RSSWS
Guidelines for Admission and Continued Support

Contents

Policy and Trustee Discretion

This Policy Statement provides a summary of the Society's criteria at the date noted below and takes into account (a) the Supplementary Royal Charter, (b) the associated Byelaws and (c) subsequent decisions of the General Committee (the Committee). These criteria are in place to try to ensure clarity, consistency and fairness in decision making. However, at all times support from the Society is at the discretion of the Society's Trustees and can be adjusted as is seen as appropriate in the circumstances.

Date of effect of this Policy

This Policy Statement is dated 3rd Sept 2021 and updated August 2023.

Previous criteria no longer apply but women admitted under them will continue on the Roll of Beneficiaries unless determined otherwise by the Committee (or under their delegated authority).

Criteria for admission to the Roll and continuing support

To be considered for admission to the Society's Roll of Beneficiaries, an applicant must be:

- Female and aged 50 or over;
- Single - i.e., unmarried, widowed, divorced or separated (by formal separation agreement or in terms of a Court decree) from their spouses or civil partners;
- Not be "co-habiting" in the sense of living with another person as if married or as if civil partners (s25 of the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006);
- Have been resident in Scotland for not less than 2 years at the date of their application;
- Be considered to be of good character. This could include (but is not limited to) consideration of their personal achievement, betterment of their life circumstances by their own efforts, evincing a sense of duty or consideration for others, carrying out voluntary or community work, or looking after family members who required care, etc.

For the avoidance of any doubt

- Employment, whether full-time or part-time, will not preclude an applicant from qualification, provided that her income remains below the threshold currently in place;
- Applicants who have extensive debts will not normally be supported unless the debts are being reduced on an on-going and manageable basis. This could include debts that are being managed under a formal agreement, but such an agreement is not a pre-requisite;
- Permanent residents of residential care, nursing homes or NHS continuing care will not be supported.

Additionally, applicants / beneficiaries must meet the financial criteria set by the Committee relating their level of savings / capital and their level of income. The majority of this policy statement seeks to provide guidance on how these financial criteria will be applied.

Financial Criteria

Capital / Savings

Ceiling

The upper ceiling for capital / savings for £16,000 (in line with DWP guidelines for people of working age but applied to all the Society's applicants / beneficiaries regardless of age). Applicants / beneficiaries whose total capital / savings exceed this will not be supported.

Application of assumed "Tariff income" from Capital / Savings

Applicants / beneficiaries who have total savings of less than £16,000 but more than £6,000 will be assumed to have a tariff income from these savings and this will be included in the calculation of their Qualifying Income - see below. The assumed tariff income will be £100 per annum income for every full £500 of capital/savings over £6000. Savings / capital of £6000 or less will be ignored (other than in the distribution of Supplementary Grants or when consideration is being given whether to make an Additional / Emergency Grant).

Calculation of Capital / Savings

- Where an applicant / beneficiary owns and lives in her own home the value of this will NOT be included as capital (although the Society reserves the right in the future to take into account the equity value of a property if it exceeds an agreed amount). Chief Executive may exercise his/her judgement based on the facts of the situation if the applicant / beneficiary is living away from her home for prolonged periods;
- Second homes and the value of any other property interests WILL be counted as capital (unless in exceptional circumstances where the applicant / beneficiary establishes that the property cannot reasonably be sold);
- Savings / assets which are held in:
  - an income bond or similar WILL be counted as capital (but the actual income received from them ignored – see below);
  - a fixed term bond / account or similar WILL be counted as capital even if the applicant / beneficiary will have to pay a penalty to access these savings before the end of the term (but the value of the bond will be taken as net of the penalty that would be applied).
  - Funds held within formal pension accounts WILL NOT be counted as capital but the income the applicant / beneficiary draws from these funds WILL be treated as income – see below

Income

Calculation of Income

The following guideline should be followed when calculating someone's income:

