

Examining Outcomes Associated with Social Security Scotland Spending: An Evidence Synthesis



EQUALITY AND WELFARE

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Office of the Chief Social Policy Adviser

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1. Executive summary

Introduction

This report synthesises emerging evidence relating to the outcomes associated with social security spending administered by Social Security Scotland.

Social security is a human right and public service that anyone could need at any time. It is also an important means through which governments can reduce inequalities and improve short, medium and long term outcomes for individuals and households. This has the additional potential to reduce future demands on other public services and spending, and over the long term, also increase tax revenues.

Background

Social Security Scotland was established in 2018. Over the last five years fourteen benefits have been introduced, seven of which are unique to Scotland. It is estimated that these benefits provide support to around 1.2 million people in Scotland.

Social security investment represents a significant proportion of the overall Scottish budget; the overall amount paid out in devolved benefits is currently forecast to increase by around £2.7 billion – from £4.2 billion in 2022-23 to £6.9 billion in 2025-26¹. The vast majority of this is related to benefits administered by Social Security Scotland.

The benefits currently delivered by Social Security Scotland² primarily provide financial support to disabled people to help mitigate the additional costs associated with being disabled, to support those caring for disabled people, and targeted payments to support low income families, particularly with children, to alleviate poverty.

Evidence relating to outcomes associated with Social Security Scotland spending

As Social Security Scotland has only been operational for five years, evidence regarding the impacts of the benefits it administers is still tentative. However, early modelling, qualitative analysis and evaluation shows that, in addition to acting as a safety net in times of need, benefits administered by Social Security Scotland support the achievement of a fairer Scotland through:

- **Reducing child poverty:** There is strong empirical and theoretical evidence that the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) is reducing child poverty in Scotland³. Scottish Government modelling suggests that the SCP will reduce the relative child

¹ Scottish Fiscal Commission (2023) [Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts – December 2023](#)

² The new Carer Support Payment will begin to replace Carer's Allowance in Scotland in 2024-25.

³ Scottish Government (2022) [Scottish Child Payment: interim evaluation](#)

poverty rate by around five percentage points in 2023/24, lifting around 50,000 children out of poverty^{4 5}.

- **Household poverty, material deprivation and debt:** There is emerging evaluation evidence⁶ that the new and devolved benefits administered by Social Security Scotland are reported to be positively contributing to reducing financial pressure on households, reducing poverty, debt, material deprivation and food insecurity.
- **Reducing income inequality:** Distributional modelling by the Scottish Government^{7 8} and the Institute for Fiscal Studies⁹ indicates that changes made to the tax and welfare system by the Scottish Government in previous budgets have contributed to reducing inequality and targeting financial support to those who need it most.
- **Promoting equality:** Women, disabled people and ethnic minorities experience higher rates of poverty. Disabled people also face increased additional living costs because of their disability or health condition. Equality impact assessments indicate that women, disabled people and ethnic minorities are likely to benefit most from new Scottish benefits such as the SCP¹⁰.
- **Health:** Early evaluation evidence of benefits such as the SCP³, Best Start Foods¹¹ and Best Start Grant¹² suggest that these benefits are improving health outcomes through, for example, enabling parents to provide more and better quality food for their children.
- **Wellbeing:** The introduction of new family benefits has led to improved family wellbeing through recipients reporting reducing money related stress and anxiety for parents, improving children's wellbeing from having their basic needs met (for example reduced distress caused by being hungry) and improving parental confidence and self-esteem¹³.
- **Education and social participation:** Several evaluations outline the role of benefits in increasing social participation. The evaluation of the Young Carer Grant¹⁴ indicated that recipients reported that the grant helped them to take part

⁴ New Child Poverty modelling figures were published after this review was completed. The latest figures state that in 2024-25, the Scottish Child Payment alone is projected to impact the relative child poverty rate by 6 percentage points, meaning it will keep 60,000 children out of relative poverty in that year ([Child poverty cumulative impact assessment – update](#))

⁵ Scottish Government (2022) [Scottish Child Payment - estimating the effect on child poverty](#) and Scottish Government (2023) [Tackling child poverty delivery plan - annual progress report: annex b - cumulative impact assessment update](#)

⁶ Principally from the interim evaluations of SCP, BSG and BSF

⁷ Scottish Government (2023) [The Scottish Government's Medium-Term Financial Strategy](#)

⁸ Scottish Government (2023) [Scottish Budget 2024 to 2025: distributional analysis](#)

⁹ Institute of Fiscal Studies (2023) [Analysis of Scottish tax and benefit reforms](#)

¹⁰ Scottish Government (2020) [Scottish Child Payment: Equality Impact Assessment](#)

¹¹ Scottish Government (2022) [Best Start Foods: evaluation](#)

¹² Scottish Government (2020) [Best Start Grant: interim evaluation](#)

¹³ SCP / BSG / BSF evaluations

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2022) [Young Carer Grant: interim evaluation](#)

in opportunities which are the norm for their non-caring peers. To date, there is limited evidence regarding the role of social security benefits in supporting participation in education or reducing educational attainment gaps.

- **Employment and economy:** Existing evaluation evidence¹⁵ indicates that the Job Start Payment helps to meet the up-front costs of a new job, support young people to take up employment and increase confidence when starting a new job. There is also qualitative evidence¹⁴ to suggest that the Young Carer Grant is supporting some carers with employment and training. However, the overall impact of Social Security Scotland spending on the wider economy, and on supporting people into paid work where this is their goal, is more difficult to evidence and more uncertain.

Maximising the take-up of Social Security Scotland benefits and payments

The Scottish Ministers have a statutory duty to ensure that as many people as possible take up the devolved benefits to which they are entitled in order to maximise the positive outcomes associated with the benefits it administers. The Scottish Government's approach to maximising benefit take-up is set out in a series of Benefit Take-up Strategies – the second of which was published in 2021. Related to this is Social Security Scotland's commitment to treat people with dignity, fairness and respect, to reduce stigma and involve service users in the design and delivery process for benefits¹⁶.

Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government have made extensive efforts to maximise the take-up of benefits and payments by marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Analysis shows estimates of take-up rates of Scottish benefits is particularly high for benefits targeted at low income families with children such as the SCP¹⁷.

Evidence from large scale surveys¹⁸ of clients finds that the vast majority of people who have interacted with Social Security Scotland are positive about their experience and feel that they have been treated with kindness and respect.

Building on and improving evidence

Understanding the longer term outcomes associated with social security spending is methodologically challenging. It may take a number of years for changes in outcomes to be observed. Demonstrating long term impact and causality involves investing in the collection of good quality quantitative data underpinned by the development of clear and well evidenced logic models. It will also be beneficial to have long term qualitative data to add depth to the statistical narrative.

This review highlighted the significant amount of detailed analytical work that underpins the design and delivery of Social Security Scotland benefits. This includes

¹⁵ Scottish Government (2022) [Job Start Payment Evaluation](#)

¹⁶ Social Security Scotland (2019) [Our Charter](#)

¹⁷ Scottish Government (2023) [Take up rates of Scottish Benefits November 2023](#)

¹⁸ Social Security Scotland (2023) [Social Security Scotland - Client Survey 2022-2023](#)

impact assessments, qualitative research, statistical modelling, user satisfaction surveys and process evaluations.

The review also highlighted areas for future development relating to logic models for the outcomes associated with the newly devolved disability benefits, impact and economic evaluation and also the need to better understand the effects of benefits on specific outcomes for people in receipt of benefits. More detailed evidence in relation to application approvals between groups with different protected characteristics is also required to better understand why some groups appear to be more successful in their applications.

There is considerable international interest in how Scotland has taken a distinctive approach in relation to the ethos of the devolved agency, the delivery of benefits and the introduction of new benefits such as the SCP. It will be important to continue to invest in high quality research and evaluation in order to better understand how the devolved social security system contributes to a wide range of short, medium and longer term outcomes.

With this in mind, a number of areas emerged from this evidence synthesis where more evidence is needed to demonstrate the outcomes (or impact) of investment. Identified gaps to date include the extent to which benefits administered by Social Security Scotland support:

- Impact on employment outcomes (beyond initial promising evidence from the Job Start payment and Young Carer Grant)
- Participation in early years education by children and in further education or training by parents (and any contributions to reducing the education attainment gap)
- Economic impacts more broadly
- Longer term health and wellbeing
- Preventative savings over time as a result of potentially reduced demand (or changes in the nature of demand that reduce costs) for public services e.g. health and social care, and also for benefits themselves over time due to factors such as a reduction in future social problems that result from investment in benefits now

Although outside the scope of this review, it should be noted that policy action in other areas, e.g. employability, housing, mental health, also has the potential to reduce - or increase - demand for social security benefits. It is therefore not possible to evaluate the outcomes of social security policy in isolation, and robust evaluation of these closely-linked policy areas is also important.

In relation to current gaps in the *type* of evidence available, the review identified these as primarily relating to longitudinal data and an absence of experimental or quasi-experimental data.

2. Introduction

Purpose of this report

This report synthesises evidence in relation to the outcomes associated with Scottish Government spending on devolved Social Security Scotland benefits. It considers the available evidence on eight different but interconnected outcomes: child poverty; reducing poverty and protecting households; income inequality; health; wellbeing; education and social participation; economy and employment; and protected characteristics.

The report provides a commentary around the broader impact of social security spending, on the outcomes for benefit recipients and in creating a fairer Scotland. It also considers how the way in which social security benefit spending is delivered can amplify, or reduce, the potential impacts of the spending itself.

Findings from the synthesis brings together in one place - for the first time - existing evidence about the outcomes of spend on new and devolved benefits administered by Scotland. It also identifies opportunities to develop the evidence base further and highlights where analytical work is currently underway.

Methodology

This report focusses on evidence relating to all of the benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland, including those replacing benefits previously delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), but has a particular emphasis on understanding the contribution of the ten unique benefits delivered only in Scotland. These are set out in the background section.

The evidence synthesis was undertaken between November 2023 and January 2024. The work involved a review of 138 different relevant evidence sources. These were collated with the support of Scottish Government analysts working in different parts of government and a Scottish Government library search for academic and other literature focusing on the time period 2017-2023. The review also drew on logic models for the new benefits, where available, to identify short, medium and long term outcomes relevant to the wider outcomes outlined in Section 4.

The literature search conducted by the Scottish Government Library covered a wide range of resources, including: IDOX, The Knowledge Exchange database, KandE, Knowledge Network, Policy Commons, ProQuest, OCLC FirstSearch, Social Care Online, Transport Research International Documentation, British Library Catalogue, National Library of Scotland Catalogue, and Google Searches (Google Scholar, Advanced and Custom searches). Evidence sources reviewed included evaluations commissioned by the Scottish Government; benefit take up reports; official statistics; Clients Surveys and Experience Panel reports; Audit Scotland reports; annual reports; impact assessments and business cases for each of the benefits. Reports from research organisations, think tanks and academic sources including the Fraser of Allander Institute, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and the Institute of Fiscal Studies were also reviewed.

Evidence that met the inclusion criteria for the work was then sifted and reviewed, with the quality of each source rated and the strengths and limitations of each of the sources identified. A small expert analytical working group was set up in September 2023 and met weekly to offer advice and guidance over the course of the project. The group included analysts from the Scottish Government – Office of the Chief Social Policy Adviser, Communities Analysis Division, Social Security Policy - and from Social Security Scotland. The group also consulted analysts from Public Health Scotland around the evidence on health outcomes. The evidence synthesis was also supported by a talented and enthusiastic PhD intern, Jud Lowes, from the University of Stirling.

