Social Security Experience Panels: Branding and Wording
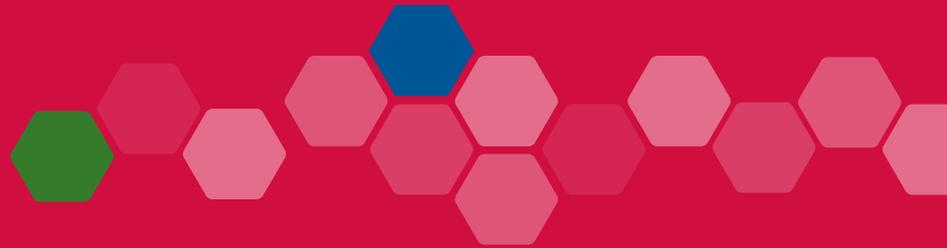
EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

social research

Contents

Introduction

In November 2017 and May and June 2018, focus groups, interviews and an online [1]survey were carried out with Experience Panel members to hear their views and opinions on elements of Social Security Scotland's branding and language guidelines. This work was part of the Scottish Government's Social Security Experience Panel programme of research.

This report provides a summary of the findings from this research.

Summary

This report contains the findings from two phases of research. The first phase took place in November 2017 and comprised fifteen focus groups and three interviews covering potential names, logos and straplines for the new social security service. Eighty-three Experience Panel members took part in this phase.

Part of this phase was undertaken by contractors as part of a wider piece of work informing the branding and name of Social Security Scotland (the agency). This report draws on analysis of the seven focus groups led by Scottish Government researchers, and on a summary report on the other eight focus groups provided by The Gate subcontracted to TNS. Scottish Government researchers were present at all sessions, including those ran by the subcontractor.

The second phase took place in May and June 2018 and comprised a survey and six focus groups covering the branding and language guidelines for Social Security Scotland. Eighteen Experience Panel members took part across four interviews and two focus groups. A further ninety-two completed an online survey.

This was primarily a qualitative piece of research exploring the range and reasons for views. It is therefore not appropriate to give exact numbers of focus group and interview participants expressing each view, and survey percentages are given to to give a broad sense of the balance of opinion only.

Agency Name and related words

Around three out of four participants said they were comfortable with the terms 'entitlements' and 'social security' with slightly fewer being comfortable with 'benefits'. Some participants disliked the word 'benefits' because they felt it represented part of the negative stigma associated with claiming social security.

Participants were generally divided about the proposed names, with positive and negative points raised for each. In general, participants did not like the name 'Benefits Scotland' believing it was not sufficiently different from what came before. The word 'benefits' was also problematic for some participants.

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[1] It was not possible to offer a paper or telephone version of the survey as participants were required to comment on materials displayed on a screen (such as how readable a font was).

Some participants favoured 'Entitlements Scotland' however concerns were raised around how understandable this name was, with some participants feeling it did not adequately reflect the agency's purpose.

'Social Security Scotland' and 'Social Security Agency Scotland' were received more positively. Some participants did not like the word 'agency' being included in the title and believed 'Social Security Agency Scotland' was too long for a name. Participants were generally positive about 'Social Security Scotland', however some did not like the use of the word 'social security' feeling it was 'old-fashioned' or had associations with the old Department for Social Security.

Participants identified a number of attributes they would like the agency name to have: it should contain the word 'Scotland', it should be easily understandable and it should reflect the purpose of the agency.

Agency logo

Some participants disliked the proposed 'Entitlements Scotland' and 'Benefits Scotland' logos, thinking they did not reflect the agency's purpose or were 'meaningless'. Participants tended to have no strong feelings either way on the 'Social Security Scotland' logo. Many participants felt positively towards the 'Social Security Agency Scotland' logo, seeing the logo as 'distinctive' and 'positive'.

Agency strapline

Participants were mostly positive about the strapline 'Enabling, Supporting, Advising', feeling that it was 'supportive' and 'helpful'. Some questioned how realistic such a strapline could be whilst others felt that the words were in the wrong order.

The straplines 'Built around you' and 'Your social security agency' were received positively by some, however others felt that these straplines were 'vague', did not say anything about the new agency or were 'impersonal'.

'Dignity Fairness Respect' was well received and participants felt that this strapline would guide the behaviour of clients and staff and was 'bold', 'political' and 'fresh'.

Branding elements

On the whole, participants viewed the suggested colour palette positively, feeling that the colours were markedly different from those used by the Department for Work and Pensions. Participants felt that accessibility was an important consideration when deciding how and where to use colours. They also noted that whilst they were positive about the colours, this depended on the context in which they were used.

