



## Social Security Scotland statistics

# Social Security Scotland feedback statistics to 30 September 2019

### Frequency of publications

The next publication, covering up to end December 2019 will be released in March 2020.

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

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

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

# Introduction

This report covers feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced on 4 September 2018 until 30 September 2019. It includes statistics about feedback for particular benefits as well as feedback that was not benefit specific. The first Carer's Allowance Supplement payments were delivered in September 2019, followed by Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment (10 December 2018), Early Learning Payment (29 April 2019), School Age Payment (3 June 2019), Best Start Foods (12 August 2019) and Funeral Support Payment (16 September 2019). At the time of publication, Social Security Scotland was also delivering Young Carer Grant, however this launched after the reporting period for this publication, on 21 October 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>.

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

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/experimental-statistics-official-statistics-in-development/>

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# Main findings

## Complaints

- In total 170 complaints were received by 30 September 2019, including 70 for Carer's Allowance Supplement and 100 for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods [Table 1]. This compares to 91,550 carers receiving Carer's Allowance Supplement payments by 30 June<sup>4</sup> and 96,535 Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods applications made by 30 September 2019<sup>5</sup>.
- Overall, 15% of complaints reached stage 2 (either progressing from stage 1 to stage 2, or being received at stage 2 – the [background section](#) explains the difference between stage 1 and 2 complaints) [Table 1]. A higher proportion of Carer's Allowance Supplement complaints reached stage 2 (25%) than for Best Start Grant or Best Start Foods (8%) [Chart 1]. This difference may be due to clients using complaints in different ways for the two benefits. While Best Start Grant has a redeterminations and appeals process, for Carer's Allowance Supplement there is no statutory right to appeal. This could lead clients to make complaints about Carer's Allowance Supplement as a way of having their cases looked at again.
- No cases were referred to Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

**Table 1: Complaints by benefit and stage**

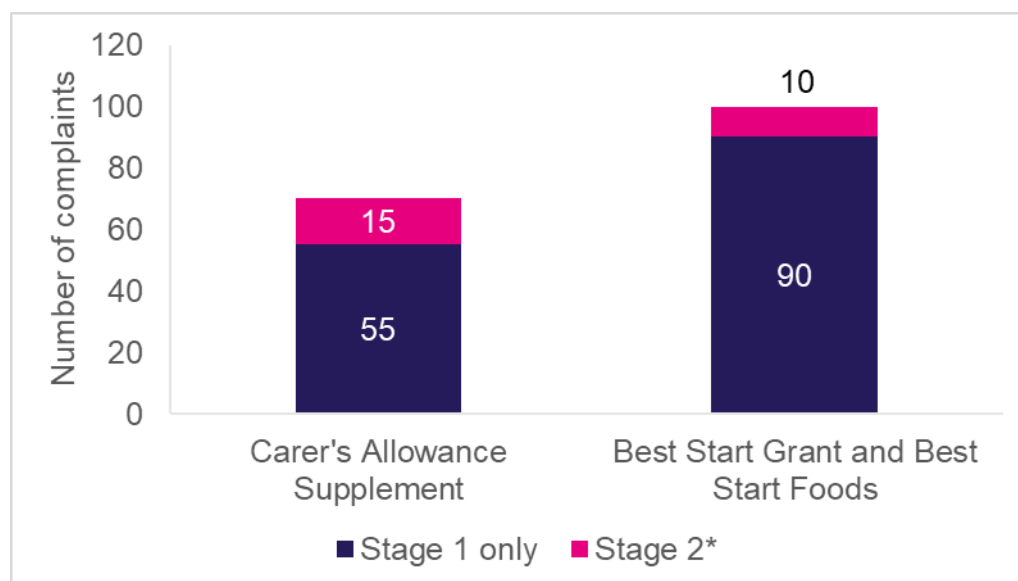
Benefit	Total	% of all benefits	Stage 1	Stage 2	% progressed to Stage 2
Carer's Allowance Supplement	70	40%	70	15	25%
Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	100	59%	100	10	8%
Funeral Support Payment	0	*	0	0	*
Not benefit specific	0	*	0	0	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15%</b>

\*suppressed for disclosure control. The majority of stage 2 complaints were initially received at stage 1 and later progressed to stage 2. A small number of Best Start Grant complaints went straight to stage 2. These are counted in the stage 2 and Total columns but not the stage 1 column. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

<sup>4</sup> Carer's Allowance at February 2019 and Carer's Allowance Supplement, April 2019 eligibility date <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland/CASApr2019>. The next Carer's Allowance Supplement payments will be made from mid-December 2019: <https://news.gov.scot/news/carers-to-receive-extra-cash-by-christmas>.