- Income is calculated AFTER deduction of tax and NI (if applicable) but NOT pension contributions (and these may need to be added back into the applicant / beneficiary's earnings);
- If applicant / beneficiary's income varies, the Society will normally take an average over the past 3 months to calculate their income. A different period can be used if doing so would give a more representative estimate.
- The Society does NOT take into account the actual income / dividends received from saving or capital – instead we apply an assumed "Tariff Income" from savings or capital – see above.
- If an applicant / beneficiary has opted for a Motability car/wheelchair in lieu of the mobility component of PIP or DLA, the value of the mobility component they have forgone WILL be included as income (less any appropriate disregard for disability benefits– see below);
- The Society does NOT include any income the applicant / beneficiary receives for any dependent children (for example, Child Benefit or additions to ESA or Universal Credit);
- The full value of any benefits the person is entitled to WILL be taken into account notwithstanding the fact that an applicant / beneficiary may have deductions from their benefits (or earnings) for things like the recovery of overpayments of benefits or debts owed, the repayment of loans, etc.

Calculation of "Qualifying Income" (QI)

Qualifying Income (QI) is calculated as follows:

- Total income from all sources as set out above
  - PLUS the following (if applicable):
    - An assumed tariff income from savings or capital – see above
    - Assumed notional income from any unclaimed pension (if the applicant / beneficiary has reached their State Pension age - see below
    - Assumed or actual income from family / other adults – see below

  - LESS the following offsets (if applicable)
    - Net Housing costs and Council Tax payable – see below
    - Disregard against disability benefits - see below
    - The first £1,500 of any earnings (or self-employed Net income) that the applicant / beneficiary may be paid.

"Notional income" from unclaimed pensions

As noted above, assets held within formal pension funds WILL NOT be counted as capital but the income the person draws from these will be treated in full as income. If an applicant / beneficiary has reached their State Pension age and has one or more private, personal or occupational pensions funds which they have not yet started to draw down an income from, the Society will assume a notional income from these of 10% of the value of the funds in these pensions.

Actual and assumed income from family / other adults

Where a / some family member(s) / other adult(s) lives in the applicant / beneficiary's home

For example, this would apply where adult child (or children) continues to live in their mother's home, the Society will assume that the applicant / beneficiary receives **£25 per week per adult living with the applicant / beneficiary**. Such assumed income will NOT be applied where it relates to any adult living with the beneficiary:

- Who is under the age of 21; or
- Who is under the age of 24 and a full time student; or
- Whose only income is from Attendance Allowance, DLA or PIP.

Where an applicant / beneficiary shares their home as shared tenant or similar

For example, this might apply where 2 friends live in the same house as joint tenants. The following adjustments will be made:

- Any net Housing and Council Tax offsets will be assumed to be shared on an equal basis between shared tenants on the basis that they are equally liable for them;
- A £1300 per year (£25pw) assumed reduction in the costs that they would normally have to pay (and hence in the level of QI that they would require) because they are able to share a range of household costs. As a matter of administrative convivence and to comply with systems within the Society's database, this will be expressed as an assumed income to the applicant / beneficiary as this has the same effect as reducing the applicant / beneficiary's QI limit

Where the applicant / beneficiary lives in another adult's household

For example, this might apply where a beneficiary moves to live in the home one of their adult children. The following adjustments will be made:

- No allowances will be made for Housing or Council Tax offsets
- A £2600 per year assumed reduction in the costs that they would normally have to pay (and hence in the level of QI that they would require) because they may only be making a contribution to a range of shared a household costs. As a matter of administrative convivence and to comply with systems within the Society's database, this will be expressed as an assumed income to the

applicant / beneficiary as this has the same effect as reducing the applicant / beneficiary's QI limit.

Where the applicant / beneficiary is support by others but does not live with them

The Society also seeks to prioritise women with very few options for support. Accordingly, where an applicant / beneficiary receives regular support from a family member or firend who does NOT live with them, the Society will take into account the actual amount that they receive estimated over the full year. For the avoidance of any doubt, this only applies to regular income and does NOT apply to occasional gifts that may be received during the year.

The Chief Executive has discretion to adjust the level of assumed income / reduction in the allowable housing costs that are applied to applicants / beneficiaries in these circumstances where these assumed levels would not be reasonable in the circumstances.

Housing and Council Tax Offsets

The Society offsets most direct housing costs that applicants / beneficiaries are required to pay. This will include:

- Rent / mortgage payments calculated NET of any housing benefit or other support for housing costs received;
- Council Tax / Water Charges payable calculated NET of any rebates or discounts received;
- Any compulsory factoring charges (up to a limit of £1,200);
- Services charges for things like heating, lighting etc within the person's own home will NOT normally be treated as part of the allowable housing costs as most people would be expected to pay these from within their income.