Participants were broadly positive about the example photos. However, they expected agency photos to be inclusive and portray different genders, ages, ethnicities and disabilities. Particular value was placed on photos which appeared to be authentic and not posed. Some participants believed the photos they were

shown were not as inclusive as they could be as they lacked certain groups of people, or did not reflect their experience of visiting an office.

The proposed icons were seen as clear, easy to understand and helpful however participants did express some concern over how inclusive they were (especially for the male/female and wheelchair icon). They noted there was a balance to be struck between using newer, more inclusive icons that fewer people may understand compared to icons that may be seen as less inclusive but more universal.

Participants were most comfortable with the word 'individuals' being used to describe those who claim social security (90 per cent), however 'clients' and 'applicants' also scored highly (76 per cent and 78 per cent respectively). Participants were more mixed in their feelings for words used to describe disability, however focus group participants generally agreed with the principle of putting the person first (for example, 'person with a disability' rather than 'disabled person').

Background and research methods

The Scottish Government is becoming responsible for eleven of the benefits previously delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the work to prepare for this change, the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels. The Experience Panels are made up of over 2,400 people across Scotland who have recent experience of claiming at least one of the benefits that will be devolved to Scotland.

The Scottish Government is working with Experience Panel members to design a new social security system that works for the people of Scotland. The benefits devolved to the Scottish Government will be delivered by Social Security Scotland – Scotland's new social security agency.

As part of the formation of Social Security Scotland, researchers from the Scottish Government have met with Experience Panel members to hear their thoughts and views on elements of the agency's branding and language guidelines.

In phase one of the research, fifteen focus groups and three interviews took place in November 2017 exploring Experience Panel members' views on potential names for the new agency, the design of the agency's logo and their views on the agency's strapline (slogan).

Seven of the phase one focus groups were carried out by Scottish Government social researchers. A further eight were carried out as part of a piece of work by The Gate, subcontracted to TNS. The findings from phase one include data from focus groups carried out by Scottish Government researchers and the subcontractor's report.

In phase two of the research, two focus groups, four interviews and an online survey were carried out by Scottish Government social researchers in May and June 2018. These explored Experience Panel member's views on the agency's

colour palette, the style of photography, icons and font used in agency materials and the agency's language guidelines.

All participants were recruited through the Scottish Government's Social Security Experience Panels. The Social Security Experiences Panels are a longitudinal research project. The panels are made up of volunteers from the Scottish population who have lived experience of benefits. The results of the survey should be regarded as being reflective of the experiences and views of the respondents only and are not indicative or representative of the wider Scottish population. The number of participants for the survey was small and this should be kept in mind when considering the results. Percentages are given only to give a broad sense of the balance of opinion across participants.

Focus Groups

Fifteen focus groups were held in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Perth, Hawick and Shetland with eighty attendees. Participants were shown 'mood boards' to showcase the proposed agency names, logos and straplines. Flipcharts and post-its were used to facilitate discussion and capture the views of less vocal or confident participants. An additional three interviews were held in Edinburgh with participants who were British Sign Language users, registered blind or a speaker of a foreign language. Focus groups were facilitated by Scottish Government researchers and an external contractor. Scottish Government researchers were present at all sessions, including those ran by the subcontractor.

The second set of focus groups covered the agency's branding and language guidelines and were carried out in May and June 2018. Fifteen participants took part across two focus groups and four interviews.

A Scottish Government staff member acted as a note-taker in each session. The second set of focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The analysis is based on these notes and transcripts.

Survey Method

All 2,456 Experience Panel members were invited to take part in the survey called 'Help us with the new social security branding and words we will use'. Participation in all Experience Panels research is optional, and in this case ninety-two Experience Panel members chose to complete the survey (3.75 per cent).

The information was added to information from the 'About Your Benefits and You' (Scottish Government, 2017[2]) and 'Social Security Experience Panels: Who is in the panels and their experiences so far' (Scottish Government, 2018[3]) surveys. The data collected in these surveys was linked to the information supplied by participants of this survey as part of the longitudinal dataset for this project.

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[2] Scottish Government (2017). *Social Security Experience Panels: About Your Benefits and You – Quantitative Research Findings*. [online] Available at: www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/7769

[3] Scottish Government (2018). *Social Security Experience Panels: Who is in the panels and their experiences so far*. [online] Available at: www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/10/3083

More than eight in ten participants (84 per cent) were aged between 45 and 79, and just over a third (35 per cent) were aged between 60 and 79. Seventeen per cent were aged between 25 and 44.

