



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Social Security Scotland – Overview of a Client and Staff Insights Research Programme and initial findings

1. Introduction

Social Security Scotland came into being on 1st September 2018. As part of the new organisation, an insights research programme is being established. A co-design approach has been adopted, to ensure the programme is shaped by people who have lived experiences of benefits. The results from this programme will be used to continuously improve services.

While the research programme is designed over the course of the next year, some work has already begun, with staff being in place for Carer Allowance Supplement and Best Start Grant and these benefits going live.

To date, this has involved the collection of both routine monitoring and experience information. This summary report introduces the client and staff strands of the insights programme, outlines future research plans, and reports on initial findings for the period September to December 2018.



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2. Key Findings

- The insights programme has had feedback from clients and staff on their experiences of engaging with the organisation during the first three months of its existence.
- Over 200 clients left ratings on how their experience of engaging with the Social Security Scotland telephony service. Of those, 95% felt their call was answered quickly, 91% felt that they got what they needed from the call, and 94% were happy with the service they received.
- Over 500 clients left ratings following online and telephony applications for the Best Start Grant – Pregnancy and Baby Payment. Of online applicants who responded, 98% rated the service as good/very good. Of telephony applicants who responded, 100% rated the service as good/very good.
- A smaller proportion of clients left feedback in the form of open text comments following applications for the Best Start Grant – Pregnancy and Baby Payment. The majority of comments (96% for telephony applications and 85% for online applications) were positive. Commonly used words in the comments include: ‘easy’, ‘straight forward’, ‘simple’, ‘quick’, ‘helpful’, ‘good’ and ‘happy’.
- A staff survey was undertaken in October 2018 and received a response rate of 97%. Results were very positive overall, with an engagement score (measuring employee attachment and motivation) of 85% positive.
- Early indications from staff survey data suggest that Social Security Scotland staff are representative of the Scottish working population. For example, 22% of those who completed the survey reported having a long-standing physical or mental health condition, illness, impairment or disability, versus 19% in the population. Regarding ethnicity, 8% of staff survey respondents identified as ethnic minorities, compared to 4% in the Scottish working population.

3. Background

In September 2018, Social Security Scotland was established as a new Executive Agency of the Scottish Government. Social Security Scotland is responsible for the delivery of a number of devolved social security benefits to those who rely on them.

An analytical team within Social Security Scotland are responsible for collecting, analysing and publishing management information, research and statistics that relate to the delivery and performance of the organisation. Within this, a programme client and staff insights research is being established, to gather the experiences, needs and priorities of those who use and deliver social security in Scotland. This information, in turn, will be fed back into the organisation's processes, policy and practice, to facilitate continuous improvement. This work will be co-designed with people who have lived experience of social security, building on the work undertaken as part of the Social Security Experience Panels and the development of the Social Security Charter.

Experience Panel work aims to inform the design of Scotland's Social Security system, and primarily involves Scottish Government researchers asking panel members *how the system should look*. Client Insights work will gather peoples' perceptions of the delivery and performance of the new social security system, and will primarily involve Social Security Scotland researchers asking users *how their experience has been*. Benefit-specific strands of research will transition from Experience Panels to Client Insights as benefits go live, and research activity will be designed in a way that facilitates cumulative learning.

Client Insights research is also distinct from formal client feedback (complaints, compliments and suggestions). The main distinction lies in the client's decision to formalise their feedback. Where complaints are recorded, for example, it is crucial that the client is aware of the formal recording, and they can choose to be identified against the complaint and receive a reply. Insights research will always be anonymous, and as such will supplement and add additional evidence to other work on formal feedback.

Throughout Social Security Scotland's first quarter, the main priorities for the Client and Staff Insights programme were to collect data on:

- **Client interactions and experiences with the services provided by Social Security Scotland at point of contact**
- **Staff demographic information and experiences of being part of the new organisation**

Initial findings for the above research strands are presented in section 5.

