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Developing the Scottish Social Security Charter: co-design in action



EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY



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Executive Summary

The Scottish Government is getting new powers to deliver some social security benefits. Provision for delivering these benefits is set out in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018¹. These benefits will be delivered by Social Security Scotland (the Agency).

The Act required a charter for social security to be co-designed with people who had experience of social security and stakeholder organisations. The charter was required to reflect the Human Rights based approach to social security as well as the eight social security principles which are set out in Section 1 of the Act (see Annex A for a list of the principles).

Co-design work took place over six months from June 2018 to December 2018, the result was a draft charter which was laid before the Scottish Parliament in January 2019.

This report describes the co-design process by which the considered thoughts, views and opinions of people with lived experience of social security and stakeholders were brought together to produce a comprehensive, evidence led, robust manifestation of the meaning of the eight principles in the Act.

Who was involved?

People with experience of social security including:

- 34 diverse people (the Core Group) worked together in a series of workshops
- 26 diverse people took part in focus groups and interviews
- 462 Social Security Experience Panel members responded to a survey

A wide group of stakeholders - meaning professionals who represent the interests of and work on behalf of social security clients (see appendix B)
Social Security Scotland staff

The work was planned, facilitated and overseen by Scottish Government researchers and policy officials.

How did co-design happen?

We undertook detailed, intensive and iterative research work and charter drafting work. The research resulted in a charter content checklist and the drafting element resulted in the draft charter.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/9/introduction/enacted>

Input to the draft charter and the checklist was gathered from:

- Seven day-long workshops with the Core Group including one joint workshop with the core group and stakeholders.
- Seven deliberative² focus groups and six individual interviews with people with experience of social security.
- A survey of Experience Panels members.
- A Social Security Scotland staff focus group.
- Two stakeholder workshops and a series of individual meetings.
- A debate in the Scottish parliament.

What is in the Charter and why?

The content of the Charter is based on a list of statements that represent what the principles in the Act mean in practice to people with lived experience of social security and stakeholders. We have called this list the Charter Content Checklist (see Annex E). The drafting of the charter has turned this list into a set of commitments that when delivered will give us a human rights based social security system that will encompass dignity and respect for all.

The content checklist will also be used as the basis for a measurement framework against which the implementation of the charter will be monitored.

The draft charter has a 4 page introduction and four substantive sections. The draft Charter will be available to view on the Social Security Committee pages of the Scottish Parliament website in February 2019³.

Charter front page

The title on the front page is 'Our Charter' with the following tag- line. "What you can expect from the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland"

The introduction has seven very brief sections in plain language which participants have used to set the scene for the substantive sections.

Introduction- setting out the background to the changes to social security in Scotland and the eight principles from the Act.

What is Our Charter? Participants included a brief overview to explain what the charter is in plain language.

² In this report we use the term 'deliberative' to reflect that participants in the research process were given extensive information before we proceeded with research questions.

³ <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/social-security-committee.aspx>

Who created Our Charter? This section sets out who was involved with the co-design of the charter.

Who is the ‘Our’ in Our Charter? This section explains that the Charter is important to everyone in Scotland.

Who makes sure that Our Charter is being delivered? Participants included in this section the process for making sure the Charter commitments are delivered and who would be overseeing and scrutinising this.

What is the difference between the Scottish Government, Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Parliament? Contains explanations of each of these and their role should be included.

Who should you speak to if you don’t think the commitments in Our Charter are being delivered? Finally, participants included a section that clearly states who people should get in touch with if they have a problem.

All the four substantive sections of the Charter are phrased as a list of commitments saying who will be responsible for delivering them.

A People’s Service

“We are here to make sure you get everything you are entitled to.”

This section clearly states the roles and responsibilities of Social Security Scotland staff in the process, and the roles and responsibilities of the clients. Participants included commitments for staff to be knowledgeable, kind and flexible, and for clients to give staff feedback to help them develop a better service.

Processes that Work

“We will design services with the people who use them.”

The list of commitments under this heading are mostly the responsibility of Social Security Scotland who will design and deliver the processes. Participants included commitments that processes should be designed with people who use them, that they should be flexible, adaptable and inclusive, and simple and clear.

A Learning System

“We will encourage feedback and empower people to deliver the best service possible.”

The list of commitments in this section are based around participants’ suggestions for the culture of the new system. They focus on: the involvement of clients, the need to own up to mistakes and to learn from them, to build trust and to support their staff, and further commitments to accessibility.

A Better Future

“We will use new powers to invest in the people of Scotland – making a positive difference to all of our lives.”

In this section the ‘we’ in ‘we will’ is specifically the Scottish Government. The tag-line reflects what participants feel the role the government should play.

This not only captures the role of government but also encapsulates the necessity of positioning social security as important to all people in Scotland.

Next steps

The Charter is being laid before Parliament at the same time as this report is published. After the parliamentary process we will design a measurement framework that will be used to ensure the charter is being delivered in practice.

The measurement framework will be designed to ensure that all aspects of the principles described by people with lived experience of social security are closely and robustly monitored, and the learning from this is used to improve the system.

The same groups of people that have been involved in developing the charter will also input to the development of a measurement framework. Information collected under the measurement framework will be made publicly available through annual Government Social Research publications.

Conclusion

The Scottish Social Security Charter has been co-designed. The process has brought together the considered thoughts, views and ideas of people with lived experience of social security and stakeholders. The people with lived experience that worked on the Charter have been guided by experts in a carefully formulated programme of capacity building and co-design.

The Core Group and other Experience Panel members were the basis of all the charter co-design work. The process was difficult for this group; for many their conditions make it hard for them to travel, be in a noisy room with many people, take part in discussions, and digest a large amount of complex information in a short time period. Nevertheless this group not only undertook these tasks they did them well and the quality of their input is manifest in the draft charter.

The result of this work is a draft charter that expresses what the principles in the Act mean to a wide range of people with experience of social security and who needs to do what to ensure that the vision of a system based on human rights is delivered.

1. Introduction and Background

The Scottish Government is getting new powers to deliver some social security benefits⁴. Provision for delivering these benefits is set out in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018⁵. These benefits will be delivered by Social Security Scotland (the Agency).

One key requirement of the Act is the development of a charter to guide the experience of people who apply for and receive social security (referred to as 'clients'). The charter should reflect the Human Rights approach to social security as well as the eight social security principles which are set out in Section 1 of the Act (see Annex A for a list of the principles).