Table 1: Age of survey participants (n=79)

Age	%
25 - 44	17
45 - 59	49
60 - 79	35
Total	100

Almost four out of ten participants identified as 'man or boy' (37 per cent) and just over two thirds (64 per cent) identified as 'woman or girl'.

Table 2: Gender of survey participants (n=79)

Gender	%
Man or boy	37
Woman or girl	64
Total	100

More than seven out of ten survey participants (73 per cent) had a disability or long term health condition, and just under half of the survey participants cared for someone with a long term health condition or a disability.

Table 3: Disability status of survey participants (n=79)

Disability Status	%
Disabled	85
Not Disabled	15
Total	100

Survey participants took part from twenty-seven of the thirty-two local authorities, with the majority living in an urban area (86 per cent)[4].

Table 4: Location of survey participants (n=70)

Participant Location	%
Urban	86
Rural	14
Total	100

Most survey participants were caring for a friend, relative or partner at the time of the survey:

Table 5: Carer status of participants (n=77)

Care Status	%
Carer	57
Not Carer	43
Total	100

More detailed demographic information on the Experience Panels as a whole can be found in Social Security Experience Panels: Who is in the panels and their experiences so far' (Scottish Government, 2018[5]).

Agency Name and related words

Words used to describe social security

Participants in the second phase of the research were asked their views on three words used to describe social security: 'social security', 'benefits' and 'entitlements'. Survey participants were asked to rate how comfortable they were with these words on a five-point scale.

Just over seven in ten survey participants felt very comfortable or comfortable with the words 'social security' and 'entitlements'. Almost half (47 per cent) were

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[4] 17% of the Scottish population lives in a rural area – Scottish Government (2018). *Rural Scotland Key Facts 2018* [online] Available: https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0054/00541327.pdf

[5] Scottish Government (2018). *Social Security Experience Panels: Who is in the panels and their experiences so far*. [online] Available at: www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/10/3083

uncomfortable or very uncomfortable with the word 'benefits' however 54 per cent of participants said they were comfortable or very comfortable.

Table 6: Survey participant views on words used to talk about social security (n=91-92)

Word or phrase	Very comfortable or Comfortable (%)	Uncomfortable or Very uncomfortable (%)	Don't know / No opinion (%)
Social Security	72	27	1
Benefits	53	47	0
Entitlements	77	23	0

Participant comments were mixed. Some participants believed using 'entitlements' represented a positive shift away from what they believed was a current negative discourse around social security:

"the words 'entitled to' and 'having a right to' are good in the fact that we are moving the mood music away from feeling that you are almost begging for support…"

Others disagreed and believed the word was inappropriate:

"Words like entitlement and benefits should be banned. Being on social security due to a horrible degenerative condition is not a benefit and the language that is used can reinforce unconscious byas [sic]…"

"And the very fact that you have to apply for it says that we are not actually entitled until somebody else makes a decision and says we are."

Some participants associated the term 'social security' with the previous name of DWP (DSS). For others, it was a more positive term:

"I am still very positive about social security, I don't mind going to pick up social security, I don't mind if somebody else does…"

The participants in the second phase of the research generally gave similar views about the three words above as the participants in phase one, who gave their views on the words as part of potential names for the new social security agency.

Agency Name

The four potential names presented in phase one were 'Benefits Scotland', 'Entitlements Scotland', 'Social Security Scotland' and 'Social Security Agency Scotland'. Participants raised a range of positive and negative points for each. They tended to be negative about Benefits Scotland. Generally participants liked the term 'social security' in the name, and less positive about also including the word 'agency'. Some had concerns about the accessibility of the name Entitlements Scotland.

Benefits Scotland

Opinions tended to be negative on the name 'Benefits Scotland'.

Participants who liked this choice of name said that it was 'simple' and 'straightforward', that it 'does what it says'. They felt that it was clear what the agency was for. Some liked the word 'benefits' because it was clear and didn't link back to 'social security' which they viewed as an 'old' word. They felt the staff working for this organisation would know their job, understand the benefits system and would be helpful.

Others were less favourable towards the name 'Benefits Scotland'. Some felt that it was confusing and that it didn't reflect the purpose of the agency. Some participants did not like the word 'benefit':

> "We cannot have that word, it cannot be resurrected"

Participants felt it was important that the name is not just about benefits, as there are other things you might look for from the agency (such as advice or information). Others pointed out that some may not see the money they receive as a 'benefit' – for example, Cold Weather Payments may be seen differently from Personal Independence Payment.

