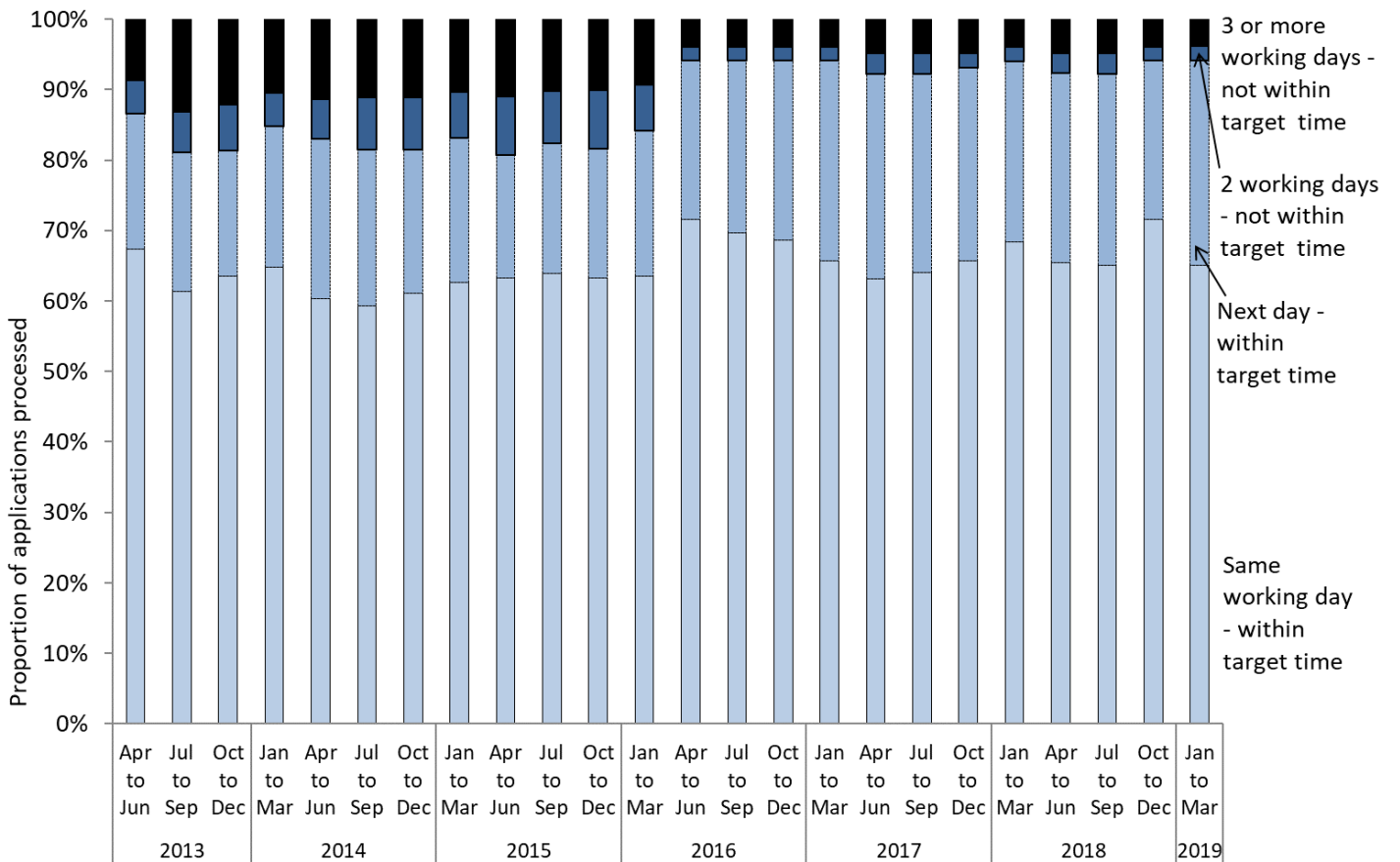## Chart 4: Initial Processing Times for Community Care Grants – Quarterly

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: Apr to Jun / Jul to Sep / Oct to Dec (2013); Jan to Mar / 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 (2019)

Chart 5: Initial Processing Times for Crisis Grants – Quarterly

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

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

X-axis: Apr to Jun / Jul to Sep / Oct to Dec (2013); Jan to Mar / 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 (2019)

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Decisions and awards

- Decisions were made on 69,515 Community Care Grant applications in 2018/19. The decision was to make an award in 58% of cases (40,485 awards), while the remaining 42% of applications were rejected (29,025 unsuccessful applications) (**Table 19**). The acceptance rate decreased by two percentage points compared to last year (**Table 23, Chart 7**).

- At Local Authority level, the greatest relative increase in Community Care Grant awards since 2017/18 was in Eilean Siar (50% increase in awards, although this was only an increase of 20 awards, **Table 21**, and a 5% increase in acceptance rate, **Table 23**) and the greatest decrease was in Glasgow City (12% decrease in awards and 5% decrease in acceptance rate). The highest acceptance rate was 90% in Orkney, and the lowest was 30% in Clackmannanshire. Acceptance rates fell in most Local Authorities compared to 2017/18.

- Decisions were made on 193,140 Crisis Grants in 2018/19. The percentage of successful cases was slightly higher than for Community Care Grant applications, at 65% (125,155 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 2017/18 was in Angus (57% increase) and the greatest decrease was in Shetland (21% decrease) (**Table 26**). The highest acceptance rate was 95% in Orkney and Eilean Siar, and the lowest was 45% in Falkirk. Acceptance rates fell in most Local Authorities compared to 2017/18 (**Table 28**).

- There was a peak in Crisis Grant awards in January 2019 (**Chart 6**). This peak is slightly greater than previous years, which has been anecdotally reported by Local Authorities as being due to a delay in the payment of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