Consultation on the charter with people who are disabled with a physical or mental health condition⁶ and who have experience of one or more of the benefits being devolved is also a requirement of the Act. Additionally the Act requires consultation with those who work with or represent people who claim social security. During the bill process Ministers strengthened these requirements by committing to giving those who have experience of the benefits to be devolved a leading role in developing the charter.

The role of facilitating and enabling people with experience of social security to lead this process, gathering and inputting stakeholder expertise and bringing all these voices together in the charter was undertaken by Scottish Government researchers and policy officials and key staff from the Agency. We have termed this process co-design. The co-design work on the charter took place over six months from June 2018 to December 2018.

The result of this work was a draft charter which was laid before the Scottish Parliament in January 2019.

The content of the Charter is based on a list of statements that represent what the principles in the Act mean in practice to people with lived experience of social security and stakeholders. In this report, we have explained how the process of drafting the charter turned this list into a set of commitments that when delivered will give us a human rights based social security system that will encompass dignity and respect for all.

⁴ Social Security for Scotland: Benefits being devolved to the Scottish Parliament March 2015 Page 7 <https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00473452.pdf> 2

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/9/introduction/enacted>

⁶ The Act uses the term 'impairment'.

This report was written by Scottish Government researchers. It sets out the process by which the considered thoughts, views and ideas of people with lived experience of social security and stakeholders were brought together to produce a comprehensive, evidence led, robust manifestation of the meaning of the eight principles in the Act. It describes the co-design process as follows:

Chapter 2 sets out the people who were involved – ‘Who’,
Chapter 3 describes the work these people undertook – ‘How’,
Chapter 4 sets out what is in the draft charter and why – ‘What and Why’,
Chapter 5 describes next steps,
Chapter 6 sets out a conclusion to the work.

Please note: this report builds on a short interim report describing the early stages of the process published in September 2018⁷.

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-publication/2018/09/designing-social-security-charter-report-first-stage-work-people-experience/documents/00540961-pdf/00540961-pdf/govscot%3Adocument>

2. The Charter: Who was involved?

Introduction

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 set out who should be involved in the co-design of the charter and this chapter documents the actual participants.

People involved in the co-design of the charter were:

- people with lived experience of social security;
- stakeholders - meaning professionals who represent the interests of and work on behalf various communities and interest groups, including people with lived experience of the social security system in Scotland;
- Social Security Scotland staff.

The work was planned, facilitated and overseen by Scottish Government researchers and policy officials.

People with lived experience of social security

People with lived experience of social security were largely recruited from the Social Security Experience Panels⁸. They:

- listened to input from professionals and experts and each other;
- told us their thoughts, opinions and ideas on what a human rights based model of social security that reflected the principles would look like;
- told us about their key priorities;
- shaped the on-going co-design work;
- helped to draft and redraft the charter.

We worked with both **small groups** and **surveyed larger numbers**.

The **small groups** included:

- a core group of people with a wide range of experiences, perspectives and protected characteristics;
- people who were unable to participate in the core group.

For **larger numbers** we undertook a survey of all Experience Panels members.

⁸ Social Security Experience Panels, set up in 2017. These were established to ensure that the design of the new social security system in Scotland is shaped by the experiences, needs and priorities of those who will use it. Over 2,400 people have joined the panels.

Core Group

There were two stages of recruitment for the core group. The first recruitment stage is described in the interim report which also sets out the range of 30 people recruited to core group at the beginning. We faced challenges recruiting some seldom heard groups⁹. As such, we undertook initial workshops with the existing group and undertook further recruitment processes in parallel.

The additional recruitment led to the addition of six people, which boosted the LGBTI membership and included young people and people from minority ethnic groups. These members had an intensive capacity building¹⁰ session and a session that covered the work undertaken to date by the core group before they joined in with the core group.

Over the series of workshops 34 individuals attended the core group.

We are unable to set out a precise breakdown of the personal characteristics of this group as the small numbers could lead to disclosure of personal and sensitive information.

We are able to report that the core group when supplemented included a range of disabled people with:

- mental health conditions;
- physical health conditions;
- sensory conditions;
- and learning conditions.

The group was balanced by gender, age, and urban and rural dwellers. The group included people who are carers of disabled adults and children, a range of people from the LGBTI communities, single parents/carers, people in and out of work, a range of people from minority ethnic groups, including people with experience of the asylum process, and people for whom English is a second language.

Enabling participation beyond the Core Group

The work with the Core Group included seven day-long meetings in Dundee and for some of the groups we wanted to engage with this type of participation wasn't achievable (for example, some couldn't travel or work in groups).

⁹ See chapter 3 in the interim report for the recruitment process
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-publication/2018/09/designing-social-security-charter-report-first-stage-work-people-experience/documents/00540961-pdf/00540961-pdf/govscot%3Adocument>

¹⁰ In this report we use the term 'capacity building' to mean ensuring that people have the knowledge and understanding to input to the process in an informed way

As such and to ensure wider participation in the decision making process we engaged with 26 further people through seven focus groups and six individual interviews. The groups represented in this work were:

- minority ethnic women;
- young carers;
- people with experience of the asylum process;
- LGBTI people;
- island dwellers;
- women who have experienced violence;
- people with experience of terminal illness; and
- parents.

Survey of Social Security Experience Panels

We also undertook a survey of all Experience Panel members to ensure that other voices were heard and that as many different experiences and needs were represented. We received 462 replies, giving a response rate of nearly 20%.

The full characteristics of the respondents are set out in Annex C. In brief, the survey achieved a reasonable balance of female (58%) and male (41%) with one percent preferring to describe their gender in another way.

The majority of the respondents were in the 45-59 age group (53%) with reasonable representation from younger groups (16%) and older groups (33%).

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents described themselves as heterosexual with 9% either bi-sexual, lesbian/gay and another way (a further 3% preferred not to answer the question).

Eighty-six percent of respondents were disabled, most with multiple conditions. Ninety-four percent were white, 4% preferred not to tell us their ethnic group and the remaining 2% were a mixture of Other ethnic groups, mixed or multiple ethnic groups, Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British and Caribbean or Black.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders provided feedback, advice and proposals for consideration by the core group. We enabled this role by setting up a stakeholder group, chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of Inclusion Scotland and composed of 27 organisations. We also engaged with a sub group of the Disability and Carers Benefits Expert Advisory Group (DACBEAG) (see Annex B for a full list of organisations involved in the charter development work).

Social Security Scotland Staff

People working in Social Security Scotland took on three roles, they:

- sense checked the content of the charter;
- gave expert communications advice to the core group, and
- ensured the design was in line with corporate guidance and branding.