Across both phases of work, a number of participants felt that the word 'benefits' had negative connotations, that it is 'conservative', 'intimidating', that it doesn't feel 'safe' or 'comfortable', and is associated with a lot of stigma. This included an association with terms like 'hand-outs', 'scroungers', 'cheats', 'something for nothing', 'austerity' and 'leeching off the state'.

Overall, participants who did not like the name suggested it was not in keeping with what the agency should be conveying and wouldn't suggest a sufficient change from the previous system. This was partially driven by the perceived need to create a distance from previous systems, and that the new system needed to be seen as being for people who need help.

Views on the sample logo (fig. 1) tended to be negative.

Figure 1: 'Benefits Scotland' example logo

Amongst those who liked the logo, some felt it was 'modern' and 'looks permanent'. They felt it was 'clean' and 'simple'.

However many participants did not like this logo. Some felt the logo did not give any sense of purpose. Others felt the logo did not look new and that the brand was similar to DWP. Some suggested that the logo looked like a private company logo, making comparisons with high street stores and banks. They felt this made the agency feel less approachable and that it looked unfriendly:

"I don't think it is distinct. It reminds me of a private logo not government agency"

A number of participants did not like the colour used in the logo:

"The colour is offending me"

Alternative colour options shown to paticipants, such as mint green, were received more positively. Purple and teal were favoured by some and considered 'warm'.

Entitlements Scotland

As above, some participants liked the sentiment of the word 'entitlements' in that it was a conscious attempt at something new and a move away from stigmatised words like 'benefits'. Whilst the move away from the word 'benefits' was received positively, the word 'entitlements' itself was not universally seen as positive across both phases:

"Nicer thought – but we're not there yet"

"I like the concept of it. But I'm not sure I'd want to see this in the name. It's too big."

"People will be like 'What does that mean?'"

"I'm not a British Citizen, and this scares me. You need to have something to go along to this. Grandma from the hills would run away from this."

The most common issue with the name 'Entitlements Scotland' was the length of the word. Participants thought that the word 'entitlement' was overly complicated and that people would struggle to understand it. In particular several participants made reference to the challenges this would pose for people with learning difficulties. One individual who spoke English as a second language struggled with the word:

> "It doesn't matter where you live, there are about 20% of the population have a reading age of 8-9. This is too long."

Some participants made negative associations with 'entitlements' and a perception of people receiving benefits feeling 'entitled' to support. Similarly, participants had an association with 'entitlements' and a sense of superiority, suggesting the agency would be 'grand, 'fancy' or 'exclusive'.

> "I feel staff working for this organisation would look down their nose at me"

Some participants expressed a concern that the word 'entitlements' was not accessible, believing there was no British Sign Language equivelant.

Participants across the groups were not positive about the logo (fig. 2).

Figure 2: 'Entitlements Scotland' example logo

Time was spent in groups trying to understand what the image was designed to represent. Several participants thought the logo was more suited to something temporary, like a conference or a corporate event. The image was seen as having little connection to Scotland, or the people who would be seeking support from the agency.

> "Don't know what this logo is supposed to be - it looks like a stamp"

There was a mixed response to the orange colour palette. Some participants liked that it was a neutral, non-threatening and inoffensive colour. Several participants noted potential issues for users with visual impairments where yellow and white together can be very hard to read. Participants tended to prefer the option in blue as they felt this was more permanent and more related to Scotland.

Social Security Scotland

Responses to this option were more positive. Participants considered the name to be clear and instantly recognizable. They were also positive about having 'Scotland' as part of the name.

Participants generally liked that it didn't include the word 'agency' as it made the name simpler:

> "the title tells you what it does"

Some participants felt that 'social security' was less stigmatising than 'benefits' and 'welfare'. 'Social Security Scotland' was seen to offer support and security.

Across both phases, several participants drew associations with the Department for Social Security. For some, this had negative connotations with an old system. Whilst the name did have these associations for some, it was not always a negative association with some participants reporting positive associations with the Department for Social Security.

The logo (fig. 3) did not generate particularly strong feelings. Many participants recognised the logo as a representation of an 's'.

Figure 3: 'Social Security Scotland' example logo

Some participants liked the colour on the white background, thinking it helped the logo to stand out. However some associated the colour red with panic, danger or a stop sign. They felt this could cause alarm, for example if used on envelopes. Participants tended to prefer the blue and purple options, which were considered to be more 'Scottish'.

Social Security Agency Scotland

Participants tended to be more negative about the name 'Social Security Agency Scotland' than Social Security Scotland.