As the organisation continues to develop, the remit of the research programme will expand to include:

- **The measurement of clients' overall experiences** – gathering overarching views from clients on their whole experience of engaging with the system. This will inform ongoing service design, support continuous improvement activity and provide a main source of data for measuring the Social Security Charter commitments.
- **The measurement of staff experiences with recruitment, onboarding and training processes** – gathering views from each new intake of staff to apply learning to recruitment and related processes during the organisation's rapid period of growth.

Alongside these strands of activity, additional research will be undertaken in relation to arising priorities as the programme is developed with people with lived experience.

4. Methodology

Insights research to date has involved the collection of routine management information, and directly asking clients and staff about their experiences. The following section outlines the methods used to collect insights data during Social Security Scotland's first quarter.

4.1. Client Insights

To capture client interactions and experiences with Social Security Scotland processes and services at point of contact, research methods have been embedded in both telephony and online channels using embedded surveys.

4.1.1. Telephony – general call experience

An automated survey mechanism is in place to gain insights from clients about how well telephony services are being received. Clients have the option of completing the survey following any telephone interaction (e.g. from general enquiry to benefit-specific contact). The focus for this survey is experience of the call.

Full telephony experience questions and response options are detailed in Annex A.

4.1.2. Applications

Clients' immediate views and feelings on the process of applying for benefits, across telephone, online and paper applications have also been gathered. Given that any survey following the application process will occur at the end of this contact, it is important that the number of questions are kept to a minimum. Two client satisfaction questions have therefore been embedded within a questionnaire which clients have the option of completing at the end of applications, as standard.

Full application experience questions and response options are detailed in Annex B.

For clients applying via paper application, the questionnaire is included in their application pack, with a freepost envelope for returning both forms. For clients applying online, a link to the questionnaire is available at the end of the application. For clients applying over the telephone, a client advisor offers to take the client through the questionnaire over the phone, or to post it out to them.

In addition, clients have the opportunity of completing the automated telephony survey (described in section 4.1.1) following their phone call, which may be beneficial if the client has (for example) additional feedback about that call specifically and/or feedback that they do not wish to disclose to the client advisor directly.

4.2. Staff Insights

4.2.1. *Workforce statistics including diversity information*

Social Security Scotland collect workforce data via e-HR, the organisation's employment record system. One hundred per cent of staff have provided information on their age and gender. This is because these details are needed for legislative purposes for use by HM Revenue and Customs, and also for baseline security clearance.

Staff can voluntarily disclose diversity information on e-HR for the remaining protected characteristics. As the organisation grows, work will be undertaken to encourage staff to complete this information.

4.2.2. *Staff survey*

Social Security Scotland conducted a standalone staff survey in October 2018, one month after the launch of the organisation. The survey replicated the formal UK-wide Civil Service People Survey, which the organisation plans to participate in from 2019 onwards. 193 staff members participated.

Questions ask staff about their engagement with the organisation, their work, organisational objectives and purpose, their teams, learning and development, inclusion and fair treatment, resources and workload, pay and benefits, and leadership and managing change.

An 'about you' section also asks about staff diversity characteristics.

