

Scottish Parliament Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Job Start Payment

Written submission by Social Security Scotland, February 2026

We understand that the Committee will consider:

1. To what extent the Payment is meeting its stated aim of helping young people with the costs associated with the transition to employment.
2. Any barriers to take-up and delivery of the Payment.
3. Any other measures to support young people into employment that could be more effective.

It is important to note that Job Start Payment is delivered under an Order in Council under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998. It gives the Scottish Ministers functions under section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973 to provide assistance to retain employment. The subject-matter of that Act is a reserved matter, except so far as relating to training for employment. This means that key eligibility criteria to Job Start Payment as it stands, such as the fundamental purpose of providing assistance to retain employment and related key criteria such as the amount of time a young person can be out of work for, can only be amended through a further section 63 order. As a result, even relatively modest adjustments to these overriding elements would require an Order in Council to be approved by both the UK Parliament and the Scottish Parliament before it can be made by the Privy Council. This significantly limits the degree to which the Scottish Government can respond quickly or flexibly to operational evidence or stakeholder feedback on JSP as it stands.

The following information is provided as written evidence to point two, the operational delivery of Job Start Payment.

Job Start Payment – delivery of the payment

Job Start Payment is a benefit designed to support unemployed young people aged 16 to 24 (or 16-25 for care leavers) who have been out of work, receive a low-income qualifying benefit and require financial help when starting a new job. Introduced in August 2020, the payment can help with upfront costs such as travel, work clothing, lunches, childcare and other expenses associated with entering employment. It is a non-taxable cash payment and is only available in Scotland.

Between launch and 30 September 2025, 17,015 applications have been received and 16,810 processed from Young People and care leavers across Scotland who have entered employment. Applications can be made online, submitted via paper form, over the telephone or with the support of our community based Local Delivery teams. Applications can be made within six months of receipt of a formal job offer. Official statistics on Job Start Payment are published quarterly on the [Social Security Scotland website](#).

Raising Awareness via Communications & Engagement

Since its launch in 2020, Social Security Scotland has promoted Job Start Payment through a wide range of communication channels, including advertising, outreach, media relations, distribution of materials to relevant touchpoints, social media content, and stakeholder engagement.

In the first years following launch, paid for advertising was delivered predominantly on digital channels (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat), but also on commercial radio stations and outdoor advertisements.

The Scottish Government completed an evaluation on Job Start Payment in 2022 which highlighted that the most effective way of reaching and engaging young people around the benefit would be through more tactical outreach and stakeholder engagement work.

In 2025, as part of its continuous promotional efforts, Social Security Scotland attended a series of careers fairs across Scotland to engage with young people leaving school and university and transitioning into the workforce. Engagement took place across a number of key cities across Scotland including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth, and Inverness.

Materials, such as leaflets, posters and promotional cards, are produced and distributed annually to stakeholders and partners who have venues where eligible young people are likely to be. This included job centres, schools and college career hubs, Skills Development Scotland offices and Developing Young Workforce partners.

Stakeholder engagement is central to promoting Job Start Payment, with trusted partners playing a key role in reaching potential applicants. For example, Social Security Scotland has targeted engagement sessions with the Department for Work and Pensions and Skills Development Scotland ensuring their front-line advisers are equipped to share accurate and up to date information with the young people they support.

Social Security Scotland works closely with Young Scot, the national youth information agency as a key partner, to ensure clear and accessible information about the benefit is available across its channels.

Stakeholder organisations can request additional printed material by [emailing](#) us. This email address is promoted when we engage with them. In addition, stakeholders can go to a dedicated stakeholder page on our [website](#) which has the most up to date figures, translations, factsheets and social media.

Alongside this partnership activity, Social Security Scotland continues to share social media content regularly across Facebook, X, and LinkedIn, helping to maintain awareness and visibility of Job Start Payment.

Improvements since launch

Insight from the Scottish Government's 2022 evaluation on Job Start Payment informed delivery improvements between January and April 2023.

In response, to an identified key issue highlighting that some young people had applications denied due to difficulties providing job offer evidence, evidence requirements were simplified. Previously the job offer evidence needed five pieces of information, now it only requires three pieces of information – the date of the job offer, a piece of information about the client (name, address, email address or phone number) and a piece of information about the employer - their name, address, email address or phone number).

The application window was also extended from three months to six months after the job offer has been made.

Guidance was also made clearer for advisers on what was an acceptable job offer evidence and example evidence was provided on MyGov for clients.

In seeking to address the fact that short periods of paid work, such as trial shifts were unintentionally making young people ineligible, the eligibility criteria was improved. This meant that income from a work trial is now disregarded for the purposes of the young person needing to be out of work for 6 months. Prior to this change, these short periods of work could break the required six-month qualifying period of unemployment.

Social Security Scotland, working with colleagues in the Scottish Government Social Security Policy Directorate, remains committed to strengthening partnerships, improving communications, and refining the application process to ensure Job Start Payment is as accessible and effective as possible for the young people it aims to support.