

## Social Security Scotland statistics

# Social Security Scotland feedback statistics to 31 March 2023

This document and the corresponding publication tables were revised on 31 August 2023 to correct some figures. Further information on the corrections made can be found on page 2.

## Key Figures

In 2022/23, covering April 2022 to March 2023:

- 1,785 Stage 1 complaints were received.
- 355 Stage 2 complaints were received.
- 185 compliments were received.
- 135 suggestions were received.

## Frequency of publications

The next publication will cover up to the end of September 2023 and will be released in December 2023.

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>.

<sup>1</sup> The Code of Practice for Statistics is available on the [UK Statistics Authority website](#).

<sup>2</sup> The forthcoming publication timetable is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

# Introduction

This report covers feedback (complaints, compliments, and suggestions) received by Social Security Scotland since it was introduced on 4 September 2018, until 31 March 2023. It includes statistics for specific benefits as well as feedback that was not benefit specific. In this publication, information relating to the reporting year 2022/23 updates the information from the previous publication which reported only on the first half of the 2022/23 financial year (from April 2022 to September 2022).

The benefits included within the time period covered by the report are: Carer's Allowance Supplement, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Funeral Support Payment, Young Carer Grant, Job Start Payment, Child Winter Heating Assistance, Scottish Child Payment, Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Winter Heating Payment.

All tables and charts relating to this publication can be found at the [Social Security Scotland](#) website. This document and the corresponding publication tables were revised on 31 August 2023 to correct some identified errors. The main corrections relate to the compliments section of this document where all-time figures had been originally presented, the breakdown and chart of compliments by benefit on page 15 and percentages for the most common reasons for compliments on page 16. These have now been updated to correctly reflect 2022/23 financial year only. Minor corrections have also been made to the total number of Stage 1 complaint outcomes for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods on page 11, charts of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in 2022/23 on pages 13 and 14, the chart of compliments by reason in 2022/23 on page 16 and the chart of suggestions by reason in 2022/23 on page 17. Titles have also been added to excerpts from tables. All other statistics remain unchanged and no headline messages were affected.

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 the [Office for Statistics Regulation website](#).

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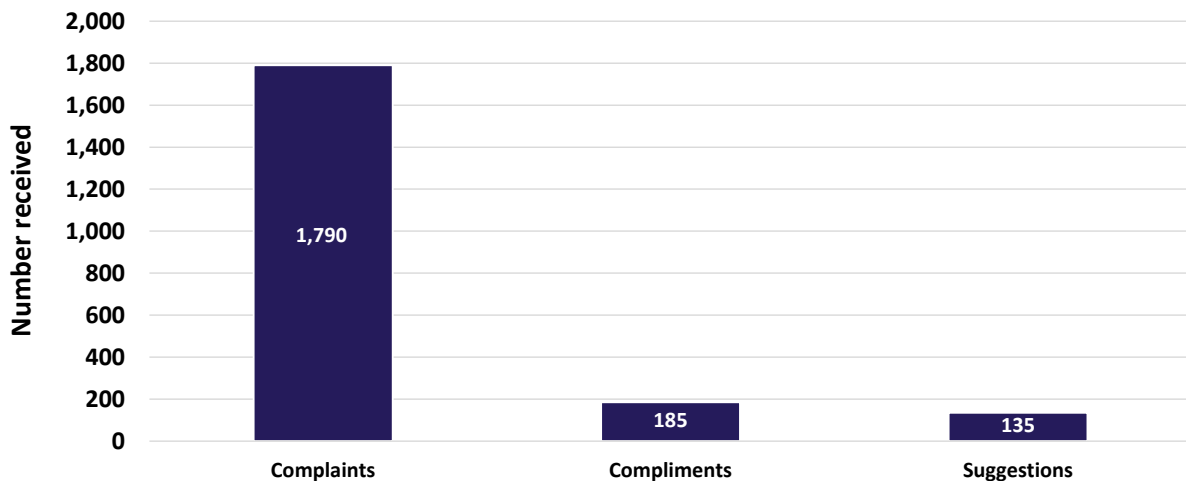
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# Main findings

In 2022/23, a total of 1,790 complaints, 185 compliments and 135 suggestions were received. The most common type of feedback received was complaints, in line with previous years [Chart 1(i)].

The increase in feedback in 2022/23 coincided with the continued expansion of services provided by Social Security Scotland. The year 2022/23 was the first full reporting year following the launch of Child Disability Payment nationally in November 2021. Adult Disability Payment launched from March 2022 as phased pilot before operating nationally from August 2022. Scottish Child Payment, which was initially introduced for low-income families with children aged under six, was extended to eligible low-income families with children aged under 16 on 14 November 2022. The new Winter Heating Payment was launched in February 2023.

**Chart 1(i): Feedback in 2022/23**



Complaints include all Stage 1 complaints, plus complaints received at Stage 2.