Limits on level of housing cost offsets

Chief Executive has discretion to limit the level of housing costs being offset in the calculation of the applicant's / beneficiary's QI where it appears to him/her that the housing costs are excessive with reference to rents in the applicant's / beneficiary's home area. In doing so, the Chief Executive (a) will have refence to Local Housing Allowance Rates as set but the Scottish Govt for benefits purposes and (b) may allow higher offsets for a transition period if it seems appropriate in the circumstances to do so.

Disregards Against Disability Benefits

A proportion of disability benefit payments (i.e. AA, DLA or PIP) will be disregarded in the calculation of the applicant / beneficiary's income from these benefits in recognition that people on such benefits generally face higher living costs. The disregard will be based on the following percentages and rounded up to the nearest £100 for administrative convenience.

- 50% - Mobility components of DLA or PIP
- 30% - Daily Living / Care Component of DLA or PIP
- 50% - Attendance Allowance

If an applicant / beneficiary faces particularly high care costs for care services, the Chief Executive has the discretion to allow higher level of offset against the Daily Living / Care Components of DLA/PIP or Attendance Allowance up to a limit of the full value of these components. Examples of such costs might include:

- Costs of attending a Registered Care Services (such as Day Centres, etc) (less £10 per day if meals are provided)
- Costs of support provided at home by a registered care service (which can include the costs of "topping up" SDS budgets for such services

- Costs of attending registered residential respite care (averaged out over the year)
- These costs would not normally include things like home helps, gardeners, specific diets, community alarms, continence aids, etc. The Society's previous practice of making allowance for such costs will not apply but transitional provision for existing beneficiaries where these provisions previously applied may be taken into account.

In such circumstances applicants / beneficiaries would normally be asked to provide evidence of these higher costs and they would be added to the standard percentage disregards.

Qualifying Income Ceilings

Qualifying Income:	**Ceiling for continued support is £14,200.** This ceiling is based on the median net income after housing costs of Scottish single pensioners rounded down the nearest £100. The Committee will keep this figure under review using in future years but reserves the right to depart from this benchmark as they see fit.
Admission Income:	From time to time the Committee may apply a lower QI ceiling for new applicant's admission to the Roll as a filter if the number of applications becomes unmanageable.

Grant Support

Monthly Grant Payments to Beneficiaries on the Roll

Once a person has been admitted to the Society's Roll of Beneficiaries, they will normally receive a regular month grant from the Society. Trustees keep the amount of these monthly grant under review but it is currently £110 pcm. Payments will continue until the beneficiary is withdrawn from the Roll or their payments are suspended for some reason – see below.

Withdrawal from the Roll and suspension of grant payments

The Society's Caseworkers carry out regular reviews of beneficiary's circumstances and the Chief Executive has the delegated authority to withdraw any beneficiary from the Society's Roll where the Chief Executive is satisfied she no longer meets the Society's criteria.

The Chief Executive (or Welfare Manager in his/her absence) may also suspend grant payments to a beneficiary where this is felt appropriate including:

- If there is a question as to whether she will continue to meet the Society's criteria;
- Where she no longer meets the criteria, but it anticipated that she would do so again in the near future (for example, where there is a temporary increase in a beneficiary's QI as a family members has moved in with them but it anticipated that they will move out again soon, or where a beneficiary has received the capital from the sale of their home but is planning on using this to buy another property to live in);
- Where the Society has been unable to contact the beneficiary;
- Where the beneficiary has not provided all the information request from her by the Society.

The beneficiary may eventually be withdrawn from the Society's Roll if the questions cannot be resolved.

