

Scottish Government Updates

Housing and Welfare

Discretionary Housing Payments

- Bedroom Tax being abolished at source update
- DHP Guidance Work update
- Benefit Cap

Discretionary Housing Payments

- The Scottish Government is committed to abolishing the bedroom tax (Removal of spare room subsidy RSRS) at source as soon as possible using Universal Credit flexibility powers.
- Work has restarted on the Scottish DHP Guidance.

Discretionary Housing Payments

- We have begun exploring ways to better support those who are affected by the UK Government's Benefit Cap.

Tenant Grant Fund

- Local authorities are responsible for distributing the £10 million Tenant Grant Fund to tenants based on the allocation they received.
- Local authorities are actively spending the fund
- The fund enables local authorities to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies by paying some or all of a tenant's rent arrears where a tenant is in either in the social or private rented sectors, and has faced difficulties due to Coronavirus
- The grant covers arrears between 23 March 2020 and 9 August 2021

Tenant Grant Fund

- SG is collecting monitoring information from local authorities on progress with the fund which will be published on the SG website.
- Further monitoring information will be collected at the end of March.
- No plans to expand the scheme beyond March 2022.
- Local authorities can continue to spend the current funding beyond March if they haven't spent the full allocation.

Tenant Grant Fund Further Information

Guidance:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tenant-grant-fund-guidance-for-local-authorities/>

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Universal Credit

February 2022

UC Scottish Choices

Since October 2017, we have offered:

- Payment of housing costs directly to landlords; and
- Twice monthly payments.
- The aim of these policies is to provide more choice for people to manage their finances, protect tenancies and reduce build up of rent arrears.

What's happened in the last six months?

- Ongoing engagement with DWP regarding the evaluation; and
- Working alongside analysts we have proposed a new management information data sharing and invoicing process which will hopefully be implemented very soon. This should improve the accuracy of the MI we receive from DWP and allow us to better evaluate take up of the choices.

Key areas we are still looking at, based on the last evaluation are:

- Awareness of the choices,
- Payment Schedule,
- When they are offered, and;
- Making MFP fortnightly rather than twice monthly

UC Split Payments

Why offer Split Payments?

- We recognise that the UK Government's policy of making a single payment of Universal Credit to a household can facilitate and legitimate domestic abuse or financial coercion, which previously could have taken months or years to effect.
- The Scottish Government intends to introduce split payments of Universal Credit in Scotland to give everyone access to an independent income and to promote equality in the welfare system.
- They are fair, empowering, practical and reflective of society.

Work paused for 12 months due to COVID-19 but since March 2021 we have picked up pace and have been able to make some good progress.

UC Split Payments

Where are we now?

- Officials from the Scottish Government and the DWP have had regular workshops and will continue to meet regularly throughout the development of the policy (our most recent meeting was held on 28 January).
- Good progress is being made in finalising some of the policy issues, and we also expect to hold workshops with individuals who have experienced domestic abuse or financial coercion by the end of March.
- We are engaging with Scottish Government social and user researchers to gain insight into how those with lived experience of Universal Credit feel about Split Payments and to help inform policy decisions. These interviews should also take place in March.
- We are also planning engagement directly with users of Universal Credit through Experience Panels and third sector organisations. We met with our user researchers on 21 January to begin this process.
- **The Scottish Government aims to have a proposal for policy implementation ready by Spring/early Summer 2022 which will be sent to DWP to action.**
- Mr Macpherson will continue to communicate with key stakeholders and hopes to have further meetings in early Summer (once we have progressed further with the policy).

Questions