Limitations

This evidence synthesis was completed in a short timescale, and while it sought to be comprehensive, it is not intended to be exhaustive. The review did not include a formal critical appraisal of the evidence.

The evidence synthesis does not consider factors which relate to the effectiveness of or value for money of Social Security Scotland delivery and operations, as this is partly covered by Social Security Scotland corporate reporting requirements including in its annual accounts and report. Neither does it consider how outcomes associated with social security spending in Scotland compare to those in the rest of the UK.

Finally, it should be noted that social security policy and practice in Scotland is far from static and some of the changes resulting from more recent policy changes such as the expansion of the SCP to include all children up to 16 years and the increase in its rate to £25 are not yet evidenced. This is partly due to the natural time lag between when policy changes are made and when data and evidence covering the required periods becomes available.

3. Background

The Scotland Act 2016 devolved new powers over social security to the Scottish Parliament and gave the Scottish Government the power to create new benefits and top up existing ones¹⁹. The first wave of benefits was announced in May 2017 along with the intention to create a new agency, Social Security Scotland, to deliver the devolved benefits.

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 sets out the framework for the operation of devolved social security powers, and identifies eight overarching principles for how the system will operate. It also commits the Scottish Government to produce a Social Security Charter setting out what people should expect from the new social security system. The Charter¹⁶ was produced in partnership with people with lived experience of social security benefits and organisations that represent them.

Distinguishing characteristics of Scottish social security benefits

Social Security Scotland is an executive agency created by the Scottish Government to administer the Scottish social security system effectively, in accordance with the principles in the 2018 Act and Charter. The new system takes a human rights approach that seeks to address the perceived adversarial nature of the previous system, replacing it with a new, distinctly Scottish system founded on dignity, respect, and human rights²⁰.

The overarching aim for social security in Scotland as set out in 'Creating a Fairer Scotland: a new future for social security in Scotland'²¹ is 'to create a fairer society'.

This is described in relation to objectives such as:

- Tackling poverty and inequality
- Helping people move into or stay in work and participate in society
- Providing protection and acting as a safety net in times of need
- Acting as early intervention to give people the best possible chances in life
- Treating people with dignity and respect, reducing stigma and maximising benefit take up

An updated Social Security Programme Business Case was published in February 2023²². The Scottish Government has committed £5.3 billion in social security spending in 2023-24, which is forecast to rise to £8.0 billion in 2028-29¹, supporting around two million people²³. This spending represents a deliberate choice by the Scottish Government to use its social security powers to help low-income families and carers with their living costs and to tackle poverty. The devolved disability benefits aim to help mitigate the increased costs people incur as a result of having a disability or long term health condition.

¹⁹ Scottish Government (2017) [Responsibility-for-benefits-overview](#)

²⁰ Scottish Government (2017) [Social security principles and a rights based approach](#)

²¹ Scottish Government (2016) [Creating a Fairer Scotland](#)

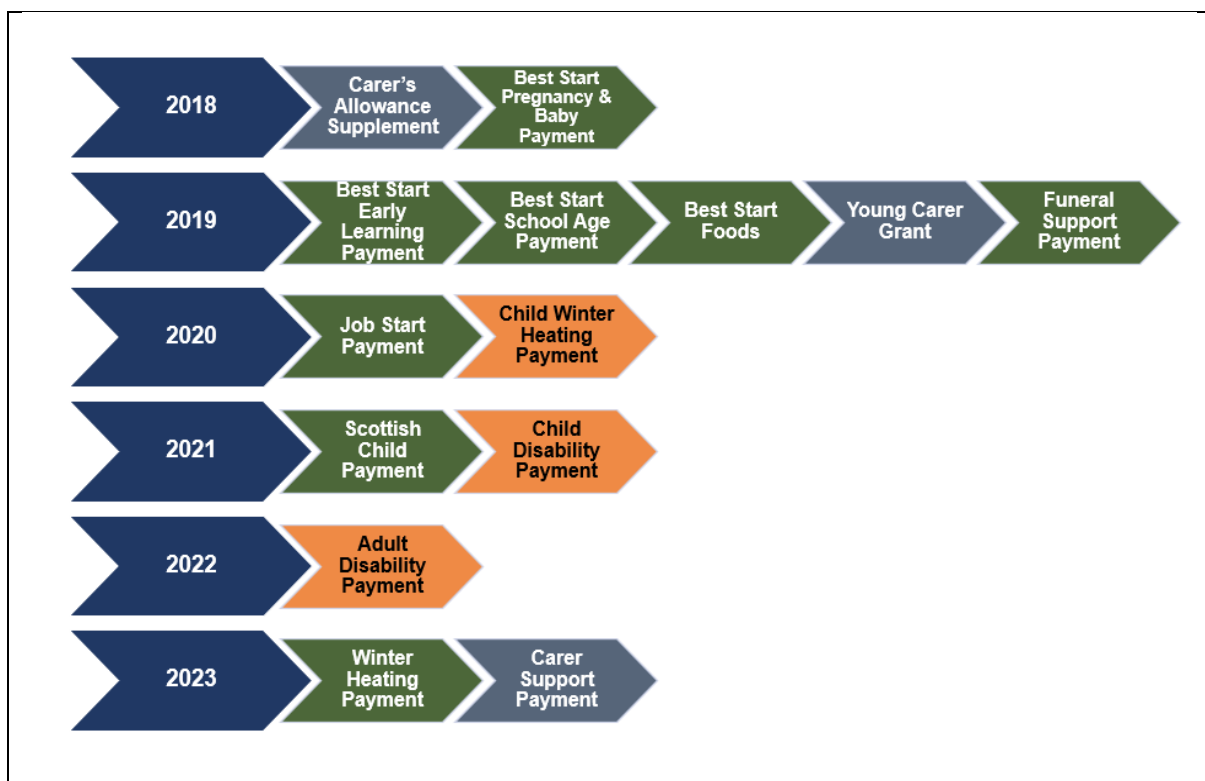
²² Scottish Government (2023) [Social Security business case February 2023](#)

²³ Scottish Government (2023) internal Scottish Government analysis

Examples of the Scottish Government’s new approaches to benefits include: abolishing routine face to face assessments for disability benefits; introducing indefinite awards for some disabled people where their disability or condition is very unlikely to change, to avoid the need for them to undergo unnecessary reviews; replacing food vouchers that people said they found stigmatising with Best Start Foods (BSF) payment cards which can be used like regular debit cards, and a series of Benefits Take-up Strategies²⁴ which aim to ensure that everyone gets the support to which they are entitled.

Figure 1 below sets out a timeline for delivering devolved benefits. This demonstrates the considerable pace at which new benefits have been introduced in Scotland over the last 5 years.

Figure 1: The timeline for delivering the devolved benefits



Benefits in green are low-income benefits with an earnings threshold, benefits in grey are carer benefits, and benefits in orange are disability benefits.

Benefits included in this evidence synthesis

Evidence relating to all benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland was reviewed and the devolved benefits included in this evidence review are summarised in Table 1 below by type.

²⁴ Scottish Government (2021) [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018: benefit take up strategy - October 2021](#)

The value and frequency of payments varies considerably across benefits ranging from a one-off annual payment of £55.05 (Winter Heating Payment) to a weekly payment of up to £172.75 (for Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment). An overview of each benefit including eligibility, payment amount and estimates of take up is provided in [Annex A](#).

Table 1: Characteristics of benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland

Low income benefits Earnings thresholds apply	Disability benefits No earnings thresholds apply	Carer benefits
Scottish Child Payment* Best Start Foods* Best Start Grant Pregnancy & Baby Payment Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment Best Start Grant School Age Payment Funeral Support Payment Job Start Payment Winter Heating Payment	Adult Disability Payment* Child Disability Payment* Child Winter Heating Payment	Young Carer Grant (no earnings threshold) Carer's Allowance Supplement (earnings threshold)

*Indicates a regular four-weekly payment. Other payments are made once (YCG, CWHP, WHP) or twice (CAS) a year, or on a one-off basis (BSG, FSP, JSP).

Distribution of social security spending across benefits

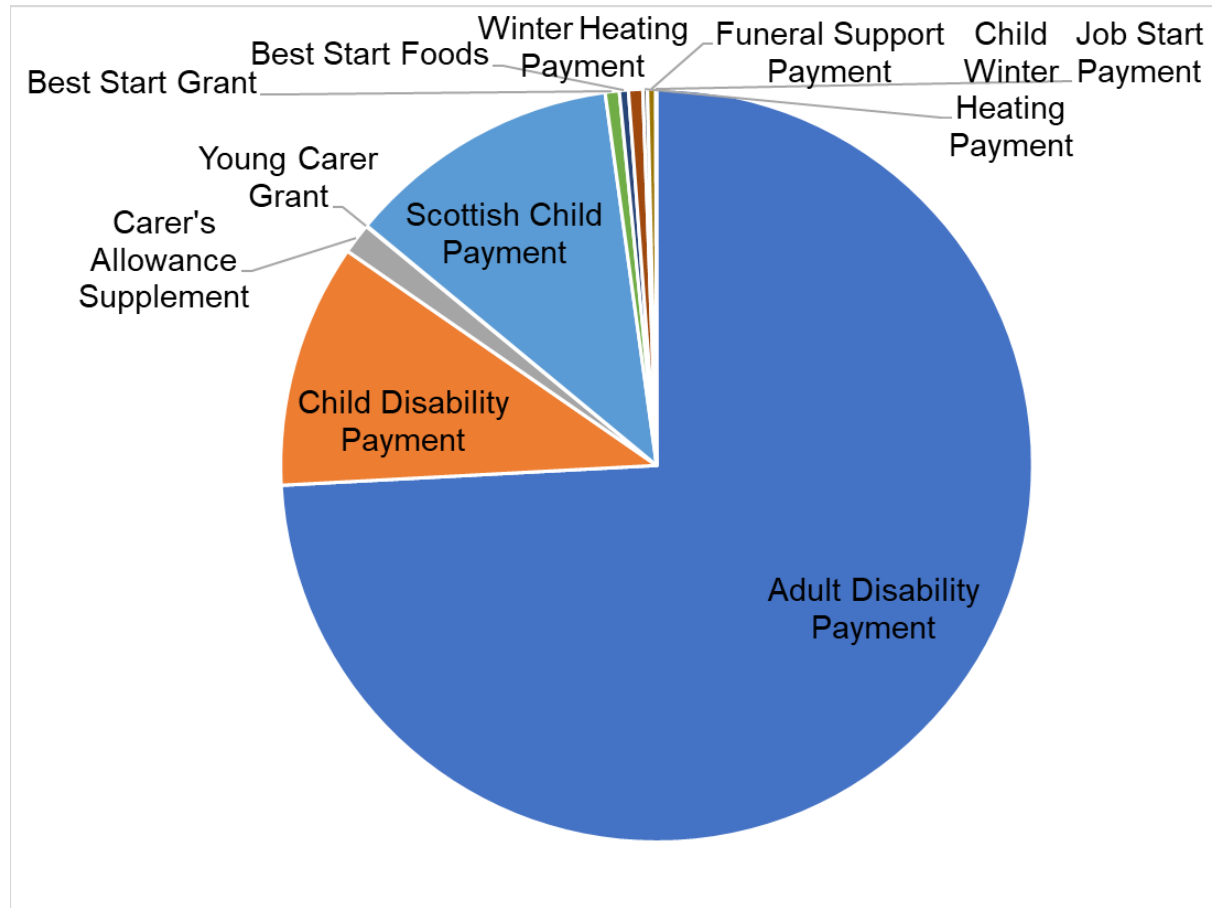
In 2023-24, around 85% of total forecast spending^{1,25} on the 11 devolved benefits considered in this evidence synthesis is accounted for by two disability benefits, Adult Disability Payment (74.2%) and Child Disability Payment (10.5%) as shown in Figure 2 below. Disability payments are designed around the social model of disability to recognise the extra costs associated with being disabled, given the barriers that society creates for disabled people. Eligibility is therefore not subject to earnings thresholds in the same way as for low-income benefits.