Scottish Government Officials

Scottish Government officials, including researchers and policy officials, had a role to facilitate and enable the work.

The Scottish Government policy officials:

- ensured the process was conducted in line with the terms of the Act;
- advised people with lived experience on policy and technical matters;
- liaised with wider social security officials and Ministers; and
- engaged with key stakeholders to interpret the Act and foster buy-in.

Scottish Government researchers:

- designed, planned and implemented the co-design research processes;
- facilitated and enabled people with experience of social security to put forward informed opinions on what the form and content of the charter should be;
- collected information from stakeholders and Agency staff; and
- analysed the input, and shared the learning with the people with experience of social security, policy officials and stakeholders to reflect on and to develop the draft charter.

3. The Charter: How did people contribute?

Introduction

The Act requires the Charter to be developed in consultation with people with lived experience of social security. Ministers subsequently committed to a leading role for this group. The co-design process was carried out over six months from June 2018 to December 2018 and had two distinct elements; an evidence based research element which resulted in a charter content checklist and a drafting and design element which resulted in the charter that was presented to the Scottish Parliament in January 2019.

Both elements were detailed, intensive, and iterative. They included all the groups of people set out in Chapter 2. This chapter is a summary of how the roles explained above were undertaken, the work that took place and how we achieved the resulting documents described in Chapter 4.

Summary of all activity

Input to the draft charter and the checklist was gathered from:

- seven day-long workshops with the core group including one joint workshop with the core group and stakeholders;
- seven deliberative¹¹ focus groups and six individual interviews with people with experience of social security beyond the core group;
- a survey of Experience Panels members;
- a Social Security Scotland staff focus group;
- two stakeholder workshops and a series of one to one meetings; and
- a debate in the Scottish parliament.

There is a timeline of activity in Annex F.

The process that led to the Charter Content Checklist

The first version of a charter content checklist was produced in Core Group Workshops 1, 2 & 3 and the first stakeholder workshop. This checklist contained statements that represented what people thought the principles in the Act mean in practice. The details of this process and the first list are set out in the interim report¹². For convenience a brief summary is set out here.

¹¹ In this report we use the term 'deliberative' to reflect that participants in the research process were given extensive information before we proceeded with research questions.

¹² <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-publication/2018/09/designing-social-security-charter-report-first-stage-work-people-experience/documents/00540961-pdf/00540961-pdf/govscot%3Adocument>

Workshops 1, 2 & 3 consisted of extensive capacity building¹³ and facilitated discussion using research questions. This activity focussed on the meaning and importance of the eight principles in the Act to participants in the workshops.

The capacity building took the form of information giving with question and answer sessions, the full list of such sessions is in Annex D. The discussions were based on research questions designed to ensure that we could systematically collect information from all participants. The full list of questions is also in Annex D. All the information from these sessions was scribed and analysed to produce a checklist of statements that reflect the meaning of the principles to the core group and stakeholders.

The later research after the interim report added to and refined the content checklist. This work is detailed here and included Workshop 4 (the first half), the focus groups and individual interviews and the survey of all Experience Panel members mentioned above.

Workshop 4

Workshop 4 was split into two sessions. In the first half we worked on the content checklist (the second half is described below).

In all the workshops from Workshop 2 onwards we presented analysis of the earlier workshop back to the group for confirmation. In Workshop 4 this was the early content checklist which reflected the analysis of the material collected at previous workshops. We asked the core group to confirm whether or not we had understood their points of view and to add aspects that they may have thought about over the intervening period.

Focus groups and individual interviews

The focus groups and the interviews with people beyond the core group both took the same deliberative approach. We began by undertaking an intensive capacity building session. This included giving people the information they needed to understand the devolution of the benefits, the principles in the Act, the charter development process, and how the Core Group had produced the content checklist. Participants were given time to ask questions throughout.

We then went through the checklist item by item and asked the participants to consider the statements in the list and to discuss their meaning to them and their importance.

We then prioritised the content checklist items by using a list for each section and by asking people to identify their top three. Finally, we asked them to consider the principles and the content checklist and to tell us anything they thought was missing from their point of view. In this way we added important points to the list.

¹³ By 'capacity building' this report means ensuring that people have the knowledge and understanding to input to the process in an informed way

This process also enabled testing of the words the core group had used to express themselves. As we facilitated consideration of and discussions around each statement we asked for alternative words or phrases the participants might use themselves to express the meaning of the statement.

This research work collected additional rich information on a wider range of views, opinions and considerations. These were analysed and used to add to and refine the list to ensure that the full range of meanings of the principles were reflected.

The survey of Experience Panel members

The survey was undertaken in parallel with focus groups and interviews. The findings from the survey enabled us to both prioritise and add to the list.

The survey participants were asked to choose the most important statements to them from the list and add anything they believed was missing from the list. These choices were summed together to identify the statements that were most important to the highest number of respondents.

Checklist conclusion

This activity produced a comprehensive, evidence led, robust manifestation of the meaning of the eight principles in the Act to a very wide range of people with lived experience of social security. As such it formed a checklist against which the content in the charter was tested. It will also feature in the next steps as the basis for a measurement framework against which the implementation of the charter will be monitored.

Drafting the charter

The content checklist formed an evidence based list of what should be in the charter. This was then translated into a form of words that comprehensively said who should do what to ensure the new system fulfilled the aspirations in the Act. We worked iteratively in an intensive round of engagement to draft and refine the charter, which included; Workshops 4 (second half) 5, 6 & 7; individual sessions with stakeholders; a further stakeholder workshop; and we also took account of MSP's views as expressed in the debate in the Scottish Parliament.

Workshops 4 (second half), 5, 6 & 7

Workshops 4 (the second half), 5, 6 & 7 all explored ideas for the formats and the specific wording that should be used to reflect the broad content that had been developed by the core group.

These workshops were different to the other work. Information was given and collected as in the previous workshops, however in the drafting workshops the information was acted on and discussed in real time.

In **Workshop 4** we asked the core group how they thought the content checklist statements generated from the research should be reflected as more specific commitments or outcomes in the charter. We asked what words they would use to

make sure that someone reading the document clearly understood who should do what to ensure the statements, and, by extension, the social security principles were achieved in practice.

The information collected at the workshop was used by officials to write comprehensive plain English content for the charter. Officials also undertook a sense check of the content to ensure the imperatives of the Act were covered.

In **Workshop 5** the content was presented back to the core group and they discussed and commented extensively on it. At the same workshop a communications official and graphic designer collected ideas from the core group about the design of the charter.

