

Scottish Welfare Fund Statistics: Update to 31 December 2017

Introduction

This publication provides information on the Scottish Welfare Fund for the latest quarter, 1 October to 31 December 2017. It also contains information from previous financial years dating back to 1 April 2013, when the scheme commenced its operation. A supplementary spreadsheet containing 42 tables and 13 charts has also been published.

Electronic versions of this document and accompanying tables and charts are available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/swf>

Summary of main points

- The Scottish Welfare Fund comprises of Community Care Grants – which help people to live independently – and Crisis Grants, which provide a safety net in a disaster or emergency.
- From when the Scottish Welfare Fund scheme began on 1 April 2013 until 31 December 2017, 285,720 individual households have received awards totalling £155.8 million. A third of households receiving an award were families with children, while just over half were single person households with no children.
- Between 1 October and 31 December 2017, local authorities received 15,240 applications for Community Care Grants (5% fewer than in the same quarter last year) and made 9,485 awards (10% fewer than in the same quarter last year). The acceptance rate was 60%, one percentage point lower than in the same quarter last year. Community Care Grant awards totalled £5.5 million in this quarter.
- During the same quarter, local authorities received 40,115 applications for Crisis Grants (8% more than in the same quarter last year) and 27,570 awards (6% more than in the same quarter last year). The acceptance rate was 68%, two percentage points lower than in the same quarter last year. Crisis grant awards totalled £2.1 million.
- 95% of Community Care Grant applications and 98% Crisis Grant applications were processed within the target time limits.
- The annual budget for Scottish Welfare Fund awards in 2017/18 (including underspend from previous years) is £34.4 million. By 31 December, three quarters of the way through the financial year, 69% of this budget had been spent.

- Since April 2013, there have been 15,805 Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants, and 8,870 for Crisis Grants. Just under half of decisions have been revised at this stage for both Community Care Grants (47%) and Crisis Grants (48%)

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Background to the Scottish Welfare Fund

On 1 April 2013, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) abolished two elements of the Social Fund - Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans - and transferred funds previously spent on them to Scottish Ministers. In its place, the Scottish Government established the Scottish Welfare Fund. The Scottish Welfare Fund is a national grant scheme run by Local Authorities, based on [guidance](#) from Scottish Ministers. The guidance has been developed in partnership with COSLA, Local Authorities and other stakeholders.

The objectives of the scheme are to:

- provide a safety net in a disaster or emergency, when there is an immediate threat to health or safety.
- enable people to live independently or continue to live independently, preventing the need for institutional care.

There are two types of grants in the Scottish Welfare Fund – Crisis Grants, and Community Care Grants.

A Crisis Grant aims to help people on a low income who are in crisis because of a disaster or an emergency. A disaster is something like a fire or a flood. An emergency might be when money has been stolen.

A Community Care Grant aims to:

- help people establish themselves in the community following a period of care, where circumstances indicate that there is a risk of the person not being able to live independently without this help;
- help people remain in the community rather than going into care where circumstances indicate that there is a risk of the person not being able to live independently without this help;
- help people set up home in the community, as part of a planned resettlement programme, following an unsettled way of life;
- help families facing exceptional pressures, with one-off items, like a cooker or a washing machine, and;
- help people to care for a prisoner or young offender on release on temporary licence.

The Scottish Welfare Fund is a discretionary, budget-limited grant scheme that prioritises applications according to need. It provides grants that do not have to be repaid. It does not provide loans.

The DWP transferred the funding spent in Scotland on its Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for Living Expenses to the Scottish Government. For 2013/14 and 2014/15 this amounted to £23.8 million. The Scottish Government topped this amount up by a further £9.2 million, giving the Scottish Welfare Fund a total budget

of £33 million for both these years. This level has been maintained at £33 million in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 by the Scottish Government. Local Authorities have been able to top this up with their own funds, together with any underspends carried forward from previous years. There is no statutory limit on the amount of money which can be spent on the Scottish Welfare Fund.

The Scottish Welfare Fund was introduced on an interim basis for the first three years, prior to setting the Fund out in law. The [Welfare Funds \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) received Royal Assent on 8 April 2015 and placed the Scottish Welfare Fund into law from 1 April 2016. The Act is supported by the [Welfare Funds \(Scotland\) Regulations 2016](#), and statutory guidance.

