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Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Collette Stevenson MSP  
Convener  
Social Justice and Social Security Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
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27 September 2024

Dear Collette

## Winter Heating Payment

I am writing to inform you of a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) issue with Winter Heating Payments which has led to a significant number of clients in Scotland not being paid their entitlement in winter 2023-2024.

Winter Heating Payment was first introduced in winter 2022-2023 and replaces the DWP Cold Weather Payment. Unlike the DWP benefit that was reliant on the weather being sufficiently cold for a sustained period of time, Winter Heating Payment guarantees that everyone who is eligible will receive a payment every year, no matter the weather.

By the end of March 2024, Social Security Scotland successfully paid 417,885 clients over £23 million for the 2023-2024 Winter Heating Payment. While overall, there was no increase in client contact, Social Security Scotland noticed an issue with a number of seemingly eligible clients and asked DWP to investigate. As a result of this action, Social Security Scotland were informed on Monday 9 September that DWP had not provided them with all the details of clients eligible to receive the 2023-2024 Winter Heating Payment. They have been working closely with them to resolve the issue for impacted clients and to understand how these people were missed from the original data provided to them.

37,000 clients have been included in the data file supplied by DWP and were likely to be eligible for payment. Social Security Scotland will write to them detailing their entitlement and confirm the payment relates to the 2023 qualifying week and 2023-2024 Winter Heating Payment. These letters and emails will be sent week commencing Monday 30 September and payment will start being made to them on Wednesday 9 October.

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As this was an issue with data extracted from DWP systems which contained an incomplete set of eligible clients, this issue is only relevant to client's resident in Scotland. Social Security Scotland will seek to recover any additional administration costs incurred where applicable.

Social Security Scotland have sought assurances from the DWP and will undertake their own testing to ensure that there will be no impact on any clients eligible for the 2024/2025 award qualifying week.

I hope this information is helpful. I welcome the support of the Committee while Social Security Scotland makes these payments.

Yours sincerely,

**SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE**

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