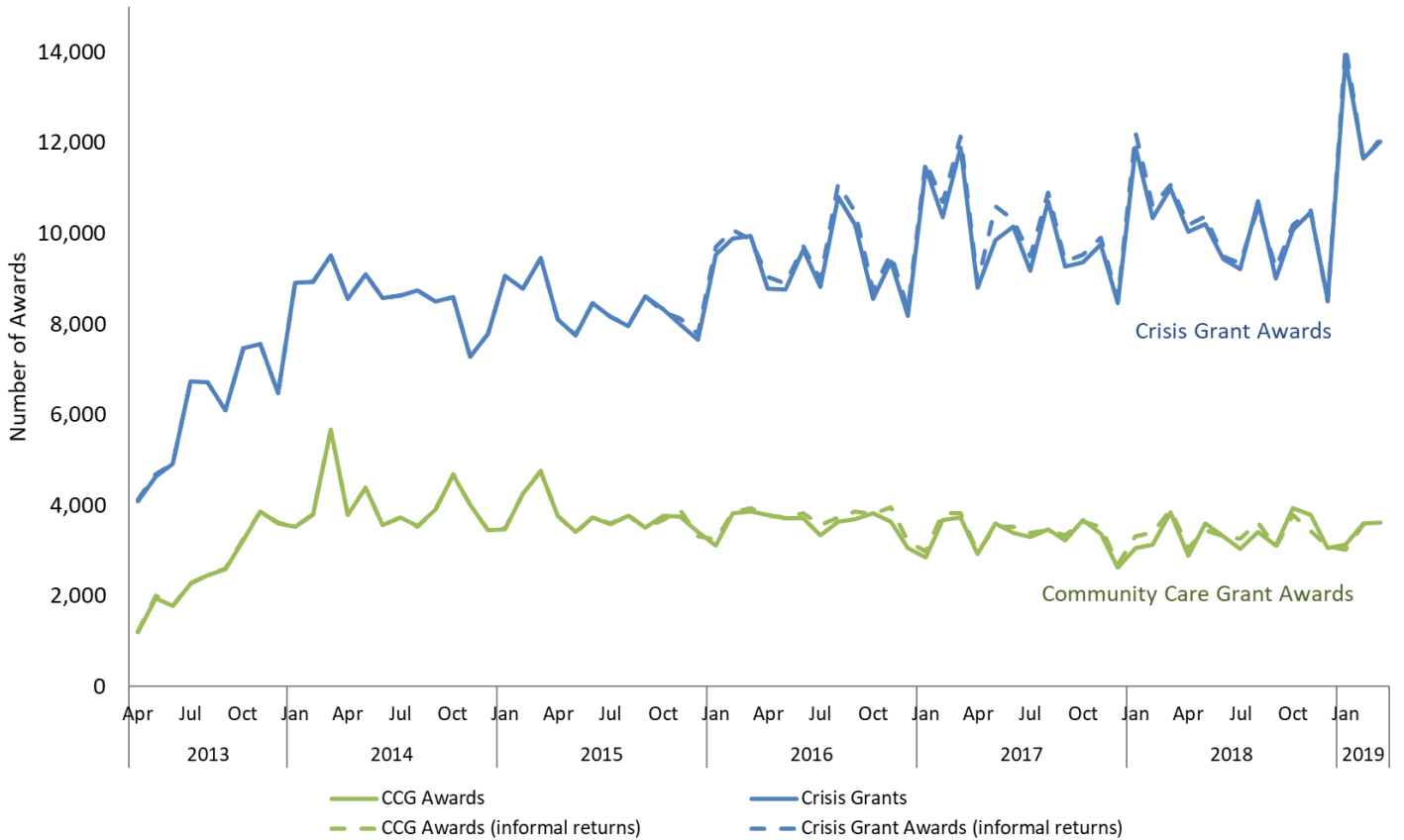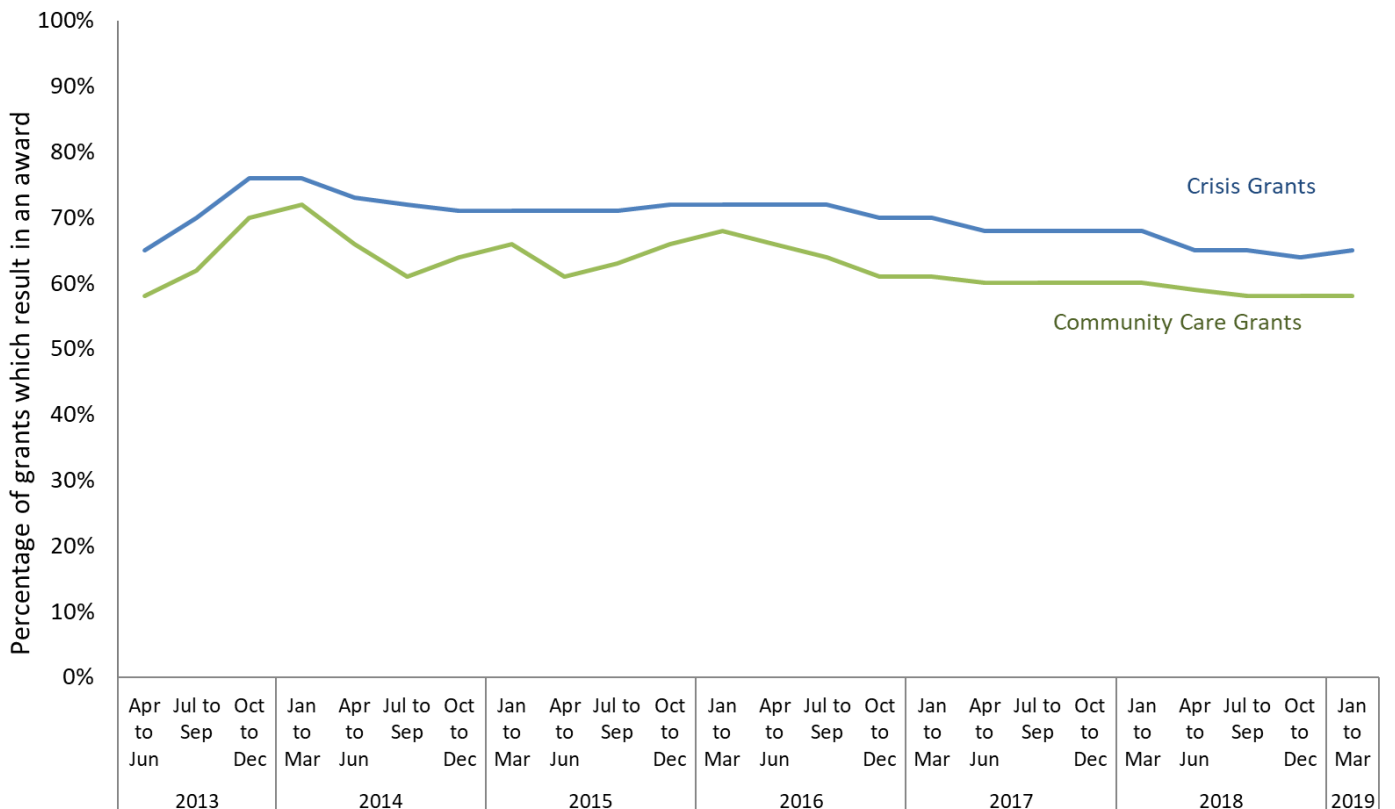**Chart 6: Number of Scottish Welfare Fund Awards – Scotland – Monthly**

Crisis Grant Awards

Community Care Grant Awards

CCG Awards — Crisis Grants
CCG Awards (informal returns) — — Crisis Grant Awards (informal returns)

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

Crisis Grants

Community Care Grants

Expenditure and budgets

- Unless otherwise stated, all expenditure information in this publication is based on the date of decision. As such it should be regarded as committed spend, rather than actual spend. Where a case has been reviewed, expenditure is assigned to the quarter of the initial decision rather than the review date. Further discussion of expenditure data quality is included in the Data Quality section of the publication.

- Local Authorities submit 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.