Local Authority Delivery

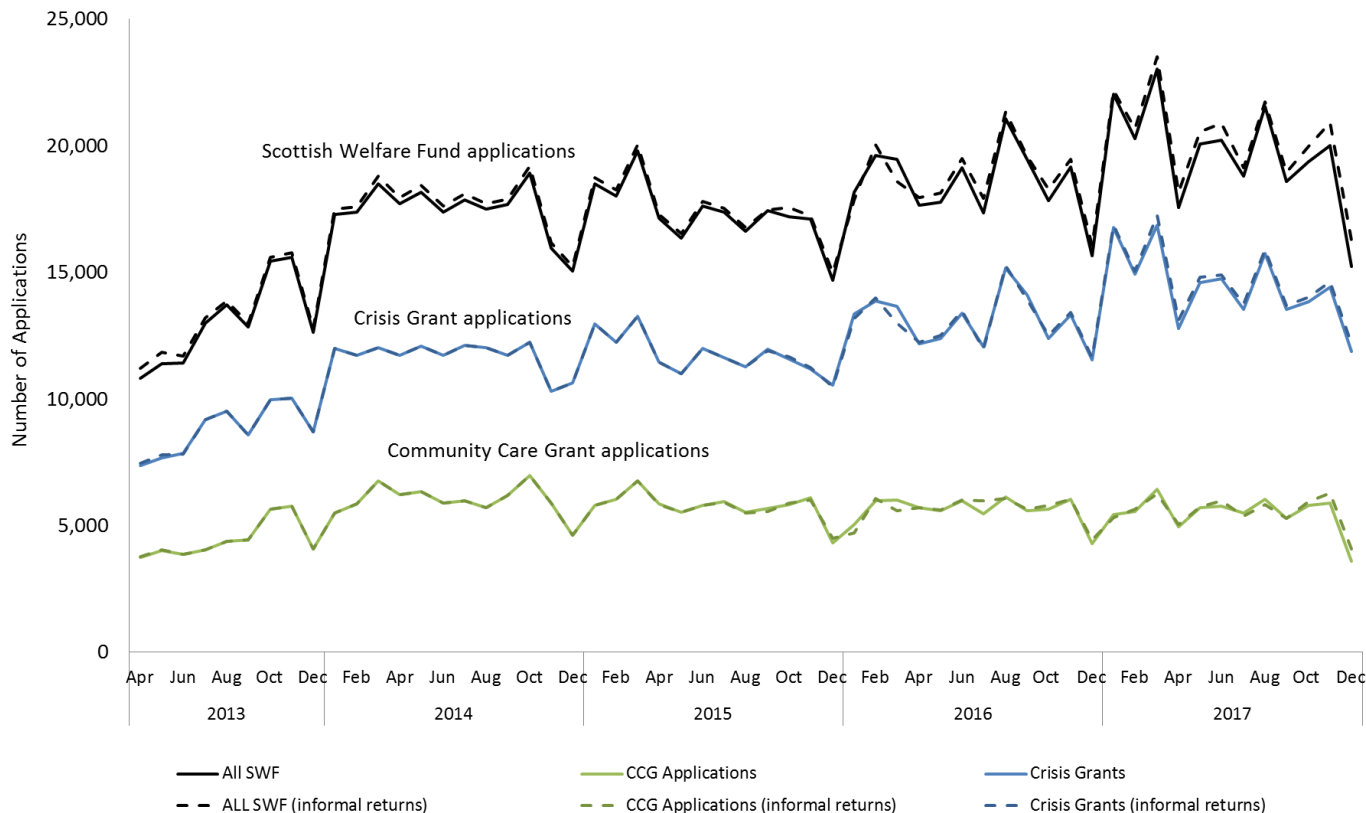
Local Authorities have the discretion to provide support in different ways. Not all grants will be cash payments. They may provide vouchers, a fuel card, or goods if they think that is the best way to meet the need.

Local Authorities also have discretion on where in their organisation they process applications and how they link the scheme to existing services.

Applications

- Between 1 October and 31 December 2017, a total of 54,610 applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund were received (**Table 1Q**). The majority of applications were for Crisis Grants (40,115, **Table 3Q**), and a smaller proportion were for Community Care Grants (15,240, **Table 2Q**). Households can apply for both Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants in the same application, hence the total number of Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants is higher than the total applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund.
- Compared to the same quarter last year (October to December 2016), the number of Community Care Grant applications decreased by 5% (725) (**Table 2Q, Chart 1**). At local authority level this varied from a 30% decrease in applications in Eilean Siar to a 25% increase in applications in Perth and Kinross (**Table 2Q**).
- Compared to the same quarter last year, the number of Crisis Grant applications increased by 8% (2,870) (**Table 3Q, Chart 1**). At local authority level this varied from a 42% increase in applications in City of Edinburgh to a 12% decrease in applications in Angus and Orkney (**Table 3Q**).

