



## Social Security Scotland Statistics

# Best Start Grant: high level statistics to 30 June 2019

### Frequency of publications

The next publication, covering up to end September 2019 will be released in November 2019.

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

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

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

# Introduction

The Best Start Grant includes three types of payment: Pregnancy and Baby Payment (applications taken from 10 December 2018), Early Learning Payment (applications taken from 29 April 2019) and School Age Payment (applications taken from 3 June 2019). The [Background](#) section has further detail about these different payments. This publication provides information on applications and payments for Best Start Grant from 10 December 2018 to 30 June 2019. It therefore includes figures for approximately seven months of Pregnancy and Baby Payment applications, two months of Early Learning Payment applications, and one month of School Age Payment applications. The publication does not include figures on Best Start Foods, which replaced Healthy Start Vouchers for new claims in Scotland from 12 August 2019.

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

[www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland](http://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland)

These statistics are being published as experimental statistics. Experimental statistics are defined in the Code of Practice for Statistics as "*new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.*" These statistics have not yet been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority. They have not been designated as National Statistics<sup>3</sup>.

## Main findings

### Key figures

- From 10 December 2018 to 30 June 2019, 71,625 applications for Best Start Grant were received **[Table 1]**. Around 27,815 (39%) included an application for Pregnancy and Baby Component, 23,800 (33%) included an application for Early Learning Payment and 14,310 (20%) included an application for School Age Payment **[Table 2]**.
- Around 63,875 applications had been processed by 30 June 2019. Of these, around two thirds (42,515, 67%) were authorised, under one third (19,255, 30%) were denied, and a small proportion (2,105, 3%) were withdrawn **[Table 1]**.
- In total, £12.9 million of Best Start Grant payments had been issued to clients by 30 June 2019. £6.1 million (48%) payments were for

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

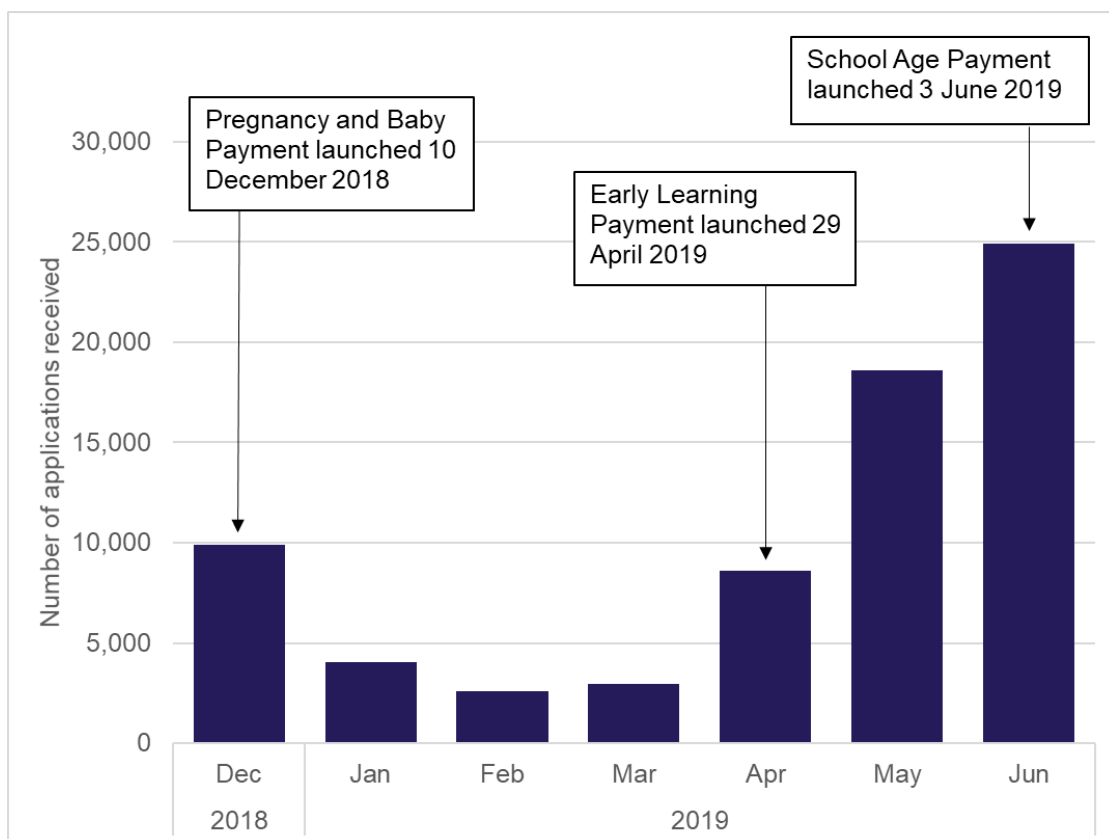
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/assessment-and-designation-of-experimental-statistics.html>