<sup>5</sup> Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods: high level statistics to 30 September 2019 <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/SocialSecurityforScotland/BSGBSFSeptember2019>

**Chart 1: Complaints by benefit and stage**



\*stage 2 figures for BSG include a small number of complaints that went straight to stage 2, as well as complaints progressing from stage 1 to stage 2. Figures do not sum to those in Table 1 due to rounding. A small number of complaints related to Funeral Support Payment or were not benefit specific - these have been omitted from the chart.

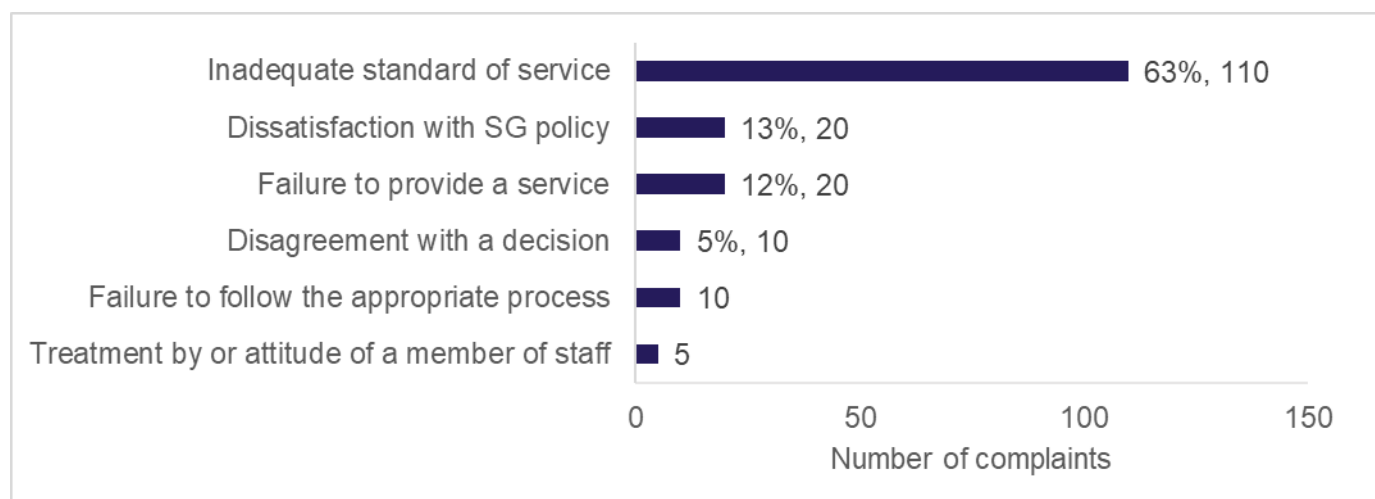
- The most common reason for complaints was 'Inadequate standard of service' (110, 63%), followed by 'Dissatisfaction with SG policy' (20, 13%), and 'Failure to provide a service' (20, 12%) [Table 2, Chart 2]. The [background section](#) gives definitions for the different outcomes.

**Table 2: Complaints by reason**

Reason	Total	%
Inadequate standard of service	110	63%
Dissatisfaction with SG policy	20	13%
Failure to provide a service	20	12%
Disagreement with a decision	10	5%
Failure to follow the appropriate process	10	*
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	5	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* suppressed for disclosure control. Complaint reason is based on the first reason given for a complaint when it was received. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