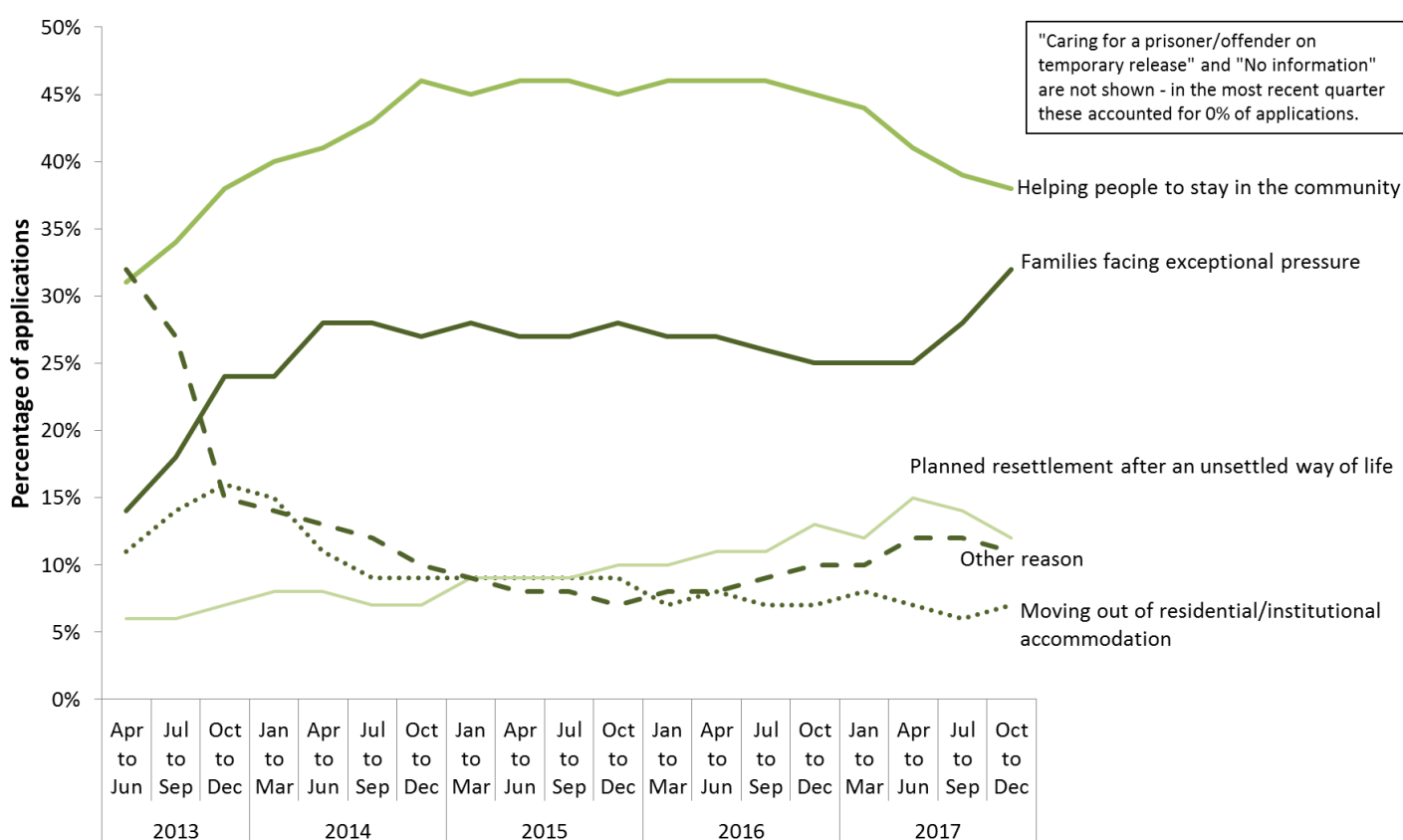
Figure 1: Applications to the Scottish Welfare Fund – Scotland (Chart 1)



- Since the same quarter last year, the number of applications from ‘Families facing exceptional pressure’ has increased by 23%, while the number for ‘Helping people to stay in the community’ has decreased by 19% (**Table 4Q**,

Chart 2). The greatest percentage change in numbers of applications in these two categories¹ has occurred in North Lanarkshire (85% increase in applications by ‘Families facing exceptional pressure’, 84% decrease in applications for ‘Helping people to stay in the community’). Within the broader category of ‘Families facing exceptional pressure’, the sub-reason which has had the greatest increase in applications at Scotland level since the same quarter last year is ‘There has been a breakdown of relationships resulting in a move’ (up 44%). For ‘Helping people to stay in the community’, the sub-reason with the greatest decrease in applications has been ‘Enabling the applicant to move to more suitable accommodation to prevent unnecessary admission to care (down 36% since the same quarter last year).