# Complaints

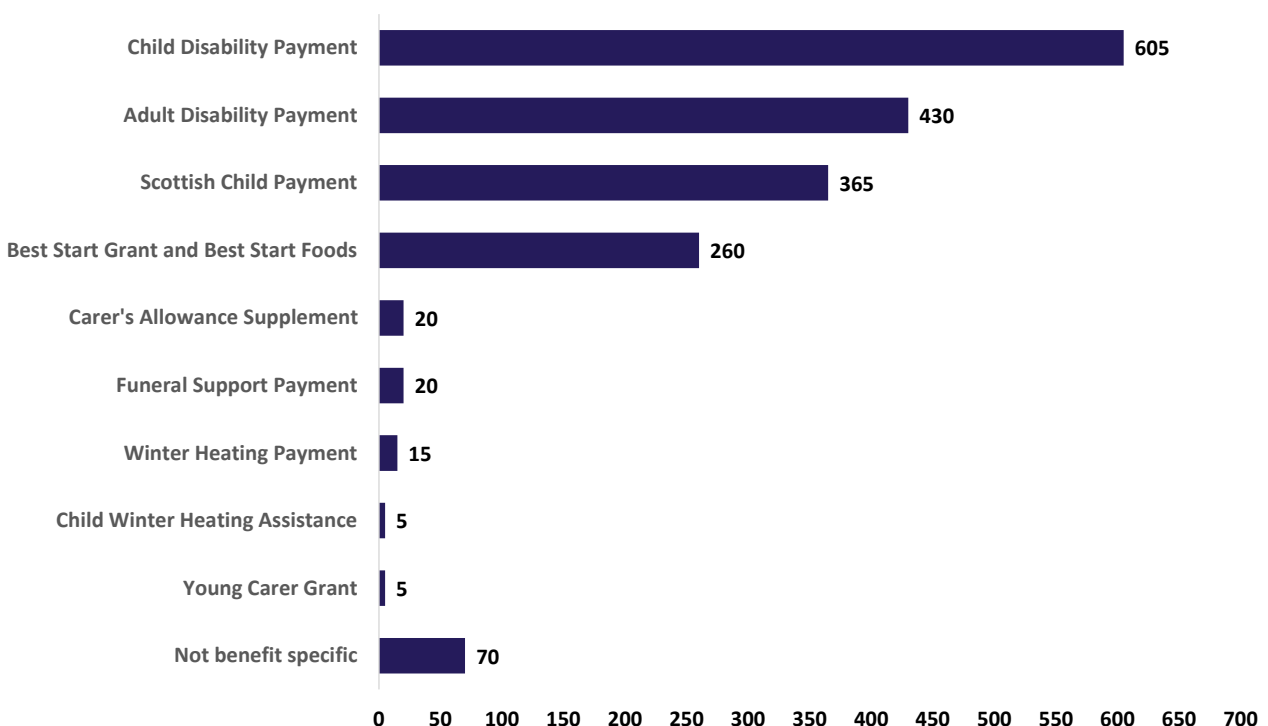
## Complaints received in 2022/23

Social Security Scotland received 1,790 complaints in 2022/23. The complaints received in the period include **[Table 1, Chart 2]**:

- 605 for Child Disability Payment
- 430 for Adult Disability Payment
- 365 for Scottish Child Payment
- 260 for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods
- 135 for other benefits and non-benefit specific.

There were a small number of complaints for Job Start Payment received in 2022/23, which are not reported due to disclosure control. The [background section](#) gives the launch dates for each benefit.

**Chart 2: Complaints received by benefit in 2022/23**



Complaint numbers remain low compared to the number of people receiving payments or making applications. For example, there were 1,400 complaints received between Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Scottish Child Payment in 2022/23. In the same time period, 268,180 applications were received across these benefits. The [background section](#) gives a full list of benefit launches since 2018 with application or payment numbers and sources.

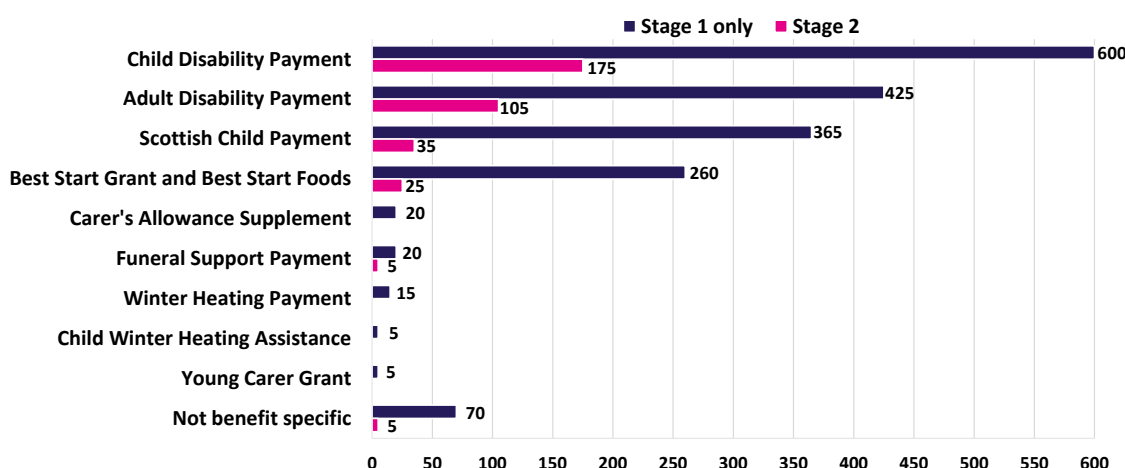
Complaints can come from people that did not make an application for a benefit, or did not receive a payment (for example, for Carer's Allowance Supplement where

there is no application process), therefore it is not possible to calculate a rate of complaints per applications or payments.

## Complaints reaching Stage 2

- In 2022/23, 20% of complaints reached Stage 2. This means either progressing from Stage 1 to Stage 2, or being received at Stage 2. This is higher than in 2021/22 when 16% of complaints reached Stage 2 **[Table 1]**. The [background section](#) explains the difference between Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints.
- In 2022/23, the highest number of complaints that have reached Stage 2 was for Child Disability Payment at 175, followed by Adult Disability Payment at 105 and Scottish Child Payment at 35 **[Table 1, Chart 3]**. This may relate to both Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment being more complex benefits in terms of both processing and decision making.
- No cases were referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) **[Table 1]**.