Some suggested the name could be quite confusing. Reasons for this included that when used as an acronym, it may cause confusion with the Students Award Agency for Scotland (SAAS) and that some people may interact with both organisations. Other reasons included a suggestion that it might be unclear from the name whether the organisation was being directed from Westminster, whether it was 'just a Scottish branch' and that it felt very 'same old'. Some participants suggested this was because of the inclusion of the word 'agency'.

Similar to above, some participants raised concerns with the words 'social security'. These participants felt it may be out of date and offered no change. Others felt the word 'agency' was unnecessary and they would be more accepting of the name if the word 'agency' was removed.

Many participants liked the logo (fig. 4). It was felt that the image suggested a map of Scotland and the idea of the logo being a stylised map was well liked.

Figure 4: 'Social Security Agency Scotland' example logo

Participants from islands strongly felt that a representation of the map of Scotland should include the islands.

The map style itself was viewed positively by some. Participants saw the blocks as supporting each other, interlocking and joining the country. Participants who did not make the association that the logo looked like Scotland still tended to feel that the logo was 'distinctive' and 'positive'.

Participants suggested it was important for a logo to be official and serious, but also warm and welcoming, with some feeling the logo achieved this.

Straplines

Focus group participants were presented with a number of potential straplines for the new agency: 'Built around you', 'Dignity Fairness Respect', 'Enabling, Supporting, Advising' and 'Your social security agency'.

'Enabling, Supporting, Advising'

Many participants were positive about this strapline. Amongst those who were positive, they liked the language was 'supportive' however they questioned how realistic a description this could be for the new agency.

Those who were positive about this strapline felt that it sent a good message and suggested an element of choice. The word 'advising' was seen as good because it's not 'telling' or 'forcing' – it felt less prescriptive. Some felt that it implied even when the answer was 'no' the agency will be constructive and when turning people away suggest where they go next.

Some participants suggested changing the order of the words, for example placing 'supporting' first to give a sense of priorities. This also meant the strapline would not have the acronym 'ESA'[6] which for some had negative connotations.

Participants who were less positive suggested it sounded 'like a charity' and were not sure it covered everything the agency should do. Others believed that the purpose of the agency was missing.

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[6] ESA can refer to Employment Support Allowance, an out of work benefit currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

'Built around you'

Participants who were positive about this strapline suggested it might indicate a person-centred approach and they found that reassuring. A number of participants felt the strapline was unclear and seemed incomplete, not telling the reader anything about the agency. Others felt it was a false promise. Some suggested that the word 'built' had the connotations of a housing association or building company.

'Dignity Fairness Respect'

Many participants felt positively about this strapline, and felt it set a good, clear tone for the new agency. They believed it would guide expectations of the behavior of both the staff and clients.

> "It demonstrates that care and attention has been put in to getting it right"

Many felt the word 'dignity' was important and marked a change from the previous system. Participants felt that the strapline was 'powerful', 'political', 'strong', 'bold' and a 'service level agreement that they could trust'.

> "This is an accurate representation of what is being built. Dignity is the key, as there is nothing dignified about the current process in place at DWP"

'Your Social Security Agency'

Responses to this strapline were mixed. Some participants were strongly against it, feeling that it was not a new or different message.

They felt the agency didn't feel as personal as this implied. Those who preferred 'social security' in the 'agency's' name felt it was too repetitive.

Participants who liked this strapline felt it made the brand feel 'personal' and liked the word 'your'. They felt it broke away from the past and gave them a stake in the agency.

Colours

Survey and focus group participants were shown a colour palette (fig. 5-6) with the proposed primary and secondary colours to be used by Social Security Scotland.

Figure 5: Social Security Scotland primary colours

Figure 6: Social Security Scotland secondary colours

Participants were not shown examples of the colours in use beyond the Social Security Scotland logo. This was because we wanted to understand their initial reactions and feelings towards the colours rather than their views of the situation in where they might be used.

Survey participants were asked to rate the primary and secondary colours against six attributes using a two point scale of 'Agree' and 'Disagree'.

More than three out of four participants thought the colours were bold, fresh, modern and positive. The most disagreed with attribute was warm, with just over one in four participants (26 per cent) disagreeing.

Table 7: Survey participant views on agency primary and secondary colours (n=84-87)

Attribute	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Warm	74	26
Bold	87	13
Fresh	88	12
Modern	87	13
Positive	88	12
Optimistic	79	21

No notable differences were observed in terms of participant colour preference and age, gender or disability status.