Pregnancy and Baby Payment, £4.3 million (34%) were for Early Learning Payment and £2.4 million (19%) were for School Age Payment [Table 9].

## Applications by month

- Around 9,895 applications were received in December 2018 immediately after the launch of Pregnancy and Baby payment. Following this, applications decreased to under 3,000 in February and March 2019. Application numbers increased following the launch of Early Learning Payment in April 2019, and again with the launch of School Age Payment in June 2019, reaching 24,930 in June 2019.
- The proportion of applications authorised was highest in December 2018 (81%), decreased to 57% by March 2019, and then has increased again to 73% in June 2019 [Table 1].

Chart 1: Applications received by month



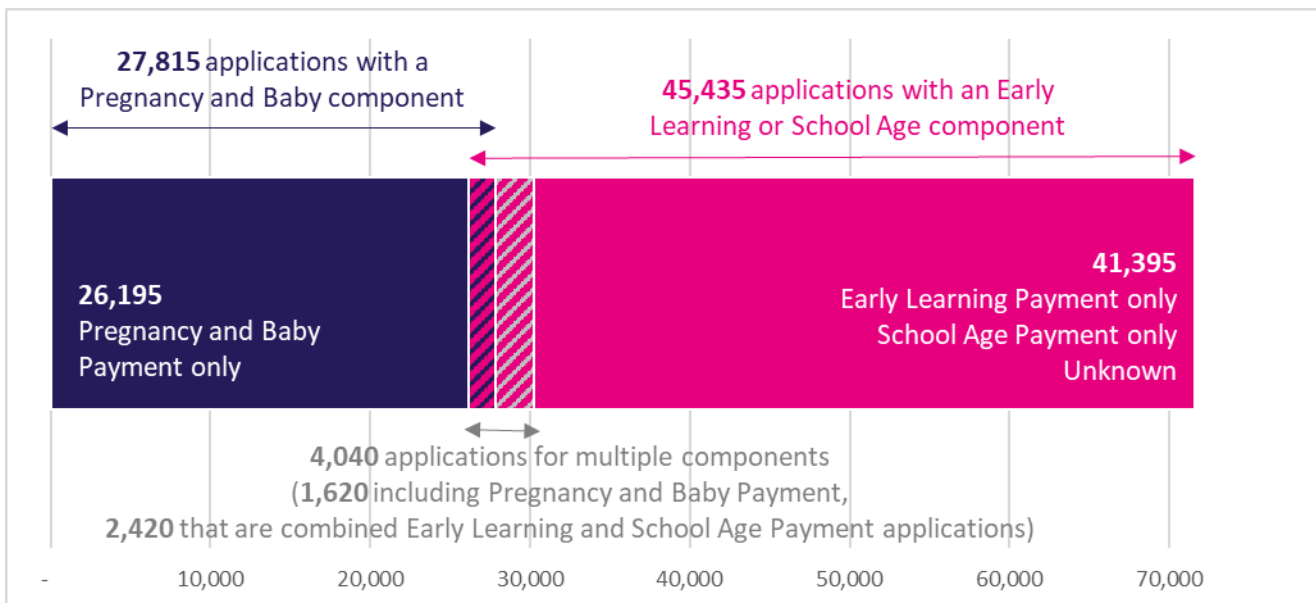
## Applications by Best Start Grant payment type

- Of the applications received to 30 June 2019, around 26,195 (37%) were for Pregnancy and Baby Payment only, 20,085 (28%) were for Early Learning Payment only, 11,480 (16%) were for School Age Payment only and 4,040 (6%) were for multiple payments. An

additional 9,830 (14%) applications are assumed to have been for either Early Learning Payment or School Age Payment but did not include details of any eligible children [Table 2, Chart 2]. The [About the data](#) section explains how the payment being applied for is derived.

