



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Convener Social Justice and Social Security
Committee, Collette Stevenson

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28 September 2023

Dear Convener

I thought it would be helpful to update you and members of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee following my letter of 21 August.

I am sorry the Committee has not been able to visit Agnes Husband House yet, but I look forward to welcoming you and colleagues once a new date has been agreed.

Adult Disability Payment statistics

The latest Adult Disability Payment statistics were published on Tuesday 19 September, covering up to the end of July 2023.

The statistics show at the end of July, almost 94,000 people were in receipt of Adult Disability Payment, an increase of 69% from April 2023.

August 2023 marked the first anniversary of the national roll-out of this benefit and, as I highlighted at the Committee session on 29 June and in my last correspondence to the committee on 21 August, there will always be a lag between the improvements we see within the agency and the official published statistics.

In the last quarter, we processed the highest number of applications since the benefit launched - almost 55% more than the previous three months. From April to July, the average

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median processing time reduced by 8 working days, decreasing from 96 days in April 2023 to 88 days in July 2023. As I said at my Committee appearance on 29 June, I would always be cautious about making direct comparisons with the UK system, but 16 months from the launch of the Department for Work and Pensions Personal Independence Payment pilot, the median average processing time was approximately 175 working days.

The data also shows the average processing time for special rules applications was 2 working days. For reference, the latest published median average processing time for special rules applications of PIP was 4 working days in July 2023.

Adult Disability Payment is the largest and most complex of the benefits we are currently delivering, however I believe we are seeing a steady improvement in processing times and improvement remains our top priority – I know there is more to do.

The statistics are available at [Social Security Scotland - Adult Disability Payment: high level statistics to 31 July 2023](#)

Client survey summary

The client survey on disability payments, which captures the lived experience of clients, was also published on 19 September.

The survey results show 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed they “were treated fairly and respectfully throughout the application process” and that “the application process was clear.” The findings contained in the report demonstrate our commitment to treating people with dignity, fairness and respect.

The summary is available at [Social Security Scotland - Social Security Scotland - Client Survey - Disability Payments](#)

Committee meeting 14 September 2023

I note that Mr Balfour, MSP for Lothian (Region) highlighted his “disappointment that the organisation [Social Security Scotland] is not monitoring at all the time from when someone puts in an application for a new benefit to when the application is processed”.

I also note that in the Parliament debate on Thursday 14 September Jeremy Balfour commented that “*During recess, the Social Justice and Social Security Committee got a letter*

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in which David Wallace proudly announced that Social Security Scotland was unable to report on the times taken between the submission of relevant documents and a decision being made on a benefits application. With that lack of oversight, it is small wonder that we are seeing so many complaints.”

To avoid any doubt can I confirm that we collect, analyse and publish statistics and management information on the devolved benefits Social Security Scotland is responsible for delivering. All our statistics publications are defined as official statistics in line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. They are produced to robust professional standards and follow the guidance set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Currently our statistics are being published as experimental official 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 include, for all our benefits, the average processing time which is measured between receipt of an application and a decision being made. I.e. what can be considered the full 'end-to-end' for a first decision to be made.

[A timetable of forthcoming publications can be found here.](#)

My letter of 21 August factually confirmed the position that I outlined in my appearance on 29 June. Where an application does not have all the supporting information required for us to make a decision and we have to work with the client and/or third parties to obtain additional information, we were currently unable to report on the time taken between the receipt of *all supporting information* and a decision being made in a case. I.e. we cannot report on this particular sub-set of the 'end-to-end' journey. I am sorry if I have caused any confusion.

I hope this is helpful to Committee members and please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

David Wallace

Chief Executive
Social Security Scotland

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