**Chart 3: Complaints by benefit and stage\* in 2022/23**



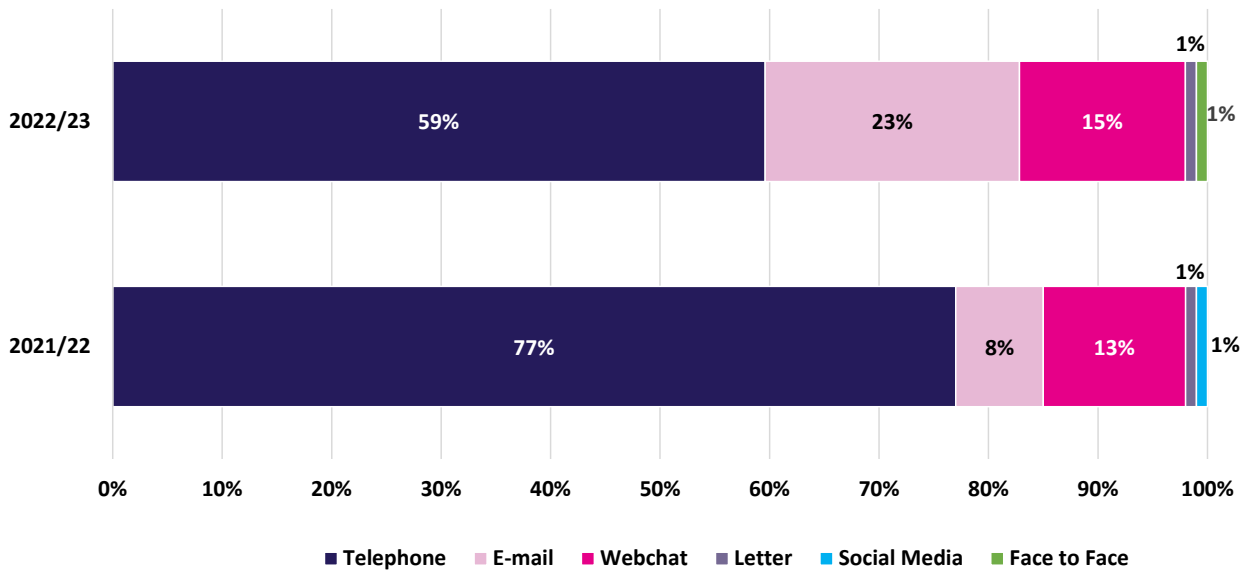
\*Stage 2 figures include a small number of complaints that went straight to Stage 2, as well as complaints progressing from Stage 1 to Stage 2. Figures may not sum to those in Table 1 due to rounding. Stage 2 complaint numbers for Winter Heating Payment, Child Winter Heating Assistance, Job Start Payment and Young Carer Grant are too small to display.

## Complaints channels

- In 2022/23, telephone remained the most common channel for complaints, although the percentage of complaints received this way decreased from 77% in 2021/22 to 59% **[Table 2, Chart 4(i)]**.
- The proportion of complaints received by web chat increased from 13% to 15% and by e-mail from 8% to 23% between 2021/22 and 2022/23 **[Table 2, Chart 4(i)]**.

- A small number of complaints were recorded via social media and letter. A small number were recorded face to face for the first time in 2022/23 [Table 2, Chart 4(i)].
- The [background section](#) gives further details on communication channels and when they have been introduced.

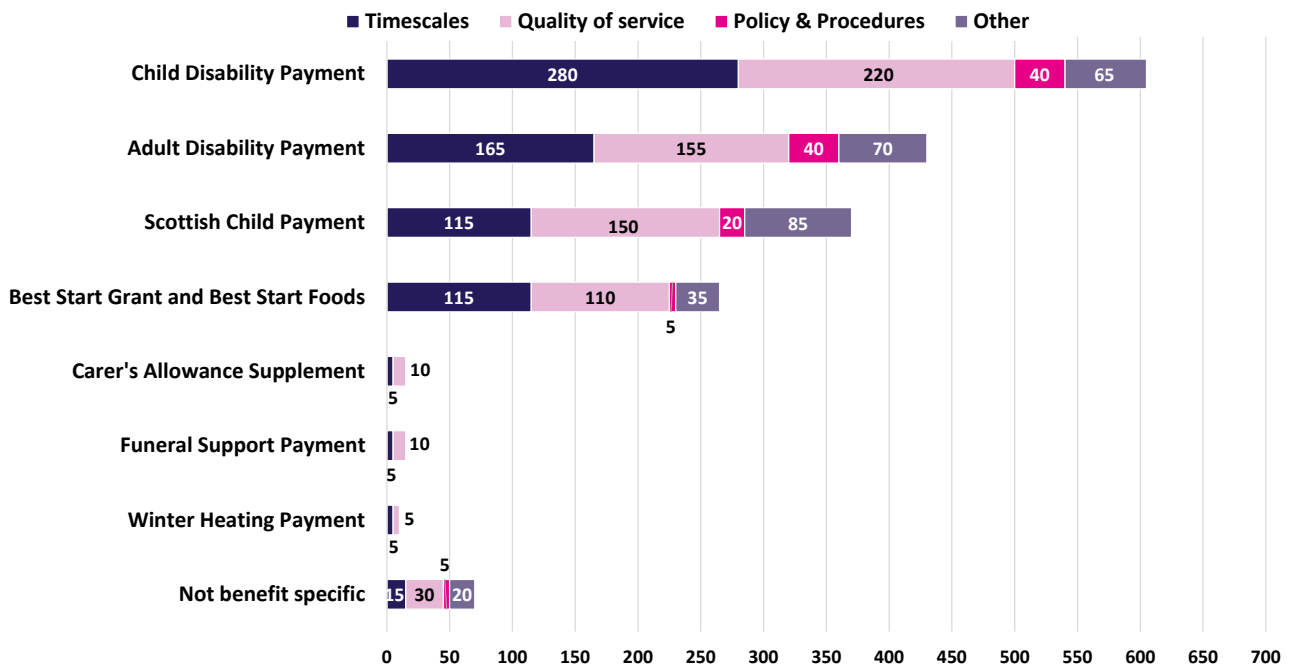
**Chart 4(i): Complaints by channel in 2021/22 and 2022/23**