Figure 2: Reasons for Application – Community Care Grants (Chart 2)

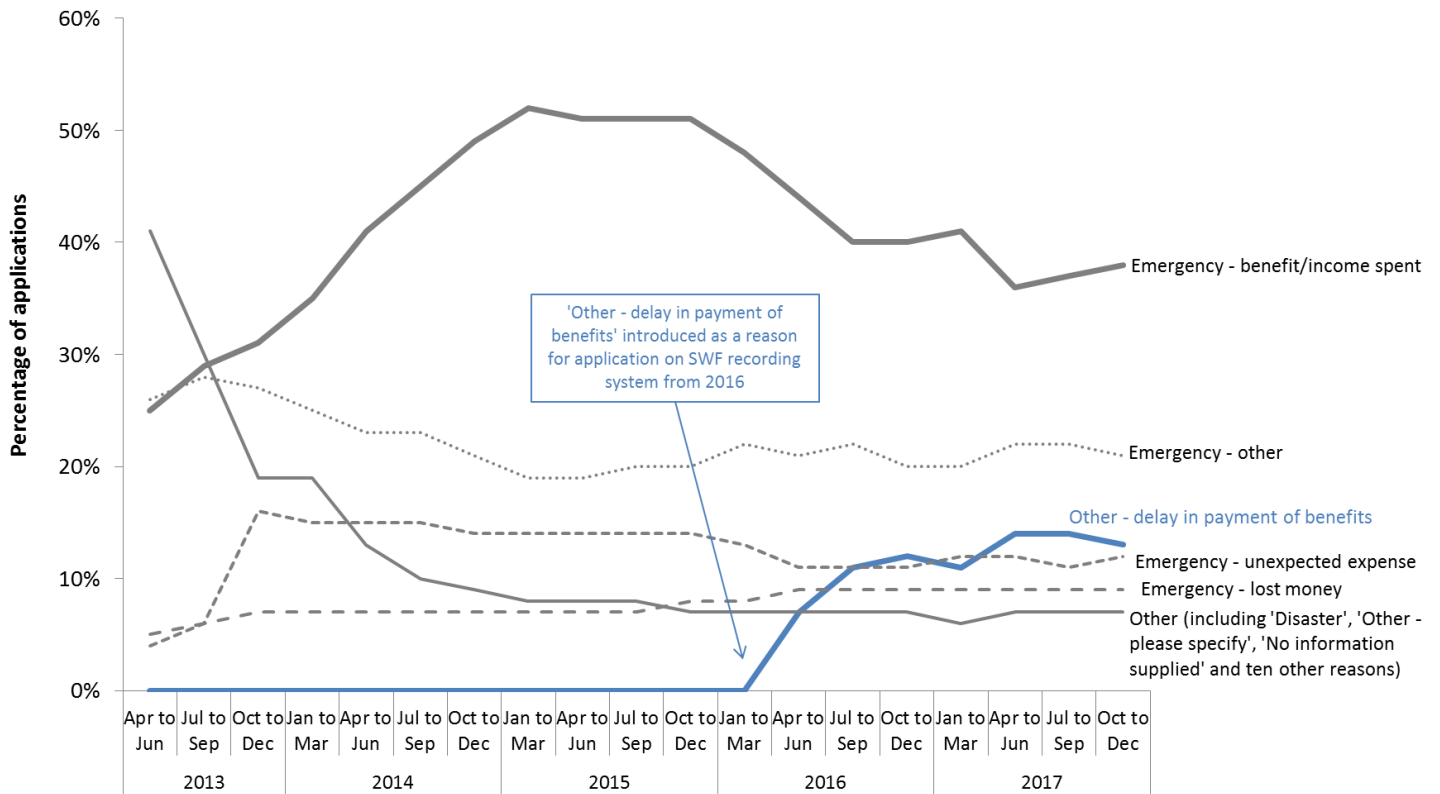


- The most common reasons for Crisis Grant applications were different types of emergency (83%) (**Table 6Q, Chart 3**). Less than 1% of applications were due to disasters such as fires and floods. Around 13% of Crisis Grants were applied for due to delay in payment of benefits, a similar proportion as in the previous quarter from July to September 2017 (14%) (**Table 6Q**). The number of applications due to delay in payment of benefits gradually

¹ Excluding the local authorities which had five or fewer applications for Community Care Grants in the latest quarter in either category – Eilean Siar, Orkney and Shetland

increased after this reason was introduced in 2016, however at this stage it is not known to what extent this is due to increasing use of this reason by Local Authorities when recording applications, as opposed to a real increase due to delays in benefits.

Figure 3: Reasons for Application – Crisis Grants (Chart 3)



Processing Times

Between 1 October and 31 December 2017:

- The processing time limit for Community Care Grants is 15 working days. 95% of Community Care Grant applications were processed within this time limit. This is an increase of four percentage points compared to the same quarter one year ago (**Table 8, Chart 4**). At the level of individual local authorities, Orkney had the lowest proportion of applications processed within the time limit at 71%. However, this is based on only 15 applications. Four local authorities processed 100% on time (Highland, Midlothian, North Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire).
- The processing time limit for Crisis Grants is two working days. 98% of applications were processed within this time limit. This figure has remained stable since April to June 2016 (**Table 10, Chart 5**). Thirteen local authorities processed 100% of applications within the time limit. Clackmannanshire has the lowest percentage processed within the time limit at 68%, however this relates to an on-going issue with how cases are recorded on the SWF IT system in Clackmannanshire as described in the [Data Quality](#) section.