- Of the Pregnancy and Baby Payment only applications processed by the end of June 2019, 62% were authorised [Table 2]. A slightly higher proportion of Early Learning Payment or School Age Payment applications were authorised (68%), and an even higher proportion of multiple applications were authorised (86%). Multiple applications may be more likely to be authorised because, due to the way these are derived, at least one child in the application must be of eligible age for a payment. Also, a multiple application will be classed as ‘authorised’ even if only one of the payment types applied for was successful. The [Data Quality](#) section explains in more detail how the method of deriving which payment is being applied for affects the interpretation of authorisation rates by payment type, including the reason for combining Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment.
- Accounting for applications for multiple different payment types, 27,815 applications were received for Pregnancy and Baby Payment, 23,800 for Early Learning Payment and 14,310 for School Age Payment [Table 2, Chart 2]. In total 15,840 Pregnancy and Baby Payments, 17,235 Early Learning Payments and 10,185 School Age Payments were authorised, with some clients receiving more than one type of payment [Table 2].

**Chart 2: Applications received by Best Start Grant payment type to 30 June 2019**



## Application channel (method of application)

- Around 93% of applications received by 30 June were made online (66,860 applications). The remainder were made through phone or paper applications (4,665, 7%) or unknown channel (100, 0%) **[Table 3]**. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of applications by phone and paper for December 2018 to April 2019. The [About the data](#) section has further information about the application channel data.
- From May to June 2019, around 41,340 (95%) applications were online, 1,935 by phone (4%) and 195 (0%) by paper application **[Table 3]**.
- The proportion of applications made online has increased from 89% in December 2018 to 95% from April 2019 onwards **[Table 3]**.

## Age group

- Around 98% of applications were made by people aged 18 to 44. Only 1% of applications were made by people under 18, and 1% by people aged 45 or over **[Table 4]**.

## Applications by local authority, health board and non-Scottish postcodes

- Applications were received from people in all local authorities, with the highest number of applications coming from Glasgow City (11,370, 16%), North Lanarkshire (5,590, 8%) and Fife (5,250, 7%), and the lowest number of applications coming from Orkney Islands (125), Shetland Islands (135), and Na h-Eileanan Siar (185) **[Table 5]**.
- Similarly, the health board with the highest number of applications was Greater Glasgow and Clyde (18,215, 25%), with the lowest numbers from Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles **[Table 6]**.
- While the average percentage of applications authorised at Scotland level was 67%, this varied from 62% in Orkney Islands local authority to 76% in Dundee City local authority **[Table 5]**.
- Around 3,520 (5%) applications were made by people living at non-Scottish postcodes **[Table 5]**.

## Pregnancy and Baby Payment applications for first and subsequent births

- More applications were received for subsequent births than first births. By 30 June 2019, 55% of applications (15,410) were for subsequent births (i.e. to clients that already had children under 16 that lived with

them and that they were responsible for), whereas 45% of applications (12,400) were for first births **[Table 7]**.

- The proportion of applications authorised was higher for subsequent births (79%) than first births (38%) **[Table 7]**. This may be because clients applying for their first child are less likely to be on a qualifying benefit, particularly if the application for Best Start Grant was received before the birth of their baby. In total 11,415 payments were authorised for subsequent births and 4,425 for first births.

## Processing times

- More than three quarters of the applications that were received and decided by 30 June 2019 were processed within 10 working days (49,275, 78%). Nearly nine out of ten applications were processed within 15 days (55,985, 88%). Around 7% of applications took 21 days or more to be processed **[Table 8]**. This processing time includes time spent waiting to receive copies of documents from clients, but does not include additional time to make payments.
- Median average<sup>4</sup> processing time was highest for applications processed in January 2019 (12 days), and has since decreased to an average of seven days in June 2019.
- The percentage of applications processed within ten days has increased from 37% in January 2019 to 84% in June 2019. The higher increase seen in May and June could be due to the launch of Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment. Most of these payments are processed without the need to contact the client, whereas for Pregnancy and Baby Payments pregnancy often needs to be verified by asking clients for copies of additional documents. This may contribute to the faster processing time for Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment.