Chart 8: Expenditure on the Scottish Welfare Fund – Comparison of quarterly data and informal monitoring – Scotland – Monthly
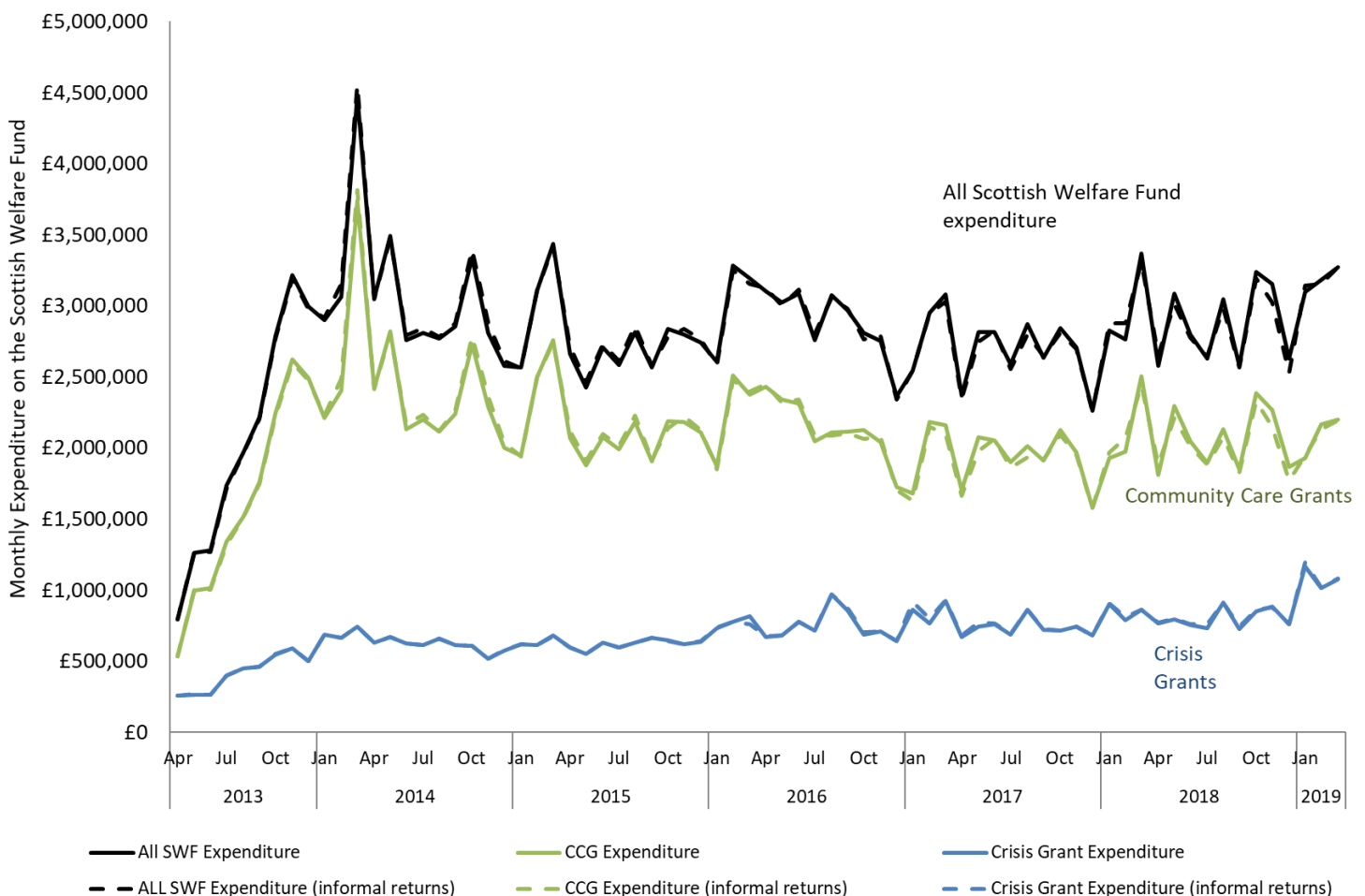
Between 1 January and 31 March 2019:

- £9.6 million was spent through the Scottish Welfare Fund, more than in January to March 2018 (£9.0 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 (£608, **Table 19**). The remaining £3.3 million was spent on Crisis Grants, an increase in expenditure of 28% compared to January to March 2018 (about £700,000 more, **Table 39**). This was partly due to a large peak in Crisis Grant applications in January 2019, plus an increase in the average award value to £87 (£77 in January to March 2018) (**Table 24**).

During 2018/19:

- The available budget for awards in 2018/19 was £35.3 million, which included £33.0 million allocated by Scottish Government, and £2.3 million of underspend carried forward from 2017/18 (**Table 40**).

- A total of £35.3 million was spent on Scottish Welfare Fund awards (**Table 38**), including £24.8 million on Community Care Grants (**Table 34**) and £10.4 million on Crisis Grants (**Table 36**). This is 7% more than was spent in 2017/18 (£32.9 million, **Table 38**), which included £23.7 million on Community Care Grants and £9.1 million on Crisis Grants.

- Average award value for Community Care Grants increased from £599 in 2017/18 to £614 in 2018/19. The average award value for Crisis Grants increased from £77 in 2017/18 to £83 in 2018/19.

- Expenditure on Community Care Grants increased compared to 2017/18 in 21 Local Authorities, the greatest relative increase being in Aberdeenshire (105% compared to 2017/18, but a decrease of 24% compared to 2016/17, **Table 34**). Expenditure decreased in 10 Local Authorities, the greatest relative decrease occurring in North Lanarkshire (-21%). Overall across Scotland expenditure on Community Care Grants increased by 5% compared to 2017/18.

- Expenditure on Crisis Grants increased compared to 2017/18 in 22 Local Authorities, the greatest relative increase being in Angus (101%, **Table 36**). Expenditure decreased in ten Local Authorities, with the greatest relative decrease in Shetland (45%). Overall across Scotland expenditure on Crisis Grants increased by 14% compared to 2017/18.

- As a whole, for the first time Local Authorities spent 100% of the available budget (the amount allocated by Scottish Government plus underspend from previous years) (**Table 42, Chart 9**). In comparison, at the end of 2017/18 95% of the available budget had been spent (**Table 42**).

- The Local Authorities which spent proportionately the least of their available budget were Eilean Siar (39%), followed by Aberdeenshire (64%) and Scottish

Borders (65%, **Table 42, Chart 9**). In total, the Local Authorities which underspent their available budget in 2018/19 will have £1.9 million of underspend to carry forward into 2018/19. This is a decrease from the underspend carried forward from 2017/18 to 2018/19 (£2.3 million, **Table 40**).

- Thirteen Local Authorities have spent more than 100% of the available budget for 2018/19: East Lothian (101%), South Lanarkshire (102%), West Dunbartonshire (102%), North Ayrshire (103%), Renfrewshire (107%), East Dunbartonshire (107%), Stirling (108%), City of Edinburgh (109%), Shetland Islands (113%), Inverclyde (115%), Glasgow City (115%), Dundee City (119%), and Dumfries and Galloway (123%) **Table 42, Chart 9**). In total Local Authorities overspent their available budgets for 2018/19 by around £1.9 million. This is more than double the overspend for 2017/18 (£660,000, **Table 40**).

- Of the thirteen Local Authorities that overspent their budgets this year, eight overspent last year. The others either balanced or underspent their budget last year: East Lothian (99%), Renfrewshire (99%), Shetland Islands (97%), Stirling (92%) and South Lanarkshire (81%). Of those who overspent last year, only North Lanarkshire (113%) did not overspend this year (99%).

- There were nine Local Authorities that spent less than 90% of their budgets in 2018/19: Aberdeenshire (64%), Clackmannanshire (79%), Eilean Siar (39%), Falkirk (85%), Highland (72%), Midlothian (84%), Moray (83%), Perth and Kinross (87%), Scottish Borders (65%). Of these nine Local Authorities, eight also spent less than 90% of their budgets last year.

