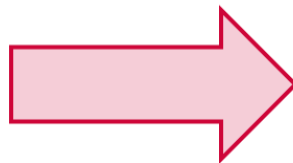


Social Security Experience Panels: Gathering Supporting Information

Background

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

**Department
for Work and
Pensions**



**Scottish
Government**



Over 2,400 people from across Scotland have joined the Experience Panels. They all have recent experience of the benefits that are coming to Scotland.



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

2,400+
**Experience Panel
members**

About the research

This report gives the findings of the 'gathering supporting information' research.

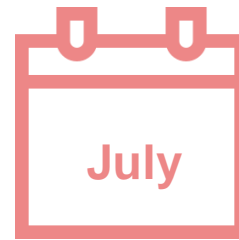
The research took place in



1109
invites



189
survey
responses



2019

The research explored:



what supporting information applicants could supply to Social Security Scotland;



what supporting information they think would be most useful in showing their health condition;



what supporting information Social Security Scotland could gather for applicants; and



communication preferences if Social Security Scotland needs to contact an applicant to get more supporting information.

Supporting information

When people apply for a benefit, Social Security Scotland will need to have a full understanding of how their condition or disability affects them. For most people, Social Security Scotland will need to see supporting information for this.



We asked what supporting information respondents could give to Social Security Scotland that would tell them about their health condition.

Over nine in ten said they could give a list of medicines.



Over eight in ten said they could give a letter from a doctor or consultant.



Just under half said they could provide a statement from their carer.



Three in ten said they could provide a letter from their support worker.



Over two in ten said they could provide a report from a social worker.



Under two in ten said they could provide a letter from a school.



Just under three in ten respondents (29 per cent) said they could supply some other kinds of supporting information to Social Security Scotland.

The most common suggestions were:



a statement from a family member or friend.



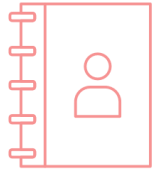
other forms of medical information, for example, registration certificates, hospital letters, tests and results.



letters from other specialist medical professionals; letters from employers, charity workers and support groups.



general information about a health condition.

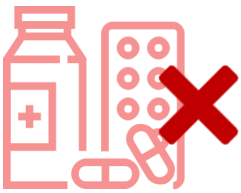


a log of daily living activities; previous DWP paperwork.

Some respondents said that they would struggle to provide supporting information to Social Security Scotland. Some of the reasons included:



having a lifelong, untreatable, fluctuating or rare condition.



not taking medication.



not regularly seeing a medical professional.

there being no medical consultants or professionals who specialised in their condition.

“This is difficult - I have a progressive long term illness for which there is no treatment, so there is very little point in my taking up the time of health professionals.”

“It's very hard to get supporting evidence because I don't always see the doctor very often as there is no treatment that works. Also medications don't really help so I'm not often on a lot of meds.”

“My condition does not currently have clinics or experts in the field. This means that I would not be able to provide a consultant report, or any sort of test results. I'm not even sure what my GP might say about me. This is not the only illness that is difficult to evidence. It's a fluctuating condition, it's chronic.”

We asked if there was any supporting information they would expect Social Security Scotland to already have access to.



Most respondents thought Social Security Scotland should have access to their medical records.



Some respondents thought Social Security Scotland should have access to previous benefit applications and supporting information.

We asked what supporting information would be most useful to show that they were eligible for a benefit.



Most respondents thought that a letter from a doctor, consultant or medical professional, or medical records would be the most useful.



Some respondents felt that a statement from themselves, a carer or family member would be most useful.

“As well as the ‘professionals’, talk to people who actually know me and know my abilities first hand. Sometimes the diagnosis is very different from the day to day realities of the condition.”

We asked those respondents who said that they would be able to supply a social work report how useful they think it would be for Social Security Scotland.



Over seven in ten respondents (74 per cent) said a social work report would be useful.

“Social workers have intimate and in-depth knowledge of both an individual and their medical condition/disability relevant to their claim. They are also a recognised professional body who must adhere to professional standards so the information they supply can be trusted as valid and insightful.”



Under two in ten respondents (17 per cent) thought that it would not be that useful or not useful at all.

“Social Work reports can sometimes be subjective and has no basis in Medicine. For example, a person may be diagnosed with depression by their GP, a Social Worker may state that the person does not 'appear to be depressed.’”