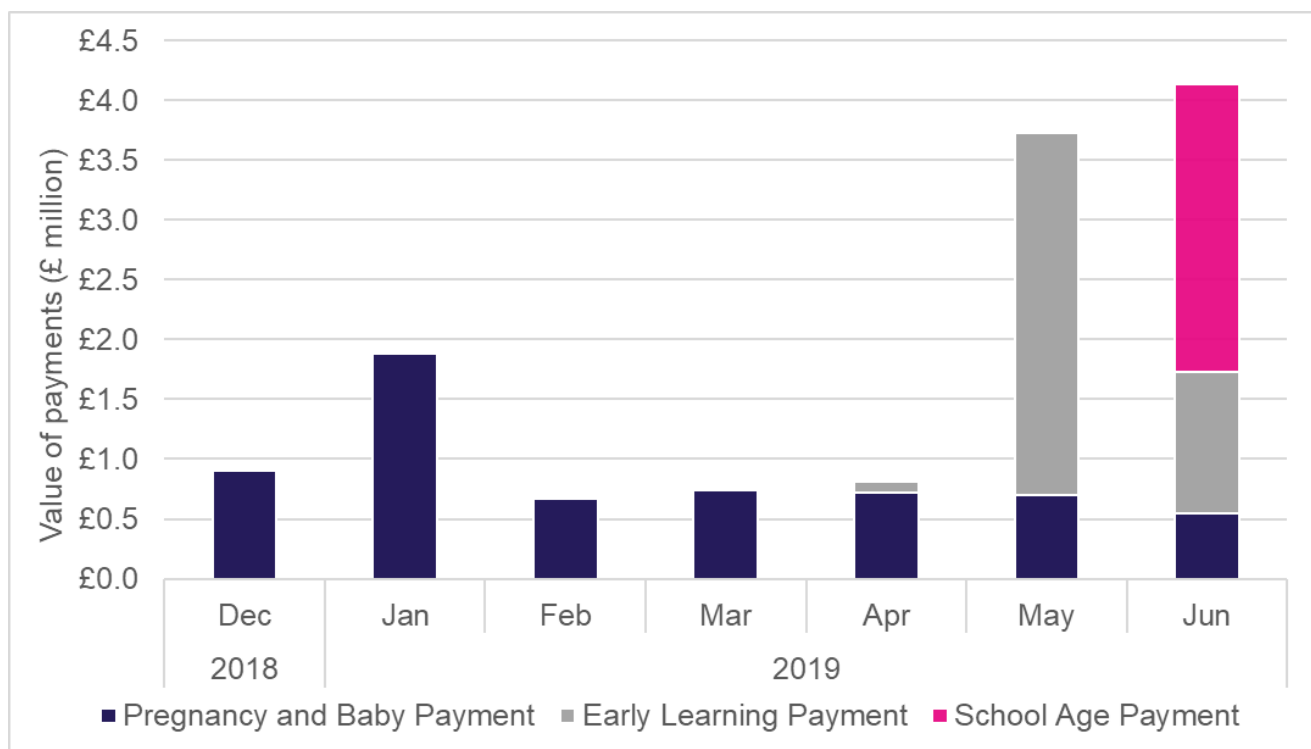
## Payments

- The total value of Best Start Grant payments to 30 June 2019 was £12.9 million. Of this, £6.1 million was for Pregnancy and Baby Payment, £4.3 million was for Early Learning Payment and £2.4 million was for School Age Payment **[Table 10]**. Some clients will have received multiple types of payment.
- At local authority level, the highest total value of payments was made to people in Glasgow City (£2,127,800 million), North Lanarkshire (£1,072,500) and Fife (£995,650) and the lowest to people in Shetland Islands (£21,500), Orkney Islands (£23,300) and Na h-Eileanan Siar (£36,200) **[Table 9]**.