The majority of social security expenditure can be considered as driven by the prevalence of disability and ill health in the population. Rates of disability and long term health conditions are increasing across all nations of the UK and therefore the funding received from the UK Government for devolved disability benefits through block grant adjustments is also increasing. However, the forecast spend trajectory for disability benefits is steeper in Scotland according to the most recent Scottish Fiscal Commission (SFC) forecasts¹ and the exact contribution of several possible factors is currently uncertain. The SFC, however, acknowledge high levels of uncertainty in current forecasts, particularly for Adult Disability Payment¹. SCP accounts for a

²⁵ Scottish Government (2023) [Scottish budget 2024-25 Annex A3](#)

further 11.8% of benefit expenditure in 2023-24, with the remaining eight benefits collectively accounting for 3.5% of forecast spend.

Figure 2: Distribution of devolved benefit spending forecasted for 2023-4



Sources: Scottish Fiscal Commission Forecast, December 2023¹ and Scottish Government²⁵)

The SFC forecasts that total Scottish Social Security expenditure will increase from £4.2 billion in 2022-23 to £8.0 billion in 2028-29, of which around 80% will be on disability payments. The share of spending accounted for by disability payments would be even greater if the knock-on effects of rising disability leading to rising spending on carer benefits is considered. Policy decisions that affect the eligibility criteria for different benefits, the Scottish Government's approach to promoting benefit take up, and the economic cycle, can also influence levels of social security spending.

4. Outcomes associated with social security spending in Scotland

The importance of showing how benefits help address wider outcomes

The Audit Scotland report 'Social security - Progress on implementing the devolved benefits'²⁶ assessed progress to the end of February 2022 and recommended that the Scottish Government should:

“detail more clearly the intended impact of the Scottish social security system on outcomes for the people of Scotland, linking directly to the National Performance Framework. This is central to being able to evaluate value for money and inform decisions about future social security interventions”.

This section considers the available evidence on eight different outcomes: Child poverty; household poverty, material deprivation and debt; income inequality; health; wellbeing; education and social participation; economy and employment; and protected characteristics. Key findings are summarised below and the icons indicate how these outcomes link to the National Performance Framework outcomes.

Child poverty



Social security payments have the potential to reduce child poverty through providing low income families with increased regular income (SCP), making healthy foods more affordable (BSF) and providing additional financial support at key transition points such as starting school (Best Start Grant, BSG).

Together SCP, BSF and the three BSG payments are known as the Five Family Payments. The Five Family Payments are key Scottish Government measures contributing towards the national mission to tackle child poverty.

In 2023-24 it is expected that around 370,000 children aged 0 to 15 will be eligible for SCP⁹. This equates to around 38% of children under 6 and 43% of children aged 6 to 15. Of those eligible, around 327,000 are expected to get the payment (around 9 in 10).

Contributions to addressing child poverty

The generosity and design of benefits can either increase or reduce child poverty. For example, at the UK level, analysis and modelling²⁷ have demonstrated the negative impact on child poverty of the two child limit to Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit.

Scottish Government modelling²⁸ suggests that the £25 SCP could lift around 50,000 children out of poverty in 2023/24. This would equate to reducing the relative child

²⁶ Audit Scotland (2022) [Social security: Progress on implementing the devolved benefits](#)

²⁷ Benefit changes and larger families [Benefit changes and larger families](#)

²⁸ Scottish Government (2022) [Scottish Child Payment - estimating the effect on child poverty](#)

poverty rate (after housing costs) by an estimated 5 percentage points in 2023-24. This modelling does not, however, consider any behavioural responses to or labour market effects of SCP's design and is subject to changes in the economic and fiscal environment.

The SCP has been carefully designed to reduce the 'depth of poverty' and provide support to those who need it most. Early evaluation evidence³ suggests that SCP is helping to reduce financial pressure on households. The SCP interim evaluation concluded that the payment is "likely to have contributed positively to the Scottish Government's long term aims (e.g. reduced child poverty and inequalities of outcomes for children)'.

There is tentative evidence to suggest that SCP is improving Scotland's performance on child poverty relative to other UK nations. The 2023 Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'Destitution in the UK' report²⁹ concluded that "Scotland had improved its position, having experienced by far the lowest increase since 2019. This may be indicative of the growing divergence in welfare benefits policies in Scotland, notably the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment". Similarly, the Trussell Trust³⁰ found that Scotland saw a smaller percentage increase in the number of food parcels for children from November 2022 to March 2023 compared with the same period in 2021/22 than other UK nations. It suggested that this may be related to the extension of eligibility for SCP and the increase to £25 a week introduced in November 2022.

There is early qualitative evaluation evidence that articulates how people receiving BSF¹¹, BSG¹² and Child Winter Heating Payment (CWHP)³¹ perceive these payments are supporting short and medium term outcomes such as reduced pressure on household finances and preventing households from going into debt. This evidence suggests that whilst 'it is reasonable to assume' that SCP and the other family payments are reducing child poverty, measuring the impacts of individual payments will be challenging and take time.

Household poverty, material deprivation and debt



Social security payments have the potential to reduce poverty by increasing the income of households in poverty, reducing unmanageable debt, and providing financial support to help mitigate the additional costs associated with being disabled.

Reducing poverty, material deprivation and debt are explicit policy aspirations of BSG, SCP, CWHP and Funeral Support Payments (FSP).

It is estimated that between 2019-22, 21% of Scotland's population were living in relative poverty, after housing costs³². Certain groups including lone parents,

²⁹ Fitzpatrick, S et al. (2023) [Destitution in the UK 2023](#) Joseph Rowntree Foundation

³⁰ The Trussell Trust (2023) [Emergency food parcel distribution in Scotland: April 2022 - March 2023](#)

³¹ Scottish Government (2022) [Child Winter Heating Assistance: evaluation report](#)

³² Scottish Government (2023) [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2019-22](#) (last accessed: 14 November 2023)

children, carers, young carers³³, and households with a disabled person(s) and ethnic minority groups are more likely to be living in poverty and/or experiencing food insecurity.

Contributions to addressing poverty, material deprivation and debt

There is emerging tentative qualitative evaluation evidence³⁴ that recipients believe that the devolved benefits are positively contributing to reducing financial pressure on households, reducing poverty, debt, material deprivation and food insecurity. The evaluation of BSF¹¹ and CWHP³¹ suggested that they had reduced financial pressure on households. Commissioned interviews with recipients of BSG¹² found that 'respondents were unanimous in the view that the BSG had made a positive impact on their household finances'.

Commissioned interviews undertaken for the interim evaluations of BSG¹² and SCP³ found that recipients said BSG and SCP prevented them from going into debt or having to cut down on essentials such as food.

Although too early to report on medium term outcomes, the interim evaluation of BSF¹¹ found that it is *likely* that BSF has reduced the incidence of food insecurity. For some parents BSF was a 'lifesaver', assuring them their child would always have food. Family Payments can benefit the wider family as well as the child(ren).

The SG commissioned evaluation of Carers Allowance Supplement (CAS)³⁵ demonstrates that CAS has gone some way to meeting its overall aim of improved outcomes for carers by providing extra financial support. Stakeholder modelling evidence³⁶ concluded that while the Scottish Government's ambitions are too modest to change overall income inequality, the reforms in targeted policy do make a substantial difference to the lived experience of carers in poverty.

The interim evaluation¹⁴ of the Young Carer Grant (YCG) did not provide findings on whether the grant helped young carers become 'better off financially'. The payment rate was rarely mentioned by interviewees, other than to note that it could be higher.

The CWHP evaluation³¹ indicated some perceived progress towards meeting the medium-term goals of mitigating against financial difficulties/insecurities and supporting people with payment costs when they most need it. CWHP helped families to increase household income, heat their homes more often and for longer, and mitigate the additional heating costs associated with having a disabled child.

³³ Scottish Government (2017) [Young Carers: review of research and data](#)

³⁴ Principally from the interim evaluations of SCP, BSG and BSF

³⁵ Scottish Government (2020) [Carers Allowance Supplement: evaluation](#)

³⁶ Cantillon, S and Kirk, E (2020) [Scotland's Progressive Rhetoric: Devolution and Carer's Allowance](#) *Social Policy and Society*, 19(3), 396-413



Social security payments have the potential to reduce income inequality (for a definition see House of Commons briefing³⁷).

Reducing poverty, itself a measure of income inequality, is a key principle set out in the Social Security Charter¹⁶ and the tax and welfare system plays an important re-distributional role.

In terms of income inequality, official statistics³² show that between 2019 and 2022, the top ten percent of the Scottish population had 18% more income (before housing costs) than the bottom forty percent combined.

Contributions to addressing income inequality

Modelling⁷ of the distributional impact of the Scottish Government's (SG) income tax and social security policy choices in May 2023 found that the SG's tax and social security policies are reducing income inequality and targeting support at those who need it most. The modelling considered the impact of a combined package of income tax and social security policy changes (including SCP, BSG, BSF, Discretionary Housing Payment and Carers Allowance Supplement) on households across the income distribution range to demonstrate the overall distributional impact. SG policies mean that household incomes increase by around 4% for households in the lowest and second lowest deciles. Most of this increase is due to SCP and Income Tax changes. Incomes have been reduced in the richest tenth of households by on average £2,590 (2.1%) and increased in the poorest tenth by £580 (4.6%) per year (with those in the middle broadly unaffected).

Subsequent SG analysis⁸ for the budget in December 2023 showed that SG policies mean that 58% of households are better off under the Scottish system than in rUK, with the majority of these in the bottom half of the income distribution. The SCP is the largest single contributor to the improved financial resources of low-income households relative to the rest of the UK, while the impact on higher income households is driven by the introduction of – as of 2024-25 – a six band Income Tax system in Scotland that levies higher rates of Income Tax on higher incomes, with slightly lower rates on those earning less than £28,850.

Independent modelling by the Institute for Fiscal Studies⁹ in 2023 of recent tax and benefit³⁸ reforms by the Scottish Government on Scottish households' incomes reaches similar conclusions (although noting some differences with the December 2023 SG analysis, due to a different modelling approach around take up of social security). This shows that while the combined impact of these measures is to reduce Scottish households' incomes, the effects differ markedly across the income distribution range. The reforms reduce the incomes of the richest households and increase the income of the poorest 10%. The poorest 30% of families with children benefit the most, seeing an average increase of £1200 per year whereas the richest

³⁷ Francis-Devine, B and Orme, S (2023) [Income inequality in the UK](#) House of Commons Library

³⁸ Increasing SCP to £25 per week and expanding eligibility to children aged up to 16 years.

