

What's next for the Scottish welfare fund?

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GATHERING EVIDENCE ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF CHANGES IN THE BENEFIT SYSTEM ON CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES AND INFLUENCING CHANGE



Early Warning System Scotland

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FIND OUT MORE

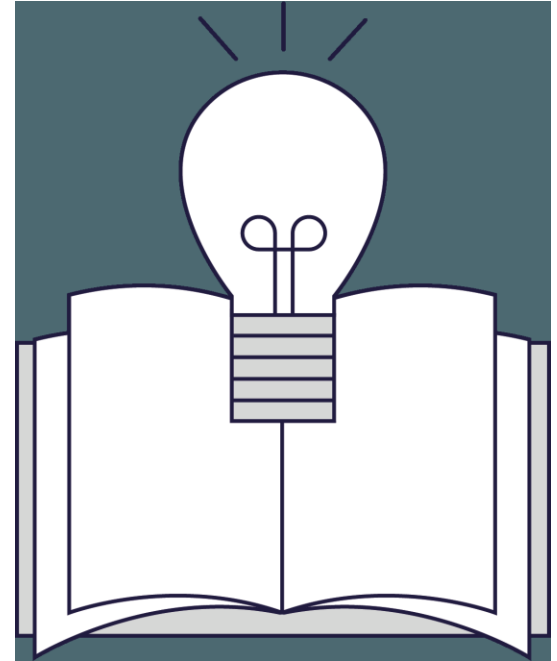
Website: cpag.org.uk/early-warning-system

EWS evidence

- Unnecessary and unreasonable requests for evidence
- Communications unclear
- Limited awards
- Incorrect refusals on immigration status

Scottish welfare fund action plan

- Published June 2023
- 22 actions split into 3 workstreams:
 - 1 - Improving Fund Administration, Accessibility and Experience
 - 2 - Updating Statutory Guidance
 - 3 - Creating a New Data, Monitoring and Audit Approach



Progress

'We are close to completing workstreams 1 and 2'

Shirley Anne-Somerville 19th Feb 2025

Work on workstream 3 is ongoing

All 22 recommendations

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-welfare-fund-action-plan/pages/9/>



2. Updating Statutory Guidance



Statutory Guidance Review Committee established
March 2024



New guidance due April 2025



Committee will continue to meet - annually

What to expect from the new guidance?

I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you.....

You want me to tell you anyway!

- Checklist for decision makers
- Low-income threshold tables – produced annually
- Award rates – linked to UC essentials guarantee and UC child element (no 2 child limit)

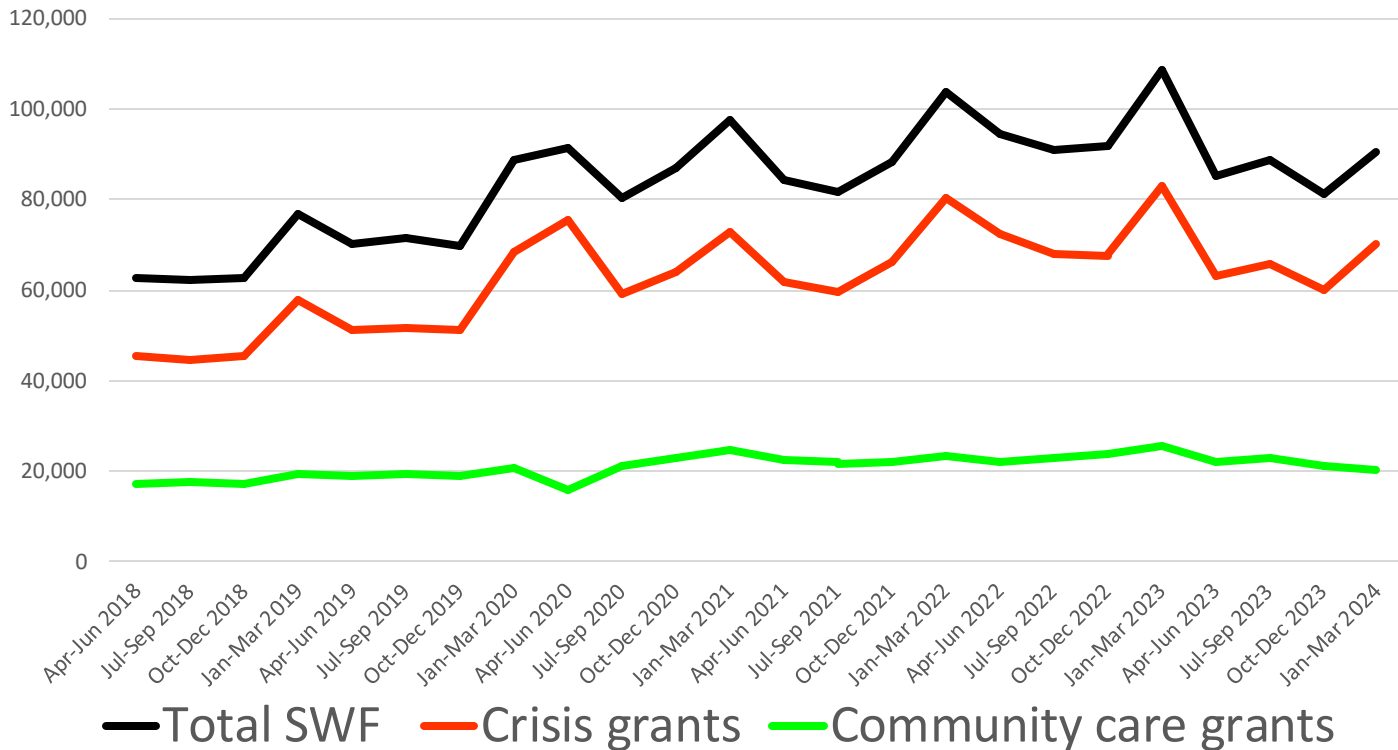
Expanded guidance on

- Local authorities moving to high most compelling status
- Gathering evidence
- How to treat repeat applications
- Eligibility in relation to immigration status