Decisions, awards and expenditure

For the quarter from 1 October and 31 December 2017:

- Decisions were made on 15,775 Community Care Grant applications. The decision was to make an award in 60% of cases (9,485 awards), while the remaining 40% applications were rejected (6,290 unsuccessful applications) (**Table 12**). Overall 60% of applications were accepted, a decrease of one percentage point since the same quarter last year (**Table 14, Chart 8**).
- At local authority level, the greatest increase in Community Care Grant awards since the same quarter last year was in Dumfries and Galloway (34% increase) and the greatest decrease was in Clackmannanshire (64% decrease). The highest acceptance rate was 82% in East Renfrewshire, and the lowest was 33% in Clackmannanshire (a drop of 38 percentage points compared to the same quarter last year).
- Decisions were made on 40,295 Crisis Grants. The percentage of successful cases was slightly higher than for Community Care Grant applications, at 68% (27,570 awards) (**Table 15**). The percentage of successful cases has decreased slightly, by two percentage points since the same quarter last year (**Table 17, Chart 8**).
- At local authority level, the greatest increase in Crisis Grant awards since the same quarter last year was in East Dunbartonshire (30% increase) and the greatest decrease was in Aberdeenshire (23% decrease). The highest

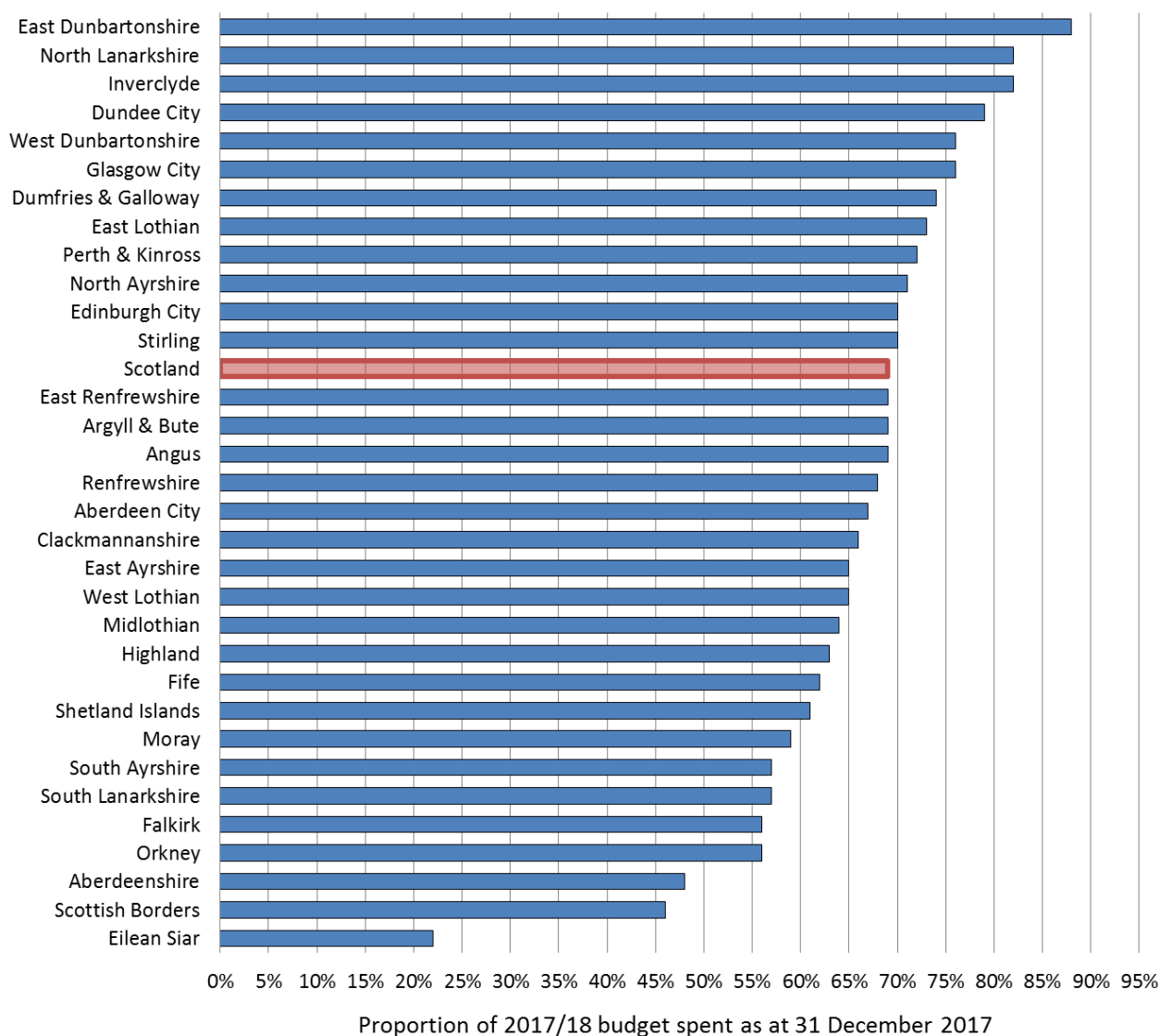
acceptance rate was 93% in Orkney, and the lowest was 40% in Scottish Borders.

