

Government Response sent to Lesley Blair on behalf of Scottish Members

Thank you for all your work with us to date seeking to help us resolve some issues that your members have been having in accessing funding through the Newly Self Employed Hardship Fund and Mobile and Home Based Close Contact Services Fund.

As discussed earlier this week, and ahead of a further call this afternoon, I am happy to share information with you in some broad areas which seem to be the root of most enquiries to date, to help you reassure and update your members on the actions we are taking to resolve issues and move things forward. These issues were of course part of our discussions.

1. Applications Declined Due to Systems Errors:

As you know we have unfortunately experienced a few technical issues in administering the schemes that have impacted the ability of some applicants (around 100 in total) to submit applications. We have worked hard to find ways through these challenges, as our core objective is to get the funds out to all those that are eligible for them as swiftly as we possibly can. All applicants that have been impacted by a known systems issue have now been contacted with an apology and given an opportunity to re-apply.

2. Applications Declined Due to User Mistakes:

We have also been dealing with a large number of cases (around 1300 in total currently) where decisions to decline funding result from user mistakes via incomplete or inaccurate information being supplied on the application form. We have worked hard to find ways through these challenges also, and taken steps to help eligible applicants where we can, whilst balancing the need to manage fraud risks.

We have decided to offer those that are eligible but whose applications have been impacted by a user data entry problem an opportunity to re-apply also. We are in the process of updating and testing the system to enable that, and are also updating the guidance for applicants to highlight common mistakes to reduce the prospect of those re-occurring. We will be contacting those applicants in this category over the next few days with an update to reassure them that they will be able to re-apply.

It will take a few days for our team to adjust and test the system to enable applications to be re-submitted (seeking to avoid further technical issues). **So please note that individuals are NOT able to re-apply until that work has been completed and they receive an email from us asking them to do that.** Anyone trying to re-apply before that work has been completed will just be rejected by the system as a duplicate so please ask your members NOT to try to re-apply until they are invited to do so.

3. Concerns Raised Around Progress Updates:

Some applicants have also been contacting us with concerns over not having heard anything since their application was submitted. We would like to reassure those applicants that this is due to the large number of applications we have received and

that our delivery agent, Umi, will be in touch with every applicant individually when the appraisal team reaches their case. If eligible and their case is also impacted by manual mistakes we will also offer them an opportunity to re-apply at that point.

We would also like to offer reassurance that all applications received by the closing date of 16 March 2021 will be processed and will receive funding if eligible. Reference numbers should not be viewed as an indication of when an application will be concluded, as the work involved in each case may differ.

We are aware that some individuals that have not received an automated email confirming that their application has been received. Our delivery team has advised that system logs have been checked and acknowledgement emails have been sent to the email addresses that applicants included in their application forms. If your members completed the full application process and received an on screen message that their form had been submitted with a reference number attached it will be in the system.

4. Enquiry Process:

We are working to manage the review of cases systematically so nothing gets missed. We have been receiving multiple emails from individuals and enquiries on behalf of those same individuals from a wide range of sources. This is slowing down the process of checking and putting solutions in place. All those whose cases you have raised with us thus far on the various lists provided have been logged on a central database by our teams and are currently being worked through, or will be in the coming days.

From today we have introduced a new online enquiry form which individuals can use to log any new issues with us, which is available at [Biz Support](#) . This is to help us manage enquiries more effectively. Please note that individuals that have already contacted the Scottish Government direct, through their MSPs, via the Find Business Support team or through yourselves **do not need to use the form as their cases have already been logged and are currently under review.** The enquiry form is only for those that have not contacted us already through any of these channels or through other routes.

Your help in reinforcing that message with your members would be very helpful as we don't want to slow the checking/resolving process down as a result of having to keep detecting duplicate enquiries.

Whilst there have been some issues with the administration of the schemes, we have so far successfully received over 11,000 applications for support through the funds, and as of today, we have paid out over £11 million in grant support through the funds to successful applicants across Scotland.

Once again many thanks to you and your colleagues for all your work with us to date as we seek to identify and resolve issues where we can and get the funds out to eligible individuals as quickly as possible. We will keep in touch with you as these actions take effect to help us monitor progress.