Officials used the core group comments to redraft the content. At the same time the graphic designer used the information she had gathered to set up a template using Social Security Scotland and Scottish Government branding. The content was then put into the template and became the first draft charter.

There were then two more iterations. At **Workshop 6** we collected a round of comments on the draft charter. These were incorporated in the draft and the final draft of the charter was then taken back for comment in **Workshop 7** by the core group and stakeholders. The final comments were then incorporated.

Social Security Scotland Staff input

Eight members of delivery and management staff from Social Security Scotland also attended a focus group, facilitated by researchers. We talked them through the charter development process and an early draft of the charter and asked three questions:

- What are your overall impressions of the draft charter?
- To what extent is this deliverable from your point of view?
- What, if anything, is missing from the draft?

We collected and recorded their answers.

Disabled and Carers Benefits Expert Advisory Group

Key members of the Expert Advisory Group met to discuss and give advice on the draft charter. The group discussed a late draft of the charter and gave advice on:

- the structure and balance of the draft charter;
- the content of the charter including the language used;
- the look and feel; and
- inclusive communication.

Scottish Parliament Debate

Mid-way through the charter development process a debate was held in the Scottish Parliament. During the debate, MSPs expressed their support for the on-going co-design process and made some suggestions on what should be included in the Charter. As such MSPs who contributed were considered to be an important voice in the co-design process and their suggestions were taken into account by other participants.

4. The Charter - What and Why

Introduction

The result of the work detailed above with the groups of people detailed above is a co-designed draft Charter that was laid before parliament in January 2019.

The content of the Charter was taken from a list of statements produced through the co-design process that comprehensively sets out what people with experience of social security want to be in the charter, we have called it the Charter content checklist. In this chapter firstly, we explain what the checklist contains and why.

The final draft charter has four substantive sections

- A People's Service
- Processes that Work
- A Learning System
- A Better Future

These four sections reflect the content checklist as a set of commitments that set out what people can expect from the social security system based on the social security principles. In this chapter secondly, we describe what the draft charter contains and why.

The Charter content checklist

The research we have undertaken with people with lived experience of social security has produced a comprehensive list of statements that reflect the meaning of the social security principles as set out in the Act. The list is set out in full in Annex E.

These statements fall under five different themes in relation to the social security system that were important to participants who had experience of social security. These were then simplified into the four headings in the final charter (see above). The five themes.

- Clients' role in the process.
- Social Security Scotland staff behaviour.
- Social security processes.
- Social security system.
- Wider social security culture across Scotland.

Clients' role in the process

It was important to participants that their role should not be subordinate to Social Security Scotland staff, rather that the process should be a partnership between them. This role was considered by participants to set the tone for their interactions and this partnership idea is reflected in the list of statements, for example:

- Clients have as much information as they want about their claim in a way they can understand.
- Clients are considered trustworthy from the start.
- Clients are involved in research to find out if the promises in this Charter are being kept.

A further aspect of their status is concerned with human rights and their place in the new system. This was important to participants as they had experienced extremely negative attitudes in the past when claiming social security. As one participant said:

“We want it (the charter) to humanise the people who get social security”.

This issue is exemplified by the following statement they put in the list:

- Clients are claiming a human right not looking for a hand out.

Social Security Scotland Staff behaviour

The way that clients are treated by people they come across throughout the social security process was a key concern for our participants. Many of them had experienced unhelpfulness (even rudeness), and unkindness. Participants set out exactly how they would like to be treated by staff. Some examples of statements to this effect in the list include:

- Staff are open and honest, they listen to clients, they are kind and polite.

And further

- Staff take care of clients, treat them as individuals not a number.

Participants thought this sort of treatment would stem from an attitude of understanding and so thought that staff could be more supportive of clients if they saw issues from their point of view. Examples of statements on this issue include:

- Staff know about and understand the barriers and difficulties clients can face.
- Staff never judge clients or make assumptions about them.

As one participant said:

“A lot of people with mental health issues are looked at as normal as there is no physical evidence. So people should treat everyone as if they might be disabled and not judge them”.

Participants also thought that the knowledge base in terms of entitlement to benefits and other services that people could access were key to this type of caring service being delivered. It was important to participants that staff listened to people’s circumstances and were able to think about the bigger picture in terms of the support they might be able to direct people to. Statements stemming from these findings include:

- Staff know about other services or chances/opportunities that can help clients and help them to get them.

Other knowledge the participants wanted staff to have was about what accessible formats were available. This was because it would be too cluttered to, as one participant said,

“You can’t state which different formats are available on every page so staff have to know what help you can get”.

- Staff know about and help clients to get accessible formats, translations and other support for needs.

Social Security Processes

Assessments for benefits for disabled people were a key issue for participants in the research. The Act states that face-to-face assessments for disabled people benefits should only be undertaken where the information that is needed to check entitlement is not available elsewhere. Nevertheless it was important to participants to make this explicit in the charter. Further issues surrounding who undertakes assessments were vital to participants. One participant said:

“ We need to encourage the senior staff to put their heads together to come up with a quality methodology to ensure that if I have a mental health issue I’m not seen by a physiotherapist.”.

Assessments and how they should be carried out feature heavily in the list of statements, some examples include:

- Assessments are done in a way that causes as little stress as possible.
- Assessments are done by people who are specialists in the condition being assessed.

- Assessments are only done when there is no other way to find out if a person qualifies for the benefit.

For other processes it was important to participants that they were simple and straightforward so one statement is:

- Social Security processes are easy to understand.

Social Security System

Participants outlined how the charter should cover the whole of the social security system and what it should look like. For example they thought that the system should offer choice.

- People have a reasonable choice about how they contact and work with the Agency.

That the system should be consistent but also flexible for different situations

- The social security system is the same all across Scotland.
- The social security system is flexible within the rules.

They understood that everything in the new system would not be perfect from the beginning but that it should be a learning system that improved as experience increased.

- The Agency admits and learns from its mistakes.
- The Agency's service keeps getting better.

Wider social security culture across Scotland

Of great importance to the participants was the need for a change to the culture of social security across Scotland. Issues regarding reducing stigma and poverty were central to this.

In terms of poverty the participants thought that social security payments should not simply cover the necessities of life. Rather they should ensure that clients could be useful members of society, exemplified by these statements:

- Social Security payments are enough to make sure clients can take part in society.
- The Scottish Government uses the social security system to help reduce poverty in Scotland.