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

**Chart 3: Applications by Best Start Grant payment type to 31 May 2019**



## Redeterminations and appeals

- Management information collected manually by the Client Experience team at Social Security Scotland indicates that around 835 redeterminations were requested by 30 June 2019. This represents around 1.3% of the total number of decisions made during this period **[Table 11]**.
- By 30 June 2019, 715 redetermination requests had been decided, with just over half of these disallowed (380, 53%), over a third allowed or partially allowed (240, 34%) and 95 (13%) withdrawn. A further 120 redetermination requests (14% of the 835 received) were pending an outcome.
- The median average number of days to respond to a redetermination request was 12 working days. Up to 30 June 2019, around 98% of completed redeterminations were closed within 16 working days. Where redeterminations were closed after the deadline of 16 working days, extensions were agreed with the client and the redeterminations were closed within the 21 working day deadline.
- Management information also indicates that around 25 appeals were received by 30 June 2019. The tribunal have considered 10 appeals and in each case, the appeal has been dismissed and the Social Security decision upheld.

# Background to Best Start Grant

The Scotland Act 2016<sup>5</sup> gives Scottish Parliament powers over a number of social security benefits which had been administered to Scottish claimants by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

On 10 December 2018, Scottish Ministers initiated their competence to deliver the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment, a form of Early Years Assistance, under the Social Security Scotland Act 2018. Social Security Scotland – the executive agency of Scottish Government responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland – began taking applications for Pregnancy and Baby Payment on Monday 10 December. This replaced the Sure Start Maternity Grant which the DWP ceased to deliver on the same day.

On 29 April 2019, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment.

On 3 June 2019, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Grant School Age Payment. Statistics covering the first applications for School Age Payments will be published in the next publication in the Best Start Grant series.

On 12 August 2019, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Foods. Best Start Foods replaces the UK Government scheme Healthy Start Vouchers. Clients currently getting Healthy Start Vouchers will be sent an invitation to apply for Best Start Foods between August 2019 and December 2019.

Further details about all Best Start Grant payments can be found at <https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant/>.

## Pregnancy and Baby Payment

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

For example, if someone has twins and one is their first child, they would receive £1,200. This is made up of £600 for the first child, £300 for the second child and £300 for having twins. An applicant having twins where none of the children are

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<sup>5</sup> The Scotland Act 2016 webpage at <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/scotland.html>



their first child would get £900. This is made up of £300 for each child plus a £300 payment for twins.

The application window is from 24 weeks pregnant to 6 months after the birth (or up to the day before the child is 1 year old for people who take over looking after a baby, such as adopted parents or kinship carers). If a baby was stillborn or died after they were born, applications can still be made up to six months after their birth date. Applicants must not already be in receipt of the Sure Start Maternity Grant for the baby being applied for.

## **Early Learning Payment**

The Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment is a new £250 payment to help support child development, for example travel costs, changes of clothes for messy play, trips out and toys for home learning. The application window is from a child's second birthday up to the day the child is 3 years 6 months old.

The application window captures the two common ages for starting nursery, depending on whether parents qualify for a nursery place when the child is two or three. There is no requirement to take up a place at nursery to qualify for a payment.

## **School Age Payment**

The Best Start Grant School Age Payment is a new £250 payment to help with the costs of preparing for school, for example educational toys or after school activities. Eligibility is based on the child's age and relates to when a child is first old enough to start school, which is usually between the ages of 4.5 and 5.5. Exact dates when applications should be made depend on when the child was born. These dates are shown in the table below. Children born before 1 March 2014, who could have started school last year, are not eligible to receive the grant.

<b>Child's date of birth</b>	<b>When application can be made</b>
Between 1 March 2014 and 28 February 2015	Between 3 June 2019 and 29 February 2020
Between 1 March 2015 and 29 February 2016	Between 1 June 2020 and 28 February 2021

## **Best Start Foods**

Best Start Foods is available to families on certain low income benefits. It introduces a prepaid card that can be used to support the purchase of healthy foods for children under three. Eligible families can apply from pregnancy and any time up to their child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday if they are in receipt of qualifying benefits.