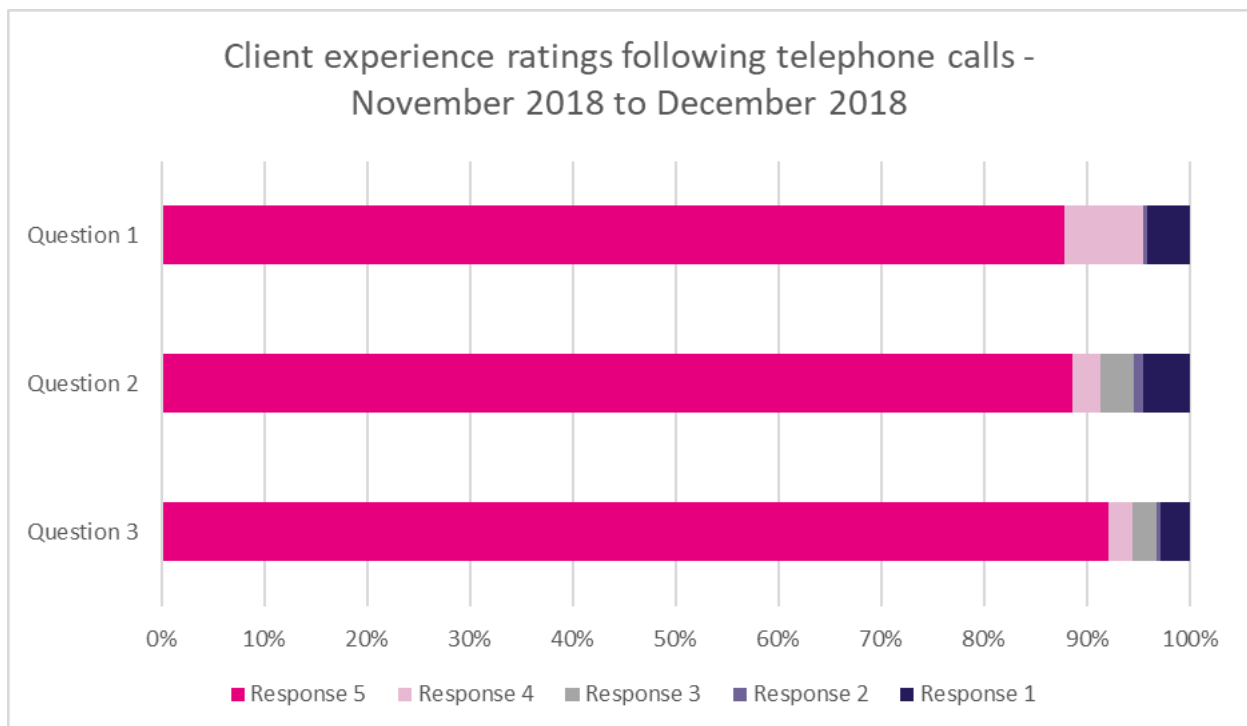
A full list of core survey questions and response options can be found [here](#).

5. Initial Findings

5.1. Client insights - satisfaction following general telephony contact

After any phone call with a client advisor, clients can stay on the line and answer a series of three questions about their experience with Social Security Scotland.

Of those who left a rating, 95% felt their call had been answered quickly [Question 1] 91% felt they got everything they needed from the call [Question 2] and 94% rated the service positively [Question 3].