Views on colour palette

Focus group participants were asked their views on the colours, with the attributes being used as prompts to encourage discussion. Survey participants were also given the option of making additional comments on the colours.

Many participants responded positively:

> "I love the colours. They appear easy/non-threatening and are easy on the eye"

> "I like how the complement each other whilst still being recognisably different."

While more than one in four (26 per cent) survey participants did not believe the colours were warm, however for some not being warm was not an issue:

> "I like the colours but I wouldn't describe them as warm, however I don't feel warm would be a good idea anyway"

Accessibility of colours

Survey and focus group participants were asked if they had any thoughts on the accessibility of the colour palette, or if the use of colours could aid or hinder accessibility.

Most participants did not raise any specific points around accessibility, either having nothing to say or believing the colours were accessible.

Some of those who chose to comment said the use of colour made text easier to read:

> "I'm dyslexic and can read just fine, but anything with colour is far easier to read. I'm very happy there is colour and a variety of it."

> "I do like the colours, but sometimes when the font is in these colours then it can be very difficult to read"

Associations

Most participants did not associate the colour palettes with anything specific. Some commented that this was partially due to the diverse range of colours present.

Those who did have associations tended to refer to specific colours or pairings of colours within the palette:

> "Colour pink has a recognised association with LGBT groups and also breast cancer."

Participants also considered the colour palette in relation to those used by the Department for Work and Pensions and other government departments. This was unprompted, but was a relatively common theme. Where this comparison was made, it was usually complimentary:

"They are a refreshing change from DWP and HMRC which are older, dull…"

"They feel familiar and more personable than the current colours used by DWP…"

Of the participants who had negative associations with the colours, it was usually with specific colours rather than the palette as a whole:

"…the blue and grey, the primaries, are reminiscent of 1970s [sic] Government building paintwork…"

Overall most participants viewed the colour palette positively, with the caveat that their views on the use of colour as a whole was dependent on the context in which it was used. As it was not possible to show participants examples of the colour palette in use, we did not explore this issue further.

Photos

Survey and focus group participants were shown two sets of photographs and asked to rate them against a number of attributes on a five-point scale.

The photo sets were designed around two themes which would be present in Social Security Scotland's written materials:

- Social Security Scotland clients (fig. 7) - showing the people the agency helps living the lives they are entitled to

- Social Security Scotland staff at work (fig. 8)

Figure 7: Photo set 1 – Social Security Scotland clients

Figure 8: Photo set 2 – Social Security Scotland staff at work

It was made clear to participants that the photo sets shown to them were concepts created using stock photos and were not the final photos intended to be used by the agency. Participants were asked to consider the style, themes and ideas presented in the photos. Each set of photos was rated separately.

Social Security Scotland clients

Survey participants were broadly positive about photo set one, though slightly less so than photo set two.

More than seven out of ten participants believed the photos were warm and positive, but around a third of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that the photos were authentic (real) or reflective of their community.

Table 8: Survey participant views on photo set 1 – Social Security Scotland clients (n=86-88)

Attribute	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree or Strongly disagree (%)
Authentic (real)	55	14	31
Positive	77	18	5
Warm	72	21	7
Reflects my community	41	24	35
Inclusive	56	18	26

Social Security Scotland staff at work

Survey participants largely agreed with the attributes suggested for the staff photos.

More than eight out of ten participants (84 per cent) believed the photos were friendly and almost three quarters thought they were approachable and professional. Just over half of the survey participants agreed the photos were inclusive, however around one in five participants neither agreed nor disagreed that this attribute was represented.

Table 9: Survey participant views on photos set 2 – Social Security Scotland staff at work (n=89-90)

Attribute	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree or Strongly disagree (%)
Natural	61	29	20
Friendly	84	9	7
Helpful	66	27	7
Approachable	74	16	10
Professional	73	17	10
Inclusive	52	28	20

Inclusivity and Authenticity

The areas in which participants were more often negative about the photo sets were around inclusivity, 'reflects my community' and authenticity. Both survey and focus group participants were mixed in their feelings around these attributes.

Those who felt the photos were not inclusive, authentic or both commented:

"As far as I can see no images of disabled people which would be a fairly large part of people using the service."

"…there are no clients of Oriental extraction. No headscarves despite Scotland's significant Muslim population…"

A recurring point of discussion in focus groups was whether photos should show clients and staff looking happy. For some, this was inauthentic and did not accurately reflect their past experience of claiming social security:

> "they are extremely happy and healthy. I don't know of a job centre whose client group is remotely reflected in these images."