10% see a drop in income of just over 1%. Taken together, reforms to Scotland's income tax rates and bands and devolved benefits will have reduced the average income of Scottish households by £210 (or 0.5%) per year by 2023–24, compared to what their incomes would be in England and Wales. However, the poorest tenth of households will, on average, have benefited by £580 (4.6%) per year as a result of higher benefit entitlements.

Ongoing and forthcoming SG modelling and evaluation work may provide further evidence of the impact of spending on new and devolved benefits on increasing recipients' income (e.g. OCEA modelling, evaluations of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment (AVE) scheme, Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment etc.) See section 6.

Health



Social security payments have the potential to improve health outcomes through, for example, supporting households to buy nutritious food and better heat their homes and allowing disabled people to meet their health and care needs. Payments can also alleviate financial worry and improve poverty-related poor mental health. The time during pregnancy and up to the age of five is critical for a child's development; poor nutrition over this period can have direct, irreversible effects on long term health³⁹.

Improving health outcomes is an explicit policy aspiration of several benefits administered by Social Security Scotland including the Five Family Payments, Job Start Payment (JSP), and CWHP.

Health outcomes differ markedly in relation to socio-economic disadvantage; people living in less affluent areas of Scotland have a shorter life expectancy than those living in wealthier areas. Modelling studies demonstrate that UK benefit cuts have been associated with drops in life expectancy^{40, 41} among the working age population.

Contributions to improving health

There is empirical and theoretical evidence indicating that social security payments can improve long term health outcomes^{42,43}. In turn, this can reduce spending on

³⁹ Hoynes, H., Schanzenbach W, D. and Almond, D. (2016). Long-Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net American Economic Review, 106(4), pp. 903-934

⁴⁰ Richardson E, et al. (2021). The contribution of changes to tax and social security to stalled life expectancy trends in Scotland: a modelling study. J Epidemiol Community Health 2021;**75**:365–70

⁴¹ Seaman, R et al (2023) Social security cuts and life expectancy: a longitudinal analysis of local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. J Epidemiol Community Health Published Online First: 07 November 2023

⁴² Sperber, J. F. et al. (2023). Unconditional Cash Transfers and Maternal Assessments of Children's Health, Nutrition, and Sleep: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Network Open*, 6(9), PMID

⁴³ Broadbent et al. (2023) The public health implications of the cost-of-living crisis: outlining mechanisms and modelling consequences The Lancet Regional Health Europe 2023;27 100585

social security and health⁵³, and potentially increase government revenue through increased taxation if it leads to higher productivity and earnings.

Early evaluation evidence of SCP³, BSF¹¹ and BSG¹² indicated that the recipients interviewed felt that these benefits are improving health outcomes through, for example, enabling parents to provide more and better quality food for their children. Parents perceived that their own mental health improved due to having fewer money worries. Despite very positive feedback on BSF, health professionals and parents expressed concern that because the payment rate reduces after the child's first birthday, the amount of healthy food families can buy once their child turns one is also reduced¹¹.

There was some evidence that CWHP³¹ and SCP³ may indirectly improve health by enabling families to heat their homes for longer and to have a good supply of hot water. This is particularly important for disabled children who are often up during the night and may need bathing more often³¹. BSGs were often used to buy items such as bottle sterilisers, breast pumps, cots and car seats which may also indirectly improve health.

CAS was very well received but existing evidence suggests that for most recipients had little direct impact on health, mainly due to the relatively modest rate (£541 per year in 2023-24). In a few cases CAS had a positive impact on carers' mental health³⁵.

An NHS Health Scotland briefing paper⁴⁴ using the EUROMOD and Triple I models concluded that, of those considered, the most effective income-based policies for reducing health inequalities are likely to be those that disproportionately increase incomes for people with the lowest incomes, for example increasing benefit rates. Unpublished health inequalities modelling by Public Health Scotland concluded that bolder combinations of devolved tax raising and social security powers will be required to achieve meaningful reductions in inequalities in Scotland⁴⁵.

Wellbeing



Social security payments (and the way in which they are administered) have the potential to improve wellbeing outcomes through providing income that reduces psychological stress brought about as a result of experiencing poverty and inequality.

Improving wellbeing outcomes is an explicit policy aspiration of several benefits administered by Social Security Scotland including the Five Family Payments, JSP, CAS and CWHP.

⁴⁴ Richardson, E et al. (2018) Income based policies in Scotland: how would they affect health and health inequalities (NHS Health Scotland)

⁴⁵ Personal communication from authors; publication planned 2024

A key feature of the devolved benefits system is its focus on treating people with dignity and respect¹⁶. There is good quality empirical evidence⁴⁶ that the stress of undergoing assessments for UK disability benefits - frequently described as 'dehumanising' and 'traumatic' - negatively affects both recipients' and carers' wellbeing.

Contributions to improving wellbeing

The most recent Social Security Scotland client survey⁴⁷ received 34,000 responses. Nearly nine-in-ten of the respondents believed that they had been treated with dignity (88%), fairness (87%) and respect (89%) when they applied for, or received, the new devolved benefits. Only 2% describe their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor'. This may lead to improved wellbeing of clients and contrasts favourably with evidence from Social Security Scotland Experience Panels⁴⁸ that described how people found certain aspects of the UK benefits, process extremely negative.

Early evaluation evidence³ indicated that recipients felt the SCP has helped to reduce money-related stress and made progress towards its medium-term outcome of improved wellbeing.

SCP recipients reported that the payment had significant positive impacts on wellbeing. For parents this was primarily by reducing financial worries. Children's emotional wellbeing benefited from having their basic needs met (for example reduced distress caused by being hungry) and also from the enjoyment of having the occasional treat or day out. Some parents spent BSG on items to support their child's emotional wellbeing such as fidget toys or weighted blankets to reduce anxiety³.

Early evaluation evidence of BSG¹² similarly found that the grants had improved recipients' perceived wellbeing through easing financial strain. Parents felt proud to be able to provide for their child rather than being dependent on others. Their confidence and self-esteem increased. Without the BSG, parents had been unable to provide new items, for example when starting a new school year; BSG and SCP³ reduced the guilt parents felt at not being able to afford things for their children.

Evaluation evidence¹¹ suggested that in families where parents used their BSF payment cards, these improved parental wellbeing through feeling positive about being able to provide their children with more nutritious food. Parents reported feeling less anxious or self-conscious about using BSF cards in shops compared to using Healthy Start Vouchers.

The CAS evaluation³⁵ concluded it had helped improve unpaid carers' mental health and wellbeing "a little". Many carers said they spent CAS on short breaks or days out which they felt were very beneficial and offered "a breather" from their isolation and

⁴⁶ Foster, H, and Stamatis E (2020). [Stress and well-being of unpaid carers supporting claimants through disability benefit assessments](#). Health & Social Care in the Community, vol. 28, no. 5, 2020, pp. 1525-1534

⁴⁷ Social Security Scotland (2023) [Client Survey 2022-2023 Summary Report](#)

⁴⁸ Scottish Government (2019) [Social Security Experience Panels: Personal Independence Payment Health Assessments](#)

round-the-clock caring responsibilities. The evaluation noted that wider support, such as respite care, was also needed.

Education and social participation



Social security payments have the potential to support people to participate in social and educational opportunities. Improving participation outcomes is an explicit policy aspiration of several benefits administered by Social Security Scotland considered in this review including SCP, BSG, JSP and YCG.

The Poverty in Scotland 2022 survey⁴⁹ found that 58% of people with low financial security had stopped or reduced socialising with friends and family due to cost. Disabled people and those on low incomes are more likely to feel socially isolated⁵⁰.

Contributions to improving education and social participation

Interim evaluations of the SCP³ and BSG¹² suggested that parents believed the payments had enabled children to participate in opportunities which the parents would otherwise not have been able to afford. Examples included attending regular early learning activities like parent and toddler groups and also days out; for example a trip to the beach or museum.

Parents typically said they used their BSG Early Learning and School Age Payments to buy items their children needed to start nursery or school. Parents emphasised the expense of uniforms and of having to buy multiple sets of indoor and outdoor clothing to facilitate nursery play. Some had used BSG to buy clothing or equipment that allowed their children to take part in more physical activity.

The interim evaluation¹⁴ of the annual YCG concluded that it “appears to be meeting its overall aims” and that the grant is helping young carers improve their own quality of life by taking part in opportunities which are the norm for their non-caring peers. Young carers said they spent the grant as teenagers in general tend to spend their money, for example going out with friends, going to the cinema or a concert, attending dance classes, and taking driving lessons. Young carers generally said that, without YCG, they would have had to miss out on these activities.

Stakeholders and young carers were positive about YCG but felt that the requirement that the cared-for person is in receipt of certain benefits was excluding too many young carers with significant caring responsibilities. They felt this could present a particular barrier to minority ethnic young carers, as people in these communities were less likely to access the qualifying disability benefits.

⁴⁹ Birt, C et al. (2022) [Poverty in Scotland 2022](#) (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

⁵⁰ Scottish Government (2023) [Social isolation and loneliness: Recovering our Connections 2023 to 2026](#)

There is limited evidence available as to whether SCP reduces barriers to education for parents. Most people interviewed as part of the evaluations were full-time carers for young children and therefore were not seeking access to education.

Relatively little time has passed since devolved benefits were introduced, so there is not yet evidence available about how they contribute to progress towards longer term outcomes that can be measured (e.g. reduced inequality of outcomes for children). Nevertheless, the interim evaluation concluded that “SCP has made good progress towards some of its short and medium-term outcomes” [e.g. children are able to participate in social and educational activities’ and ‘reduced barriers to education’] and that “it can be reasonably assumed that the Scottish Child Payment is making some contribution towards the Scottish Government’s long term aims for children and families”.

Economy and employment



Social security payments have the potential to improve economic outcomes. For example, investment today (e.g. SCP) to mitigate the harmful effects of poverty⁵¹ can lead to longer term benefits to the economy in future through: reduced demand for, and expenditure on, public services (e.g. less health-care spending); improved productivity (e.g. through a healthier, more productive, workforce); and greater and more equal labour market participation (e.g. by reducing some labour market barriers, particularly for disadvantaged groups), stimulating improved tax revenues in future.

Improving economic and employment outcomes is an explicit policy aspiration of several benefits administered by Social Security Scotland considered in this review including SCP, FSP and JSP.

Official statistics⁵² show that SCP payments totalling £458.5 million were paid out since the benefit’s inception up to September 2023. There is strong theoretical and empirical evidence indicating that increased social security expenditure can result in wider future economic benefits, for example though people being more economically self-sufficient in later life⁵³.

Contributions to improving economic and educational outcomes

The interim evaluation³ of the SCP stated that “[e]vidence of increased spend amongst recipients would suggest that SCP has had positive impacts on the Scottish economy.” Families used SCP to buy essential items, as well as small treats and family outings, that would otherwise often have been unaffordable. There was

⁵¹ IPPR Scotland (2023) [Tipping the scales: The social and economic harm of poverty in Scotland](#)

⁵² Social Security Scotland (2023) [Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 30 September 2023](#)

⁵³ Bailey, et al., (2020) [Is the Social Safety Net a Long Term Investment? Large-Scale Evidence from the Food Stamps Program](#). The Review of Economic Studies, *rdad063*

evidence to show that most families spend, rather than save SCP, thus benefiting the Scottish economy through supporting consumption.