Participants felt that negative impressions of people who claim social security as seen in the media should be challenged by the new system and the government so added the following statements

- The Agency and Scottish Government will work to reduce any ‘stigma’ surrounding clients.
- Social security is seen by people in Scotland as a human right.
- People in Scotland feel a part of and proud of their social security system.

Checklist conclusion

The list of statements in Annex E is a comprehensive, evidence led, robust manifestation of the meaning of the eight principles in the Act to a very wide range of people with lived experience of social security. As such it formed the basis of the content in the charter. It will also feature in the next steps as the basis for a measurement framework against which the implementation of the charter will be monitored.

The Charter

Called ‘Our Charter’, its content is closely based on the list of statements described above. It distils those statements into specific commitments. This section sets out the content from the front page and introduction and the four substantive sections of the charter and why they look like they do.

Please note: The Charter design principle uses Social Security Scotland branding. The branding guidelines were developed following research with Experience Panels and others. They exist as a means of ensuring consistency which will help it become recognisable and appear reliable and professional. More subtle Scottish Government branding also appears in the document, most notably in the ‘A Better Future’ section which describes the actions that will be taken by Ministers. This joint branding approach reflects that the success of new system, and responsibility for delivering the charter, is shared by the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland.

When we refer to ‘all participants’ in this chapter we mean the people with lived experience of social security who took part in the research, stakeholders, Scottish Government officials and Social Security Scotland staff. On occasion suggestions from MSPs made in the debate are also cited. If particular groups within these participants made specific points we indicate that.

Charter front page

The participants agreed to call the Charter ‘Our Charter’ with the following tag- line.

“What you can expect from the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland.”

This reflects the finding that the overriding idea of all participants was that the charter should set out what people can expect when they interact with the new system. One participant said:

“It has to say what the agency will commit to for customers and what SSS expect of clients.”

The Charter is set out in Social Security Scotland colours but the Scottish Government logo is also included. This is because participants have stressed that the Scottish Government should be held to account for not only what the Agency delivers but for policy development and what the future of social security in Scotland looks like and achieves. For example, participants said that all those involved including the Scottish Government should address stigma, one participant said

“(there’s) a lot of stigma with calling people “spongers.”

Finally on the front page are the words Dignity, fairness and respect which are a key part of the Agency branding and a reflection of what all participants want the new system to achieve.

Introductory pages

Participants found initial drafts of the Charter difficult to navigate and suggested we added a contents page.

When in subsequent versions a contents page was added, participants thought this enhanced the document and made it easier to navigate.

There are 4 pages of introduction at the beginning of the charter. Participants designed each section to be short and written in plain language. Here we set out the sections the charter contains and why.

Introduction. This sets out the background to the changes to social security in Scotland and the eight principles from the Act to ‘set the scene’. As the Charter needs to reflect the principles, participants ensured that the principles themselves were stated up-front as an introduction to the document. As one participant said:

“There has to be a section that describes the principles otherwise no one will understand why we are doing it this way.”

What is Our Charter? Participants included a brief overview to explain what the charter is in plain language. It states that the Charter takes the principles and turns them into practical commitments.

Who created Our Charter? This section sets out who was involved with the co-design of the charter. Core group members and stakeholders alike wanted this section to ensure that people using the Charter realised it was produced by people like themselves who have experience of the social security system. As one participant said:

“You’ve got to include who panel members are that there were surveys and workshops around the country.”

They also thought it important to let people know that they had been guided in this process by professionals, in and out of Government.

Who is the ‘Our’ in Our Charter? This section explains that the Charter is important to everyone in Scotland, because the social security system is a human right and anyone in Scotland might need it. This sentiment comes from the Act seeing social security as an investment in Scotland and also from participants wanting to ensure that those using the Charter understand that social security is a public good. As one participant said:

“Government should have a duty to change the messaging to encourage social security to be seen as a human right.”

Participants thought this was well expressed by the following content:

- Social security is a human right - an investment in ourselves and each other. It is a public service that any of us could need at any time. So Our Charter belongs to all of us.

Who makes sure that Our Charter is being delivered? Concern from participants in the co-design process including people with lived experience, stakeholders and MSPs focused on ensuring the Charter was not just a form of words and that it would be implemented practice.

This is why participants included the process for making sure the Charter commitments were delivered and who would be overseeing and scrutinising them in this section.

What is the difference between the Scottish Government, Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Parliament? At the final drafting stage stakeholders and the core group suggested that as the introduction now contained reference to the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland that explanations of each of these and their role should be included. One participant said:

“Don’t assume people know the difference between Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government.”

This was achieved in this section.

Who should you speak to if you don’t think the commitments in Our Charter are being delivered? Finally, participants understood that in a complex system things would not always go smoothly so they included a section that clearly states who people should get in touch with if they have a problem. Further in this section, social security staff wanted the Charter to encourage feedback of all sorts. One member of staff said:

“We can’t learn from our mistakes, if we don’t know we’ve made them.”

So they included a line to stress that “...feedback and complaints are valued and encouraged”.

A People's Service

The section entitled A People's Service evolved from the participants wanting to clearly state the roles and responsibilities of Social Security Scotland staff in the process but also the roles and responsibilities of the clients.

In order to give an indication of what this section contained, participants developed a tag-line as a short and instant sign of what the aim or purpose of this service is.

"We are here to make sure your get everything you are entitled to."

All the four substantive sections of the Charter are phrased as a list of commitments saying who will be responsible for delivering these. In A People's Service the commitments are the responsibility of Social Security Scotland staff and clients themselves.

The majority of the commitments are taken from the two themes in the checklist (Clients and staff behaviour). The commitments from staff include that they will be knowledgeable, kind and understanding, they will meet the needs of the diverse range of people that will use the service, be flexible and be clear about why decisions were made. One participant put it very clearly as follows:

"Make sure that they have the knowledge and use it to help you get what you are entitled to."

The responsibilities of the clients is set out in language that asks for clients to help staff by giving accurate information, being respectful and giving feed-back on their experience. As one participant said:

"Dignity and respect should work both ways – respect for the person and the employee."

To participants this section reflected significant elements of the meaning of the principles in practice. This includes dignity and respect in action, equality and non-discrimination and generally the human rights based nature of the new system.

Processes that Work

The section entitled Processes that Work also evolved out of two themes in the checklist (Theme 3 Processes and Theme 4 Social Security System). Participants wanted this section to stress that the processes would be designed with the people who use them. This led to the inclusion of the tag-line:

"We will design services with the people who use them."

The list of commitments under this heading are mostly the responsibility of Social Security Scotland who will design and deliver the processes. Participants included commitments that processes should be designed with people who use them, that they should be flexible, adaptable, inclusive, simple and clear.