- £7.7 million was spent through the Scottish Welfare Fund in total between October and December 2017, less than in October to December 2016 (£7.9 million) (**Table 22Q, Chart 7**). Although Community Care Grants accounted for a smaller proportion of awards, they accounted for a larger proportion of expenditure (£5.5 million, **Table 22Q**), due to a high average award value (£615, **Table 12**). The remaining £2.1 million was spent on Crisis Grants, with an average award value of £82 (**Table 15**).

For 2017/18, as at December 2017:

- The annual budget for Scottish Welfare Fund awards in 2017/18 (including underspend from previous years) is £34.4 million (**Table 23**).
- By the point three quarters of the way through the financial year, £23.8 million has been spent on Scottish Welfare Fund awards (**Table 25, Chart 9**). This is 69% of the available budget for awards in 2017/18. By the same point last year, 72% of the £35.8 million 2016/17 budget had been spent (**Table 25**).
- At the level of individual local authorities, six local authorities have spent over three quarters of their funds for the year: Glasgow City (76%), West Dunbartonshire (76%), Dundee City (79%), Inverclyde (82%), North Lanarkshire (82%) and East Dunbartonshire (88%) (**Table 25, Chart 10**). The remaining 24 local authorities have spent 75% or less of their funds for the year.

Figure 4: Proportion of 2017/18 budget spent as at 31 December 2017 (Chart 10)



- From 1 April 2017, the UK Government introduced a change to the entitlement for housing costs within Universal Credit (UC), resulting in people aged 18-21 years no longer being eligible, unless the individual is covered by an exemption². The policy applies to new claimants, claiming UC on or after 1 April 2017, in an area using the full, digital service. To mitigate against this, the Scottish Government extended the Scottish Welfare Fund on an interim basis to provide Community Care Grants to 18-21 year olds affected by this change³. From 1 April 2017 to 31 December 2017, local authorities spent just under £3,000 on Community Care Grants for this purpose. On 29 March 2018, it was announced that the UK government will amend regulations so

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-costs-for-18-to-21-year-olds>

³ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/fairerscotland/scottishwelfarefund/socialfund/18to21assistancewithhousingcosts>

that all 18-21 year olds will be entitled to claim support for housing costs in UC⁴.

Items and Payments

Between 1 October and 31 December 2017:

- The most common Community Care Grant expenditure was on floor coverings, beds and bedding, and kitchen appliances such as cookers, fridges and freezers (**Table 26**). In general, the most commonly awarded items and the numbers of these items awarded remain similar quarter to quarter. However, over the last year there was a 230% increase in the number of saucepans awarded, with 1,705 awarded in October to December 2017.
- The most common payment method was by provision of new goods (**Table 30**). The use of previously used goods as a method of Community Care Grant payment has been increasing since the introduction of a re-use scheme in Fife, and in this quarter 7% of payments were made in previously used goods.
- The most common Crisis Grant expenditure was on food (43% items awarded), essential heating expenses (32% items awarded) and other living expenses (19% items awarded) (**Table 28**). The most common payment method was by cash, followed by payments into bank accounts (**Table 31**).

Repeat Applications and Awards

- An application is defined as a repeat application if the household made another Community Care Grant/Crisis Grant application within the 12 months of the current application. Similarly a repeat award occurs if an award was made within 12 months of the current award.
- There is a higher rate of both repeat applications and repeat awards for Crisis Grants compared to Community Care Grants (**Chart 12**).
- From October to December 2017, nearly a quarter of Community Care Grant applications were repeats (24%, **Table 39**) compared with nearly two thirds of Crisis Grant applications (64%, **Table 41**).
- For awards, 13% of Community Care Grant awards were repeats (**Table 40**), compared with over half of Crisis Grants (55%, **Table 42**). The rate of repeat awards remained the same for Community Care Grants in this quarter

⁴ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-03-29/HCWS611>

compared to the same quarter last year (**Table 41, Chart 12**). For Crisis Grants, the rate of repeat awards was 88% in the same quarter last year (**Table 42, Chart 12**).