> "I don't like the idea of the site being replete with happy, smiling people when the majority of users will be neither particularly happy or smiling, Seeing such pictures somewhat invalidates user's feelings"

Others felt that photos of smiling clients and staff gave the impression of friendliness and warmth:

> "If the intent was to portray a positive, approachable vibe, I believe it succeeds"

> "Photos appear friendly and natural…"

For others, a lack of authenticity was evident in how clients dressed:

> "I am taken to challenge anybody that says they are on benefits who is dressed like that."

Despite the mixed feelings around whether the photo sets were inclusive and authentic, survey and focus group participants suggested common ideas of what an inclusive and authentic photo set would look like:

- Include diversity of gender, ethnicity, age and disability;

- Be sensitive to individual circumstances – the circumstances which bring clients to claim social security will mean they are not always going to be smiling or happy; and

- Be positive, warm and natural.

Icons

Survey and focus group participants were shown a set of icons (fig. 9) and asked to rate them against attributes on a five-point scale. It was made clear to participants that the icons presented to them were provisional.

Figure 9: Icons
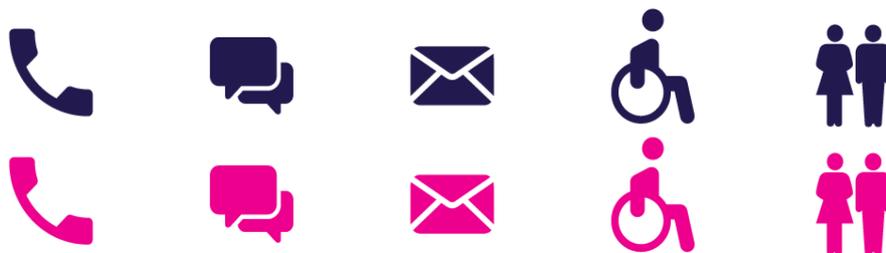
Participant views on icons

Survey participants tended to agree the icons reflected the attributes, with at least four out of five participants agreeing with all of the attributes except inclusive. Almost a quarter of participants neither agreed nor disagreed that the icons were inclusive, and one on ten disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 10: Survey participant views on icons (n=89-91)

Attribute	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree or Strongly disagree (%)
Clear	92	4	3
Easy to see	94	2	3
Easy to understand	80	9	11
Bright	88	11	1
Helpful	84	13	3
Inclusive	63	25	12

Some survey respondents explained their views on the inclusive attribute in the text box provided. A number of participants commented on the male/female icon in particular:

"…And why have male and female figures, without a non-binary figure…"

"Why is there an old fashioned male/female sign? This is in no way society's take on gender and will bother many people."

Other participants felt the wheel chair logo was problematic:

"disabled people represented by a wheelchair? Great. How very clichéd."

"Inclusive? This is the problem with your disabled person […] is not always in a wheelchair"

A recurring theme in focus groups was how to strike the balance between using a recognizable symbol such as the wheelchair or male and female logo, and adopting a newer, potentially more inclusive symbol which was unlikely to be as widely understood.

During focus groups, participants tended to believe being more readily understood was of greater importance than using a more inclusive symbol.

Understanding the icons

Many participants felt they could understand the icons presented to them:

> "I like the icons and it is easy to understand what they represent"

> "The signs are simple, bright and understandable"

A minority of participants commented on potential difficulties understanding certain icons. This tended to relate to the speech bubble 'webchat' icon and whether the envelope icon was referring to email or post:

> "The icon for message and email may not be understood by elderly clients"

To address this, some suggested that icons should never be used in isolation and should always have accompanying text giving to give context.

Font

Survey and focus group participants were shown a sample of the proposed agency font, Open Sans (fig. 10) and asked to rate it on a five-point scale against four attributes.

Figure 10: Sample of agency font

Putting dignity, fairness and respect at the heart of everything we do, your new agency is a place where everyone is welcomed and treated equally. Our service strives to be a clear, helpful and friendly way to get what you're entitled to, on time and comfortably.

Participants largely agreed with all attributes, with less than two in ten participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the font was clear, easy to read, professional or welcoming. Just under a third of participants (33 per cent) neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed that the font was welcoming however over two thirds still agreed or strongly agreed that it was (68 per cent).

Table 11: Survey participant views on font (n=89-90)

Attribute	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree or Strongly disagree (%)
Clear	79	9	12
Easy to read	80	8	12
Professional	76	19	5
Welcoming	67	27	6

Participants were also shown a sample of the font on a coloured background (fig. 11) and asked to rate it based on how easy to read it was. More than nine out of ten participants thought the font with the coloured background was clear and easy to red, with three per cent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with both attributes.