As well as representing the meaning of the principles in practice some participants wanted to take this further and commit to supporting clients wellbeing. For example, during the debate some MSPs expressed that they would like there to be a commitment in the charter that focussed on the wellbeing of clients, wellbeing is mentioned twice in this section as a consequence.

A Learning System

The section entitled “A Learning System” includes the content from the checklist Theme 4 of the Social Security system. Participants produced a tag-line that stressed clients’ role to feedback their experience and the need to ensure staff are well supported for them to deliver a high quality services:

“We will encourage feedback and empower people to deliver the best service possible.”

Once again a list of commitments follow that are based around participants suggestions for the culture of the new system. This section marks the progression of the charter from operational delivery to culture and values of the system. The commitments focus on: the involvement of clients, the need to own up to mistakes and to learn from them, to build trust and to support their staff and further commitments that seek to advance accessibility, equality and non-discrimination.

A Better Future

Participants were clear that to truly realise a system based on the principles, it is necessary for the charter to go beyond operational delivery to also encompass the content and design of social security policy.

The analysis of the meaning of the principles to participants backed this and showed that there were wider concerns that incorporated the whole of Scotland and the culture of social security across the nation. These are largely in Theme 5 of the checklist The wider culture of social security.

In this section the ‘we’ in ‘we will’ is the Scottish Government specifically. The tag-line reflects what participants feel the role the government should play.

“We will use new powers to invest in the people of Scotland – making a positive difference to all of our lives.”

This not only captures the role of government but also encapsulates the necessity of positioning social security as important to all people in Scotland.

The commitments participants listed focus on embedding the principles in policy making, finding ways to reduce poverty through social security, helping to change the conversation about social security to ensure people see it as a universal service and something they should be proud of and ultimately ensuring that the system not only reflects human rights but is seen as a human right by people in Scotland.

The Charter – conclusion

The content of the Charter is based on the list of statements that represent what the principles in the Act mean in practice to people with lived experience of social security and stakeholders. The drafting of the charter has turned this list into a set of commitments that when delivered will give us a human rights based social security system that will encompass dignity and respect for all.

5. Next steps: Parliamentary process and measuring the charter

The charter was laid before Parliament for approval at the same time as this report was published. After the parliamentary process we will design a measurement framework that will be used to ensure the charter is being delivered in practice.

Measuring the Charter

A measurement framework will be designed to ensure that all aspects of the principles as described by people with lived experience of social security are closely and robustly monitored. This will be used for a full practice evaluation of the Charter.

Why will we measure the Charter?

The Act makes it clear that the development and approval of the charter is not an end, rather it is the initial blueprint for how the new social security system will function. The system is now expected to live up to the commitments in the charter and Ministers will be held accountable by the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Commission on Social Security for ensuring that it does so. For Ministers to report on progress effectively and to ensure the vision articulated by the principles is being realised in practice it is necessary to monitor and evaluate the performance of the system from the point of view of those who are using it, including clients and staff in the new system.

Monitoring is about learning and the charter measurement framework will be designed to ensure maximum learning is delivered back into the system, to the right place at the right time.

Who will take part?

The same groups of people that have been involved in developing the charter will also input to the development of a measurement framework. It will be led by Scottish Government officials and input will be collected from:

1. Agency clients and Experience Panels members
2. Stakeholders
3. Agency staff

What will it measure?

The framework will be based around the content of the charter and the more detailed checklist of statements in Annex E.

What will we do with the information?

Information collected under the measurement framework will be made publicly available through annual Government Social Research publications.

6. Conclusions

The Scottish Social Security Charter has been co-designed. The process has brought together the considered thoughts, views and ideas of people with lived experience of social security and stakeholders. The people with lived experience that worked on the Charter shared decision making with the Scottish Government and have been guided by experts in a carefully formulated programme of capacity building and co-design.

The Core Group were the basis of the charter co-design work. The process was difficult for this group, for many their conditions make it hard for them to travel, be in a noisy room with many people, take part in discussions and digest a large amount of complex information in a short time period. Nevertheless this group not only undertook these tasks, they did them well, and the quality of their input is manifest in the draft charter.

We asked the core group how they felt about the process they had gone through, whether or not their needs were met during the process and to what extent they felt their voice was heard and is explicit in the charter.

Every member of the Core Group who told us about their experience said that their physical health, mental health, sensory issues and learning difficulty needs were met all or most of the time.

“I feel everything was done to help all of us no matter what our needs were”.

Every member that replied to us told us they felt well supported through the process, and the vast majority understood all the information they were given. And all but one were fully able to give their opinions. Some comments included:

“Anything I didn't understand I just asked. Got an answer asap.”

“(the officials)...Encouraged me to participate & feel valued.”

“They (the officials) always LISTENED.”

Finally we asked to what extent they felt their opinions are reflected in the draft charter. The vast majority of those who replied told us they felt their opinions were completely reflected and a small minority saying mostly.

The draft charter expresses what the principles in the Act mean to a wide range of people with experience of social security, and who needs to do what to ensure that the vision of a system based on Human Rights, from policy design all the way through to operational delivery, is realised.

Annex A – The Scottish Social Security Principles

The Scottish social security principles are—

- (a) social security is an investment in the people of Scotland,
- (b) social security is itself a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights,
- (c) the delivery of social security is a public service,
- (d) respect for the dignity of individuals is to be at the heart of the Scottish social security system,
- (e) the Scottish social security system is to contribute to reducing poverty in Scotland,
- (f) the Scottish social security system is to be designed with the people of Scotland on the basis of evidence,
- (g) opportunities are to be sought to continuously improve the Scottish social security system in ways which—
 - (i) put the needs of those who require assistance first, and
 - (ii) advance equality and non-discrimination,
- (h) the Scottish social security system is to be efficient and deliver value for money.