There is transitional protection for current recipients of Healthy Start Vouchers where a child is over 2 years old at the time of application. This transitional protection gives the child Best Start Foods payments up until their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. Healthy Start Vouchers, which are administered by the Department for Health and Social care, will no longer be available to Scottish recipients after March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020.

The payments of Best Start Foods are:

- £17 every 4 weeks during pregnancy
- £34 every 4 weeks from your child being born up until their 1<sup>st</sup> birthday
- £17 every 4 weeks for children between the ages of 1 and 3
- £17 every 4 weeks for transitionally protected children between the ages of 2 and 4

## Eligibility

To be eligible to qualify for Best Start Grant applicants must live in Scotland. Applicants over 18 must be getting at least one of: Child Tax Credit, Universal Credit, Income Support, Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income-based, Jobseekers Allowance or Income-related Employment and Support Allowance. Applicants under 18 do not need to be getting any qualifying benefits. This also applies to some applicants aged 18 to 19 going to school or college for at least 12 hours a week.

Applications can be made by the main person who is responsible for the child, or their partner. This includes: the child's birth mother; her partner; her parent or carer if she is dependent on them (Pregnancy and Baby Payment only); single fathers; or people who have started looking after, and are responsible for, the child e.g. kinship carers. Further details about the benefits and legal orders that identify the main people responsible for looking after a child are given at <https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant/>. Claims cannot be made by foster or residential carers, because in these cases the local authority will already be paying for the items that the Best Start Grant is intended to help provide.

There is usually one payment for each child for each life event i.e. one payment for each child for each of the three different Best Start Grant payments. There is an exception if responsibility for the child changes within the application window i.e. the child moves to live with a different carer (kinship carer/adoptive parent) who now meets the responsibility test. In this case there can be one further payment.

## Application and decision making process

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

There is a single application form for Best Start Grant that covers the Pregnancy and Baby, Early Learning and School Age Payments and Best Start Foods. Rather than indicating what they wish to apply for on the form, applicants provide details about themselves, their partner, all dependent children, and any details about their pregnancy and expected children. When the application is processed, Social Security Scotland determines which elements of Best Start Grant the client is eligible to receive, and makes a single payment to the client to cover all of these elements.

Social Security Scotland processes each application received and makes a decision whether to approve or deny the application. An application will be denied if the client is not eligible to receive any of the Best Start Grant payments. An application will be authorised if the client is eligible to receive at least one of the Best Start Grant payments. Applicants may also withdraw their application before a decision is made.

Social Security Scotland aims to process the application and make a decision, and provide a decision letter to the applicant, within ten days of receiving an application. Applications may take longer to process if copies of documents need to be requested and received from clients. This is more likely for Pregnancy and Baby Payments, where copies of maternity or birth certificates are often required. Once an application is decided, Social Security Scotland then aims to provide payment within five working days of applicants receiving their decision letter.

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

## **Redeterminations and appeals**

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

## **About the data**

### **How the data is collected**

The data in this publication is sourced from Social Security Scotland's case management system. The system holds information on all applications received,

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

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

To take into account backdating and delays between applications being authorised and payments being made, the data cut from 1 August has been used to produce statistics on applications received and decisions made up to 11.59pm on 30 June 2019. Later data cuts may include additional retrospective changes to application details, including corrections to details in the case management system, and changes that have resulted from redeterminations and appeals.

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

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

## **Revisions**

Each updated publication of Best Start Grant figures will include revisions of numbers of applications received, processed, processing times and payment values going back to December 2018. This is because each time figures are published they will be based from a new 100% data cut from the case management system, which can include retrospective changes to data going back to December 2018 as described in the [How the data is collected](#) section. More recent months tend to be subject to a greater degree of revision than more distant ones.

## **Quality assurance**

The data used to produce the official statistics are the same as the data extracted from the case management system on a daily basis that is used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland. As such, the data is checked

daily for consistency with previous extracts (i.e. do applications, decisions and payments figures increase as expected over time, and are they in proportion to each other) and compared to other sources of information such as the number of payment instructions reported by the finance team.