**Chart 2: Complaints by reason**



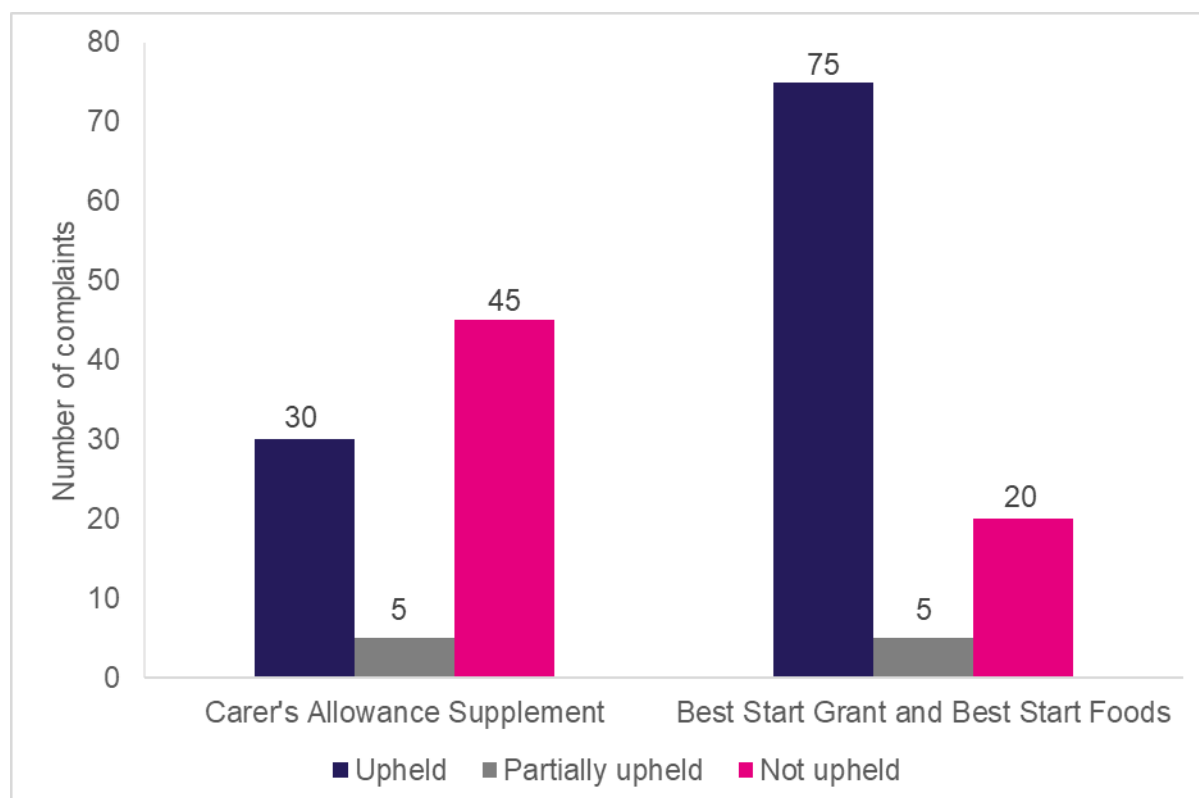
- By 30 September 2019, of the 170 complaints received around five were outstanding and did not have an outcome.
- For stage 1, the median average processing time was one working day (meaning that on average complaints were decided on the next working day after they were received). A small number of stage 1 complaints were not dealt with within the initial five working day timescale, in which case an extension was agreed with the client and the case was dealt with within this extended timescale. For stage 2, the median average processing time was 17 working days. All stage 2 complaints were dealt with within the appropriate timescales as explained in the [background section](#).
- In total, over all benefits and both stages, 110 complaints were upheld (58%), 65 were not upheld (35%), and 15 were partially upheld (7%). For Carer's Allowance Supplement, the majority of complaints were not upheld (55%), while for Best Start Grant the majority were upheld (75%) **[Table 3, Chart 3]**. Complaint outcomes are counted separately for stage 1 and 2 – a complaint that progressed from stage 1 to stage 2 will have two outcomes.

**Table 3: Complaints by outcome**

Outcome	All	Carer's Allowance Supplement (CAS)	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods (BSG/BSF)	Not benefit specific	% all benefits	% CAS	% BSG/BSF	% Not benefit specific
Upheld	110	30	75	0	58%	36%	75%	*
Partially upheld	15	5	5	0	7%	8%	7%	*
Not upheld	65	45	20	0	35%	55%	18%	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>*</b>

\*suppressed for disclosure control. Around five complaints were outstanding as of 30 September 2019, and therefore are not counted in this table. Additionally a small number of complaints were withdrawn. Outcomes for stage 1 and stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

**Chart 3: Complaints by outcome**



Outcomes for stage 1 and stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. Around five complaints were outstanding as of 30 June 2019, some complaints were withdrawn, and a small number were not benefit specific – these have not been shown in the chart. Additionally a small number of complaints were withdrawn. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

## Compliments

- A total of 115 compliments were received by 30 September 2019, including 60 (54%) for Carer's Allowance Supplement, 45 (38%) for Best Start Grant, and five for Funeral Support Payment) [Table 4].
- The most common reason for compliments was 'Thank you for being so helpful' (60, 51%), followed by 'Thank you for getting it right (30, 27%) [Table 5, Chart 4].