Reviews

- If an applicant disagrees with the outcome of their application, there are two possible review stages. Firstly, a Tier 1 review will be carried out by the Local Authority. Following this, an independent Tier 2 review may be carried out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)⁵.
- Since April 2013, there have been 15,805 Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants, and 8,870 for Crisis Grants (**Table 32**)⁶. Just under half of decisions have been revised at this stage for both Community Care Grants (47%) and Crisis Grants (48%) (**Table 33**).
- Since April 2013, around 78% of Tier 1 reviews for Community Care Grants have been made within the 15 working day target, while around 86% of Tier 1 reviews for Crisis Grants have been made within the two working day target (**Table 34**). East Ayrshire have not been able to supply information on review processing times, which accounts for a further 3% Community Care Grants and 1% Crisis Grants where it is unknown if reviews were made within target times.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

Between 1 October and 31 December 2017:

- Scottish Welfare Fund awards tend to go to applicants living in more deprived areas of Scotland. Around one in five people in Scotland live in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland, as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). However, over half of Community Care Grants (56%) and Crisis Grants (54%) were awarded to applicants living in these areas. In comparison, around 3% of Community Care Grants and 2% of Crisis Grants were awarded to applicants from the 20% least deprived areas (**Table 35 and Table 36**).
- Community Care Grant applicants in more deprived areas also tend to receive a higher average award value than applicants in less deprived areas (**Chart 11**). On average, applicants in the 20% most deprived data zones received an award that was around £100 higher than applicants in the 20%

⁵ Tier 2 reviews have been carried out by the SPSO since 1 April 2016 (previously this was done by Local Authorities). Tier 2 review statistics are published separately at: <https://www.spsso.org.uk/scottishwelfarefund/statistics>

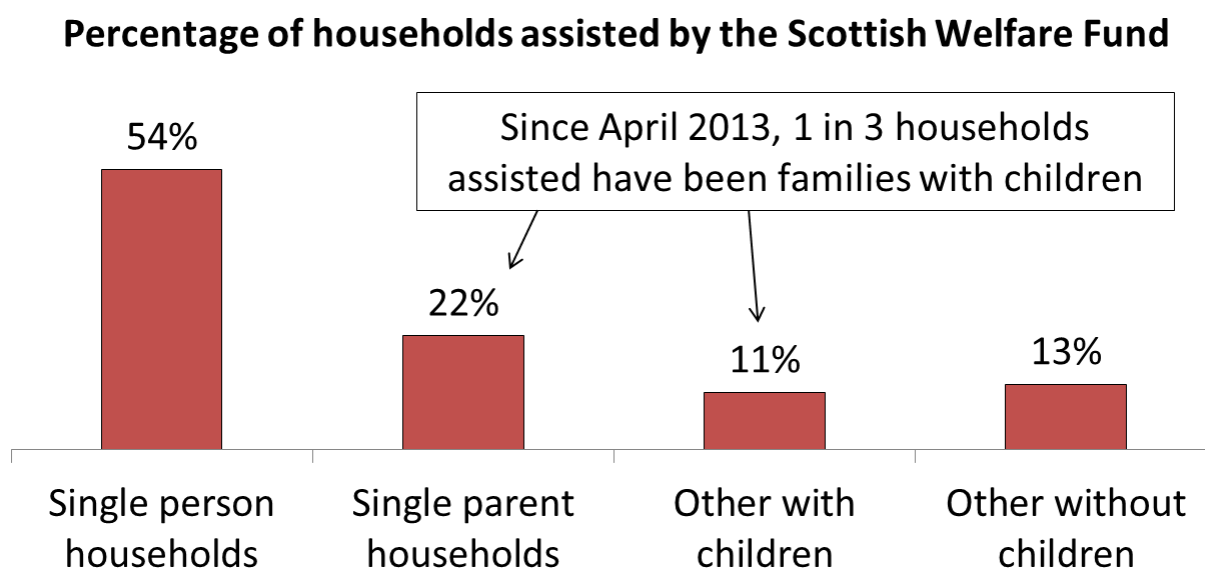
⁶ Tier 1 review information is not available for East Ayrshire for 2013.

least deprived data zones (£601 compared to £497, **Chart 11**). For Crisis Grants, average awards were similar across the different SIMD rankings (**Chart 11**).

Characteristics of Households in Receipt of Awards

- Since the scheme began in April 2013, 285,720 unique households received at least one award from the Scottish Welfare Fund. More households have received a Crisis Grant (202,525) than a Community Care Grant (152,180) (**Table 37a**).
- More Scottish Welfare Fund awards go to single person households and single parent households than would be expected based on the composition of Scottish households in general. Since the scheme began in April 2013, over half of all awards have gone to single person households, and over a fifth to single parent households (**Table 37b, Chart 13**). In comparison, the latest household estimates indicate that only 37% of households are single people, and 6% of households are single parent families⁷. Less than a quarter of Scottish Welfare Fund awards have gone to couples, couples with children or other types of household, whereas over half of households in Scotland are estimated to fall into these categories. In total around a third (33%) awards have gone to households containing children.

Figure 4: Household types of unique households receiving funds from the Scottish Welfare Fund 1 April 2013 to 31 December 2017 (Chart 13)



⁷ National Records of Scotland 'Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2016', <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/households/household-estimates/2016>

About the Data

How the data is collected

One month after the end of each quarter, Local Authorities are asked to submit an XML file containing the information as set out in the [data specification](#). This data is then uploaded to the Scottish Government's ProcXed⁸ website. Once the data has been validated by our software, the data is passed over to the Scottish Government's Communities Analytical Division. Four IT companies provide IT systems which underpin the provision of the Scottish Welfare Fund. These companies are Capita, Civica, Northgate IS and IEG4.