## Reasons for complaints

- In 2022/23, the most common reasons for complaints were ‘Timescales’ and ‘Quality of service’ which accounted for 39% and 38% of complaints received, respectively. These were followed by ‘Policy and Procedures’ which accounted for 7%. Each other reason accounted for 5% or less **[Table 3]**. More information about complaint reasons is found in the [background section](#).
- For Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment and Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, the most common reason for complaints was ‘Timescales’. For Carer’s Allowance Supplement, Scottish Child Payment, Funeral Support Payment, Winter Heating Payment and complaints which are not benefit specific, the most common reason for complaints was ‘Quality of service’ **[Table 3, Chart 5]**.
- Overall, the proportion of complaints relating to ‘Quality of service’ decreased from 45% in 2021/22 to 38% in 2022/23. The proportion of complaints relating to ‘Timescales’ increased from 30% in 2021/22 to 39% in 2022/23 **[Table 3]**.

**Chart 5: Complaint reasons by benefit in 2022/23**



‘Other’ includes ‘Accessing services’, ‘Disagreement with a Decision’, ‘Treatment by Member of Staff’, and ‘Information Provided’. Totals may not sum due to rounding.



## Complaints processing times

- In 2022/23, 1,720 Stage 1 and 320 Stage 2 complaints had been closed, leaving 65 outstanding Stage 1 complaints and 30 outstanding Stage 2 complaints at the end of the reporting period **[Table 4]**.
- In 2022/23, the median processing time has been four working days for Stage 1 complaints, and 18 days for Stage 2 complaints. In total, 80% of Stage 1 complaints were closed within the initial five working day timescale, and 98% of Stage 2 complaints were closed within the initial 20 working day timescale **[Table 4]**. An extension of five working days can be added to these initial timescales by Social Security Scotland if it will benefit the client. More information can be found in the [background section](#).
- The proportion of Stage 1 complaints closed within the initial five working day timescale decreased from 88% in 2021/22 to 80% in 2022/23. The proportion closed within an agreed extended timescale decreased from 98% in 2021/22 to 83% in 2022/23 **[Table 4]**.
- The proportion of Stage 2 complaints closed within the initial 20 working day timescale increased from 94% in 2021/22 to 98% in 2022/23. The proportion closed within an agreed extended timescale stood at 99% in 2022/23 **[Table 4]**.

## Complaint outcomes

### Stage 1 complaint outcomes in 2022/23

Complaint outcomes are counted separately for Stage 1 and 2 – a complaint that progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 will have two outcomes. The breakdown of 1,720 Stage 1 complaints that had an outcome in 2022/23 is shown in the table below [Table 5].

Excerpt from table 5(iii): Complaints by outcome and year

Stage 1 outcome in 2022/23				
Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Resolved	Withdrawn
615	145	180	740	40

Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

The outcome 'resolved' was introduced from 12 April 2021, in result of which the proportion of other outcomes decreased compared to previous reporting years [Table 5].

### Stage 2 complaint outcomes in 2022/23

In 2022/23, of the 320 Stage 2 complaints that had an outcome in 2022/23 is shown in the table below [Table 5].

Excerpt from table 5(iii): Complaints by outcome and year

Stage 2 outcome for 2022/23				
Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Resolved	Withdrawn
230	35	30	15	10

Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A small number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

## Stage 1 complaint outcomes by benefit in 2022/23

- Of Stage 1 complaints made for Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment and complaints that were not benefit specific, the most common outcome was 'resolved' [Table 5].
- The excerpt below from Table 5(i) summarises the outcomes of Stage 1 complaints completed in 2022/23 by benefit for the five most numerous groups.

Excerpt from table 5(i): Complaints by benefit and outcome in 2022/23

Stage 1 complaint outcome	Benefit				
	Child Disability Payment	Adult Disability Payment	Scottish Child Payment	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	Not benefit specific
Total	585	405	350	255	70
Upheld	195	145	130	105	25
Partially upheld	60	40	30	10	5
Not upheld	75	40	35	20	5
Resolved	245	165	150	120	35
Withdrawn	10	10	10	5	0

Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

## Stage 2 complaint outcomes by benefit in 2022/23

- The majority of Stage 2 complaints have been upheld for all benefits overall, with 71% having this outcome. For Child Disability Payment, 75% of Stage 2 complaints have been upheld and for Adult Disability Payment, 69% of Stage 2 complaints have been upheld [Table 5].
- The excerpt below from Table 5(i) summarises the outcomes of Stage 2 complaints completed in 2022/23 by benefit for the five most numerous groups.