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

- Check for duplicate and missing application references
- Checking application dates, processing times and payment times are within the expected ranges
- Checking payment date is present where a payment value is present
- Checking applicant and child dates of birth are within the expected ranges – see [Age and Gender](#) section
- Checking postcodes that do not match to local authorities – see [Geography](#) section
- Checking payment values match to expected number of children – see [First and Subsequent birth](#) section

Once the data is aggregated and copied into the publication and supporting Excel tables, the final statistics are quality assured by a different member of the statistics team. The final documents are checked by the lead statistician.

## Data Quality

### *Rounding and disclosure control*

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

### *Missing and duplicate applications*

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

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

Clients can make multiple applications for different components of Best Start Grant over time, or may make repeated applications for the same component, for example if their first application is denied. This means that there can be several applications in the data cut from the same client. For this publication we have retained all these applications.

#### *Unverified information from application form*

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

#### *Delay between application authorised and payment*

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

In the previous publication we reported on the value of payments that had successfully reached clients by the end of the month. We are now reporting on the value of payments that had been issued by the end of each month. This should provide a more accurate estimate because it is not based on the assumption that payments reach clients four days after a decision is made.

#### *Applications by payment type*

There is one application form covering all types of Best Start Grant payment. Clients do not need to select which type of payment they wish to apply for. Therefore statistics on number of applications by Best Start Grant payment type have been derived from the type of information and ages of children included in applications for Best Start Grant. In the current publication, applications are classed as follows:

Application form details			Payment type combination	Component(s) included in the application
Baby details	Dependent children of eligible age for Early Learning Payment	Dependent children of eligible age for School Age Payment		
✓	✗	✗	Pregnancy and Baby Payment only	Pregnancy and Baby Payment
✗	✓	✗	Early Learning Payment only	Early Learning Payment
✗	✗	✓	School Age Payment only	School Age Payment
✗	✓	✓	Multiple payments	Early Learning Payment; School Age payment
✓	✓	✗	Multiple payments	Pregnancy and Baby Payment; Early Learning Payment
✓	✗	✓	Multiple payments	Pregnancy and Baby Payment; School Age Payment
✗	✗	✗	Unknown – assumed to be for either Early Learning Payment or School Age Payment	n/a

Applications where the baby details section of the application form had not been completed are assumed to have been applications for Early Learning or School Age Payment. If there are no children of eligible age for either of these payments the application is categorised as 'Unknown'. The authorisation rate for unknown applications is therefore very low because the application did not include a child of eligible age. Correspondingly, the authorisation rates for Early Learning Payment only and School Age Payment only are high (89% and 94% respectively) because all applications in these categories did include a child of eligible age. Combining these three categories of application gives an authorisation rate that is more likely to be representative of applications for Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment (see Table 2).

Multiple applications may be more likely to be authorised than applications for only one payment type, because at least one child is of eligible age for a

payment, and also because a multiple application will be classed as 'authorised' even if only one of the payment types applied for was successful.

Information about the type of payment which clients received does not have to be derived from application or payment details, as the case management records the value of payments received by each client by payment type.

### *Application channel*

It is not possible to break down applications into paper and phone before May 2019. Application channel is manually entered into the case management system for applications taken by phone or paper. In a small number of cases it is known that application channel has been manually entered incorrectly. For these cases application channel has been classed as 'unknown'.

### *Age and gender*

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

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

### *Geography*

Applications are assigned to local authority and health board by postcode using a Scottish Government lookup file. For some applications, the postcode will not match to the lookup file. This can be because the postcode is not in a Scottish local authority, or because the postcode has been introduced too recently to appear on the lookup file, for example if a property is in a new development. For postcodes that could not be matched to a Scottish local authority or health board, the postcode area was used to check whether the postcode was in Scotland or elsewhere. Non-matching postcodes from Scottish border postcode areas (postcodes starting 'DG' and 'TD') were also checked individually and assigned to Scottish local authorities or health boards or as 'non-Scottish postcodes' manually.