Annex B - Organisations invited take part in charter development work

Citizens' Advice Scotland
Child Poverty Action Group
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Inclusion Scotland
Scottish Human Rights Commission
Equality and Human Rights Commission
Public and Commercial Services Union
Scottish Commission for Learning Disability
Scottish Association Mental Health
Poverty Alliance
Coalition of Carers Scotland
Clydeside Action on Asbestos
Coalition for Racial Equality
Scottish Refugee Council
One Parent Families Scotland
Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
Engender
Age Scotland
COSLA Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Families Outside
Who Cares? Scotland
MECOPP: supporting minority ethnic carers
Glasgow Disability Alliance
Disability Action Scotland

Annex C – The characteristics of the survey respondents

How Would You Describe Your Gender?		
Answer	Number	Percentage
Man/boy	186	41%
Woman/girl	258	58%
Prefer Not to Say	*	*
In Another Way	*	1%
Total	449	100%

*Fewer than 10 or Less than 0.5%

What Was Your Age On Your Last Birthday?		
Age Ranges	Number	Percentage
16-24	*	1%
25-44	60	15%
45-59	218	53%
60-79	132	32%
80+	*	1%
Total	414	100%

*fewer than 10

Which Of The Following Best Describes How You Think Of Yourself?		
Answer	Number	Percentage
Heterosexual/Straight	361	88%
Bisexual	12	3%
Lesbian/gay	16	4%
In another way	*	2%
Prefer Not to Say	14	3%
Total	411	100%

*Fewer than 10

Do You Have Any of the Following Conditions Which Have, Or Have are Expected To Last, At Least 12 Months Or More?		
Answer	Number	Percentage
A Physical Disability	224	50%
Chronic Pain (lasting at least 3 months)	246	55%
Another Long-Term Condition	304	68%
Deafness/Severe Hearing Impairment	58	13%
A Learning Disability	23	5%
Prefer Not to Say	*	2%
None of the Above	62	14%

*Fewer than 10

What Is Your Ethnic Group?		
Answer	Number	Percentage
White	401	94%
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	*	2%
Caribbean or Black	*	
Mixed	*	
Other	*	
Prefer not to say	17	4%
Total	425	100%

*fewer than 10 or Less than 0.5%

What Religion, Religious Denomination Or Body Do You Belong To?		
Answer	Number	Percentage
Church of Scotland	77	19%
Roman Catholic	56	14%
Other Christian	34	8%
Muslim	*	1%
Buddhist	*	1%
Jewish	*	1%
None	187	45%
Prefer Not to Say	12	3%
Another Religion	23	6%
Total	412	100%

*fewer than 10

Annex D – Details of core group workshops

Gaining knowledge

During the meetings we had a total of 12 different learning opportunities. They were led by experts and are listed here.

- An introduction to social security in Scotland and information on the content of the Act in respect of the charter.
- Information about charters and their purpose including examples of other charters from the NHS, other Social Security systems across Europe and key organisations in Scotland.
- A presentation on the meaning of co-production in the context of the work they were being asked to undertake.
- Information on the findings from Experience Panels research to set the scene and give context to our knowledge to date of people's experience of social security.
- An explanation of the seven principles from the Act. Including the actual wording of the principles, the policy intention behind the principles and some plain English descriptions.
- Work on the meaning and importance of the remaining principle; the human right to social security. This covered the five aspects of the human right to social security as defined in key human rights instruments and associated guidance, most especially the International Covenant on Social, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and UN General Comment 19 on social security¹⁴. In short these refer to adequacy, availability, accessibility, progression and non-regression. This work was interactive given by a representative of the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and further a recap of the points made by the SHRC to introduce a discussion session.
- Information on Inclusive Communication standards. This included the meaning of Inclusive Communication.
- An explanation of outcomes focused government and how thinking in terms of outcomes can help set out what the future should look like
- The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman explained her role and give advice on what to include in the charter
- A communications official and graphic designer helped to guide the wording of the content and the layout of the charter.

Discussions

The discussions sessions were based around research questions designed to ensure we gathered all relevant opinions and views. They were facilitated by officials who used their skills to ensure each participant's opinion was heard. Scribes took extensive notes which were pooled and analysed. The sessions,

¹⁴ ISESCR general comment No:19 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47b17b5b39c.html>

(topics listed here) were undertaken round table and included between three and seven participants.

- Existing charters and what people liked or didn't like about them
- What members thought the charter should be called
- The size and shape of the new charter, covering length, formats, tone, text and images
- The meaning and importance to participants of principle (b) social security is itself a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights. These discussions were broken down into the five elements presented to the core group by SHRC; those being, adequacy, availability, accessibility, progression and non-regression. The group discussed what each meant to them, what was the most important thing about the principle from their point of view and how they would like to see it represented in the charter
- The meaning and importance to participants of principle (d) respect for the dignity of individuals is to be at the heart of the Scottish social security system. The group discussed what respect for dignity meant to them, what was the most important thing about this principle from their point of view and how they would like to see it represented in the charter
- The meaning and importance to participants of the remaining six principles (see Annex A). Six round table discussions were carried out, one for each principle. For each, officials asked what the principle meant to core group members, what was the most important thing about the principle from their point of view and how they would like to see it represented in the charter. These discussions lasted two sessions.
- How the core group visualised and would articulate an ideal human rights based social security system

Annex E – Charter Content Checklist

Scottish Social Security Charter: What is important to people with lived experience of social security Please note: statements without vote numbers were added after the survey			
ID no	Statement	Votes	% of votes
Theme No 1: Clients role and status			
1.1	Clients are claiming a human right not looking for a hand out	198	15%
1.2	Clients have as much information as they want about their claim in a way they can understand	175	13%
1.3	Clients can get advice and advocacy when they need it	153	11%
1.4	Clients have a choice of how they talk to, contact and work with the social security agency	134	10%
1.5	Clients are considered trustworthy from the start	120	9%
1.6	Clients know how much money they will get and when they will get it	119	9%
1.7	Clients are told as soon as possible if the amount of money they will get or when they get it changes	87	6%
1.8	Clients respect and trust Social Security staff	86	6%
1.9	Clients are involved in research to find out if the promises in this Charter are being kept	67	5%
1.10	Clients are always consulted about new services and making services better	61	5%

1.11	Clients are open and honest, trustworthy, polite and understanding	50	4%
1.12	It costs clients nothing to claim social security benefits	49	4%
1.13	Clients are involved in staff training	43	3%
	Totals	1342	100%
1.14	Clients should know who to contact for any social security situation and how to ask for their needs to be met	Not applicable	
1.15	Clients should be made to feel able/comfortable when asking for their needs to be met	Not applicable	
Theme 2: Staff behaviour			
2.1	Staff take care of clients, treat them as individuals not a number	210	16%
2.2	Staff know about and understand the barriers and difficulties clients can face	200	15%
2.3	Staff support clients to get the all the income they have a right to	196	14%
2.4	Staff never judge clients or make assumptions about them	169	12%
2.5	Staff are open and honest, they listen to clients, they are kind and polite	168	12%
2.6	Staff know about other services or chances/opportunities that can help clients and help them to get them	140	10%
2.7	Staff never tell anyone outside the agency anything about clients, without their permission	74	5%
2.8	Staff acknowledge and learn from mistakes	64	5%

