

Social Security Experience Panels: Information About Your Application and Accessing Support From Other Services

Background

The Scottish Government are becoming responsible for some of the benefits currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

DWP



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

To prepare for this change, the Scottish Government set up the **Social Security Experience Panels**.



2400+

people with
experience of
benefits



Social Security
**Experience
Panels**

Experience Panel members all have experience of **claiming at least one of the benefits being devolved to Scotland**.

The Scottish Government is working with Experience Panel members to design Scotland's new social security system.

About the research

This report gives the findings of research with panel members about what information and support Social Security Scotland should give.



2,456
invites



227
survey
responses

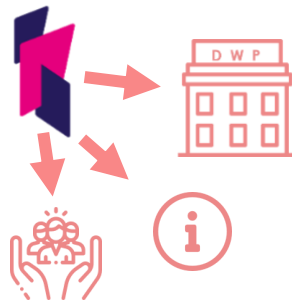


5
focus
groups

The research explored:



How to keep people up to date with information about their application for a benefit



What sort of support people would want Social Security Scotland to tell them about



How Social Security Scotland should help people to get the other support they need

Survey respondents were between

25 – 79



30%
Man or boy



52%
Woman or girl

Half of survey respondents had a disability or long term health condition, including:



chronic pain



severe hearing impairments



severe visual impairments



other kinds of long term health condition

Getting information about your application

People were asked about how they would want to receive information about their application at different stages. This included:

- that Social Security Scotland had received their application
- updates about the application being processed
- to tell you a decision has been made
- to ask you for more information

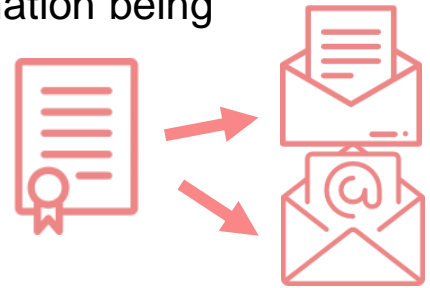


People said it was important to have a choice of how they get information.



They said that the way they would want information about their application would depend on the type of information being given and how they felt that day.

For example, many people said they would prefer a letter or email for information about decisions on their application.



But they might be more comfortable with a text message if it was for general updates about the progress of their application.

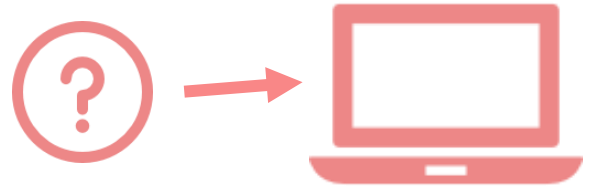


Finding out what support might be available

Many people said that they would get information online about what support was available to them.

This included:

- the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) website
- Citizens Advice Scotland website
- a search engine



Other people said that they would use services that can help face-to-face or on the phone. This included:



Advice services



Charities or third sector organisations



Health and social care services

Some people said they felt that organisations like Citizens Advice Scotland and charities which help people to get support are too stretched to be able to help as much as needed.

‘Well traditional route is CAB, and they’re generally on top of what’s happening but they’re swamped.’

‘I’ve found Citizen’s Advice, although can be very helpful, they are sometimes limited because the person is not trained up on everything.’



What type of support people want to know about

Most people said that they would want Social Security Scotland to tell them if there were other benefits or types of support that might be available to them from another organisation.



In particular panel members wanted to be told about:



Other types of **benefits or grants** they could apply for



Other services that could help like blue badge



Advocacy or support services

Some people thought it would be helpful to provide information about other types of financial or debt advice. But others thought that this could come across as judgemental.

“If someone asks but not generally- the idea that you can’t handle your money because you’re disabled doesn’t sit well with me.”



“There’s nothing wrong with offering. It’s just a service to offer - it’s not wrong to assume people might have difficulties with mortgage payments after they have lost their job for example.”

How to help people get support

Almost **7 in 10** people said that they would want to be just given information, and be allowed to take any next steps themselves.



Almost 7 in 10

“It would be really helpful if there was a single webpage and leaflet (for those not online) that sets out all the benefits and support available to those with disabilities and long term illnesses.”



“I would like the information given to me, then leave it up to me to apply.”

Others said that they would like Social Security Scotland to help them to get in touch with the other service. **Almost half** said they would like this to be by helping them to contact the organisation, and

more than 4 in 10 said they would want Social Security Scotland to share their details with another organisation to who could then contact them directly.



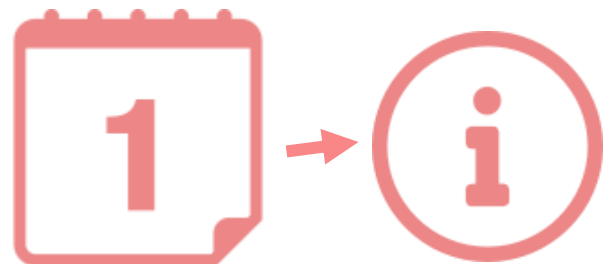
Respondents said that this would help to make sure that they were supported to access the support that they needed.

“Telling me that something exists, but leaving me completely unsupported in applying for or accessing applications for these things would only make matters worse.”

“Making people feel supported and not on their own - rather than “here’s the number”, staff could make the phone call for them.”

When and how people would want information

Most respondents felt that they would want to hear information about other support available when they first contacted Social Security Scotland.



They said they would want to get information through:



Information
leaflets



Online



Talking to a staff
member

“I would like to have a face-to-face conversation in which how my benefit(s) were calculated and where I might get support if my total benefit was not going to cover my living cost.”

What's next?

We will carry out further work with Experience Panel members to better understand how Social Security Scotland can help people to get the support they need.

The feedback from this research is helping the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland make decisions. This includes about how to update people on the progress of their application. It will also help decide how they can best support people to get information and advice from other organisations.

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.



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