Chart 9: Proportion of 2018/19 budget spent as at 31 March 2019
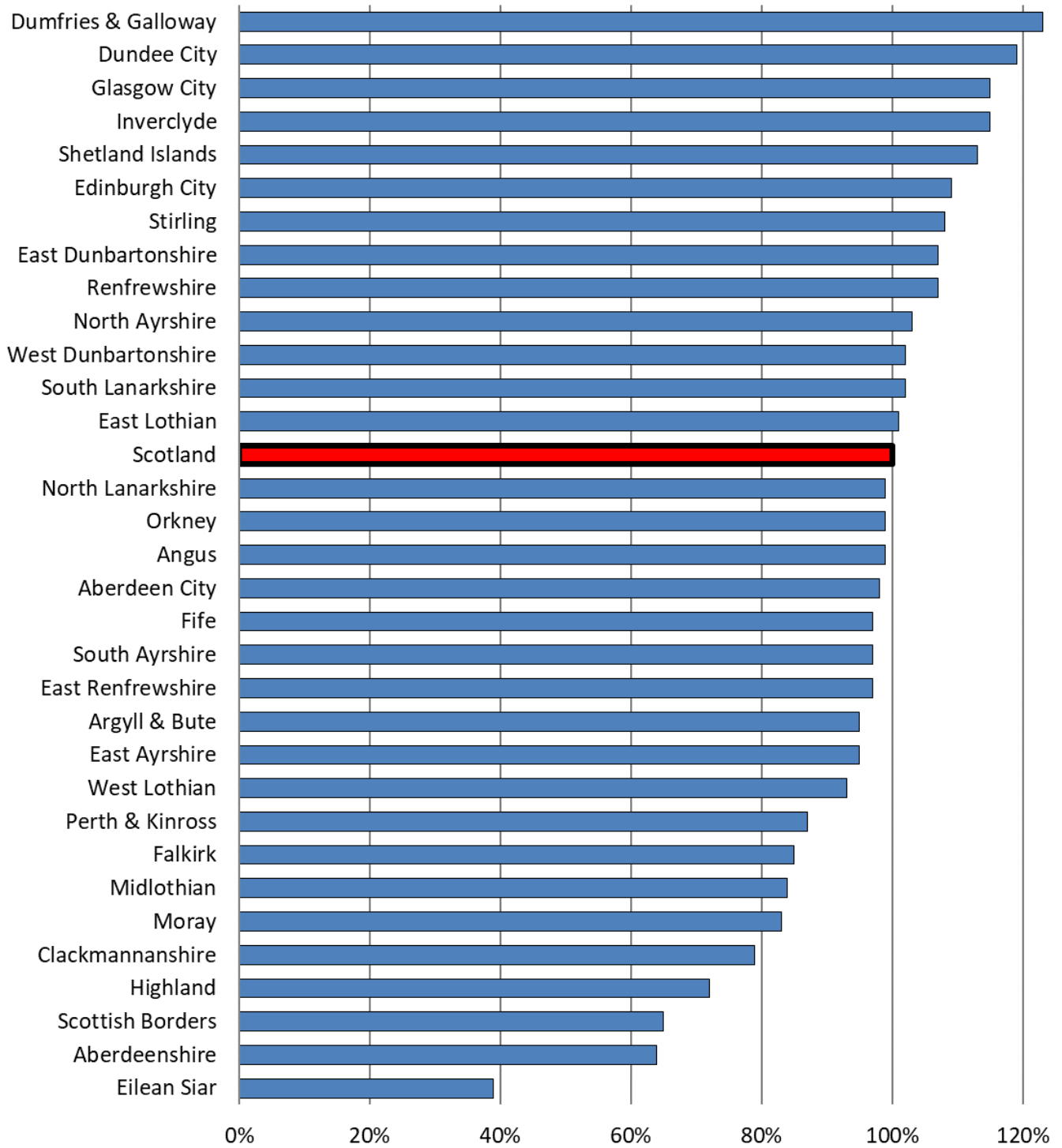

Proportion of 2018/19 budget spent as at 31 March 2019

Expenditure patterns within year:

- As in previous years, monthly expenditure at Scotland level was fairly volatile, particularly for Community Care Grants (**Chart 8**). In 2018/19, Community Care Grant expenditure was low in December, as in previous years.

- **Chart 10** shows an estimated flat spend profile based on total budget available for 2018/19 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 only slightly from this estimated spend profile, moving closer to the estimated spend profile at the end of the year as expenditure peaked. Across the year there was a slight underspend, decreasing to 0% by March 2019.

Chart 10: Cumulative expenditure on the Scottish Welfare Fund – Monthly – 2018/19
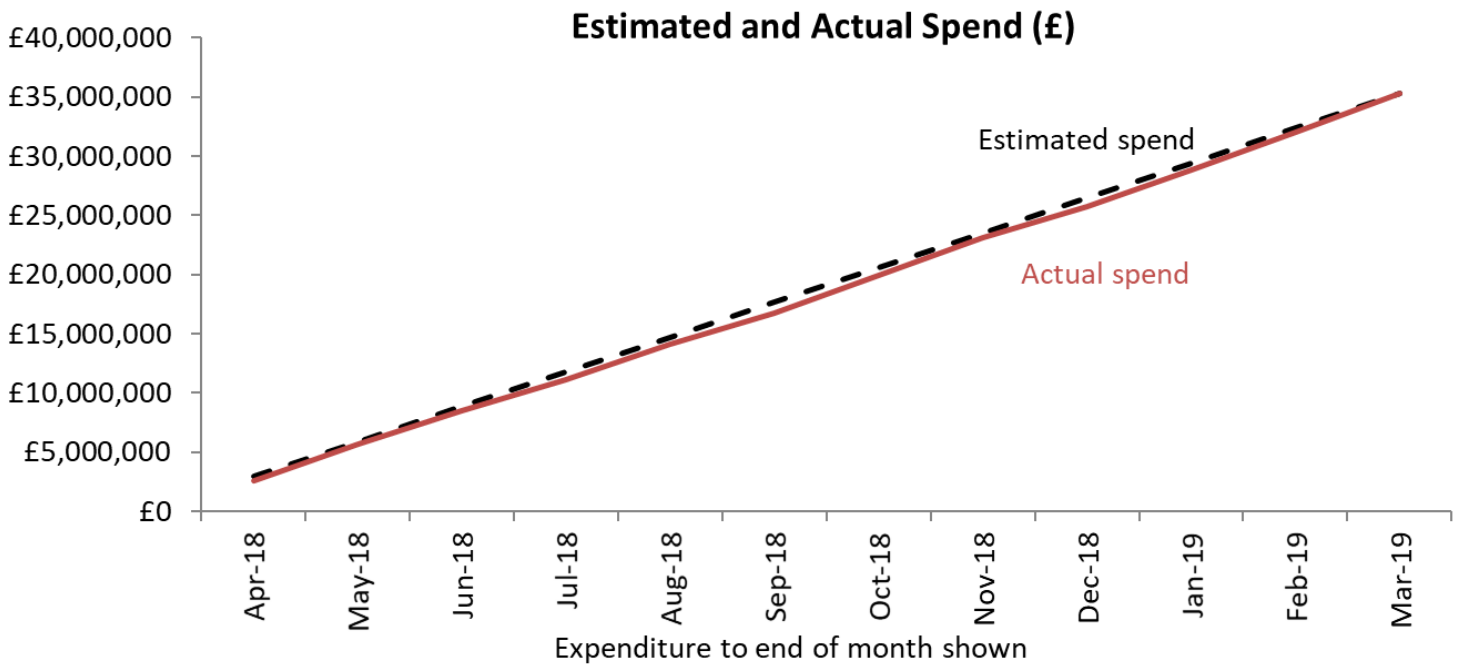
Housing costs within Universal Credit:

- 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]. Based on management information supplied to Scottish Government by Local Authorities, these grants have amounted to around £14,000 from 1 April 2017 to 31 December 2018. Applications, awards, expenditure and review data relating to these grants have been excluded from the rest of this publication. On 5 November 2018 the UK Government laid regulations coming into force on 31 December revoking the removal of assistance with housing costs for those aged 18-21. No further applications have been received under this scheme.

Family Reunion Crisis Grants:

- Delivery of Family Reunion Crisis Grants commenced on 14 May 2018. The grants support refugee families arriving in Scotland under family reunion rules to settle with their family member already resident in the Local Authority area. Applicants can apply for both Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants through this scheme. Based on management information supplied to Scottish Government by Local Authorities, these grants have amounted to around £43,000 from 14 May 2018 to 31 March 2019. Applications, awards, expenditure and review data relating to these grants have been excluded from the rest of this publication.

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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

Items and Payments

- In 2018/19 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 46% increase in the number of saucepans awarded, with 5,295 awarded in 2018/19.

