

Scottish Government Updates

Housing and Welfare

Discretionary Housing Payments

- Bedroom Tax being abolished at source update
- Creating the Scottish DHP Scheme
- Benefit Cap Mitigation
- Practitioner Groups

Housing Affordability

- Update on Affordable Housing working group

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.
- Creating the Scottish DHP Scheme.

Discretionary Housing Payments

- We committed to mitigating the UK government's benefit cap as fully as our powers allow us

Discretionary Housing Payments

- We are putting together DHP practitioner groups with Local Authorities to meet on a regular basis

Housing Affordability

- Housing affordability working group
- Short-life working group
- Develop a shared understanding of affordable housing
- Wide-ranging membership

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

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?

- Due to the pandemic, much of our work around the choices has been paused however it has restarted recently.
- 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 more frequent payments *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 is considering introducing split payments of Universal Credit in Scotland to give everyone access to an independent income and to promote equality in the welfare system.

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. Good progress is being made in finalising some of the policy issues.
- We have been 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.
- This valuable and in-depth research has recently concluded and we are currently reviewing the findings with the aim of sharing it with stakeholders this summer.
- **The Scottish Government will begin work on our proposal for policy implementation which will be sent to DWP to action.**
- Mr Macpherson will continue to communicate with key stakeholders.

Questions

