



# Insights into Adult Disability Payment: Evidence from Citizens Advice Scotland

Quarter 4 2025-26

The Citizens Advice network in Scotland is the largest independent provider of Adult Disability Payment (ADP) advice outside of Social Security Scotland (SSS). We provide whole-person support to people who need it.

## Advice on challenging decision-making continues to drive demand to our network



Inaccurate ADP review decisions are contributing to demand for advice on challenging outcomes, with the **number of people advised on Short-Term Assistance (STA) more than doubling over the last year**



Narrow and inconsistently applied mobility criteria can mean that **people's mobility needs are not being fully recognised**, compromising decision-making



A **national escalation route for advisers** would mean urgent issues and safeguarding concerns are actioned faster, helping decision-making

## The long view on ADP advice

- > Over **77,000 pieces of ADP** advice about the daily living component were provided to more than 27,000 people in the period 2025-26 - **a stable level of high demand**
- > Since 2019, a **higher proportion of people reporting health-related barriers have sought our advice**
  - > **16% increase** in those with a long-term health condition
  - > **19% increase** in those who care for a disabled person
- > Over the last year, demand for **advice about redeterminations remained consistently high**; it is the **third highest demand area** of ADP advice.

## Unpredictable award review processes are driving demand for advice about challenging decisions and temporary financial support

Our evidence shows that ADP journeys can be overwhelming, especially when decision-making is inaccurate. During this quarter advisers from CABs across Scotland reported volatility in decision-making during both planned reviews and reviews triggered by a change in circumstances. Demand has risen for our advice on STA, a valuable safety-net for those whose award has been reduced while they challenge decisions.

When awards are reduced at review, people are faced with the prospect of being unable to fund the health management strategies they rely on, risking worsening people's health or preventing some people from journeying to employment.

### From January to March 2026:



Redeterminations and appeals accounted for over a **fifth (21%) of all ADP advice** work: 7,608 pieces of advice



**The number of people advised on STA more than doubled over the last year** meaning our network is supporting more people challenging decisions about reducing their awards



Advisers reported challenges in helping people avoid surrendering essential Motability Scheme vehicles as **STA is not automatically paid to the Motability Scheme provider and arrangements must be negotiated each time.**



### James' experience

James<sup>1</sup> came to his local CAB for support to appeal a decision to end his ADP award. The victim of an assault, James lives with chronic pain and cognitive impairment, unable to use opiate pain relief due to addiction recovery. Following a review, he received only two points, terminating his award. James was really distressed when he was issued with an appeal form, becoming anxious about STA eligibility and how he was going to cope financially.



### The CAS Solution:

The Scottish Government should act on its commitment to **progress the criteria-modernisation roadmap set out in the Independent Review of Adult Disability Payment**, ensuring that forthcoming reforms accurately reflect the lived experience of disabled people.

<sup>1</sup> All names have been changed to protect anonymity

## Mobility needs are not being captured effectively as people can struggle to understand the relationship between care needs and mobility

The ADP criteria for assessing mobility are narrowly defined and do not account for real-world factors that affect walking. People are asked to imagine hypotheticals that can be difficult to understand. This includes circumstances people rarely encounter in daily life, leaving people unable to convey their experiences clearly.

Understanding how to apply the criteria for people living with mental health conditions is especially complex. For example, anxiety that falls short of overwhelming psychological distress can still prevent someone from being able to follow a route safely. This can be challenging to evidence and interpret, making it harder for people to access support that is vital to prevent social isolation or to access employment.

People often think of their care needs and mobility needs as separate. This can make it **harder for people to recognise that the same health conditions that are driving their care needs can also limit their ability to get around.** Someone with arthritis may focus on the help they need with dressing or meals, without realising that the same symptoms make walking difficult. By contrast, people generally find it easier to understand that mobility restrictions can increase care needs.

This is reflected in our advice patterns. During the period 2025-26, 65% of people advised on the daily living component also needed advice on mobility, while 93% of those seeking mobility advice were also being advised on daily living. Some awards can fail to reflect the real-world barriers people face in participating in social and economic life.<sup>2</sup>



### Brian's experience

Brian went to his local CAB confused by the outcome of an ADP review process. He'd received Personal Independence Payment (PIP) since 2016, but when he transferred to ADP, SSS reviewed his award and decreased his allocated points, despite his health having worsened. Brian requested a redetermination resulting in his award being removed entirely. Even though Brian needs physical support and a wheelchair, he was awarded no mobility-related points. This left him confused and anxious about how his mobility needs had been assessed and how he will be able to access the support that he needs.



### The CAS Solution:

SSS should further **strengthen decision-making training and guidance** to ensure assessments of whether activities can be undertaken safely, reliably and timeously, are rigorous and consistent.

Our advisers consistently tell us that ADP, and its **principle-based approach grounded in dignity, fairness and respect, can make a real difference to people's lives, helping them to feel valued** while providing essential income to enable people to live decent and dignified lives.

<sup>2</sup> Considering Social Security Scotland [data](#), it is noteworthy that just 6% of the ADP caseload by January 2026 was Mobility component only awards, whereas 41% of awards were Daily living component only. Of those in receipt of a Mobility award by January 2026, 13% were accessing the Motability scheme.

## When rapid resolution matters: why an escalation route is needed urgently

Our expert advisers work hard to provide whole-person support, enabling people to access their social security entitlements and challenging decisions when necessary. In Q4 alone, our advice unlocked over £4 million of ADP entitlements. Three in five (60%) people we supported who were awarded the daily living component were awarded at initial application, demonstrating that we enable the **right decisions to be made the first time**.

Improvements to ADP can still be made. Advisers explain that being able to escalate cases rapidly, whether to resolve operational difficulties, or flag safeguarding concerns, would significantly improve their ability to support people and their families in vulnerable circumstances, getting people access to vital income in a timely manner. This would also release capacity back into SSS and advice services.



### Insight from Advisers: Kate's experience

As a welfare rights adviser, Kate was supporting John, who is terminally ill. John applied for ADP in May 2025, was refused and appealed. Although he was confirmed as terminally ill in January 2026, it took until March 2026 for ADP to be awarded, which was exhausting for John. Kate explained that an escalation route could have prevented this distress by enabling her to work with SSS to rapidly identify and resolve the issue that had caused the delay.



**The CAS Solution:** SSS should complete the evaluation of the escalation pilot as soon as possible and prioritise work to **establish a nation-wide escalation route for advisers** as a vehicle for delivering positive outcomes for people accessing ADP.

## About Citizens Advice Scotland

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) is the membership body that represents The Citizens Advice network, Scotland's leading advice charity. Advisers across all corners of the country work in Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) to provide free, impartial and confidential advice. [The Extra Help Unit](#) (EHU) is a statutory service supporting people and small businesses in vulnerable circumstances with energy and postal complaints across Great Britain. They also support heat network customers in Scotland. Each year our network helps hundreds of thousands of people, putting millions of pounds back in people's pockets. By looking at a person's complete circumstances, CAS has an unparalleled insight into the scale and complexity of what's happening in communities throughout Scotland.

### For more information please contact:

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To explore our work developing solutions based on our evidence of the social security system, devolved and reserved, visit our [social security hub](#).

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