- The most common Crisis Grant expenditure was on food, essential heating expenses and other living expenses (**Table 48**). Since 2017/18 the number of awards of food has increased by 8%, and essential heating costs by 11%, while the number of awards for other living expenses decreased by 1%. Over the last year there was a 74% increase in the number of awards of nappies, toiletries and household products (5,415 in 2018/19).

- For Community Care Grants the most common items have similar values year to year. However, for Crisis Grants the most common items have seen an increase in item value from 2017/18 to 2018/19: Food awarded has increased in value by 15% (£810,000) and Essential Heating Costs awarded have increased by 22% (£380,000).

- The most common payment method for Community Care Grants in 2018/19 remained provision of new goods (51% 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 2018/19 6% of payments were made in previously used goods. For Crisis Grants cash remained the most common payment method (43% payments) (**Table 54**).

- In 2018/19 just over half of payments were made within one week (52%), which is similar to 2017/18 (51%) (**Chart 11**). Payment times for Crisis Grants remained similar in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18, with 67% Crisis Grants paid on the same day as all information being received (compared to 66% the previous year) (**Chart 12**).

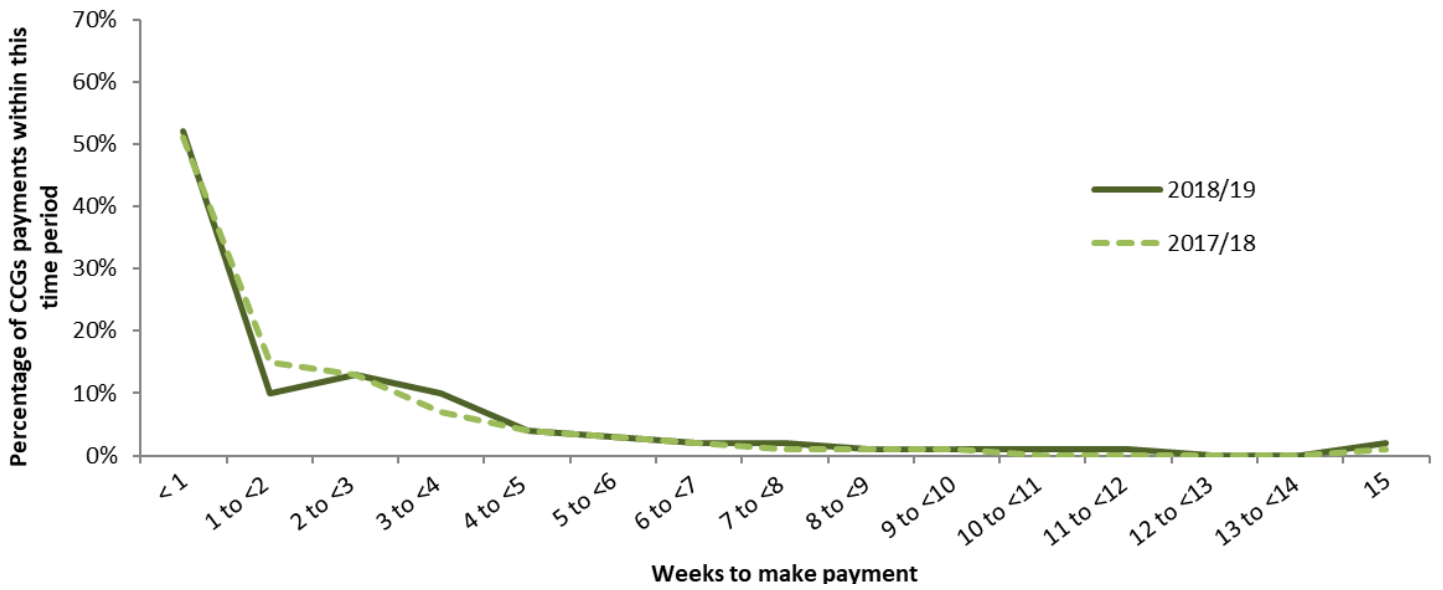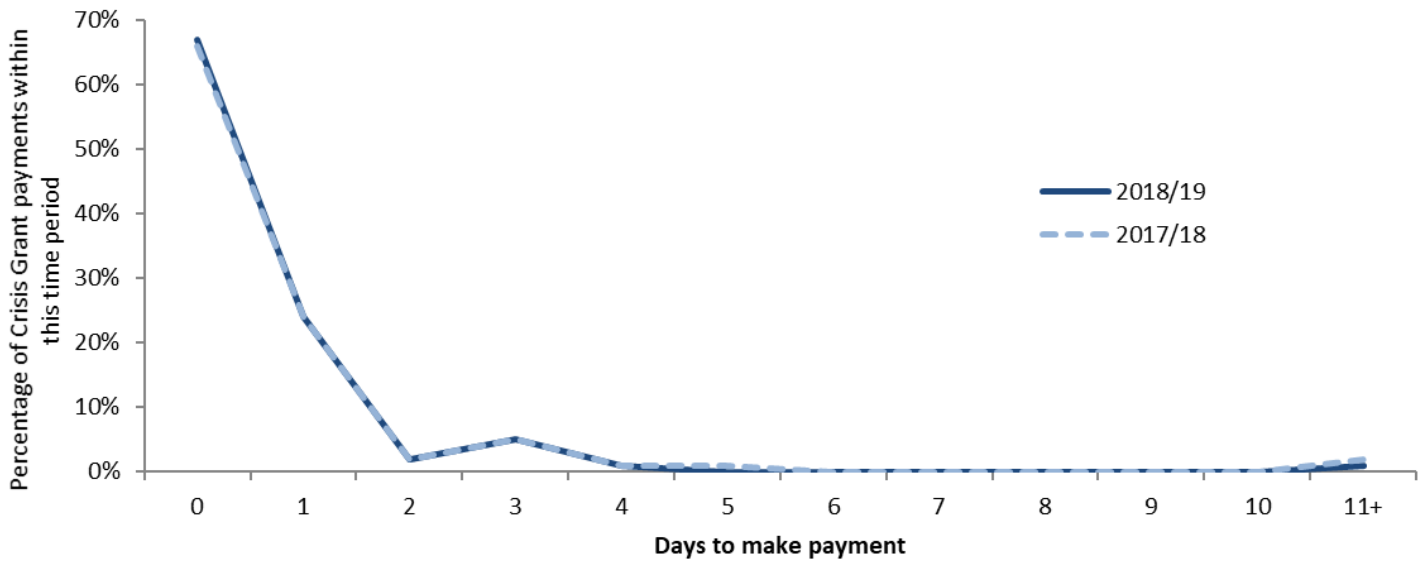**Chart 11: Distribution of time to make Community Care Grant payments (comparing 2017/18 with 2018/19)**

Chart 12: Distribution of time to make Crisis Grant payments (comparing 2017/18 with 2018/19)

Repeat Applications and Awards

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

- In 2018/19, nearly a quarter of Community Care Grant applications were repeats (24%, **Table 65**) compared with two thirds of Crisis Grant applications (66%, **Table 69**). The number of repeat Community Care Grant applications increased by 18% from 2017/18 to 2018/19, while the number of repeat Crisis Grant awards increased by 13%.

- 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 1% from 2017/18 to 2018/19, while the number of repeat Crisis Grant awards increased by 6%.

