



**Department
for Work &
Pensions**

Andrew Western MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
(Minister for Transformation)
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9DA
www.gov.uk

Tel: 0207 340 4000

Email:
minister.transformation@dwp.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dwp

Collette Stevenson MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Security Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

01 November 2024

Dear Collette,

Thank you for your letter of 11 October, I am replying on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State and I look forward to working with you as DWP and Social Security Scotland continue to successfully deliver the complex programme of work to devolve social security benefits.

The Winter Heating Payment (the Scottish Government's replacement of the UK Government's Cold Weather Payment) is an excellent example of joint working between the two Governments in Scotland to support the delivery of devolved social security powers. Navigating these complex arrangements is a testament to this collaborative approach and the data service provided by DWP has enabled Social Security Scotland to successfully make Winter Heating Payments automatically to over 400,000 people in Scotland each year.

You raise the matter of delayed payments to eligible individuals for the winter 2023-24 period. Unfortunately, under the previous government, an issue resulted in data not being included in the data scans provided by DWP to Social Security Scotland for around 20,000 eligible people. This has since been corrected and officials are taking steps to understand if there are any joint lessons to be learned in order to put appropriate safeguards in place to mitigate future risks.

While the revised file did contain around 37,000 records, as advised by my officials at the time, this consisted not only of the approximately 20,000 records missed from earlier scans due to the issue noted above, but also around 17,000 further records of people who had since become entitled to the payment after the scans had finished for the 2023/24 exercise in line with the schedule set out by Social Security Scotland and as a result would not have been picked up in the automated scans. These were routine, backdated cases.

Getting data sharing right where our systems have interdependencies is of course hugely important and I want to provide assurance that the scans to support the forthcoming 2024/25 exercise are on track to be delivered to the agreed timescales.

Andrew Western MP
Parliamentary Under- Secretary of State (Minister for Transformation)