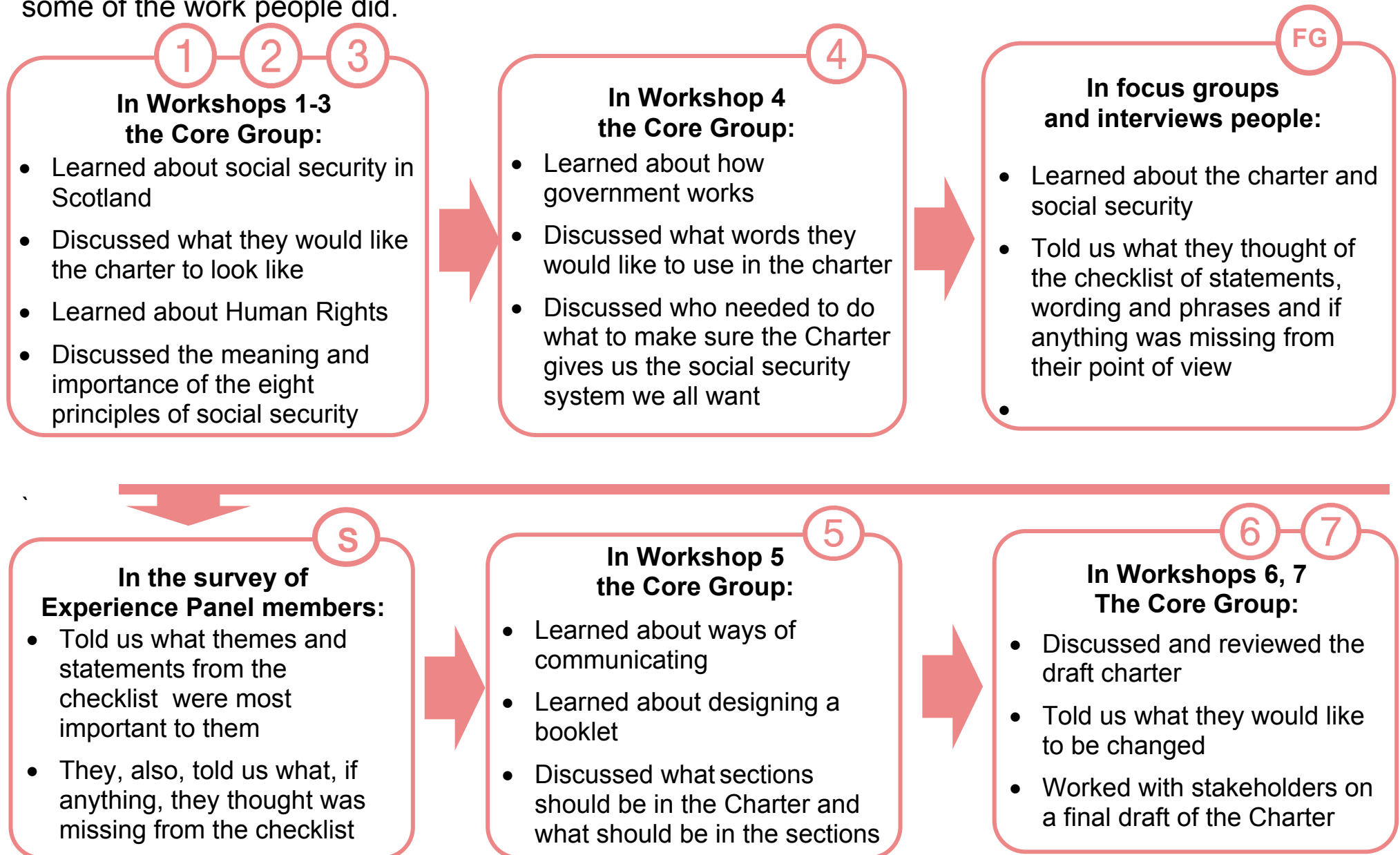
2.9	Staff are flexible within the rules of social security	52	4%
2.10	Staff understand that having different types of people is good for Scotland	43	3%
2.11	Staff know all about who can claim each benefit	38	3%
		1354	100%
2.13	Staff know about and help clients to get accessible formats, translations and other support for needs	Not Applicable	
Theme No 3: Processes			
3.1	Assessments are done in a way that causes as little stress as possible	260	20%
3.2	Assessments are done by people who are specialists in the condition being assessed	255	19%
3.3	Assessments are only done when there is no other way to find out if a person qualifies for the benefit	245	19%
3.4	Assessments are always done by people who work in the not-for-profit public sector	193	15%
3.5	Assessments can sometimes include a professional that knows the client well with your permission	135	10%
3.6	Social Security processes are easy to understand	102	8%
3.7	People who have claimed social security help to design social security processes	70	5%
3.8	Processes are accessible to all	61	5%

		1321	100%
3.9	Advocacy should be well resourced	Not Applicable	
3.10	Payments should be enough to ensure that clients can take part in society	Not Applicable	
Theme 4 : Social Security System			
4.1	Social security is a public (not private) service	250	19%
4.2	The Agency works to tell people about their right to benefits and how they can get them	203	15%
4.3	The social security system is the same all across Scotland	141	11%
4.4	The Agency gets decisions 'right first time'	127	10%
4.5	The Agency looks for ways to work with other organisations which will help them to help clients	118	9%
4.6	The Social Security Agency works in a way that does not waste time or money	106	8%
4.7	The Agency admits and learns from its mistakes	104	8%
4.8	People have a reasonable choice about how they contact and work with the Agency	81	6%
4.9	The social security system is flexible within the rules	79	6%
4.10	The system changes to keep up with changes in society	72	5%
4.11	The Agency's service keeps getting better	50	4%
		1331	100%

Theme 5: Wider social security culture in Scotland			
5.1	Social Security payments are enough to make sure clients can take part in society	301	23%
5.2	The Scottish Government uses the social security system to help reduce poverty in Scotland	286	21%
5.3	Social security is seen by people in Scotland as a human right	226	17%
5.4	The Agency and Scottish Government will work to reduce any 'stigma' surrounding clients	209	16%
5.5	The Scottish Government reviews payments every so often and increases them over time	160	12%
5.6	People in Scotland feel a part of and proud of their social security system	153	11%
		1335	100%

Annex F – Timeline of participation

Experience Panel members and others that took part were given a great deal of information and had a lot of discussions which led to the development of the checklist and the Charter itself. The boxes show some of the work people did.



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 julie.guy@gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

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