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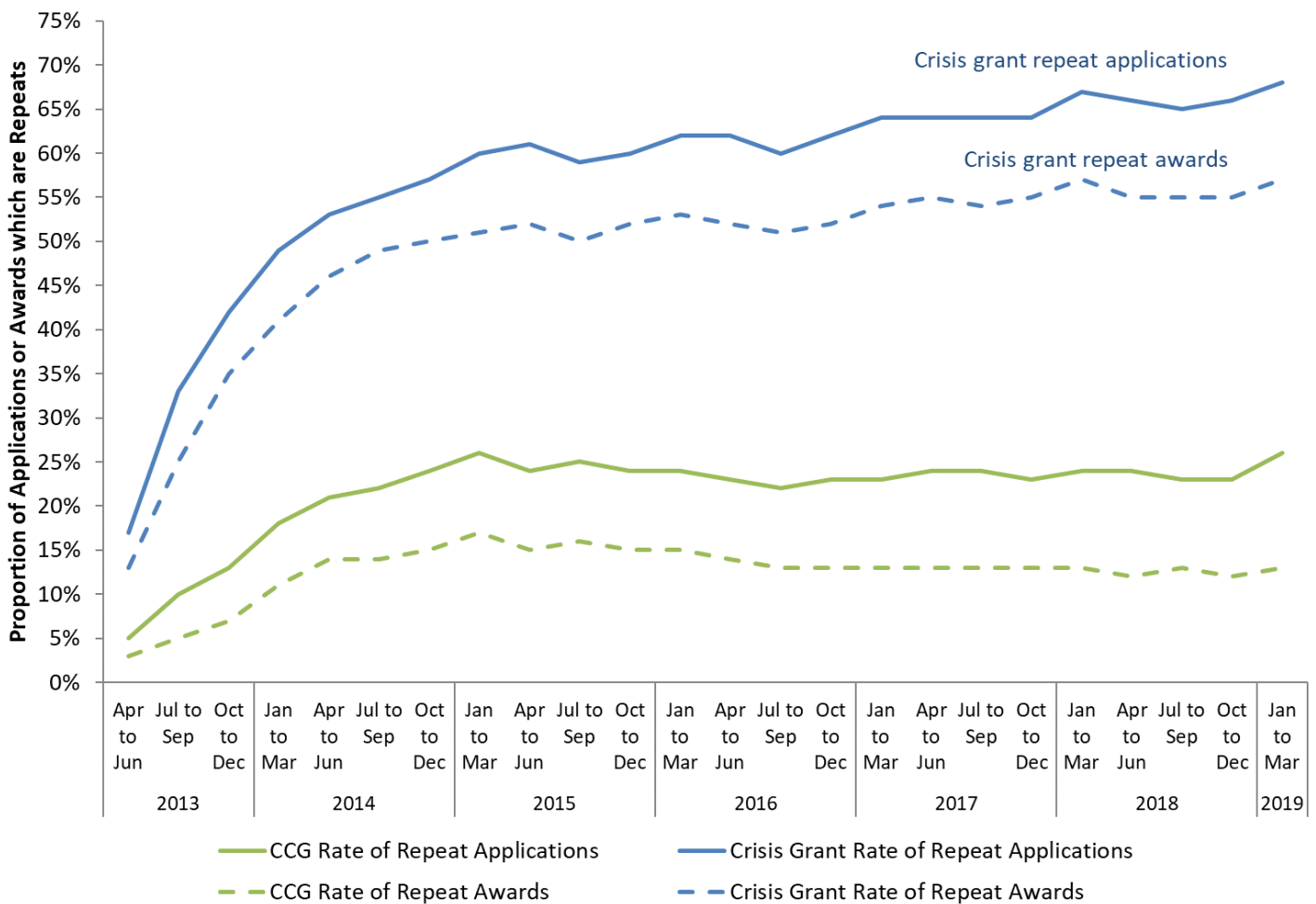
Reviews

- Since April 2013, there have been 19,650 Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants, and 14,625 for Crisis Grants (**Table 55**)[4]. Just under half of decisions have been revised at this stage for both Community Care Grants (47%) and Crisis Grants (46%) (**Table 56**).

- Since April 2013, around 77% of Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants have been made within the 15 working day target, while around 87% 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 2% Community Care Grants and 1% Crisis Grants where it is unknown if reviews were made within target times.

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[4] 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 2018/19 over half of Community Care Grants (54%) and Crisis Grants (53%) 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 2018/19 applicants in the 20% most deprived data zones received an average award that was around £142 higher than applicants in the 20% least deprived data zones (£631 compared to £489, **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 – 2018/19
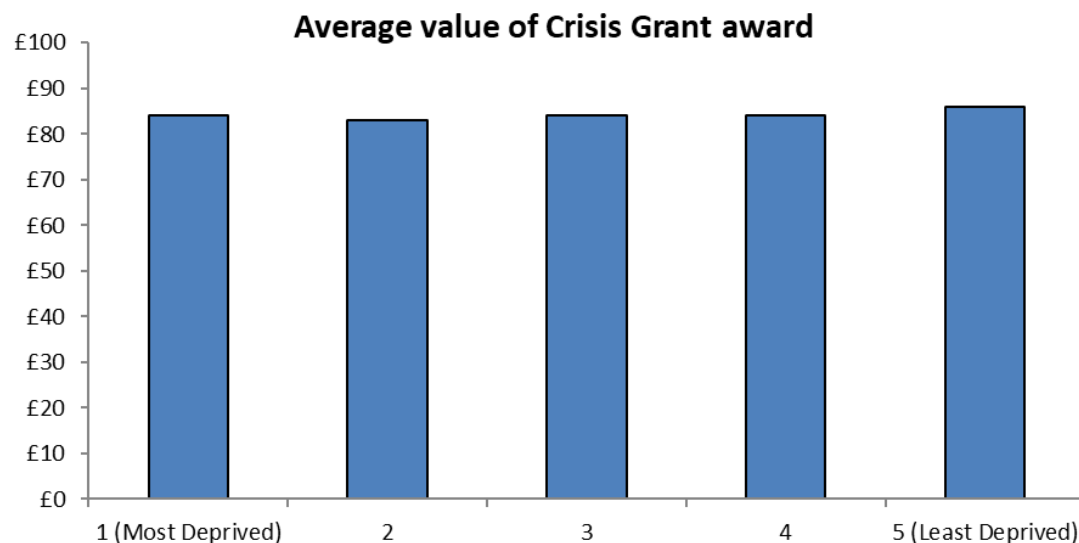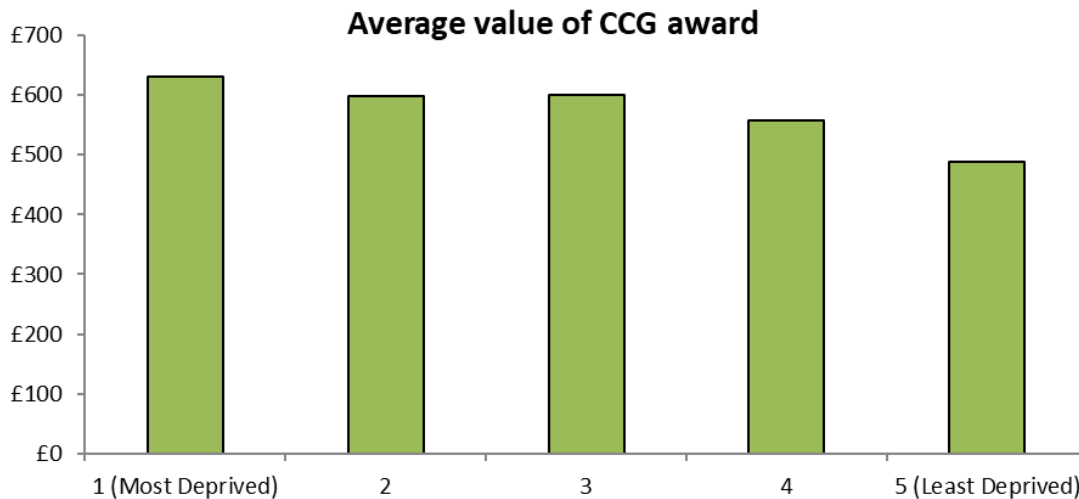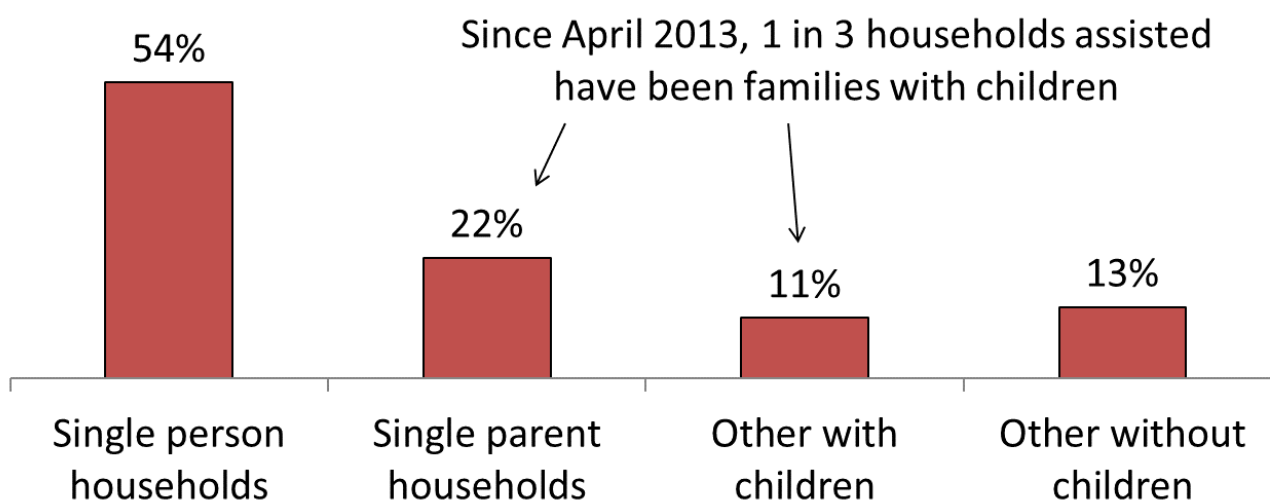
Characteristics of Households in Receipt of Awards

