

Social Security Scotland Chief Executive submission of 23 June 2022

PE1913/E: Fast-track future Adult Disability Payment applications for people undergoing cancer treatment

Thank you for your letter of 26 May, drawing attention to the concerns raised in the above petition and expressed through the petitioner's personal experience.

Before addressing each of these matters in turn, I would like to offer my sympathy to the petitioner and their family member during what is clearly a distressing time.

You asked that we confirm we plan to:

Regularly publish processing times for benefits applications, broken down by condition, to ensure that any delays/issues are monitored and addressed.

The first Adult Disability Payment statistics were released on 14 June 2022 ([Social Security Scotland - Adult Disability Payment: high level statistics to 30 April 2022](#)) and we will be publishing these routinely on a quarterly basis from now on. We will be expanding the range of information that we include in our Adult Disability Payment statistics releases, as we continue to collect more data that will allow for more detailed breakdowns. This will include information regarding processing times. We will also consider including information on applications and their outcomes by disability condition, as the data allows. Currently, we do not expect to routinely publish breakdowns of processing times by disability condition, but we will keep this under review.

Ensure that processing times for special rules cases (those with a Terminal Illness) are kept to a minimum period of around a few days.

We are committed to giving people timely decisions and our priority is making the right decisions first time. It is important to note that there

are differences in the approach to how we administer Adult Disability Payment in Scotland compared to Personal Independence Payments (PIP). One of the differences is the onus on Social Security Scotland to gather supporting evidence on behalf of a client to support their application. Processing times may not therefore be comparable with each other but Special Rules for Terminal Illness under Adult Disability Payment are likely to be longer than a few days. However, to reiterate, we are committed to giving people decisions as quickly as we can, while also making the right decision first time.

Reduce the processing times for applications for normal rules (non-terminal patients) to 11 weeks or fewer.

As with Special Rules for Terminal Illness cases, there are significant changes to how we support clients with applications, including face-to-face where required through our local delivery network across Scotland; the application process itself, with the form available digitally and built with people with experience of the system; and how we gather evidence. Again, processing times may not be directly comparable but we expect these changes - and working closely with clients or their representatives –to reduce the need for people to go through a redetermination or through a formal Appeal and a greater proportion of clients to receive the right award first time. We will continue to look for ways in which to improve the service we provide to our clients – including providing timely decisions.

Putting people at the heart of the system has been key in how the Scottish Government developed the processes and systems used by Social Security Scotland. The feedback of clients will continue to be gathered and used to improve processes including through our Annual Client Survey, creating and working with client panels, insights and the Charter Measurement ([Social Security Scotland - Social Research](#)).

Consider the scope to maximise the use of paper-based assessments and make greater use of evidence from medical professionals, to limit the need for unnecessary face-to-face assessments.

The Scottish Government has significantly changed the assessment process for Adult Disability Payment from the system in place for Personal Independence Payment. Currently over 80% of Personal Independence Payment applicants are required to attend an assessment centre to undergo a uniform assessment carried out by a contractor.

Social Security Scotland has directly employed health and social care professionals as an integral part of the Adult Disability Payment process. These health and social care professionals will support Case Managers to make decisions and only undertake a consultation with clients where necessary or where requested by the client. A consultation will only be required when the information that has been received is either incomplete or inconsistent and doesn't allow a decision to be made. Consultations will be very focused and the Practitioner carrying out the consultation will have an appropriate background for the condition(s) under consideration. In the small number of completed consultations so far the majority have been carried out by telephone. A consultation can also be carried out at a time and place of the client's choosing; either face to face or by video conference, if that is the preference of the client.