Notice & taper payments where monthly grants are ending

Where support is being withdrawn or suspended, the Society aims to soften the impact of this for many beneficiaries by (a) providing them with notice of the change and, (b) in some cases, tapering their payments down before stopping them completely as follows:

- Beneficiaries who exceed the QI ceiling by 7.5% or less AND have savings less than £8,000 will receive a further 3 months full grant as notice payments PLUS 6 months at 50% grant as taper payments to allow them to adjust to the loss of income;
- Beneficiaries who exceed the QI ceiling by more than 7.5% AND have savings less than £8,000 will receive a further 2 months full grant as notice payments
- Beneficiaries who exceed our QI by 7.5% or less BUT has savings over £8,000 (but less than £16,000) will receive a further 2 months full grant as notice payments

Beneficiaries from whom support is being suspended / withdrawn for other reasons (they exceed the capital limits, they have move into a care home or with a partner, their QI is more than 7.5% above our ceiling and they have savings above £8,000, etc) will receive not normally receive any notice or taper payments.

Notice and taper payments will NOT be made to beneficiaries where support is being suspended because the Society has not been able to contact them, or where they have failed to provide information requested.

The Chief Executive has the discretion to adjust notice and taper arrangements in individual cases where s/he considered it appropriate to do so in the specific circumstances.

Other Forms of Grant Support

"Without Prejudice Payments" (WPP) to Applicants

The Chief Executive is authorised to make without prejudice payments to applicants where s/he is satisfied that:

- The applicant meets the Society's criteria for support; and
- The applicant is in a pressing financial position as she has a low QI and savings of less than £6,000; and
- Her application is likely to be considered under the "Fast Track" arrangements; and EITHER:
    - There is likely to be a significant delay (or there has already been a significant delay out-with her control) in consideration of her application; OR
    - They require the payment to address an emergency or to provide for essential household items

The amount of a WPP will depend on the length of delay with £110 paid in most circumstances but increased to £220 or £330 where the delay has extended beyond 2 or 3 months respectively. A WPP in an emergency or for essential household items may extend up to £500 (or £1,000 if made in discussion with a Trustee who is an office bearer) consistent with such payments to beneficiaries – see below.

Advance Payments to Beneficiaries

The Chief Executive is authorised to approve advance payment of grants to beneficiaries where s/he is satisfied that an advance is likely to be in the interests of the beneficiary. Such advances will be limited to the equivalent of 5 months normal grant payment (ie £550) and the Chief Executive can agree recovery of the advance on the basis of:

- Zero grant for the following 5-month period; OR

- Half rate grant for the following 10-month period; OR
- Some combination of the above

If a beneficiary is not a full member of the Roll, the total advance open to them will be limited by the length of time until their membership of the Roll is due for review.

Additional / Emergency Grants to Beneficiaries

The Chief Executive is authorised to make additional and / or emergency payments up to a limit of £500 (or £1,000 if made in discussion with a Trustee who is an office bearer). These will normally only be made in the following circumstances:

- The Chief Executive is satisfied that they require the payment to address an emergencies OR to cover unexpected / unanticipated costs for essential household items OR where there is a pressing one off cost
- Beneficiary's savings / capital is less than £6,000

Consideration will be given as to whether an advance would be a more appropriate approach (especially if the beneficiary has a higher QI) and additional payments may be made in conjunction with an advance where the Chief Executive is satisfied this is a more appropriate way forward.

Supplementary Grants

The Society make occasional Supplementary Grant payments to some beneficiaries as part of its strategic policy of directing additional support to those beneficiaries on lower QIs and with fewer Savings / Capital. The Society will budget for such grants and the Committee or Office Bearers will approve a disbursement, but the precise distribution of these supplementary grants is delegated to the Chief Executive.

Reviewing the QI Limit

To minimise unfairness in treatment, the Trustee will review the QI limit as early in the year following the uprating of Society Security benefits (normally April) as possible. There is no commitment to change the upper QI limit in any particular year, but when reviewing it, Trustee should take into account the following:

- The updated UK median single pensioner income AHC statistics.
- The Pension Credit rates (or other minimum income guarantee figures used). If there is a growing disparity between median and minimum incomes, it might argue for a relatively lower increase in the upper QI limit to keep support target at women on the lowest incomes;
- The predicted CPI rate the following September. If this is predicted to be significantly higher than the reported increase in median pensioner incomes, it might argue for a relatively higher increase in the upper QI limit;
- The number of beneficiaries the Society has compared to the "full Roll" numbers used for budget setting. If this is relatively low, then a relatively higher increase in the upper QI limit is one way to limit the numbers of beneficiaries being withdrawn in the coming year (but which can always be adjusted for in future years)

Andrew Tweedy
Chief Executive
August 2021