- Since the scheme began in April 2013, 336,880 unique households received at least one award from the Scottish Welfare Fund. More households have received a Crisis Grant (241,700, 72% of households) than a Community Care Grant (183,360, 54% of households) (**Table 62a**).

- Since the scheme began in April 2013, over half of all awards have gone to single person households (54%), and over a fifth to single parent households (22%) (**Table 62b, Chart 15**). In comparison, the latest household estimates for Scotland indicate that only 36% of households are single people, and 5% of households are single parent families[5]. Less than a quarter of Scottish Welfare Fund awards have gone to couples, couples with children or other types of household (24%), whereas over half of households in Scotland are estimated to fall into these categories (58%). 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 2019

Percentage of households assisted by the Scottish Welfare Fund

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

- Single person households: 54%
- Single parent households: 22%
- Other with children: 11%
- Other without children: 13%

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[5] National Records of Scotland 'Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2018', https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/households/household-estimates/2018

Background

On 1 April 2013, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) abolished two elements of the Social Fund - Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans. Therefore to ensure a safety net for people in Scotland who are on low income, 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[6], 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.

- A Local Authority may provide assistance out of its SWF only to a person who is resident in the Local Authority area, is about to become resident in the Local Authority area, or a person who is homeless. Applicants should apply to the appropriate Local Authority. The application process will depend on the Local Authority's approach to wider service delivery and the infrastructure it has in place. Local Authorities must make provision for applications to be taken via three delivery channels, for example, online, on the phone and face-to-face.

- Details of applications, how they were processed, and the outcomes and expenditure associated with applications are stored on Local Authorities' IT systems. Four IT companies provide IT systems which underpin the provision of the Scottish Welfare Fund.

Application process

- Applications are processed by decision makers within Local Authorities. Scottish Government produces statutory guidance to provide a framework for decision makers to promote consistency in decision making. In making decisions, Local Authorities need to balance the needs of the applicant against the remaining budget. Joint applications for a Crisis Grant and Community Care Grant are

treated as individual. In these statistics they are also counted as two separate applications. It is for the Local Authority to determine whether a grant should be made as a Crisis or a Community Care Grant. If an applicant applies for one, the Local Authority may decide to award the other if it is more appropriate to the applicant's circumstances.

- Applicants can make repeated applications for the Scottish Welfare Fund. A Local Authority does not need to consider an application if a person has applied for a Community Care Grant or a Crisis Grant for the same items or services within the last 28 days, where a decision has already been made and there has not been a relevant change of circumstances. Additionally, the number of Crisis Grant awards should normally be limited to three per person in any rolling 12 month period across all Local Authorities, although there can be exceptions.

- An initial decision will be made on the application, either to make an award for all or some of the requested items, or to not make any award. In these statistics we refer to these outcomes as 'accepted' and 'rejected' respectively. Crisis Grants are typically made in cash or cash equivalent. Community Care Grants can be fulfilled in cash, cash-equivalent or in kind, for example by providing white goods or furnishings.

- The target time for processing applications is 15 working days after receiving all the information allowing a decision to be made for Community Care Grants and by the end of the next working day for Crisis Grants.

Review process

- If an applicant disagrees with the outcome of their application, there are two possible review stages. Firstly, a Tier 1 review will be carried out by the Local Authority. The target time for processing Tier 1 reviews is the end of the second working day for crisis reviews, and 15 working days for Community Care Grant reviews. At this point the original decision will either be 'revised' or 'not revised'.

- Following this, an independent Tier 2 review may be carried out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Tier 2 reviews have been carried out by the SPSO since 1 April 2016 (previously this was done by Local Authorities). Information on tier 2 reviews carried out by SPSO can be found in the *SPSO's Annual Reports* and *Annual Statistics 2018-19*.

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

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

application reference numbers of applications for Family Reunion Crisis Grants, and 18-21 year olds affected by the change to the entitlement for housing costs. We have then excluded these applications from the analysis when producing this publication and accompanying publication tables.

About the Data

How the data is collected

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

The data specification for the Scottish Welfare Fund is available at:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/swf-dataspec

Guidance to help Local Authority officers to record information is available at:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/swf-data-guidance

and guidance for Family Reunion Crisis Grants at:
https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-welfare-fund-family-reunion-crisis-grant-guidance/

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

This data is then uploaded to the Scottish Government's ProcXed[7] website. Once the data has been validated by our software, the data is passed over to the Scottish Government's Communities Analysis Division.

Revisions

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

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

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

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

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

Processing times

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

Households

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

Repeat applications and awards

An application is defined as a repeat application if the household made another Community Care Grant/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.

Payment times

The time taken to receive a payment was calculated as the date all information was received to the date of the last payment. If the 'all information date' is missing, the date the application is received is used instead. Last payment date includes payments made as part of reviews.

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.

Known data issues:

Missing information/delays in receiving information

- The issue of missing Community Care Grant applications from North Lanarkshire has been rectified. This publication includes information about all applications processed by North Lanarkshire up to 31 March 2019.

- An application is included in the quarterly data extract to the Scottish Government only when an application has been decided and when a payment has been made. For Crisis Grants, applications are less complex and payments are made quickly, resulting in almost no lag between cases being decided and being included in the data extract. However, for Community Care Grants, a large number of items may need to be ordered and payment may not occur until up to one month later, when invoices arrive. This results in a lag time between applications beginning in the Local Authority and applications being included in the extract to the Scottish Government. To rectify this problem, we are asking Local Authorities to submit data one to two months after the end of the quarter. This will ensure that, as far as possible, all relevant cases are included in the data extract.