**Table 4: Compliments by benefit**

	All Benefits	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	Funeral Support Payment	Not benefit specific
Number	115	60	45	5	0
%	100%	54%	38%	*	*

\* suppressed for disclosure control  
 Figures do not sum due to rounding.

**Table 5: Compliments by reason**

Reason	Number	%
Thank You for Being so Helpful	60	51%
Thank You for Getting it Right	30	27%
I Found the Process Simple and Straightforward	10	9%
Thank You for Your Prompt Action	5	6%
Thank You for Your Courtesy	5	*
Standard of Facilities	5	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* suppressed for disclosure control

**Chart 4: Compliments by reason**



## Suggestions

- In total 45 suggestions were received, mostly on 'Improving information available' (25 suggestions, 63%) **[Table 7]**.
- There were 25 suggestions about Best Start Grant (60%), ten about Carer's Allowance Supplement (19%) and ten that were not specific to a benefit **[Table 6]**.



**Table 6: Suggestions by benefit**

	All Benefits	Carer's Allowance Supplement	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	Funeral Support Payment	Not benefit specific
Number	45	10	25	0	10
%	100%	19%	60%	*	*

\* suppressed for disclosure control

**Table 7: Suggestions by reason**

Reason	Number	%
Improving information available	25	63%
Client Experience	5	16%
Systems and/or Accessibility of services	5	9%
Other*	5	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Other includes 'Timescales' and 'Administration process'. Figures do not sum due to rounding.

# Background to Feedback

Social Security Scotland is the executive agency of Scottish Government which is responsible for delivering social security benefits for Scotland. Social Security Scotland was introduced on 4 September 2018 and began making Carer's Allowance Supplement payments in September. Following this, Social Security Scotland began taking applications for Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby payment on 10 December 2018, followed by Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment on 29 April 2019, School Age Payment on 3 June 2019, Best Start Foods on 12 August 2019, Funeral Support Payment on 16 September 2019 and Young Carer's Grant on 21 October 2019.

Feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) has been received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced in September 2018. Feedback can be about a particular benefit or not specific to a benefit.

## Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints

Complaints fall under the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and their complaints handling procedure. This sets out a two stage internal complaints process. Frontline resolution – stage 1, allows 5 working days to respond to the client's complaint. Where a client remains unhappy with this response they can proceed to investigation – stage 2, which allows 20 working days to investigate and provide a response. If the client still remains unhappy then they can choose to take their complaint to the SPSO.

A small number of complaints went straight to investigation – stage 2. Not all complaints are suitable for frontline resolution and not all complaints will be satisfactorily resolved at that stage. Complaints handled at the investigation stage of the complaints handling procedure are typically complex or require a detailed examination. Examples of this include:

- the client/appointee refuses to take part in frontline resolution
- the issues raised are complex and require detailed investigation
- the complaint relates to serious, high-risk, or high-profile issues

## Complaint reasons

Complaint reasons are categorised by Social Security Scotland staff based on the information received from clients. These categories are:

- Failure to provide a service - where a service was not delivered, for example, where an application was not processed or an online application form was unavailable.
- Inadequate standard of service – where a client has been provided with a service that is below standard.
- Failure to follow process – where published timescales were not met.

- Disagreement with a decision.
- Dissatisfaction with SG policy.
- Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff.

## **Complaint outcomes**

Possible outcomes for complaints are:

- Upheld – the client’s complaint has been upheld, as it meets the terms in the definition of a complaint.
- Not upheld – the client’s complaint was not upheld because it did not meet the terms in the definition of a complaint.
- Partially upheld – if the client makes a complaint raising more than one issue, one part (or parts) of the complaint may meet the terms in the definition of a complaint, and other(s) do not. In this case the complaint would be partially upheld.

In this publication complaint outcomes are counted separately for stage 1 and stage 2. A complaint that progressed from stage 1 to stage 2 will have two outcomes.

## **Compliments and suggestions**

Compliments and suggestions should be recorded within five working days. Suggestions are investigated and the outcome is provided directly to the client.