Evidence that BSG had positive impacts on the economy was more mixed. The interim evaluation¹² found that it was unclear whether BSG led to increased child-related spending. Some parents said that without BSG they would have borrowed to buy the items suggesting this was not additional spending. However, others said BSG allowed them to buy new, rather than second hand items, or to buy better quality items.

The evaluation of JSP¹⁵ reported that it has largely achieved its short-term outcomes of helping to meet the costs of starting a new job, supporting young people to take-up employment, increasing confidence when starting a new job and thinking about employment prospects. Recipients welcomed the payment and used it for a range of work-related expenses such as clothes, travel, equipment - which some feel they could not have afforded without JSP.

There is limited evidence as to whether SCP helped to reduce barriers to entering the labour market. Most people interviewed for the evaluation³ were full-time carers for their young children and therefore were not seeking access to employment. It should be noted that a range of complex and inter-related additional factors impact employment outcomes, including availability and affordability of childcare, and SCP alone is unlikely to fully mitigate these issues.

The evaluation⁵⁴ of the FSP concluded that FSP is likely to be helping to reduce business insecurity for funeral directors through recipients paying bills in good time. As a result, funeral businesses, the majority of whom are small businesses, spent less time chasing payment.

The BSF evaluation¹¹ found that retailers thought the BSF card format was easier for them to implement than the UK Healthy Start Vouchers that BSF replaced. However, they wanted to receive data on items being bought with BSF to inform their decisions on stock and in store promotions.

Protected characteristics



The design, delivery and generosity of social security benefits can serve to widen or close equality gaps. UK Government policies have hit women's income much harder than men's; Engender estimate that from 2010 to 2020, 86% of net 'savings' raised through cuts to social security and tax credits came from women's incomes⁵⁵.

Disability benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland are designed to contribute to reducing equality gaps between disabled and non-disabled people through mitigating some of the increased costs incurred by disabled people and people with long term health conditions. Benefits targeted towards low income families may also reduce

⁵⁴ Scottish Government (2022) [Funeral Support Payment Evaluation](#)

⁵⁵ Engender (2017) [Gender Matters Roadmap](#)

multiple inequality gaps as households of people with particular protected characteristics are more likely to be living in poverty.

Social security benefits are particularly important for some groups such as disabled people who have higher barriers to employment, lower pay when in work and higher living costs. Women face multiple disadvantages as they are more likely to take on caring responsibilities, head up single parent households and earn less⁵⁶.

Impact on people with protected characteristics

Evidence from SG impact assessments demonstrate that extensive consideration has been given to ways in which the design and delivery of benefits can help to maximise take up and reduce inequalities¹⁰.

There is some very tentative evidence that social security spending may be helping to narrow some inequalities of outcome for disabled people. For example, the interim evaluation of SCP³ identified qualitative examples where parents of disabled children, spent payments on items designed to support development or learning (e.g. sensory toys and books). However, the Equality and Human Rights Commission conclude that 'It is too early to assess the impact of the Child Disability Payment and the Adult Disability Payments on the living standards of disabled people and their households⁵⁷.

Women are more likely to access the social security system and it is expected that women will benefit disproportionately from policies such as SCP which is intended to be 'a positive measure to help tackle discrimination'¹⁰.

A number of low income family benefits have been designed to support younger parents in recognition of the link between deprivation and teenage pregnancy. For example the BSF and BSG are available to parents under the age of 18 without the need to be on a qualifying benefit. By introducing benefits with the explicit long term policy outcome to reduce child poverty it is likely that inequalities between groups will also be reduced. Priority family types at highest risk of child poverty include families with mothers aged 25 or under, minority ethnic families and families with a disabled person.

There is some evaluation evidence to show that people from minority ethnic groups may find it harder to apply for benefits when English is not their first language (evaluation of the FSP⁵⁴ and BSF¹¹). Overall, benefit approval rates were substantially lower for applicants from Asian and African ethnic groups (73%) than White (81%)⁵⁸.

There are also some restrictions on eligibility which may restrict the effectiveness of benefits as a tool for reducing inequalities. For example, reserved immigration policies such as "no recourse to public funds" restrict eligibility for many Scottish

⁵⁶ Scottish Government [Equality Evidence Finder](#)

⁵⁷ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2023) [Equality and Human Rights Monitor: Is Scotland Fairer?](#)

⁵⁸ Scottish Government (2023) [Social Security Scotland Client Diversity and Equalities Analysis for June 2021 to March 2023](#)

benefits. Additionally, multiple Scottish benefits, such as SCP, are linked to UK reserved benefits which means that groups that cannot receive a qualifying, reserved benefit – such as asylum seekers - are therefore not eligible for linked Social Security Scotland benefit¹⁰.

5. Maximising the impact of social security benefit spending

Background

In addition to the benefits themselves, it is recognised that the benefits process – or *how* benefits are delivered – can have both positive and negative impacts on outcomes such as wellbeing, health, and reducing inequality and poverty. The way in which benefits are delivered can therefore amplify, or reduce, any potential positive impact of the payments that people receive.

Social Security Scotland aims to deliver a social security system built on dignity, fairness, and respect. Social Security Scotland's Charter¹⁶ sets out the standards of service and the principles that people should expect from Social Security Scotland; for example, a commitment that services should reflect human rights values, services should be accessible, and that the social security system in Scotland will 'challenge the myths and stereotypes about social security to help reduce stigma and negativity'.

Ministers have a statutory duty⁵⁹ to promote take-up of devolved benefits and have produced a series of Benefit Take-up Strategies⁶⁰. This is supported by a Social Security Scotland Charter commitment to ensure that 'as many people as possible get what they are entitled to, making a particular effort to reach people who are most likely to be excluded'. Promoting take-up also helps to maximise the wider outcomes of social security spending through encouraging eligible people who may otherwise not make an application to understand their entitlements and support and empower them to access these.

Maximising take-up

Estimates of the proportion of people entitled to a Scottish benefit who actually receive it are published annually by Scottish Government analysts, most recently in November 2023⁶¹. An overview of each benefit including the most recent take-up rates, is provided in [Annex A](#). Take up is highest for the Five Family Payments and ranges from 80% for the BSG Early Learning Payment to 97% for BSG School Age Payment, in part because some of these payments are made automatically to eligible parents or carers who receive SCP.

Take-up rates for most, but not all, benefits were stable or increased between 2021-22 and 2022-23⁶¹. For example, SCP take-up rates for children aged under 6 years rose substantially from 87% to 95% meaning the vast majority of eligible families with children of this age are receiving this benefit. At the end of March 2023, the rate for children aged 6-15 years was lower at 77%, this is likely to reflect the more recent expansion of the benefit to this age group. The Scottish Fiscal Commission expect the gap in rates for younger and older children to narrow over time. In 2022-23, SCP take-up rates for local authorities tended to be higher in more deprived, and also more urban, local authorities.

⁵⁹ UK Government (2018) [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)

⁶⁰ Scottish Government (2021) [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018: benefit take-up strategy - October 2021](#)

⁶¹ Scottish Government (2023) [Take-up rates of Scottish benefits: November 2023](#)

The lowest take-up rate was for JSP (15%, down from 29% in 2021-22). To address this, marketing and media campaigns promoted the payment during 2022-23. Further promotion work will take place throughout 2023-24, including working with DWP Youth Work Coaches and Skills Development Scotland.

Social Security Scotland has actively targeted specific groups to promote benefits and maximise take-up rates. For example, people from non-white minority ethnic groups face particular barriers, especially those with English as a second language. Social Security Scotland creates all its promotional materials in seven alternative community languages with other languages available on request. Materials are written for a reading age of 9 years, the average reading age in Scotland.

Disabled people are another group more likely to live in poverty. To maximise awareness and promote take-up of ADP and CDP, it was reported in 2022 that Social Security Scotland had delivered 110 engagement events with over 6,500 stakeholders signing up to attend⁶¹. The Charter makes the commitment that disabled people who need help with the application process can access independent advocacy. The new Social Security Independent Advocacy Service launched in January 2022, and has cleared over 3,900 client cases to date – supporting people to access and apply for devolved benefits⁶¹.

More generally there has been an extensive programme of research to understand experiences of seldom heard groups, including survivors of domestic abuse, mobile and prison populations and care experienced young people⁶². These insights were used, for example, to design more inclusive, accessible information and simpler application processes.

The Charter also commits Social Security Scotland to delivering services in local communities, and ensuring these are provided in places that are convenient and accessible. Local Delivery support is now available across 197 outreach venues in every local authority in Scotland. In 2022-23 over 50,000 appointments were completed helping people to access devolved payments, of which over 27,000 were conducted in people's homes. As part of a test-and-learn programme funded by the Scottish Government, dedicated welfare rights advisors have been provided in up to 180 GP practices across Scotland's most deprived settings and remote rural and island communities since 2021. Early findings have already highlighted the value of this approach. Almost 10,000 people were supported by the service between January 2022 and March 2023 and were helped to take up £16.2 million of benefits they were eligible for; 89% of those were 'new' users of advice⁶¹.

⁶² Scottish Government (2022) [Social Security Experience Panels: Seldom heard voices](#)

Understanding people’s experiences of the devolved benefits system

Progress towards meeting the commitments contained in the Charter is measured annually and reported⁶³ using a framework⁶⁴ of measures co-designed with people who receive benefits .

The 2022-23 Measuring our Charter report⁶³ indicates that the vast majority of Social Security Scotland clients had a positive experience. 93% of Client Survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated with kindness and 88% of applicants agreed or strongly agreed that the benefits application process was clear.

Analysis of client experience broken down by protected characteristic and socio-economic information showed relatively small differences between groups⁶⁵. For example, minority ethnic respondents were more likely than White respondents to agree that they ‘felt trusted’ (91% compared to 86%) and that Social Security Scotland staff made them ‘feel comfortable’ (95% compared to 89%). A slightly smaller proportion of people aged 16-24 (84%) said they ‘felt trusted’ compared to older age groups.

When considering clients’ experience by benefit, in 2022-23¹⁸ people with experience of YCG were consistently less likely to agree that staff made them feel ‘comfortable’, ‘listened to’ or ‘trusted’ compared with respondents who had experience of the 11 other benefits. This had not been the case in 2021-22 and could therefore be a temporary finding or due to the small number of responses (113) from recipients of YCG.

Approval rates for benefits applications were also found to differ between certain protected characteristics⁶⁵. For example, between December 2020 and May 2021 applicants from Asian ethnic groups (71%) were less likely to be successful compared to those from African (77%), White (76%) and mixed or multiple ethnic groups (78%). Multiple factors, including English language ability or disability, could potentially account for such differences but the evidence available precludes this type of analysis.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, people whose benefits applications were successful had a much more positive view of the process than those whose applications were refused.

Conclusion

Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government have made extensive efforts to maximise the take-up of Scottish benefits, including among marginalised groups and in areas of higher deprivation. These efforts are likely to have enhanced the positive outcomes associated with the benefits administered by Social Security Scotland, for example by addressing income inequalities and fostering a belief

⁶³ Social Security Scotland (2023) [Measuring our Charter 2022-23](#)

⁶⁴ Social Security Scotland (2019) [Measuring Our Charter: Are Social Security Scotland and Scottish Government delivering what Our Charter promised?](#)

⁶⁵ Scottish Government (2021) [Social Security Scotland client diversity and equalities analysis December 2020 to May 2021](#)

among individuals, including those from marginalised groups who may not previously have applied, that they are entitled to benefits. Evidence from large scale surveys of clients to date shows that the vast majority of people who have interacted with Social Security Scotland are positive about their experience and feel that they have been treated with kindness and respect.