- Some Local Authorities may not have been able to enter all of their data in time to include in this publication. Late entry of data may mean that this data appears in subsequent quarters, rather than in the quarter when the case was actually dealt with. As dates are automatically system generated, late entry of data has a knock on effect on any calculation which involves processing times or payment times.

- Some question responses may default to "Other" in some IT systems. This particularly applies for reasons for applications, rejections, reviews, review decisions and payment methods. 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. In the most recent quarter there have been improvements in the response to questions relating to reasons for applications. Some questions may not be completed at all. This includes the vulnerability and referrals questions for some Local Authorities.

Expenditure

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

- It is possible for the value of an award to increase or decrease between the decision and payment date. For example, Local Authorities may estimate the cost of carpets and the final invoice for these may be less than originally thought. This results in money being paid back into their systems. Where we receive updated information about this change in expenditure in quarterly data returns, the statistics for previous quarters are updated to reflect this. We also receive separate reconciliations information from some Local Authorities. Over time, the expenditure data in the quarterly monitoring may exceed monies actually spent if reconciliations are not applied. Most recently, reconciliations have been applied to South Lanarkshire data from January to March 2018.

- West Lothian have indicated that the expenditure for 2013/14 is an underestimate. This appears to have been due to issues in setting up the IT system for this data collection at the start of the scheme in 2013. Information about expenditure was collected manually rather than through ProcXed and cannot now be updated. West Lothian have indicated that this has led to an ongoing underspend being calculated for the Local Authority. Additionally, other Local Authorities have indicated that the figures published for annual over- and underspend do not always match Local Authorities' own accounts.

- Where Scottish Government receive updated information about expenditure from Local Authorities, the statistics for previous quarters are updated to reflect this. However, Local Authorities have a cut off point after the end of a financial year at which point they have to produce accounts. At this point, expenditure for the year is calculated, and over- or underspend is calculated. At this point the council meets the overspend, or rolls forward the underspend to the next financial year's budget. If there is a change in the value of an award after this

date, this will not be reflected in Local Authority calculation of the available budget for the next financial year. Additionally, some Local Authorities may choose to top up the budget for the fund at the start of a financial year with additional funds.

- In previous publications, we have included funds provided by Local Authorities in the available budget, however for this version of the publication this funding has been removed from calculations. Available budget therefore only represents the amounts allocated by Scottish Government plus any underspend from previous years, and it is assumed that Local Authorities meet any overspend each year.

- Each year the discrepencies between these annual expenditure figures and Local Authorities' accounts are compounded. We are reviewing these differences and to realign our calculation of Local Authorities' over- or underspend.

Joint Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant applications

- Households can apply for both Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants in the same application. In versions of the publication covering the period up to December 2017, total applications reported were the total number of applications recorded on Local Authority IT systems. In some Local Authorities, these applications in some cases will include both a Community Care Grant and a Crisis Grant element. However, some Local Authorities now have a facility to split a single application into the Community Care Grant and Crisis Grant elements, and treat these as two separate applications. Where Local Authorities have used this facility on their IT system, Scottish Government would receive this as two separate applications, with no information about whether they had originally been made together as one application. Because of this, we have changed the methodology for how total applications to Scottish Welfare Fund are reported, from the 2017/18 publication onwards. For all Local Authorities, we now report the number of Community Care Grants and number of Crisis Grant applications added together. Therefore, joint applications for Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants will now be counted in the figures as two applications. This makes the figures for total Scottish Welfare Fund applications consistent across all the Local Authorities.

- In addition to the issue described above, Local Authorities have informed us that on some occasions, applicants may tick boxes on their application forms to apply for both a Community Care Grant and a Crisis Grant, however, based on the types of item, which have been requested the Local Authority, will process this application as only a Community Care Grant (e.g. if only flooring requested) or only a Crisis Grant (e.g. if only food requested). In these cases, the statistics in this publication reflect the way in which an application has been processed by the Local Authority, rather than the original tick boxes selected by an applicant.

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Payment Methods

- An error in data processing has been discovered in regard to the Payment Method categories of 'Cash alternative' and 'Payment into bank'. Whilst we work to fix this, these categories are combined into the category of 'Payment into bank'.

Reviews

- Orkney are unable to supply Tier 1 review information via the ProcXed system. Orkney have supplied full details about all reviews carried out separately and these numbers are included in the tables, however as numbers are small these values have been supressed for disclousre control .

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

Improvements

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

Comparisons with other UK Statistics

Annual reports by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the Social Fund for the period prior to 1 April 2013 are available from the Department for Work and Pensions. The most recently available report can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-report-by-the-secretary-of-state-for-work-and-pensions-on-the-social-fund-2012-to-2013

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

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

Boxplots

Boxplots have been included to show the variation in processing times for applications within each Local Authority (**Chart 4b**). 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
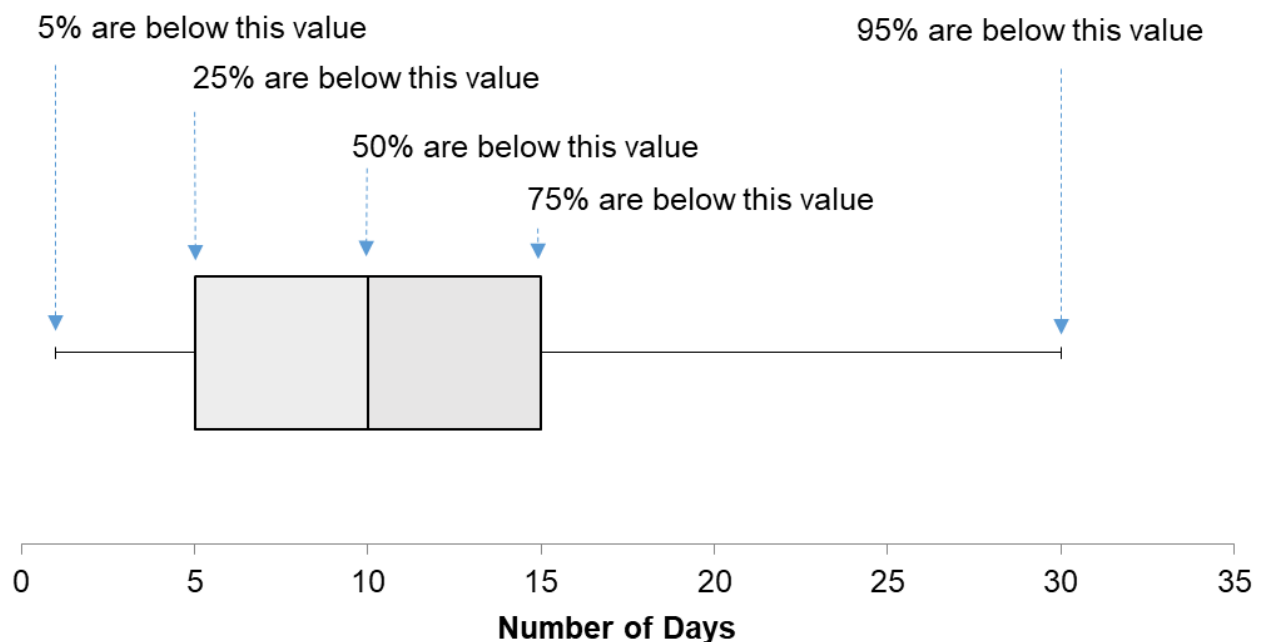
In the example above:

• 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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