# About the data

## How the data is collected

The data in this publication is primarily sourced from Social Security Scotland's case management system. The system holds information on all feedback received, and includes type of feedback (complaint, compliment, suggestion), date received, channel by which feedback was received (e-mail, telephone, letter), benefit (Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant, or no specific benefit), reason for feedback (chosen from defined lists of possible categories), and where applicable, the date that feedback was actioned and the outcome of any decisions (again selected from a defined list of possible outcomes).

The information is held across multiple tables within the system. 100% extracts of administrative data are taken from this system every month for internal reporting purposes. Data cuts combine information from the different tables in the system into one monthly extract which includes details of all feedback made since September 2018. The data cut used to produce statistics for this publication was taken on 31 October 2019.

## Quality assurance

The data used to produce the figures are the same as the data extracted from the case management system on a monthly basis that is used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland. As such, the data is checked monthly for consistency with previous extracts (for example, do numbers of complaints, compliments, and suggestions received increase as expected over time). Summary figures for number of complaints, compliments, and suggestions have been compared to equivalent summary figures produced from clerical records, and discrepancies investigated.

Additional quality assurance and cleaning has been carried out on specific variables:

- The dataset has been checked for duplicate records based on Case ID number.
- Variables have been checked for missing information.
- Feedback received dates and decisions dates have been checked to see whether they fall within expected ranges (e.g. after September 2018) and are consistent with those produced by clerical records.
- For complaints, the benefit that a complaint refers to and reason for the complaint have been checked for consistency between stage 1 and stage 2.

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

### *Comparison to clerical data*

Data from the case management system has been compared to clerical records. Discrepancies have been investigated with the Client Experience team, and errors in case management system data have been manually fixed to match the clerical record where necessary. Discrepancies included:

- A small number of items of feedback received had a date before September 2018, or had the date of feedback being recorded rather than date received. There were also errors in date feedback was received and decisions were made on the case management system due to migration of feedback information onto the case management system during the first months following the launch of Carer's Allowance Supplement. Dates have been amended back to the original dates received and decided with reference to the clerical records.
- Some feedback on the case management system is recorded as being not benefit specific. While this is true in some cases, in others this occurs where benefit information is missing. Missing benefit information has been completed with reference to clerical records.
- In a small number of cases the stage 1 and stage 2 of one complaint have been recorded as two separate complaints on the case management system. These have been merged back into one complaint where necessary.
- The case management system includes a small number of complaints where the outcome is recorded as 'Deleted'. In some cases these are complaints that have been created in error, and these have been removed from the dataset used to produce the figures in this publication. In others cases the outcome of the complaint has been amended from 'Deleted' to the correct outcome of the complaint.

### *Rounding and disclosure control*

Feedback numbers have been rounded to the nearest five for disclosure control. Figures may not sum due to rounding. Percentages are based on actual figures and rounded to the nearest percent. Some percentages have been suppressed to prevent back-calculation of small numbers.

### *Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints*

For complaint benefit and reason, we have used the first recorded benefit or reason with a complaint. For complaint outcomes, if an application had both a stage 1 and stage 2 complaint outcome, we have counted this as two separate outcomes – a complaint that progressed from stage 1 to stage 2 will have two outcomes.

Complaints that went straight to stage 2 are included in total complaints and stage 2 complaints figures, and used to calculate the percentage of complaints reaching stage 2.

### *Processing time*

Processing time is the number of days from the application being received to a decision being made or the application being withdrawn. It is calculated in working days. Weekends and public holidays are excluded. The time of day that an application was received or processed is not taken into account. Processing times are calculated separately for each complaint stage.

In this version of the publication we have reduced the number of days that are counted as public holidays, to account for feedback being processed at multiple sites with different holiday dates. This may have increased the processing times for some complaints that have already been reported on from earlier quarters.

### **Comparisons with DWP complaints statistics**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has a different feedback process to Social Security Scotland, and as such, DWP complaints, compliments and suggestions statistics are not directly comparable to these statistics.

Further information about complaints at DWP and links to their latest statistics are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/complaints-about-the-department-for-work-and-pensions>.

### **Related Social Security Scotland publications**

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

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

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.

### **Correspondence and enquiries**

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Amelia Brereton

Social Security Statistics

Telephone: 0131 244 5464

e-mail: [MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot](mailto:MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot)

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

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**

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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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