Designing the Social Security Charter: visual summary on the first stage of work with people with experience of social security and stakeholders

Background

The Scottish Government will become responsible for some of the benefits currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of work to prepare for this change, Scottish Government have set up the Social Security Experience Panels.

Department for Work and Pensions → **Scottish Government**

The Scottish Government are working with people who have experience of the current benefit system to design a new social security system with the people of Scotland.

2,400 people

What is a charter?

A charter is a document that sets out how you should be treated by an organisation.

It might also say what the organisation expects of you.

Ministers said that the social security charter would be written with people who use the system.

We are also working with organisations that represent people who might receive benefits.

Designing the charter

Who was involved

Scottish Government staff

Organisations that represent people who use social security

People who have experience of social security

How people were involved

We are working with people with experience of social security by:

Working with a 'core group' of 30 people who have experience of social security.

We have met them 3 times so far.

Meeting with people individually to hear their views.

Meeting with stakeholders.

Sending out a survey to everyone on the Social Security Experience Panels to have their say.

Who is on the 'core group'

We wanted to make sure we are speaking to lots of different people about their experiences.

The core group has people with experience of:

- A range of the benefits which are being devolved

- People who are disabled with a physical condition

- People who have a mental health condition

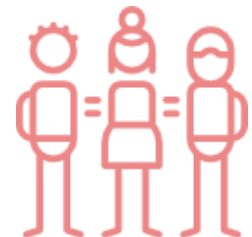- People who have a learning disability

- People who have a sensory condition

- Carers

- A range of other groups of people like LGBT people, people who are different ages, and both men and women

- People who live in rural and urban locations

Some groups of people aren't represented on the core group. We are working to make sure we hear from them and that they can join the core group.

This includes:

- Young people (under 25)
- Minority ethnic people
- Other groups who might have different needs of the charter

What have we done so far

Given the core group information to help them think about what the charter should be like

Listen to feedback from:
- **the core group**
- **organisations who represent people who use social security**

Brought it all together and considered what we have heard and what that means

Share this with the core group and the organisations and check we have got it right

Findings so far

The name of the charter

We asked the core group what they thought the charter should be called. Most of the group wanted it to be called:

"Scottish Social Security Charter"

7 names were suggested in total:

- Scottish Social Security Charter

- Social Security Rights in Scotland

- Scottish Social Security Guarantee

- Scottish Social Security Promise

- Scottish Social Security Agreement

- Scottish Social Security Standards

- Social Security Scotland – Delivery Guarantee

All Social Security Experience Panel members will be asked to vote on the name they like best.

The length and format of the charter

The core group said that the length and format of the charter should be decided when we have decided what the charter should say.

But there were are few things that were important:

- It should be "not too long but not too short". This might mean having a short version that is easy to read and a longer one that is more detailed

- Simple language and short sentences

- Colours and images to make it easy to read

- Positive and friendly language

What it should say

The Social Security Scotland Act is the law that says what the social security system in Scotland will be like. In this law, there are 10 "principles" or ways that the social security system should work. For example "put the needs of those who require assistance first." A list of these principles is in the full report.

The charter has to reflect these principles.

We asked the core group and the organisations to think about what these principles mean to them.

They came up with a list of 45 statements that explain what the principles mean in practice. These statements can be grouped into 5 themes.

Theme 1: Clients

This theme described how clients should be treated and how they should behave. People felt it was important that clients are:

- Trusted and treated fairly

- Able to get information easily

- Involved in helping the system to get better, for example by helping with staff training and by giving feedback

Theme 2: Staff behaviour

This theme is about the how staff should behave to clients. The main things that were important were that staff are:

- Patient and understanding

- Kind

- Know about the support available and help people to get it

- Listen and learn from mistakes

Theme 3: Processes

This theme is about the different parts of the process that make up the social security system, such as getting

advice, applying and assessments. The areas that were important to people included:

- All parts of the process should be simple and easy to understand

- It should be accessible to everyone and is a public (not private) service

- Assessments should only be done if necessary

- Assessments should not be stressful

Theme 4: The social security system

This theme is about how social security should be run and managed. Important areas included:

- Social Security Scotland should say if it makes a mistake and learn from it

- It should always try to get better

- It should try to make sure as many people as possible get the benefits they are entitled to

Theme 5: the wider culture of social security in Scotland

This theme is about how people in Scotland feel about social security. The main things that were important were:

- We should all work to challenge stigma around social security

- Social Security should be seen as a human right

- People in Scotland should be proud of social security

- The system should be flexible as society changes

Summary and next steps

The core group and the organisations have so far helped create a list of statements about how the new social security system should work and what it should be like.

These can be grouped into 5 themes about clients, staff, the processes involved, the system as whole, and the culture of social security in Scotland.

We will continue to work with the core group and the organisations to use these themes to write the charter. We will also speak to groups of people who are not in the core group, like younger people and ethnic minorties.

When the charter is written, it will be sent to parliament to discuss and approve.

This report is available on the Scottish Government Publications Website (http://www.gov.scot/Publications/Recent)