Crisis grants: a recap

- For short term expenses due to emergency or disaster
- Low income (not just benefit income) or unable to access money
- Max 3 awards in 12 months (unless exceptional circs)
- Decision within 2 working days
- Items assessed as low, medium, high, or **high most compelling** priority and awarded according to priority level set by local authority in month you apply

SWF applications 2018/19 - 2023/24



Demand vs supply in 2023/24

- 259,355 applications for **Crisis Grants** (11 percentage points fewer than 2022-23)
- 160,595 awards (14 percentage points fewer than 2022-23)
- Acceptance rate of 62% (1 percentage point fewer than 2022-23)

- 86,020 applications for **Community Care Grants** (9 percentage points fewer than 2022-23)
- 41,460 awards (15 percentage points fewer than 2022-23)
- Acceptance rate of 47% (4 percentage points fewer than 2022-23)

Crisis grant awards & repeat applications 2023/24

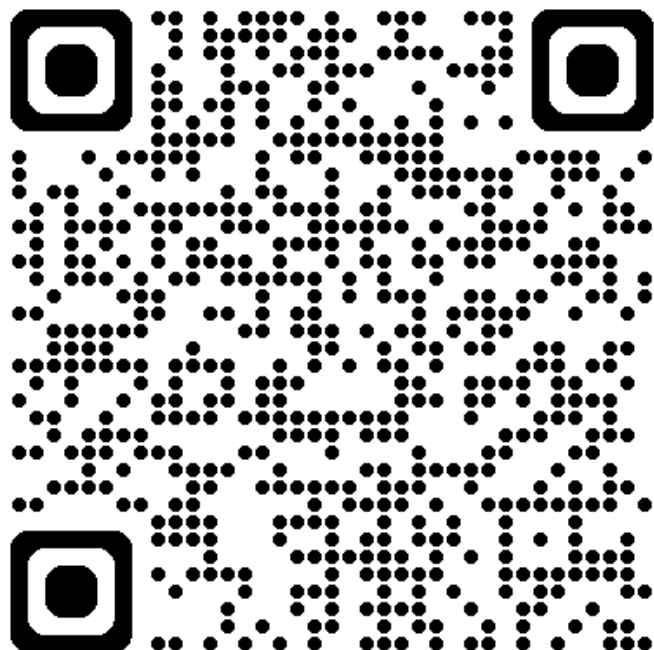
Crisis grant awards
of £18.5 million
(13% less than
2022/23)

**73% of Crisis grant
applications
were repeats**

(one percentage
point higher than
2022-23)

Average award
was £115

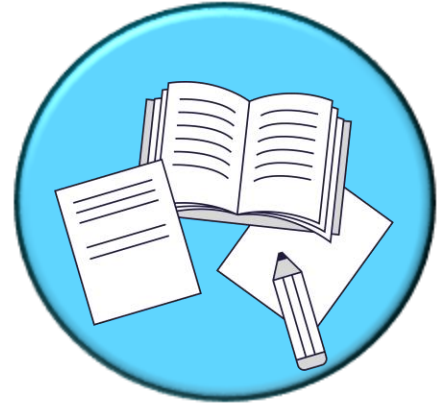
Scottish welfare fund statistics



What makes for a successful application?

Feedback from advisers:

1. Collaborative working with SWF team so that advisers are trusted to provide/verify evidence
2. Identify all applicant vulnerabilities
3. Sensitive questioning (explain reasons for questions/ evidence requirements)
4. Stay aware of current priority level(s)
5. Challenge myths about the Fund
6. ?



High most compelling (SWFG para 3.9)

In order to be successful:

- applicant's need judged to be immediate and extremely severe
- applicant judged to be highly vulnerable and at immediate risk
- an award for the item or money requested would have a substantial, immediate and sustained effect in resolving or improving the health and wellbeing of the applicant or their family
- significant and immediate adverse consequences if the item or money is not provided

High most compelling (HMC)?

Mina is a lone parent with four children aged 11, 9, 3 and 1. The 11-year-old has asthma. Mina has diabetes and depression. She has used up all her benefits paying bills, with 4 days until her next UC payment. She has no credit on her meter. Her sister has helped her out in the past, but Mina is reluctant to ask her for help again. She wants to apply for a crisis grant for food and her electricity meter.

- 1. Would an award for cash and fuel meet the HMC criteria?**
- 2. What questions could you ask to establish this?**

High most compelling (HMC)?

Kelis, aged 19, has learning difficulties. She lives with her mum and her 14-year-old brother, Keith, who has cerebral palsy and is sight impaired. Her mum is Keith's carer.

Keith's disability benefit should have been paid last week but wasn't. Her mum hasn't yet been able to find out why. She has no credit on her phone, and neither does Kelis.

Kelis gives most of her benefit to her mum, to help pay for food and bills. She went to the bank today (Friday) to withdraw her UC payment, but it wasn't there. She wants to apply for a crisis grant.

- 1. Would an award for cash and fuel meet the HMC criteria?**
- 2. What questions could you ask to establish this?**