Data Quality

To ensure the data we receive is of the highest quality, we have asked all IT providers to implement the data specification as fully as possible. The data specification includes a number of validations. These validations are provided through an XSD schema and have also been implemented into the ProcXed system. Once Local Authorities submit data to the ProcXed system, a number of validations are triggered and warning messages appear. Local Authorities may re-submit data to fix these errors or they can comment them to explain why they believe the data to be valid. On submission of the data to the Scottish Government, each Local Authority is sent a detailed automatic report showing the contents of the data and any remaining errors.

To ensure sufficient data has been submitted, we cross check all submitted data with the informal monitoring returns submitted to the Scottish Government (**Chart 6, Chart 7**). The automatic reports sent to Local Authorities contain charts which allow them to easily see if there is a discrepancy between these two data sources.

Known data issues are as follows:

- An application is included in the quarterly data extract to the Scottish Government only when an application has been decided and when a payment has been made. For Crisis Grants, applications are less complex and payments are made quickly, resulting in almost no lag between cases being decided and being included in the data extract. However, for Community Care Grants, a large number of items may need to be ordered and payment may not occur until up to one month later, when invoices arrive. This results in a lag time between applications beginning in the Local Authority and applications being included in the extract to the Scottish Government. To rectify this problem, we are asking Local Authorities to submit data one to two months after the end of the quarter. This will ensure that, as far as possible, all relevant cases are included in the data extract.
- Some Local Authorities have experienced backlogs in entering data into their IT systems. As dates are automatically system generated, late entry of data

⁸ [ProcXed.NET](#) is Scottish Government's on-line validation software that supports local authorities in collecting and validating data.

has a knock on effect on any calculation which involves processing times or payment times.

- Some Local Authorities may not have been able to enter all of their data in time to include in this publication. Late entry of data may mean that this data appears in subsequent quarters, rather than in the quarter when the case was actually dealt with.
- Some question responses may default to “Other” in some IT systems. We are currently working with IT providers to ensure that the full range of questions and responses are available in all Local Authority IT systems.
- Some questions may not be completed at all. This includes the vulnerability and referrals questions for some Local Authorities.
- Clackmannanshire Council have a known issue which means that their processing times are longer than for other councils. This is due to a local policy of keeping applications open on the Scottish Welfare Fund IT system after a decision is made. The Scottish Government are working with Clackmannanshire Council to resolve this issue going forward so that an accurate estimate of processing times can be made.
- East Ayrshire and Orkney councils have been unable to submit data on Tier 1 reviews via the ProcXed system. Information on reviews from these local authorities has only been included in this publication since the July to September 2017 version of the publication. In the present version of the publication we have incorporated information on reviews for these local authorities where they have kept their own records. Orkney have supplied full details about all reviews carried out, however numbers are small. East Ayrshire were able to supply information for 2014 onwards only, and cannot supply information on reasons for reviews, review decisions or processing times.

We are actively working with Local Authorities to improve the quality of data collected. From August 2014 we have begun issuing a one page summary document to data providers which compares the completion of different questions across Local Authorities. In this way, we have identified issues common to IT systems and which issues are Local Authority specific.

We also receive reconciliations from Local Authorities. For example, Local Authorities may estimate the cost of carpets and the final invoice for these may be less than originally thought. This results in money being paid back into their systems. Over time, the expenditure data in the quarterly monitoring may exceed monies actually spent if reconciliations are not applied. Most recently, reconciliations have been applied to South Lanarkshire data from October to December 2017.

Data Specification

The data specification for the Scottish Welfare Fund is available at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/swf-dataspec>

Guidance to help Local Authority officers to record information is available at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/15257/1529/swf-data-guidance>

Calculation of Households

We collect information on all people within each application. To group people into household units we filter the people table to contain only the main applicant and their partner. We ensure that there is no more than two people for each application. We generate a unique household reference based on the hashed National Insurance Number, gender and date of birth of the main applicant, and if applicable, their partner.

Comparisons with other UK Statistics

Annual reports by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the Social Fund for the period prior to 1 April 2013 are available from the Department for Work and Pensions. The most recently available report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-report-by-the-secretary-of-state-for-work-and-pensions-on-the-social-fund-2012-to-2013>

In addition, data on Discretionary Social Fund applications, awards and expenditure by Local Authority from April 2012 to March 2013 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/discretionary-social-fund-by-local-authority-apr-2012-to-mar-2013>

On 1 April 2013, the Department for Work and Pensions devolved the responsibility for Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans to the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and directly to English Local Authorities.

As a single national scheme covering the UK is no longer in operation, comparable statistics for other parts of the UK are not available.

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot

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

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/swf>

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

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

Complaints and suggestions

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