Total number of responses to Question 1: 221

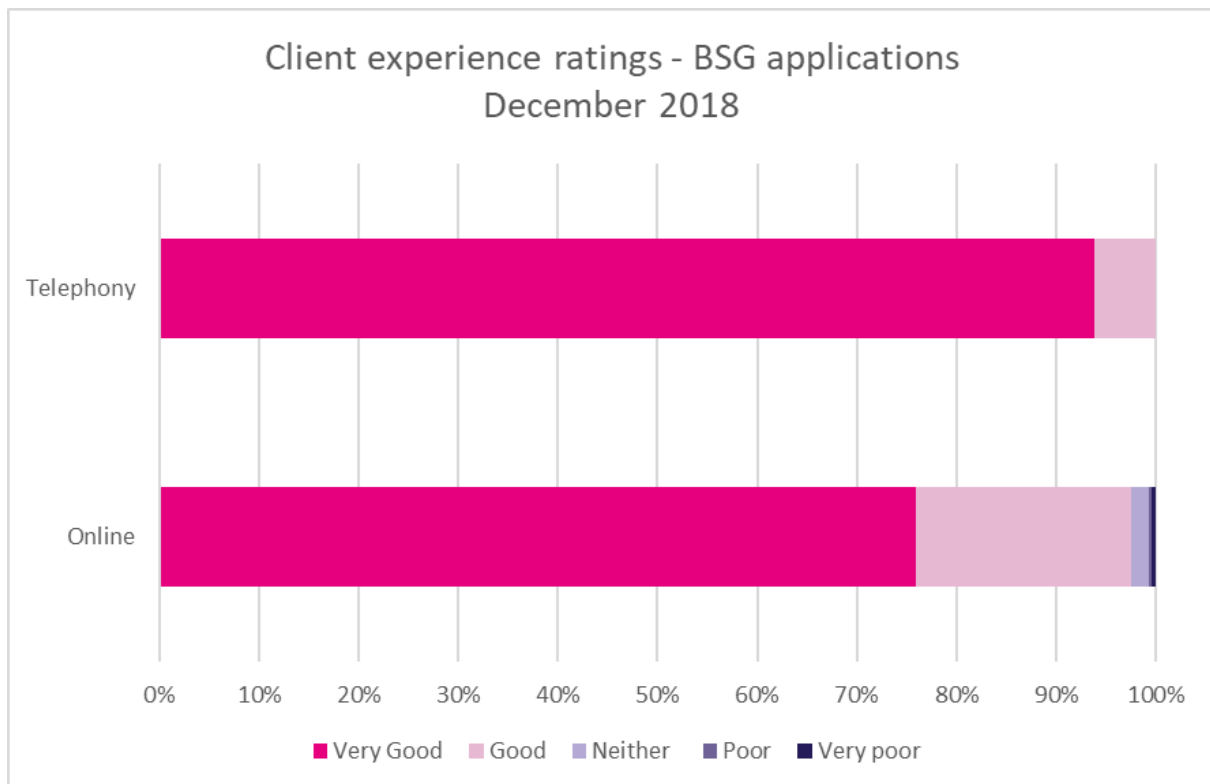
Total number of responses to Question 2: 220

Total number of responses to Question 3: 216

5.2. Client insights - satisfaction following applications

Social Security Scotland launched the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment on 10th December 2018 – the first application-based grant for the organisation. Following both online and telephony applications, a questionnaire offers applicants the opportunity to make ratings on how the experience has been for them.

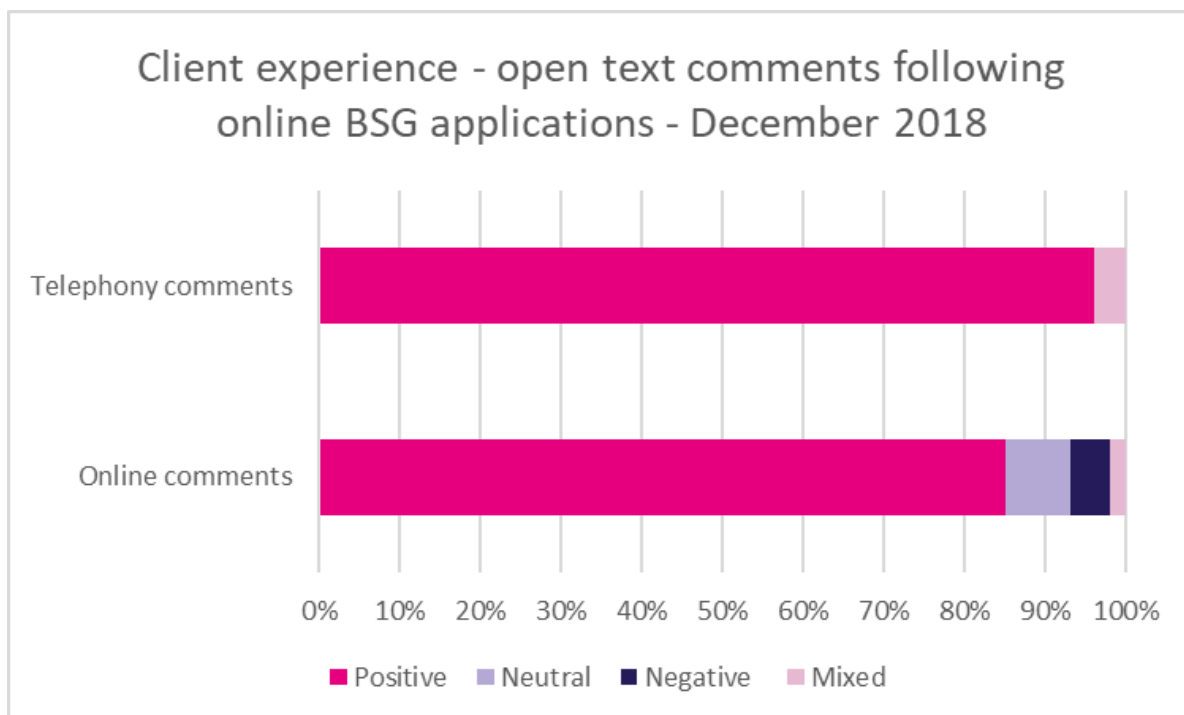
Of online applicants who left a rating, 98% rated the service as Very good or Good. For telephony applicants, 100% of those who left a rating rated the service as Very good or Good.



