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Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: Thank you**

Today I was delighted to announce that the new Scottish Government Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment has already provided £2.7m in support to expectant mothers and new babies.

Social Security Scotland opened for applications on Monday 10 December and as of Thursday 31 January more than 7,000 low income households have received a payment.

In less than two months, we have provided more financial support to Scottish families than the DWP delivered through Sure Start Maternity Grant in the full 2017/18 financial year.

Contributing to this is our commitment to not putting a cap on how many children get support – unlike the UK Government Sure Start Maternity Grant, which was only available for the first born child. Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment provides £600 for eligible families' first children and then £300 for all little brothers and sisters thereafter.

We have also simplified the application process – making it much easier for families to access what they are entitled to and allowing them to focus on preparing for their new arrival.

In addition to this, I believe that a major contributing factor was the effort put in to promoting this support to the people who need it – and much of that effort was down to you.

This is why I am writing to you today. I want to personally thank you for your support in raising awareness and encouraging people to apply.

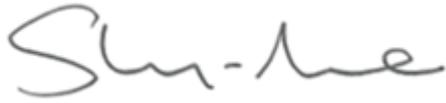
I hope that we can continue to work with you to promote benefit take up – for this payment and all the benefits that we will be introducing over the coming years.

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This is an excellent starting point and I believe we can build on this success by developing even more effective working relationships – working together to make sure that everyone in Scotland gets the social security support that they are due.

With sincere thanks,



**SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE**

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