Following these checks on postcodes, in this publication a small proportion of applications (405, 1%) were made by people with Scottish postcodes that could not be matched to a local authority or health board. A smaller proportion (155, less than 1%) did not include address information and therefore could not be matched to a local authority, health board or country [**Table 5 and Table 6**].



### *First and subsequent births*

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

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

In the first Best Start Grant statistics publication, we derived 'first births' and 'subsequent births' from payment information. However, this meant it was not possible to derive whether an application was for first or subsequent birth where the application had been denied, withdrawn, authorised but not yet paid, or where an application remained pending. In this publication we have improved the method for deriving first and subsequent births to use the information about clients' dependent children from application forms. Where an application for Pregnancy and Baby payment included baby details, but no details of other dependent children, we have classed an application as being for a first birth. Where an application for Pregnancy and Baby payment included baby details, and also details of other dependent children, we have classed an application as a subsequent birth.

### *Effect of redeterminations*

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

### *Processing time*

Processing time is the number of days from the application being received to a decision being made or the application being withdrawn. It includes time spent

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

Processing times data does not include any applications that are flagged as having had a redetermination request because the decision date for these applications will represent the redetermination decision date, which can be some time after the original decision date. The number of applications in the processing times table is therefore lower than the number of applications shown as processed or decided in other tables. Redeterminations are a small proportion of the total applications processed, and the average processing times for applications that go on to redetermination or appeal compared to other applications should not differ from all other applications. Therefore, removal of these should not impact the average processing times shown in the table.

Processing time is only calculated for applications that were decided within the period being reported on. Data is presented by the month of decision rather than month the application was received. All decisions made in December 2018 were made within 15 working days, because there were only 14 working days from launch of Best Start Grant on 10 December until the end of the month, meaning that any decisions made in December 2018 were made within 15 working days.

## **Future developments**

More detailed information on redeterminations and appeals will be available for each application directly from the case management system in future updates to the statistics when this becomes available.

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

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

DWP publish information about Sure Start Maternity Grant in the Social Fund annual report 2017 to 2018 at Great Britain level only:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-fund-annual-report-2017-to-2018>. DWP also publishes annual expenditure for Sure Start Maternity Grants at Great Britain level in their Benefit expenditure and caseload tables:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-expenditure-tables>.

Information about Sure Start Maternity Grants in Scotland in 2017/18 was also published as part of correspondence between DWP and Scottish Fiscal Commission:

<http://www.fiscalcommission.scot/about-us/correspondence/correspondence-response-from-dwp-on-social-fund-figures-for-scotland-4-september-2018/>

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

- Applicants can only apply for Sure Start Maternity Grant for their first child. No payments are made for subsequent children (with some exceptions for multiple births) whereas Pregnancy and Baby Payment is applicable for first children and subsequent children.
- Sure Start Maternity Grant payments are £500 for the first child, whereas Pregnancy and Baby Payments are £600 for the first child, £300 for subsequent children and £300 for multiple births.
- The Sure Start Maternity Grant application window is from 11 weeks before due date to 6 months after birth, whereas Pregnancy and Baby Payment is from 24th week of pregnancy to 6 months after birth.
- Additionally, in 2018/19 it is possible that some applicants delayed applying for Sure Start Maternity Grant because they were aware that they could wait for the launch of Pregnancy and Baby Payments on 10 December. This would affect numbers of people applying for both Sure Start Maternity Grant and Pregnancy and Baby Payments in Scotland.

DWP does not have an equivalent of Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment.

## **Related Social Security Scotland publications**

Future research and statistics publications will be available through the Social Security Scotland 'Reporting' webpage at:

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/what-we-do/reporting>.

Statistics on Best Start Grant feedback (complaints, compliments and suggestions) are published at:

<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland>.

## **An Official Statistics publication for Scotland**

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

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Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,

e-mail: [statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through [statistics.gov.scot](http://statistics.gov.scot)

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

[//www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland](http://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland)

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

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

### **Complaints and suggestions**

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail [statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

If you would like to be consulted about statistical collections or receive notification of publications, please register your interest at [www.gov.scot/scotstat](http://www.gov.scot/scotstat)

Details of forthcoming publications can be found at [www.gov.scot/statistics](http://www.gov.scot/statistics)

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