6. Building on and improving the evidence base

Context

As set out [in the background section](#), the Scottish Government has taken a different approach to the rest of UK in designing its new devolved social security system⁶⁶. Social Security investment represents a sizeable proportion of the overall Scottish budget¹; There is a great deal of interest in the new Scottish approach and some bold claims^{67,68,69,70} from some external commentators about the potential impact of SCP in particular.

It is therefore important to invest in gathering high quality evidence to understand how each of these benefits contributes to the achievement of wider Scottish Government outcomes, as well as whether they are achieving their stated short and medium term outcomes. The majority of social security spending over the next five years is currently forecast to be on ADP, CDP and SCP ([see 'Distribution of social security spending across benefits'](#)). Robust monitoring and evaluation needs to be in place for these three benefits.

Most evaluation evidence relates to the first wave of devolved benefits, often from interim evaluations. Ongoing and future evaluation work is summarised in [Annex B](#).

As set out [in the background section](#), this review synthesises evidence of impact to date in relation to: how security spending can help people move into, or stay in, work and participate in society; provide protection and act as a safety net in times of need; and act as early intervention to give people the best possible chances in life. Much of the social security evaluation work conducted thus far has focused on the effectiveness of benefits delivery and operations. This is because a key priority has been to ensure the safe and secure transfer of cases so that clients already in receipt of benefits do not experience an interruption in their payments. Evidence in relation to the effectiveness of delivery and value for money are outside the agreed scope of this review and are being examined in other work. It should also be noted that typically, benefit payments do not undergo value for money assessments because they represent transfer payments within the economy (e.g. from government to citizens), and are normally excluded from the social benefits included in cost benefit analysis as set out in HM Treasury Green Book guidance⁷¹.

Although outside the scope of this review, it should be noted that policy action in other areas, e.g. employability, housing, mental health, also has the potential to reduce – or increase - demand for social security benefits. It is therefore not possible to evaluate the outcomes of social security policy in isolation, and robust evaluation of these closely-linked policy areas is also important.

⁶⁶ Scottish Government (2019) [Social Security Scotland: our charter](#)

⁶⁷ Dorling, D (2023) [Scotland is showing us the route to a fairer society](#) (The Scotsman 19 August 2023)

⁶⁸ BBC News (2023) [Child poverty: Could Wales cut rates by copying Scotland?](#) (last accessed: 29 November 2023)

⁶⁹ Fitzpatrick, S et al. (2023) [Destitution in the UK 2023](#) Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁷⁰ Ditchburn, S (2023) [Why aren't more people talking about the Scottish Child Payment?](#) David Hume Institute (last accessed 29 November 2023)

⁷¹ HM Treasury (2020) [The Green Book: appraisal and evaluation in central government](#)

Challenges

Producing high quality evidence of the type needed is methodologically challenging and requires significant investment. Figure 3 below summarises some of the main challenges when considering the strengths and limitations of the evidence available to date.

Figure 3 Summary of main evaluation challenges

Assessing long term change. Assessing the impact of benefits on longer term outcomes (and preventative savings) will take time to observe, even where plans for doing so are in place.
Need for quantitative data. Robust quantitative evidence, including data linkage, is needed to fully assess impact but is not yet available. Extracting such data requires resources. Qualitative interview data with benefit recipients can help to describe how change happens, but findings cannot be generalised to the wider population.
Demonstrating causality. Social security benefits are just one element of a wider package of policy interventions and support; this makes it challenging to directly attribute any changes either to a specific benefit, or to benefits more generally.
Ethical sensitivities. Data collection can be intrusive, particularly for households living in poverty and facing multiple challenges. The use of control groups to measure the causal impact of benefits is also problematic and usually only possible in instances where benefits are rolled out to different areas or groups over a period of time. Collecting more client data can also conflict with the principle of making access to benefits as easy as possible.

Strengths of the current evidence base

The overarching approach to evaluating the outcomes of the social security benefits is set out in two evaluation strategies; the first in 2019⁸⁴ considered devolved benefits and a more recent strategy in 2021 covers plans for evaluation of the devolved disability benefits⁷². A benefit take-up strategy was also published in 2021⁷³ and Scottish Government analysts produce annual estimates of take-up rates for a range of Scottish benefits⁷⁴.

Analytical work is being undertaken to understand the experiences of social security clients. Logic models have been developed for the Carers Allowance Supplement, YCG, FSP, JSP, CWHP and the Five Family Payments. These articulate theories of change and set out the anticipated short and medium term outcomes and longer term impacts of each benefit. Commissioned evaluations have been completed for CAS, FSP, CWHP, JSP and BSF and interim evaluations completed for the Five Family Payments (BSG, BSF and SCP), and YCG. Modelling has also been

⁷² Scottish Government (2022) [Devolution of disability benefits: evaluation strategy](#)

⁷³ Scottish Government (2021) [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018 - benefit take-up strategy - October 2021: measuring take-up of low-income benefits](#)

⁷⁴ Scottish Government (2023) [Take-up rates of Scottish benefits: November 2023](#)

conducted and published that estimates the impact of benefits on child poverty rates⁷⁵ using micro-simulation, as well as internal work linking the Five Family Payments to the National Performance Framework.

There is clearly a great deal of analysis underway to understand the experiences of social security clients and how the delivery of social security benefits could be improved.

Building on and improving the evidence base

A number of evidence gaps emerge from this evidence synthesis. Addressing these could be the focus of a longer term evaluation framework for the devolved benefits system in Scotland. Identified gaps to date include the extent to which benefits administered by Social Security Scotland support:

- Impact on employment outcomes (beyond initial promising evidence from the Job Start payment and Young Carer Grant)
- Participation in early years education by children and in further education or training by parents (and any contributions to reducing the education attainment gap)
- Economic impacts more broadly
- Longer term health and wellbeing
- Preventative savings over time as a result of reduced demand for public services e.g. health and social care, and also for benefits themselves over time due to factors such as a reduction in future social problems that result from investment in benefits now

To date there is also a lack of evidence of how outcomes vary by equality group; the 2019 benefits evaluation strategy envisages this detailed evaluation will be undertaken⁸⁴ These points are expanded on below.

Impact evaluation – areas for future development

Several evaluations note that a full assessment of progress towards medium and long term outcomes for recently devolved benefits will require more time to have passed since the benefit was implemented as well as access to robust quantitative data. However, although plans for long term evaluation need to be in place, progress against short term outcomes may provide an important indication of progress. For example, the BSG evaluation¹² stated ‘we can reasonably expect that if success against short and medium term policy outcomes associated with a specific payment is achieved, then this could contribute (to some extent) to better outcomes in the future.’

The long term outcomes that the Scottish Government is trying to achieve, such as improved health, will take time to determine and are affected by a range of factors and other SG government policies and packages of support. Demonstrating causality is methodologically difficult and ultimately assessing the impact of social security

⁷⁵ Scottish Government (2022) [Scottish Child Payment - estimating the effect on child-poverty](#)

benefits in terms of *contribution* rather than attribution may be a more realistic approach.

There is currently a lack of robust quantitative evidence relating to the wider outcomes associated with benefits administered by Social Security Scotland. Most of the evaluation evidence collected to date is made up of qualitative interviews with benefit recipients and while valuable, remains a subjective assessment of impact.

There is also currently a lack of longitudinal evidence tracking the outcomes for benefit recipients over time although, as set out in [Annex B](#), there are plans to commission longitudinal qualitative research with a small number of recipients as part of the planned Five Family Payments evaluation.

Well-evidenced logic models are an important foundation for evaluation. Because there have been few changes to eligibility or payment amounts (outside of annual uprating), the focus of the evaluation work for these new disability benefits has so far focused on evaluating key reforms related to delivery of the disability benefits. There are therefore currently no detailed impact logic models for the new adult and child disability benefits of the type developed for most of the earlier low-income and carer benefits that set out the anticipated short, medium and long term outcomes of the benefit itself for individuals and society⁷⁶. A logic model is currently being developed covering both the impact of the reforms on delivery and the relationship between the benefits and how they are delivered with wider societal impacts associated with the new disability benefits; this is intended to complement the low income benefits logic models.

There is relatively little evidence available to understand the impact of benefits on child development, employment, housing, educational attainment, and outcomes associated with the economy. This may be partly due to the type of evaluation evidence available to date and also the demographic characteristics of the benefit recipients who took part in the evaluations of BSG, BSF and SCP. Many were parents of pre-school children who were not actively seeking employment. Internal analysis is being developed to understand how benefits may influence whether individuals move into paid work, work more hours, or earn more through employment. Given that income from employment is one of the three main drivers of child poverty, the lack of published evidence so far relating to the impact on employment was identified as an area where further analytical work would be beneficial.

More detailed evidence in relation to application approvals between groups with different protected characteristics is required to better understand why some groups appear to be more successful in their applications. For example, a 2023 statistical report⁷⁷ analysed application approval rates by equalities groups and found that these can differ by much as 35 percentage points between some ethnic groups (e.g. Hindu 48% compared with Jewish 83%) and by gender (men 69% compared to women 83%). Although such breakdowns are useful, the report does not state

⁷⁶ Evaluations of policy changes such as the provision of supporting information for ADP and SCP have also been completed but these are not discussed in detail here as they relate mainly to delivery

⁷⁷ Scottish Government (2023) [Social Security Scotland Client Diversity and Equalities Analysis June 2021 to March 2023](#)

whether these differences are meaningful, or what factors might explain them. Additional analysis to provide context and possible explanations for any unexpected differences (e.g. differences in English language ability) would assist with equalities monitoring. Currently it is not possible to say what might be driving such differences, or if action is needed to address them.

Economic impact – opportunities and challenges for future learning

Economic modelling is complex and requires robust quantitative data. Nevertheless, economic analysis techniques have been used in the social security context in Scotland to understand the expected economic impact of benefit expenditure policies. For example, the Outline Business Case⁷⁸ for the agency in Scotland published in 2017 compared the costs and benefits of a range of options of delivering social security assistance in Scotland. This analysis found favourable results for each, compared with the do nothing/continuation of DWP delivery option. It compared the costs of delivery (e.g. staff costs) with the expected benefits of re-distributing revenue from taxes to low income households in receipt of benefits. HM Treasury Green Book guidance assigns a higher true value to expenditure to low income households due to the theory of diminishing marginal utility of income – where the value of an additional pound of income is higher for a low income recipient and lower for a high income recipient⁷⁹.

The Social Security Programme Business Case was also published by the Scottish Government in February 2020 in line with HM Treasury Green Book guidance. It set out a view of the whole life costs and benefits of the Programme over a 30 year time horizon to 2050⁸⁰. Different options for delivering SCP were also assessed against policy objectives⁸¹ and a Multi Criteria Analysis was conducted and published that compared the effectiveness of a range of options for delivering Carer Support Payment, against a set criteria of policy objectives⁸².

Although there was empirical and qualitative evidence to show that most families spend - rather than save - benefits payments, thus boosting consumer spending, a more comprehensive economic assessment would be needed to assess the overall net impact (e.g. considering both the costs and benefits) of social security spending on the wider economy).

Improving outcomes for people is likely to require investment in services *and* benefits. For example, income from social security is only one of the three key drivers related to reducing child poverty set out within the Child Poverty Delivery Plan. With finite resources Ministers need to carefully assess what the optimum and most beneficial package of benefits and services is to achieve defined outcomes.