### Excerpt from table 5(i): Complaints by benefit and outcome in 2022/23

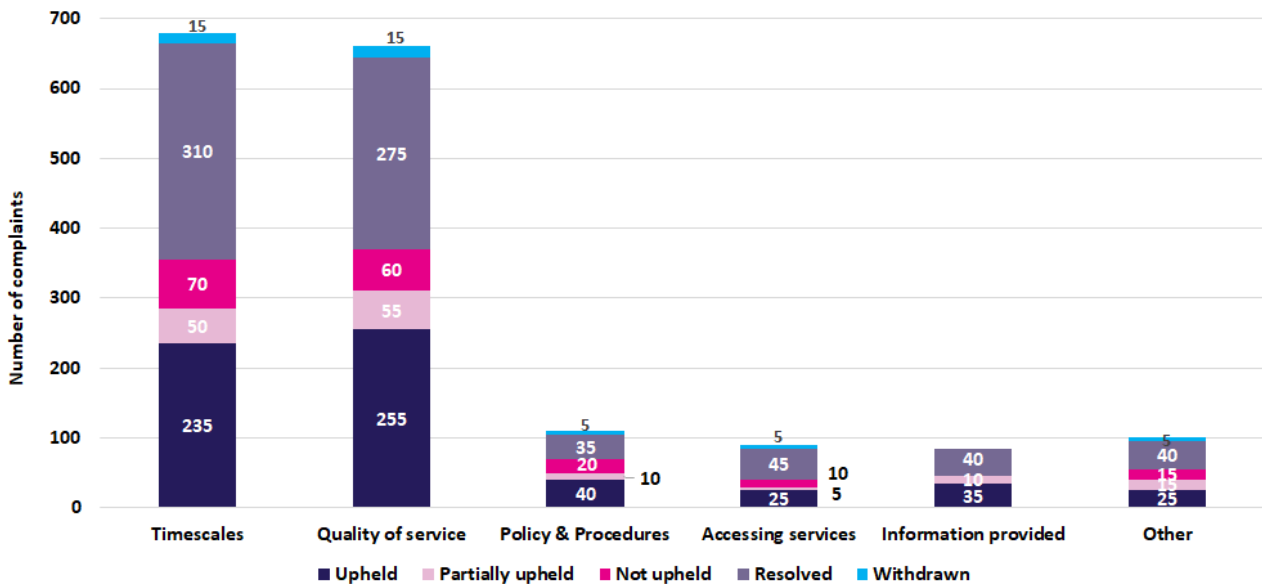
Stage 2 complaint outcome	Benefit				
	Child Disability Payment	Adult Disability Payment	Scottish Child Payment	Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods	Not benefit specific
Total	155	85	35	25	15
Upheld	115	55	25	15	10
Partially upheld	10	10	5	5	[c]
Not upheld	15	10	5	5	[c]
Resolved	5	[c]	5	5	[c]
Withdrawn	5	[c]	[c]	0	0

Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding. [c] indicates figures suppressed for disclosure control.

## Stage 1 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in 2022/23

- For Stage 1 complaints, the highest proportion which were upheld was for those about 'Information provided' with 40%, followed by 'Quality of service' and 'Policy & Procedures' with 38%, 'Timescales' with 34% upheld, 'Other' with 32% upheld and 'Accessing Services' with 30% upheld [Chart 6(i)].
- For Stage 1 complaints, the highest proportion which were not upheld has been for those about 'Policy & Procedures' with 20% [Chart 6(i)].
- For Stage 1 complaints, the highest proportion which were resolved were for those about 'Accessing Services' with 49% and 'Timescales' with 46% [Chart 6(i)].

Chart 6(i): Stage 1 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in 2022/23

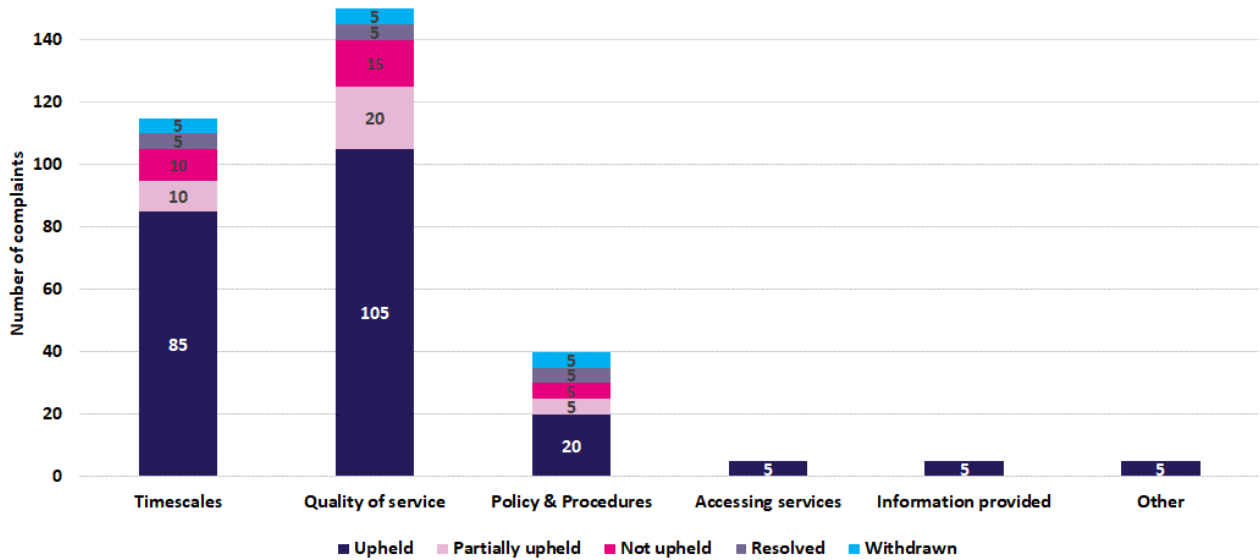


'Other' includes 'Disagreement with a Decision' and 'Treatment by Member of Staff'. Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

## Stage 2 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in 2022/23

- For Stage 2 complaints about 'Timescales', 75% have been upheld, while 73% of those about 'Quality of service' have been upheld [Chart 6(ii)].