Total number of ratings following a telephony application: 227

Total number of ratings following an online application: 283

In addition to making a rating, clients have the opportunity to leave an open text comment about their application experience. These comments were thematically analysed by analysts, and coded as positive, neutral, negative or mixed. The vast majority of comments (96% for telephony applications and 85% for online applications) were positive.



Total number of comments following a telephony application: 47

Total number of comments following an online application: 75

An analysis of the number of times keywords appeared within open text comments was also conducted. The most commonly used keywords (with 5 or more occurrences) are displayed in the tables below.

Keywords – online applications	Number of comments	% comments containing this keyword
easy	49	65%
straight forward	17	22%
simple	12	16%
quick	12	16%

Keywords – telephony applications	Number of comments	% comments containing this keyword
helpful	16	34%
service	10	21%
good	7	15%
quick	7	15%
happy	5	11%
easy	5	11%

5.3. Staff insights – workforce information

Social Security Scotland collect diversity data via e-HR, the organisation's employment record system. Information on age and gender is complete, as these fields are mandatory. At the end of December 2018, the largest proportion of Social Security Scotland staff (28%) fell into the 30-39 age bracket, and the majority of staff (60%) are female.

In e-HR, staff can voluntarily disclose information on other protected characteristics. At this early stage in the organisation's development, many employees have not yet entered their diversity information into the system, and as such, the e-HR data do not present a fully accurate picture of staff diversity characteristics. Work will be undertaken within the organisation to improve e-HR diversity declaration rates. Diversity data were also collected as part of the annual staff survey in October 2018. The survey achieved a high number of returns (197), resulting in a response rate of 97%. The majority of those who completed the survey also disclosed their diversity information. Although the survey is based on an earlier snapshot of staff than the e-HR data, the information is more complete, and is therefore the focus of the results discussed below.

Early indications from staff survey data suggest that Social Security Scotland staff are representative of the Scottish working population. For example, 22% of those who completed the survey reported having a long-standing physical or mental health condition, illness, impairment or disability, compared to 19% in the Scottish working age population. Regarding ethnicity, 8% of staff survey respondents identified as ethnic minorities, compared to 4% in the Scottish working population. 7% of survey respondents identified as LGBO, compared to 2% in the working population.

The tables in Annex C present e-HR and staff survey data on Social Security Scotland's workforce diversity characteristics. Population comparator data is also presented. Comparator data for the working age population of Scotland comes from a number of different sources which are the most up to date at the time of producing this report. Caution should be exercised when comparing Social Security Scotland figures with those of the general population. For example, a significant proportion of the 16-29 age group of the Scottish population may be

students and, therefore, not in the labour market. Also, data taken from population surveys may not be directly comparable to Social Security Scotland data because of differences in the questions asked and the options available to respondents.