⁷⁸ Scottish Government (2020) [Social Security Programme Business Case](#)

⁷⁹ HM Treasury (2023) [The Green Book \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸⁰ Scottish Government (2023) [Social Security Programme Business Case](#)

⁸¹ Scottish Government (2019) [Income supplement: analysis of options](#)

⁸² Scottish Government (2022) [Scottish Carer's Assistance: consultation Supporting documents - Multi Criteria Analysis](#)

This involves assessing trade-offs and using evidence to understand how spending on both services and benefits contribute to outcomes.

Ongoing and future analysis

Ongoing and planned analysis to evaluate the impact of social security spending is summarised in [Annex B – Ongoing and future evaluation plans](#). Of particular note in relation to impact are the evaluations of the Five Family Payments planned for 2024-25 and including longitudinal research with recipients. The possibility of linking social security data to existing datasets is also being explored⁸³. This could allow the impact of SCP on health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people to be better assessed.

Moving forward it will be important to continue to ensure that the development of social security policy in Scotland is informed by high quality evidence relating to both the delivery of benefits and the outcomes associated with Social Security Scotland spending.

⁸³ Scottish Government (2021) [Devolution of disability benefits: evaluation strategy](#)

7. Annex A – Summary of benefits included in this review

1. Scottish Child Payment (SCP) (U16s)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Scottish Child Payment is intended to deliver regular, additional financial help to low-income families. It is one of a range of Scottish Government policies intended to tackle child poverty.
- **How much is it?** It is a weekly payment of £25 for each child in the family aged under 16, paid every four weeks.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is paid to the main person looking after the eligible child, or their partner.
- **Who is eligible for it?** People who live in Scotland, receive a qualifying benefit, and are responsible for a child aged under 16.
- **When was it introduced?** Scottish Child Payment opened for applications in November 2020, and launched in February 2021.
- **Was the introduction of the benefit phased?** Initially introduced at £10 per week for eligible families with children under six in February 2021. In April 2022, increased to £20 per week. From November 2022, it had increased to £25 per week and was extended to include eligible children under 16.
- **Take-up rates?** Take-up was estimated to be 95% for children aged 0-5 in the 2022-23 financial year. The estimated take-up rate of children aged 6 to 15 at the end of the financial year in March 2023 is 77%. Overall, the estimated take-up rate of all children aged under 16 at the end of the financial year in March 2023 is 83%. These estimates will be updated in Autumn 2024.
- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** The benefit is not available in the rest of the UK.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is legally required to be uprated each year by inflation and will be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £189,984,175.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £427 million in 2023-24.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The forecast average caseload for the benefit is 327,000 in 2023-24.

2. Best Start Grant (BSG) – Pregnancy & Baby Payment; Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Best Start Grant aims to reduce pressure on low-income families. Is comprised of three payments, described in the table. It is not available in the rest of the UK.
- **Who is eligible for it?** Parents and carers who live in Scotland and are responsible for a child. Those aged over 18 must be on a qualifying benefit, unless they are aged 18/19 and are dependent on someone else i.e. named on their parent or carer's benefit claim. Those aged under 18 do not need to be on a qualifying benefit.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** The main person looking after the eligible child, or their partner.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £22 million in 2023-24.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is not legally required to be uprated each year by inflation, but will be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts (December 2023) and the funding envelope.

Pregnancy and Baby Payment:

- Introduced in December 2018.
- Helps with the costs of having a baby.
- £702.25 on the birth of the first child, and £353.65 on the birth of subsequent children.
- Take-up was estimated to be 83% in 2021-22. This estimate will be updated in Autumn 2024.
- Total value of payments was £6,726,667 in 2022-23.
- The forecast caseload for the benefit is 17,000 in 2023-24.

Early Learning Payment

- Introduced in April 2019.
- Helps with the costs of early learning and support child development.
- £294.70 for children between 2 and 3.5 years old.

- Take-up was estimated to be 80% in 2020-21. This estimate will be updated in Autumn 2024.
- Total value of payments was £7,009,617 in 2022-23.
- The forecast caseload for the benefit is 25,000 in 2023-24.

School Age Payment

- Introduced in June 2019.
- Helps with the costs of preparing for school.
- £294.70 around the time a child is first old enough to start school.
- Take-up was estimated to be 97% in 2022-23. This estimate will be updated in Autumn 2024.
- Total value of payments was £5,804,114 in 2022-23.
- The forecast caseload for the benefit is 22,000 in 2023-24.

3. Best Start Foods (BSF)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Best Start Foods is a prepaid card which is designed to provide financial support for low income families to buy healthy foods like milk, fruit and vegetables. The card can be used like a normal bank card with contactless or Chip & Pin features.
- **How much is it?** It is a weekly payment of £4.95 for pregnant women and families with children aged 1 and 2, while families with children aged under 1 receive a double payment of £9.90 to support both the mother and the child. Payments are made every four weeks.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is paid to either (i) the pregnant woman or their partner, or (ii) the main person looking after the eligible child or their partner.
- **Who is eligible for it?** People who live in Scotland and are either pregnant or responsible for a child aged under 3. Those aged 18 or over must be on a qualifying benefit and, where applicable, an income threshold applies (note that income thresholds will be removed in 2024). Those aged under 18 do not need to be on any benefits to qualify for Best Start Foods.
- **When was it introduced?** Best Start Foods was launched in August 2019. It replaced the UK Government's Healthy Start scheme in Scotland, with the transition period completed by the end of March 2020. Healthy Start is still available to low income families in the rest of the UK.

- **Was the introduction of the benefit phased?** The introduction of the benefit was not phased.
- **Take-up rates?** Take-up was estimated to be 92% in the 2022-23 financial year. This estimate will be updated in Autumn 2024.
- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** Best Start Foods replaced the Healthy Start scheme in Scotland. Healthy Start is still available in the rest of the UK.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is not legally required to be uprated each year by inflation, but will be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts (December 2023) and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £12,605,200.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £14 million in 2023-24.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The forecast average caseload for the benefit is 42,000 in 2023-24.

4. Funeral Support Payment (FSP)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Funeral Support Payment is designed to contribute towards the cost of a funeral for people on low incomes, with an overall aim of reducing funeral-related poverty and supporting people through the bereavement process.
- **How much is it?** The average payment is £1,800, but the actual amount depends on a number of factors. The payment includes a fixed rate for funeral costs, and it can also be used for other costs - i.e. burial or cremation costs, travel costs, transport costs to move the person who died, document costs, and medical costs. Currently, the fixed rate for funeral costs is £1178.75 if the person who died did not have a pre-paid funeral plan, or £143.85 if the person who died did have a pre-paid funeral plan.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** The person who is responsible for the funeral costs, or their partner.
- **Who is eligible for it?** People who live in Scotland, receive a qualifying benefit (or have a partner who receives one), and who are reasonably responsible for funeral costs (or have a partner who is responsible for funeral costs).
- **When was it introduced?** Funeral Support Payment was launched in September 2019.
- **Was the introduction of the benefit phased?** The introduction of the benefit was not phased.

- **Take-up rates?** Take-up was estimated to be 61% in the 2022-23 financial year. This estimate will be updated in Autumn 2024.
- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** Funeral Support Payment replaced the UK Government's Funeral Expenses Payment, which is still available to people on low incomes in the rest of the UK.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is legally required to be uprated each year by inflation and as such will be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £9,193,913.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £13 million in 2023-24.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The forecast caseload for the benefit is 6,000 in 2023-24.

5. Job Start Payment (JSP)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Job Start Payment is designed to help young people on low incomes meet some of the initial costs of starting work, including transport costs.
- **How much is it?** It is a one-off payment of either £294.70, or £471.50 for the main carers of children.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is paid to the young person who is starting work.
- **Who is eligible for it?** People who on the date of the job offer: (a) are living in Scotland, (b) are aged 16-24, (c) have been offered a paid job which averages at least 12 hours per week over a four week period, and (d) have been out of paid work and receiving an income related benefit continuously for six months or more. Care leavers only have to be out of work and in receipt of a qualifying benefit on the date of job offer, not the preceding six months. They can also claim Job Start Payment until their 26th birthday.
- **When was it introduced?** Job Start Payment was launched in August 2020.
- **Was the introduction of the benefit phased?** The introduction of the benefit was not phased.
- **Take-up rates?** Take-up was estimated to be 15% in the 2022-23 financial year. This estimate will be updated in Autumn 2024.
- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** The benefit is not available in the rest of the UK.

- **Uprating?** The benefit is not legally required to be uprated each year by inflation, but will still be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts (December 23) and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £125,386.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The benefit is not forecast by SFC as it falls below their materiality limit.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The benefit is not forecast by SFC as it falls below their materiality limit.

6. Child Winter Heating Payment (CWHP)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Child Winter Heating Payment is designed to help the most severely disabled children and young people and their families with increased heating costs over the winter.
- **How much is it?** It is one payment made between October and March. The payment for 2023-2024 is £235.70.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is generally paid to the main person who is looking after the child or young person (on the child and/or young person's behalf).
- **Who is eligible for it?** In the third full week in September (i.e. the 'qualifying week'), children and young people in Scotland who are under 19 and receive a qualifying benefit are eligible. The qualifying benefits are (i) the highest rate of the care component of Child Disability Payment, (ii) the highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance for Children, (iii) the enhanced daily living component of Personal Independence Payment, or (iv) the enhanced rate of the daily living component of Adult Disability Payment.
- **When was it introduced?** The first payments were made in Winter 2020-21.
- **Was the introduction of the benefit phased?** Inclusion of those on the enhanced rate of the daily living component of PIP was introduced in November 2021, and inclusion of those on the enhanced rate of ADP was introduced in March 2022. This resulted in a significant proportion of payments being backdated.
- **Take-up rates?** N/A – Child Winter Heating Payment is paid automatically to children or young people who meet the eligibility criteria on at least one day of the qualifying week.
- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** The benefit is not available elsewhere in the UK.

- **Uprating?** The benefit is not legally required to be uprated each year by inflation, but will still be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts (Dec 2023) and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £5,685,000.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £7 million in 2023-24.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The forecast caseload for the benefit is 28,000 in 2023-24.

7. Young Carer Grant (YCG)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Young Carer Grant is designed to help young carers improve their own quality of life by taking part in opportunities which are the norm for non-caring peers, and to provide some recognition for their unpaid caring role.
- **How much is it?** It is a one-off payment of £359.65 which can be applied for annually by young people aged 16, 17 or 18 with caring responsibilities.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is paid to the young carer.
- **Who is eligible for it?** Carers aged 16, 17 or 18 years old who have been caring for an average of 16 hours per week for at least 13 weeks before application. The care cannot be part of a volunteer scheme or paid job, and if more than one young person cares for the same person they should agree who should apply for the grant. Young people with no recourse to public funds can apply for Young Carer Grant without risking their immigration status.
- **When was it introduced?** Young Carer Grant was launched in October 2019.
- **Was the introduction of the benefit phased?** The introduction of the benefit was not phased.
- **Take-up rates?** Take-up was estimated to be 75% in the 2022-23 financial year. This estimate will be updated in Autumn 2024.
- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** The benefit is not available in the rest of the UK.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is legally required to be uprated each year by inflation and as such will be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £856,341.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The benefit is not forecast by SFC as it falls below their materiality limit.

- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The benefit is not forecast by SFC as it falls below their materiality limit.