Chart 6(ii) Stage 2 complaint outcomes by complaint reason in 2022/23



'Other' includes 'Disagreement with a Decision' and 'Treatment by Member of Staff'. Outcomes for Stage 1 and Stage 2 are counted separately, therefore the number of outcomes exceeds the number of complaints received. A number of complaints were outstanding at 31 March 2023 and are not included. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

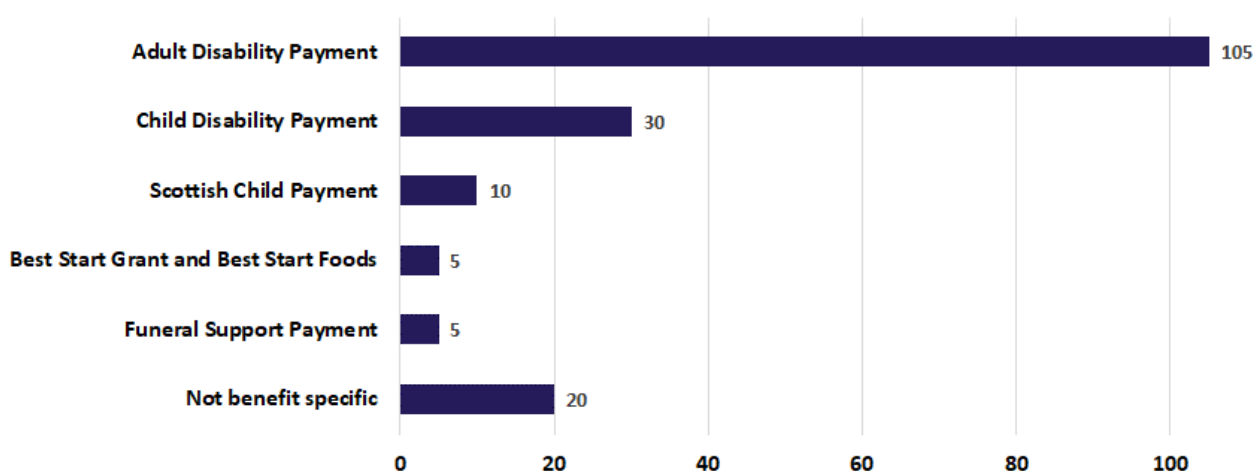
# Compliments

In 2022/23, a total of 185 compliments were received including:

- 105 for Adult Disability Payment
- 30 for Child Disability Payment
- 10 for Scottish Child Payment
- five for Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods
- five for Funeral Support Payment
- 20 not benefit specific compliments **[Table 6, Chart 7]**.

A small number of compliments for Child Winter Heating Assistance and Winter Heating Payment were suppressed for disclosure control.

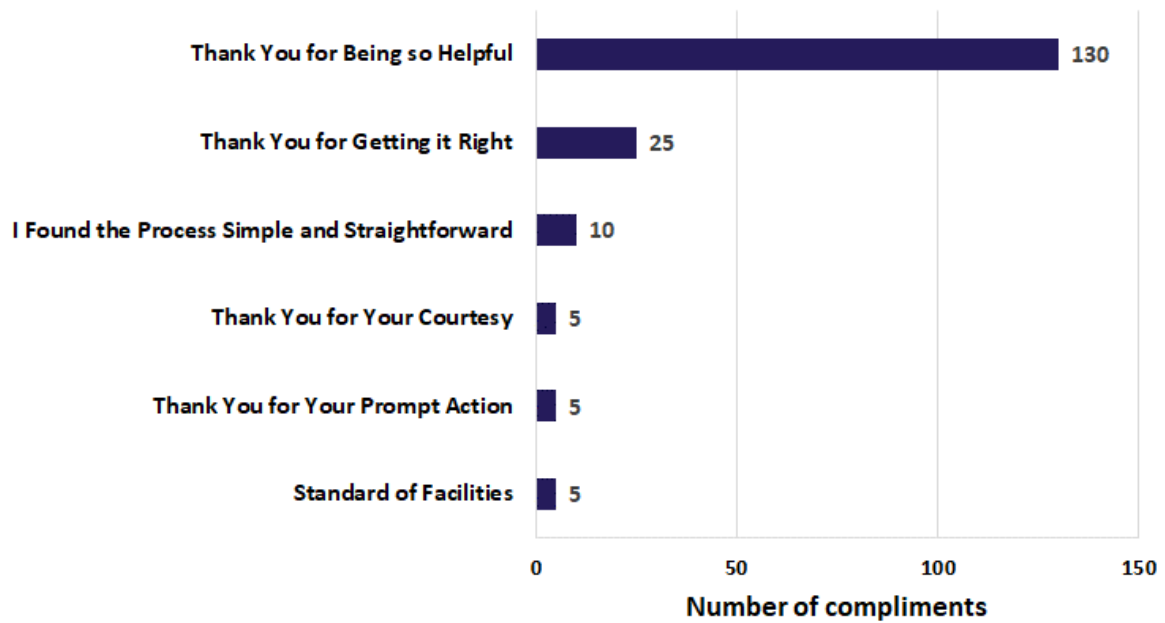
**Chart 7: Total compliments received by benefit in 2022/23**



This is more than in 2021/22 where 45 compliments were received overall **[Table 6]**.

In 2022/23, the most common reason for compliments has been 'Thank you for being so helpful', accounting for 72% of compliments, with 15% of compliments being 'Thank you for getting it right'. The proportion of compliments relating to these reasons has been broadly in line with the previous three years [Table 7, Chart 8].

