

Scottish Government submission of 21 March 2023

PE2007/A: Increase allotment provision for all and entitle Universal Credit claimants to a free plot

Allotments and community growing spaces play an important role in many ways, including use of local produce, promoting healthy eating, reducing isolation and encouraging nature and outdoor activities.

Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (the 'Act') consolidates, updates and simplifies the previous statutory regime regarding allotments by bringing it together in a single piece of legislation. As set out in Act, allotments and their provision are the responsibility of local authorities.

The Act places a number of duties on local authorities and it is ultimately up to the local authorities themselves to decide how best to carry out the duties placed on them by Part 9. We believe it is right for the Scottish Government to provide local authorities with the autonomy to decide themselves how best to carry out those duties, appreciating that a one size fits all approach does not always work.

We are committed to working with local authorities where we can to support, without impinging on their responsibilities.

The Scottish Government recognises the ongoing challenges faced by local governments in relation to allotment waiting lists. Events over the last few years such as Brexit related disruption, the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis have brought allotments and access to food growing sites to the forefront of peoples' minds. We are aware this has resulted in a sharp rise in the number of people requesting an allotment site from their local authority and has put additional strain on already lengthy waiting lists.

In accordance with section 121 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, local authorities report annually on provisions of allotments in their areas. Reports are available from each local authority online. The Scottish Government do not hold historic data on allotment provision.

We encourage local authorities to look at innovative ways to reduce allotment waiting lists, for example, by using their local food growing strategies as a mechanism to investigate and promote alternative growing models such as community garden projects. Highlighting alternatives available may encourage and allow local residents to grow in sites out with the traditional setting of allotments.

Since 2012, the Scottish Government has allocated more than £1.6 million to directly support and increase the land that is available for community growing. This funding includes:

- The Community Growing Fund, a grant scheme for the years 2019/2020 and 2020/21, provided a total of £80,000 to local community growing groups public bodies and third sector organisations.
- Nearly £579,000 has been allocated to various growing groups in Scotland, including Trellis, Social Farms and Gardens and GrowGreen Scotland, between 2016 to 2023,
- Funding to the Green Action Trust (previously Central Scotland Green Network) to allocate grants to projects that aim to increase the amount of land for community growing. Since 2012 around £1.14 million has been provided, supporting a huge number of community growing groups.

Universal credit is reserved to the UK Government and is administered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). As Universal Credit is a reserved matter, over which Scottish Ministers have no powers, unfortunately we cannot intervene.

There is no provision for the Scottish Government to provide an allotment to Universal Credit recipients in Scotland. However Universal Credit is a passporting benefit to the following benefits, managed and paid by the Scottish Government:

- legal aid
- court exemption fees
- free school lunches
- free NHS dental treatment
- NHS patient travel costs

- NHS optical vouchers
- individual learning accounts
- education maintenance allowance
- early learning and childcare entitlement

People in receipt of Universal Credit who have a child who meets the relevant age criteria, may also be eligible for our five family payments – which includes [Scottish Child Payment](#), the three [Best Start Grants and Best Start Foods](#).