8. Child Disability Payment (CDP) (extended to 18)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Child Disability Payment provides support for the extra costs that a disabled child might have. A child's disability can be either physical or mental and Child Disability Payment can be claimed even if the child does not have an official diagnosis.
- **How much is it?** There are two components with different rates depending on the severity of the child's disability.
 - The **care** component has a lowest (£26.90), middle (£68.10), and highest (£101.70) weekly rate.
 - The **mobility** component has a lower (£26.90) and higher (£71.00) weekly rate.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is paid into the bank account stipulated on the application form. Any adult with parental responsibilities and rights or a guardian can apply for Child Disability Payment. In some cases an appointee can apply if the child does not live with a parent or guardian. If the child is terminally ill anyone can apply for the child as long as the person applying has the informed consent from the parent, guardian or appointee.
- **Who is eligible for it?** Disabled children aged under 16 who either (a) live in Scotland or (b) live in the European Economic Area (EEA), Switzerland or Gibraltar and have a genuine link to Scotland. When making a decision on a claim, Social Security Scotland has access detailed decision making guidance, experienced medical practitioners, and specialist advisers with extensive knowledge and experience of working in health and social care.
- **When was it introduced?** Introduction of the benefit was phased:
 - Child Disability Payment was piloted for new applicants in Dundee City, Perth and Kinross and the Western Isles in July 2021. It was rolled out to new applicants across Scotland in November 2021.
 - Children in Scotland who were already claiming the UK Government's Disability Living Allowance for Children have had their cases automatically transferred to Child Disability Payment. The case transfer process began in October 2021 for children aged over 15 and a half, and Spring 2022 for children under 15 and a half. As of June 2023, 99% of cases had been transferred to Child Disability Payment.
- **Take-up rates?** N/A - Estimates of take-up are not yet available for the benefit.

- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** Child Disability Payment replaces the UK Government's Disability Living Allowance for children, which is still available to disabled children in the rest of the UK.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is legally required to be uprated each year by inflation and as such will be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £201,717,500. This includes new applicants and case transfers.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £378 million in 2023-24. This includes Child DLA expenditure administered by DWP.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The forecast average caseload for the benefit is 73,000 in 2023-24. This includes people receiving Child DLA from DWP.

9. Adult Disability Payment (ADP)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Adult Disability Payment provides support for people who have a disability or a long term health condition that affects their everyday life.
- **How much is it?** There are two components with different rates depending on how the person's condition affects their ability to do everyday activities or get around.
 - The **daily living** component has a standard weekly award (£26.90) and an enhanced weekly award (£101.75).
 - The **mobility** component has a standard weekly award (£26.90) and an enhanced weekly award (£71.00).
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is paid into the bank account stipulated on the application form. Disabled people can apply themselves, or someone can apply on their behalf (e.g. a family member, friend, carer, support worker or appointee).
- **Who is eligible for it?** People who are between 16 and State Pension age, and who have a long term physical or mental health condition, or terminal illness. Claimants must live in Scotland or live in the EEA, Switzerland or Gibraltar and have a genuine link to Scotland. When making a decision on a claim, Social Security Scotland has access detailed decision making guidance, experienced medical practitioners, and specialist advisers with extensive knowledge and experience of working in health and social care.
- **When was it introduced?** Introduction of the benefit was phased:
 - Adult Disability Payment piloted for new applicants in Dundee City, Perth and Kinross and the Western Isles in March 2022. It was rolled out to new applicants across Scotland in August 2022.

- People in Scotland who were already claiming the UK Government's Personal Independence Payment or Working Age Disability Living Allowance have had their cases transferred to Adult Disability Payment. The case transfer process began in August 2022 and is expected to be complete by Summer 2024. Transfers either happen automatically or are fast-tracked e.g. if the person's award is about to end or they have reported a change in their condition.
- **Take-up rates?** N/A - Estimates of take-up are not yet available for the benefit.
- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** Adult Disability Payment replaces the UK Government's Personal Independence Payment and Working Age Disability Living Allowance, which are still available to disabled people in the rest of the UK.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is legally required to be uprated each year by inflation and as such will be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £79,424,790. This includes new applicants and case transfers.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £2,677 million in 2023-24. This includes PIP expenditure administered by DWP.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The forecast average caseload for the benefit is 416,000 in 2023-24. This includes people receiving PIP from DWP.

10. Winter Heating Payment (WHP)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Winter Heating Payment is designed to help people on low income benefits who might have extra heating needs.
- **How much is it?** It is one payment of £50 that's made between February and April.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is paid to low income households that receive a qualifying benefit and meet the other eligibility criteria.
- **Who is eligible for it?** People in Scotland who on at least one day of the 'qualifying week' in November: (a) receive a qualifying benefit, and (b) meet one other specific requirement of their qualifying benefit. For example, people who are employed (or self-employed) and receive Universal Credit must also get a child or young person disability entitlement.
- **When was it introduced?** The first payments were made in Winter 2022-23.
- **Was the introduction of the benefit phased?** The introduction of the benefit was not phased.

- **Take-up rates?** N/A – Winter Heating Payment is paid automatically to people who meet the eligibility criteria on at least one day of the qualifying week.
- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** Winter Heating Payment replaced the UK Government’s Cold Weather Payment, which is still available to eligible people on low incomes in the rest of the UK.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is not legally required to be uprated each year by inflation but will still be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts (December 2023) and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in Winter 2022-23 was £19,706,500.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £22 million in 2023-24.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The forecast caseload for the benefit is 397,000 in 2023-24.

11. Carer’s Allowance Supplement (CAS)

- **What is the benefit designed to do?** Carers Allowance Supplement is a temporary top-up of Carer’s Allowance until the Scottish Government takes on full responsibility for the benefit. It is intended to have a positive impact on carer’s finances and their quality of life, and recognise carers for their contribution to society.
- **How much is it?** It is two payments in total - £270.50 in June and December. There are no applications for Carer’s Allowance Supplement - payments are made automatically based on receipt of Carer’s Allowance.
- **Who is the benefit paid to?** It is paid to the carer.
- **Who is eligible for it?** People who live in Scotland (or have a genuine and sufficient link to Scotland) and are in receipt of Carer’s Allowance on the qualifying dates. There are other conditions – i.e. carers must be over 16, not in full-time education, not earning more than £128 per week after tax, and be providing at least 35 hours of unpaid care per week to someone in receipt of certain disability benefits.
- **When was it introduced?** The first payments were made in September/October 2018.
- **Was the introduction of the benefit phased?** The introduction of the benefit was not phased.
- **Take-up rates?** N/A - It is automatically paid to people who claim Carer’s Allowance. However, this does not mean that all eligible carers in Scotland claim Carer’s Allowance. The DWP does not produce estimates of take-up for Carer’s Allowance.

- **Is the benefit available in the rest of the UK?** The benefit is not available elsewhere in the UK.
- **Uprating?** The benefit is legally required to be uprated each year by inflation and as such will be uprated in 2024/25. The cost of uprating is included within the latest SFC forecasts and the funding envelope.
- **Total expenditure?** The total value of payments in 2022-23 was £42,650,000.
- **Forecast costs from SFC?** The forecast spend for the benefit is £48 million in 2023-24.
- **Forecast caseload from SFC?** The forecast caseload for the benefit is 88,000 in 2023-24.

8. Annex B – Ongoing and future evaluation plans

Benefit or topic	Future evaluation plans	Note
Take up	<p>Annual update</p> <p>Participatory research currently underway</p> <p>Updating our knowledge of who are the seldom heard voices</p>	<p>Estimated take up rates and strategy progress update published annually. Date tbc, Q4 2024.</p> <p>Partnership with the Poverty Alliance to identify impacts of stigma on benefit take up and ways of tackling this.</p> <p>Independent evidence review and secondary data analysis to confirm the identities of the current seldom heard groups as they may have changed over the last 5 years. The research will provide a robust analytical understanding of which groups are seldom heard. Findings will inform a targeted marketing strategy for devolved benefits.</p>
Five Family Payments	<p>Evaluation planned for 2024-25.</p> <p>Longitudinal research: Timing tbc</p>	<p>Will assess medium-term impact in more depth using (tbc) quantitative data from a large scale survey to produce generalisable findings. To publish in 2025.</p> <p>There are plans to commission longitudinal qualitative interviews with people who have received payments for 12 months or more; delivered in 2 waves.</p>
Scottish Child Payment	<p>Estimating the effect on child poverty</p> <p>Evaluation 2024</p>	<p>An update to this modelling result was included in the published Cumulative Impact Assessment alongside the BSBF progress report in Summer 2023.</p> <p>The MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit and Public Health Scotland are working on an evaluability assessment of the SCP, supported by SG, to be completed 2023-24. Its primary output will be describing a set of options for future evaluation, with a view to conducting evaluation work when resources can be secured to take this forward.</p>
Disability benefits	<p>Underway</p> <p>Underway</p>	<p>Evaluation programme on the devolution of disability benefits will run through to 2025-26</p>

<p>Accessible Vehicles and Equipment scheme</p> <p>Process of moving from CDP to ADP</p>	Underway	<p>Also planned:</p> <p>Special Rules for Terminal Illness Case Transfer follow up</p> <p>Duration of awards and reviews</p> <p>Overall decision making, including client consultations</p>
Adult Disability Payment	Independent Review: planned to begin early 2024	The independent review will consider people's experiences of applying for, receiving or challenging decisions about entitlement to ADP. The independent review will consider the appropriateness of the eligibility criteria, guidance and consultations. The Chair of the review will draw on existing analysis and research and consider the need for new evidence.
Carer benefits (Carer Support Payment, Carer's Allowance Supplement and Young Carer Grant)	Various stages	The evaluation programme for carer support payment is currently being scoped, with a view to looking at short, medium and long term carer benefit outcomes in the round. The Carer's Allowance Supplement will be incorporated into Carer Support Payment following the completion of case transfer from Carer's Allowance. Consideration is also being given to incorporating the further planned evaluation of Young Carer Grant into the Carer Support Payment evaluation programme as part of the scoping exercise.
Funeral Support Payment	No further evaluation committed to	There remains a commitment to review evaluation plans as policies change and/or new considerations arise
Job Start Payment	No further evaluation committed to	
Person centred approaches: Child Poverty Pathfinders	Ongoing evaluation: will include metrics on poverty and increases to Income	The two child poverty pathfinder projects aim to provide a whole systems approach to tackling child poverty. The Glasgow pathfinder for example offers a benefits maximisation services to families.
Bring services to people: Welfare rights advisors in GP practices	Test and learn phase to be completed in 2024	A robust evaluation will follow including metrics on service user financial gain and impact on deprivation and poverty.
Social Security (Scotland) Act	Later in 2023-24	A report in fulfilment of section 86A: Duty to consider effects of inflation. Will include

(2018): Devolved Social Security Assistance, Uprating for Inflation		publication of a multi criteria decision analysis of uprating options available to SG (in line with Green Book guidance).
Data linkage	Scoping work	Public Health Scotland and Social Security Scotland are currently scoping the possibility of sharing and linking data to support research and evaluation into the links between receipt of benefits and health outcomes.
Use of population surveys	TBC	The original devolved benefits evaluation plan ⁸⁴ mentions future plans to use survey data to measure long term outcomes and this continues to be pursued. There are requests in with the Chief Statistician/Data officer who are co-ordinating data requests with DWP and HMRC.

⁸⁴ Scottish Government (2019) Devolved benefits: evaluating the policy impact



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