**Chart 8: Compliments by reason in 2022/23**

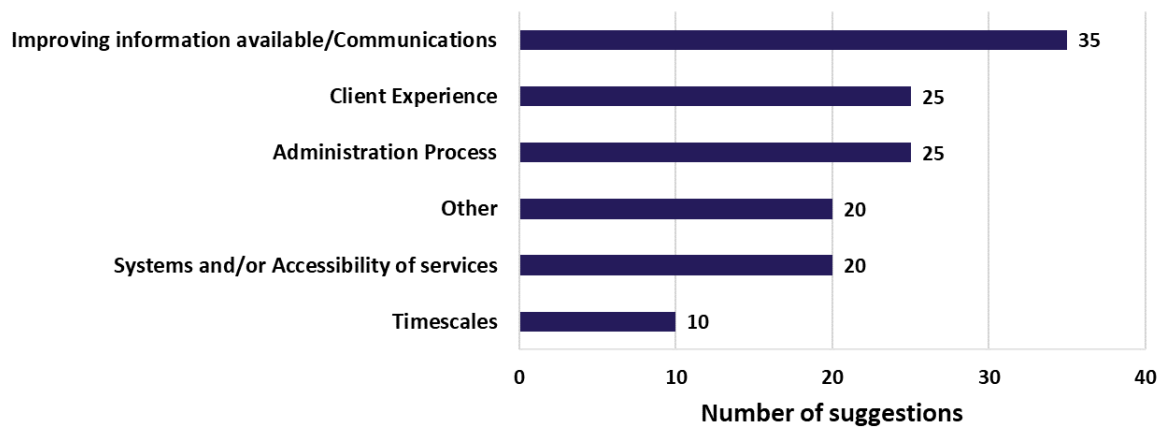




# Suggestions

- In 2022/23, a total of 135 suggestions were received. This is 110 more suggestions than were received in 2021/22 [Table 8].
- Around 51% of suggestions have been about Adult Disability Payment, followed by 19% about Child Disability Payment and 14% not specific to a benefit [Table 8].
- Most suggestions were about 'Improving information available/Communications', which accounted for 27% of all suggestions received, followed by 20% of suggestions about 'Client Experience' [Table 9, Chart 9].

Chart 9: Suggestions by reason in 2022/23



# 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. 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.

Initially feedback was received by telephone, email or letter. Webchat was introduced as a communication channel to Social Security Scotland from 1 May 2020. Social media was added to the feedback recording system from April 2021, and includes complaints received through telephone, email, letter or webchat that were originally signposted via social media. In 2022/23, feedback was also received face to face.

The volume of feedback received will be related to the number of live benefits and clients. New benefits have launched over time, potentially bringing more people in touch with Social Security Scotland. Benefit launch dates and application/payment volumes are summarised in a table below.

## 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. From January 2020, an extension of five working days can be added to this initial timescale by Social Security Scotland where it will be beneficial to the client. Prior to this, extensions had to be agreed with the client. For Stage 1 complaints it may be more appropriate to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 rather than applying an extension. Where a client remains unhappy with the response to a Stage 1 complaint, they can proceed to investigation – Stage 2, which allows 20 working days to investigate and provide a response. Again, since January 2020 an extension of five working days can be added to this timescale by Social Security Scotland if required, whereas prior to this extensions were agreed with the client. If the client still remains unhappy then they can choose to take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

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

The following table gives the launch dates and application numbers for each benefit.

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Start date</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>All time (to 31 March 2023)</b>	<b>Complaints all time (to 31 March 2023)</b>
<a href="#"><u>Carer's Allowance Supplement</u></a>	3 Sep 18	86,570 carers in receipt	89,265 carers in receipt	91,605 carers in receipt	93,530 carers in receipt	92,090 carers in receipt	141,565 carers in receipt	145
<a href="#"><u>Best Start Grant/Best Start Foods</u></a> - Pregnancy and Baby Payment - Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment - Best Start Grant School Age Payment - Best Start Foods	10 Dec 18 29 Apr 19 3 Jun 19 12 Aug 19	19,480 applications	128,075 applications	118,605 applications	84,215 applications	85,725 applications	436,115 applications	765
<a href="#"><u>Funeral Support Payment</u></a>	16 Sep 19	n/a	3,975 applications	8,690 applications	8,715 applications	8,855 applications	30,235 applications	60
<a href="#"><u>Young Carer Grant</u></a>	21 Oct 19	n/a	1,750 applications	3,375 applications	3,935 applications	4,470 applications	13,525 applications	5
<a href="#"><u>Job Start Payment</u></a>	17 Aug 20	n/a	n/a	3,190 applications	6,915 applications	2,295 applications	12,400 applications	10
<a href="#"><u>Scottish Child Payment</u></a>	9 Nov 20 (applications) 15 Feb 21 (payments)	n/a	n/a	104,575 applications	53,365 applications	160,840 applications	318,785 applications	470
<a href="#"><u>Child Winter Heating Assistance</u></a>	27 Nov 20	n/a	n/a	18,360 payments	20,000 payments	26,555 payments	64,915 payments	15
<a href="#"><u>Child Disability Payment</u></a>	16 Jul 21 (pilot) 22 Nov 21 (national)	n/a	n/a	n/a	9,570 applications	21,405 applications	30,975 applications	685

<a href="#">Adult Disability Payment</a>	21 Mar 22(pilot) 29 Aug 2022 (national)	n/a	n/a	n/a	525 applications	85,935 applications	86,455 applications	430
<a href="#">Winter Heating Payment</a>	Feb 2023	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	392,425 payments	392,425 payments	15

Note: Annual figures are based on the latest Official Statistics publications, but may be revised when the statistics are updated.

