

Social Security

Best Start Grant Announcement

We wanted to make you aware that the First Minister has just announced that the first payments of the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Birth Grant will be made before Christmas 2018.

We've set out the extract from the Scottish Government's [Programme for Government](#), published 4 September 2018 for your information:

“We want to accelerate the help we can give to new families so that every child has the best start in life. Therefore we will start making payments of our Best Start Grant by this Christmas – more than six months early. This will put more money into the pockets of families on lower incomes – by providing £600 on the birth of a first child and £300 on the birth of any later children, more than the current UK Government arrangements. By paying families on lower incomes more money more quickly we will support thousands of children across Scotland. This is the first step in our delivery of the Best Start Grant which will also – by summer 2019 – see families get a further £250 for each of their children at key points in their early years such as starting nursery and school.”

The Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Grant will replace the UK Sure Start Maternity Grant. It will improve on the Sure Start Maternity Grant by:

- paying £600 rather than £500 for the first child, and introducing £300 payments for second and subsequent children
- extending eligibility to anyone on tax credits or housing benefit and all under 18s.
- not placing a limit on the number of children who can qualify
- extending the application window to 24 weeks pregnant to 6 months after birth, giving applicants longer to apply
- taking applications on the phone and on-line as well as on a paper form, to give a choice depending on the needs of the applicant

Additionally, before Summer 2019

- a further 2 separate Best Start Grant payments of £250, per child, will be introduced to help with the costs of early learning at the age of 2 or 3 and when they start primary school
- Best Start Foods smartcards, will replace Healthy Start Vouchers to support low income families with young children to access affordable nutritious food

Further details on how Best Start Grant will operate will be available soon when the Scottish Government publishes the response to the consultation Early Years Assistance, Consultation on Best Start Grant Regulations. We'll be back in touch at this stage to discuss further how we can work together to ensure our services are ready for the new benefit. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.