5.4. Staff insights – engagement

Social Security Scotland conducted a standalone staff survey in October 2018, one month after they organisation went live. The survey replicated the formal UK-wide Civil Service People Survey, which Social Security Scotland plan to participate in from 2019 onwards.

The standalone survey received a very high response rate of 97%, and the results were very positive, with an overall engagement score of 85% positive.

Percent positive scores for each of the 10 survey themes can be found in the table below.

Survey theme	Percent positive score
Engagement Index	85%
My work	83%
Organisational objectives and purpose	95%
My manager	81%
My team	90%
Learning and development	74%
Inclusion and fair treatment	89%
Resources and workload	81%
Pay and benefits	75%
Leadership and managing change	82%

Full organisational level findings can be found in an associated PDF report, published [here](#).

6. Summary

The current programme of client and staff insights research has allowed Social Security Scotland to build an early picture of the views and experiences of those engaging with the organisation. The overall picture for both clients and staff is very positive for the first quarter.

Client insights research has revealed that the vast majority of clients who have left a rating or comment in relation to a telephone or application-based interaction with the organisation have been positive about the experience.

Client experiences at point of contact will continue to be monitored as the organisation develops, and trend information will be used to identify any fluctuations in service experience. This information will be complimented by a wider programme of research to investigate clients' overall experiences, which is currently being shaped by individuals with lived experience of the benefits system.

A staff survey conducted in October 2018 revealed strong staff engagement with the organisation. Staff were also positive about their work, organisational objectives and purpose, their teams, learning and development, inclusion and fair treatment, resources and workload, pay and benefits, and leadership and managing change.

Early indications from staff survey data also suggest that Social Security Scotland staff are representative of the Scottish working population. Work will be undertaken to improve diversity declaration rates on the employment record system, so that these figures can be monitored over time as the organisation grows.

7. Conclusions and next steps

This report summarises early findings from the research programme. As the organisation continues to grow, clients and staff will continue to have opportunities to feed their views back into the system.

The programme will widen to include research that will build up a picture of clients' overall experiences. It will also include research that delves deeper into specific internal practises affecting staff, such as recruitment, on-boarding and training processes. A further Insights Research report will be published in September 2019.

8. References

- 1) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/responsibility-for-benefits-overview/>
- 2) <https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-security/engagement-on-social-security/>
- 3) <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about-us/our-charter>

9. Annex A – Telephony experience survey content

Thanks for staying on the line. You're about to hear 3 short questions about your call today.

Question one: How quickly did we answer your call today? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is not quickly at all and 5 is very quickly.

Question 2: Did you get what you needed from this call? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all, and 5 is you got everything you needed.

Question 3: How would you rate our service today? Press a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

Thanks for taking part. We'll use your answers to improve our service.

10. Annex B – Application experience survey content

About your experience with Social Security Scotland

10 Overall, how would you rate the service provided by Social Security Scotland e.g. in making your application?

1 1 – Very poor

2 2 – Poor

3 3 – Neither poor nor good

4 4 – good

5 5 – Very good

11 Is there any further feedback you would like provide?

11. ANNEX C – Social Security Scotland staff diversity information and population comparisons

Age – e-HR data

Year	Quarter to end:	Age Group ¹												Total head count		
		16-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60-64			65 and over	
		Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%		Head count	%
2018	Sep	*	*	35	20.0	47	26.9	53	30.3	28	16	*	*	0	0.0	175
	Dec	13	5.1	52	20.6	71	28.1	67	26.5	45	17.8	5	2.0	0	0.0	253

1. Age at end of quarter; * Numbers between 1-4 are suppressed for disclosure reasons.

Age – Scottish working population data

	16-29	30-39	40-49	50-54	55-59	60-65
Scottish population (age 16-65)	28%	19%	21%	11%	10%	11%
Scottish population data source:	Mid-2016 Population Estimates					