## Complaint reasons

Complaint reasons are categorised by Social Security Scotland staff based on the information received from clients. Complaint reasons were amended from 12 March 2021 to better reflect types of complaints received and provide more focussed data to inform improvement activity. In the table below, complaints received prior to 12 March 2021 have been mapped to new categories as set out below. 'Client expectation not met - Information provided' is a new category that does not map onto previous complaint reasons.

Previous categories	New categories	Description
Inadequate standard of service	Client expectations not met – Quality of service	Should be used where we have provided the client with a service which is below the expected standard.
Failure to provide a service	Client expectations not met – Accessing services	Should be used where we have not delivered a service e.g. online application form unavailable
Dissatisfaction with Scottish Government policy	Client expectations not met - Policy and procedures	Should be used when client is unhappy with Social Security Scotland's policy or procedures.
Disagreement with a decision	Disagreement with a decision	Use only for benefits with no right of appeal
Failure to follow the appropriate process	Client expectations not met – Timescales	Should be used where we did not meet published timescales.
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	Client expectations not met - Treatment by member of staff	Should be used where the service provided by a staff member was not at the expected standard.
N/a	Client expectations not met - Information provided	Should be used where the client is unhappy about information provided on Social Security Scotland websites, social media, advertising or letters.

For the purposes of this publication we have removed the prefix 'Client expectations not met' from these categories.

## **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.
- Resolved - if a client has made a complaint and their complaint is resolved without the need to look further into why something went wrong or to mark it as upheld or not upheld. This outcome was introduced on 12 April 2021.

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, including:

- type of feedback (complaint, compliment, suggestion)
- date received
- channel by which feedback was received (e-mail, telephone, letter, webchat, social media, face to face)
- benefit (or no specific benefit)
- reason for feedback, chosen from defined lists of possible categories
- where applicable, the date that feedback was actioned
- outcome of any decisions, 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 18 May 2023.

## Quality assurance

The data used to produce the figures has been checked on a case by case basis with clerical records used for internal reporting within Social Security Scotland, 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.
- Feedback channels, reasons, benefits and outcomes have been checked for consistency 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 compared to the clerical records. Dates have been amended on a case by case basis as decided with reference to the clerical records.
- Some feedback had discrepancies in channel, reason or outcome between the case management system and clerical records. Each of these cases have been investigated with the Client Experience team and corrected.
- 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 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.
- For the 2022/23 financial year, records that were missing from either the case management system or clerical records were investigated with the Client Experience Team. A small number of duplicate cases were also identified and checked with the Client Experience Team.

### *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.



### *Channel*

Complaint channel is based on the first channel given for a complaint when it was received at either Stage 1 or 2.

Telephone, email and letter have been available for clients to use to complain since 2018. Telephone was unavailable from mid-March to mid-April 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. Following the launch of Child Disability Payment, we have seen face to face complaints recorded through local delivery interaction with clients.

Webchat was introduced as a communication channel from 1 May 2020. However, webchat was only added to the feedback recording system in February 2021. Where a complaint was received before February 2021, but the complaint notes indicate the complaint was received through webchat, we have counted this complaint as being received by webchat. It is possible that there were further complaints by webchat that have not been identified – these will be counted under ‘telephone’.

Social media complaints have been recorded since 12 April 2021. Complaints are classed as ‘social media’ when a client complains through a social media platform and is signposted by Social Security Scotland communications to make a complaint through one of the other channels, and the client does so. If a client is signposted but does not make a complaint through one of the other channels, their complaint is not recorded. Prior to 12 April 2021, social media was monitored but this type of complaint could not be recorded, and will have been counted as telephone, email, letter or webchat.

### *Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints*

For complaint benefit and reason, we have used the first recorded benefit or reason with a complaint. In general, benefit and reason are not expected to change between Stage 1 and Stage 2, although this may be possible in some cases.

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 complaint being received to a decision being made. It is calculated in working days. Weekends and public holidays are excluded. The time of day that a complaint was received or processed is not taken into account. The day the complaint was received is counted as ‘day one’ of processing, regardless of the time of day a complaint was received. For example, a complaint received and processed on the same day would have a processing time of one working day. A complaint received on one day and processed on the next working day would have a processing time of two working days.

Withdrawn complaints have not been included in median processing times statistics. Numbers of withdrawn complaints are relatively small [Table 5], therefore this has had little impact on average processing times.

Processing times are calculated separately for each complaint stage. Where an extension has been agreed on a Stage 1 or Stage 2 complaint, complaints will be classed as having been processed 'within agreed timescales' if they were processed within these extensions [Table 4]. Complaints classed as not being closed within an extension include those that were completed after the extension end date, or completed after the initial timescale without an extension being applied.

#### *Compliments and suggestions recording*

Compliments and suggestions are passed on to the Client Experience team to be recorded. When Social Security Scotland staff have high work volumes it is possible that fewer compliments and suggestions will be passed on. This may be the reason for lower volumes of compliments and suggestions received during 2020/21, as a result of the impact of COVID-19.

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

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

Further information about complaints at the Department for Work and Pensions 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**

Statistics about individual benefits are published at:

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about/statistics/social-security-scotland-statistics-publications>

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

<https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications>. This includes qualitative analysis of feedback comments made by clients during the application process for benefits.

## **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:

Maciej Dybala

Social Security Scotland – Analysis and Insights

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: [ChiefStatistician@gov.scot](mailto:ChiefStatistician@gov.scot)

### **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:

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

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [MI@socialsecurity.gov.scot](mailto:MI@socialsecurity.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 [ChiefStatistician@gov.scot](mailto:ChiefStatistician@gov.scot).

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)  
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