Figure 11: Font on coloured background
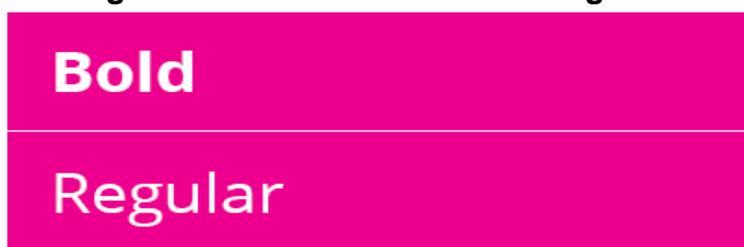
Table 12: Survey participant views on font with background colour (n=90-91)

Attribute	Strongly Agree or Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree or Strongly disagree (%)
Clear	95	2	3
Easy to read	91	6	3

Words

The agency wants to ensure that the words it uses when talking about those who have contact with the agency, social security and disability are appropriate and respectful. Participants were asked their thoughts on a number of different words.

How we talk about those who have contact with the agency

We also asked participants how comfortable they felt with five words used to refer to people who have contact with the agency. The word most survey participants

were comfortable with was 'individuals', with nine in ten participants feeling very comfortable or comfortable with the word.

76 per cent of participants were comfortable or very comfortable with 'clients' however just over one in five were very uncomfortable or uncomfortable. Participants were slightly less comfortable with the phrase 'people entitled to benefits' (58.8 per cent very comfortable or comfortable) compared to 'people with a right to benefits' (66 per cent very comfortable or comfortable).

Table 13: Survey participant views on words used to talk about those who have contact with the agency (n=91-92)

Word or phrase	Very comfortable or Comfortable (%)	Uncomfortable or Very uncomfortable (%)	Don't know / No opinion (%)
Clients	76	21	3
People entitled to benefits	59	40	1
People with a right to benefits	65	34	1
Applicants	78	20	2
Individuals	90	9	1

Participants were generally happy with the term 'clients', preferring it over other terms such as 'customers'. For some, the term customers was not appropriate as they couldn't 'choose to go elsewhere'.

How we talk about ill health and disability

Participants were also asked their views on how we should talk about ill health and disability. More than three quarters of participants were very comfortable or comfortable with the phrases 'wheelchair user', 'person with [condition]' and 'person who has experience of [condition]'. Almost a third of participants were uncomfortable with 'disabled people', 'impairment' and 'person with an impairment' however around six in ten participants were comfortable or very comfortable with these terms.

Table 14: Survey participant views on words used to talk about disabilities (n=90-92)

Word or phrase	Very comfortable or Comfortable (%)	Uncomfortable or Very uncomfortable (%)	Don't know / No opinion (%)
Disabled people	67	32	1
Person with [condition]	76	23	1
Person with experience of [condition]	78	19	3
Impairment	65	34	1
Person with impairment	65	33	2
Wheelchair user	84	13	3

A recurring comment in focus groups and the survey was putting the person first was important:

"It should be people with disabilities or impairments and not disabled people. Because we are people first."

Other views on words used by the agency

Participants made a number of other comments relating to the words used by the agency. These tended to be general observations as to how the agency should act:

- Speak in plain English with easy to understand language

- Treat clients as individuals and always put the person before the condition

- Language should be factual and truthful

What's Next?

Experience Panel feedback was central to the naming of the new Executive Agency established to deliver devolved benefits.

This feedback – along with ongoing user research – has shaped the brand guidelines that outline how Social Security Scotland should visually present itself and speak to people.

Much of the feedback received demonstrates that Social Security Scotland is moving in the right direction with the development of its identity.

We have also stressed that photos should be of 'real people' wherever possible and should represent the full range of people in Scotland – who we are here to serve.

Work is underway to commission original photography. We are working with stakeholders to identify people who will use our service and who are happy to appear in our communications and marketing products.

People's preference on language has been incorporated into the brand guidelines. However, this will be an iterative process and as we continue to test the use of the language in the body of materials, we will learn, adapt and improve.

The Scottish Government will continue to work with the Experience Panels in the development of Scotland's new social security system. This will include further research on individual benefits in addition to cross-cutting work to assist in the development of Social Security Scotland.

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:
☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics

☐ are available via an alternative route <specify or delete this text>

☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact SocialSecurityExperience@gov.scot for further information.

☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.