Gender – e-HR data

Year	Quarter to end:	Gender				Total head count
		Female		Male		
		Head count	%	Head count	%	
2018	Sep	105	60.0	70	40.0	175
	Dec	151	59.7	102	40.3	253

Gender – Scottish working population data

	Female	Male
Scottish population (age 16-65)	51%	49%
Scottish population data source:	Mid-2016 Population Estimates	

Disability – e-HR data

Year	Quarter to end:	Disability								Total head count
		Disabled		Not Disabled		Prefer not to say		Unknown		
		Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	
2018	Sep	11	6.3	55	31.4	2	1.1	107	61.1	175
	Dec	22	8.7	70	27.7	3	1.2	158	62.5	253

Disability – staff survey data

Year	Survey period	Disability						Total returns
		Disabled		Not Disabled		Prefer not to say		
		Number returns	%	Number returns	%	Number returns	%	
2018	Oct	42	21.8	140	72.5	11	5.7	193

Disability – Scottish working population data

	Disabled	Not disabled
Scottish population (age 16-64)	19%	80%
Scottish population data source:	Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2015	

Ethnicity – e-HR data

Year	Quarter to end:	Ethnicity								Total head count
		Ethnic minority ¹		White		Prefer not to say		Unknown		
		Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	
2018	Sep	6	3.4	144	82.3	3	1.7	22	12.6	175
	Dec	8	3.2	211	83.4	2	0.8	32	12.6	253

Ethnicity – staff survey data

Year	Survey period	Ethnicity						Total returns
		Ethnic minority ¹		White		Prefer not to say		
		Number returns	%	Number returns	%	Number returns	%	
2018	Oct	15	7.8	165	85.5	13	6.7	193

Ethnicity – staff survey data

	Ethnic minority ¹	White
Scottish population (age 16-64)	4%	96%
Scottish population data source:	Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2015	

1. 'Ethnic minority' includes: African, Caribbean or Black; Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British; Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Group; Other Ethnic Group.

Religion or belief – e-HR data

Year	Quarter to end:	Religion or Belief												Total head count		
		None		Church of Scotland		Roman Catholic		Other Christian		Other religion or belief ¹		Prefer not to say			Unknown	
		Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%		Head count	%
2018	Sep	82	46.9	24	13.7	24	13.7	8	4.6	6	3.4	5	2.9	26	14.9	175
	Dec	129	51.0	28	11.1	36	14.2	13	5.1	7	2.8	4	1.6	36	14.2	253

Religion or belief – staff survey data

Year	Survey period	Religion or belief								Total returns
		None		Christian		Other religion or belief ¹		Prefer not to say		
		Number returns	%	Number returns	%	Number returns	%	Number returns	%	
2018	Oct	105	55.3	59	31.1	11	5.8	15	7.9	190

Religion or belief – Scottish working population data

	None	Christian	Other religion ¹	Prefer not to say
Scotland (age 16-64)	51%	44%	3%	1%
Scottish population data source:	Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2015			

1. Other religion or belief includes: Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, Hindu, Pagan, and Other.

Sexual orientation – e-HR data

Year	Quarter to end:	Sexual orientation								Total head count
		Lesbian, gay, bisexual, other		Hetero-sexual /straight		Prefer not to say		Unknown		
		Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	Head count	%	
2018	Sep	8	4.6	135	77.1	5	2.9	27	15.4	175
	Dec	14	5.5	195	77.1	5	2.0	39	15.4	253

Sexual orientation – staff survey data

Year	Survey period	Ethnicity						Total returns
		Lesbian, gay, bisexual, other		Hetero-sexual /straight		Prefer not to say		
		Number returns	%	Number returns	%	Number returns	%	
2018	Oct	14	7.3	166	86.5	12	6.3	192

Sexual orientation – staff survey data

	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, other	Heterosexual/ Straight	Prefer not to say
Scottish population (age 16-64)	2%	96%	2%
Scottish population data source:	Scottish Surveys Core Questions 2015		



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