Just under one in ten respondents (nine per cent) said they were not sure.

We told respondents that Social Security Scotland will be able to gather some supporting information for them. We asked what supporting information Social Security Scotland could gather for them.

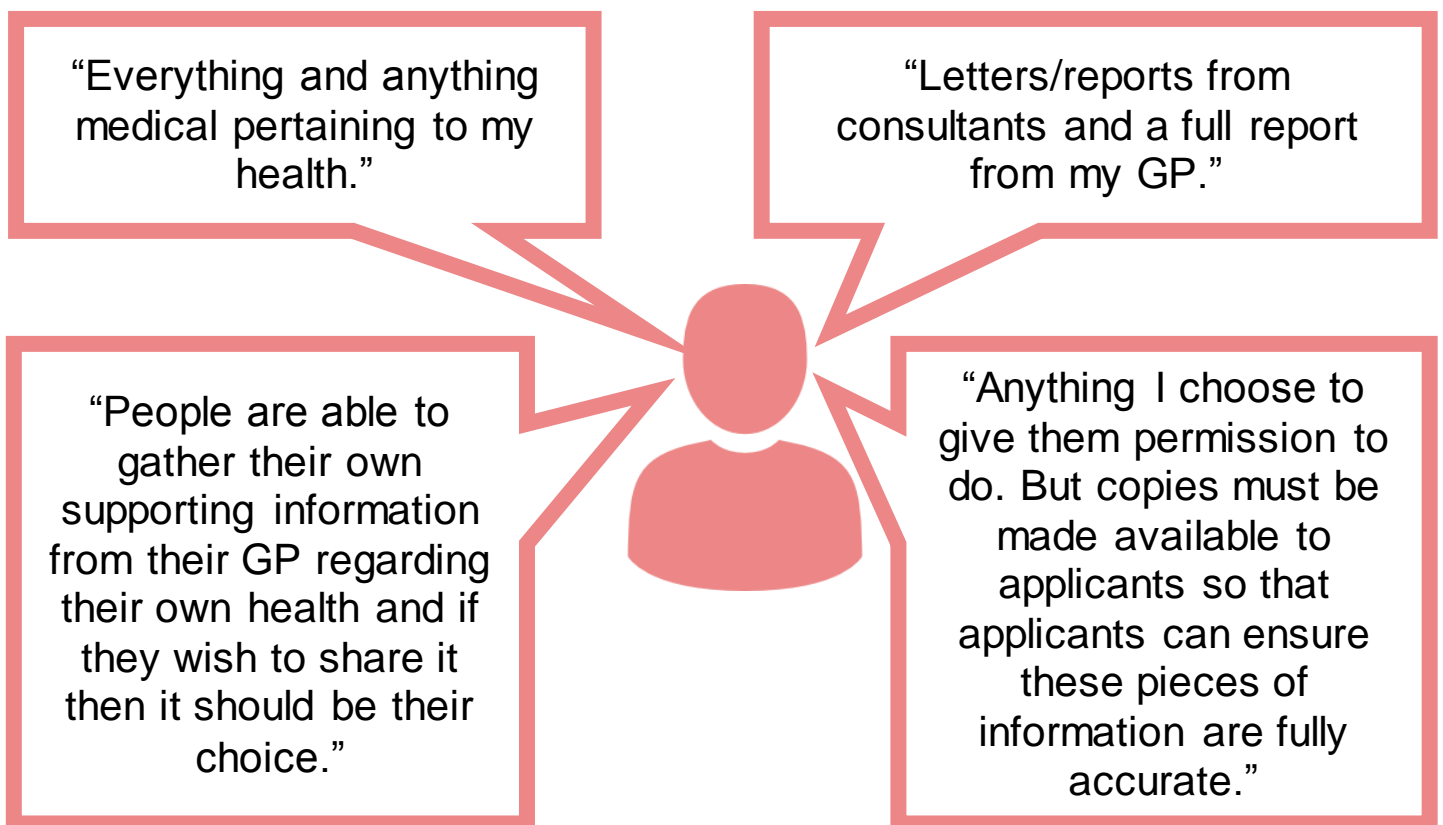


The vast majority said that Social Security Scotland could gather medical information for them. This included records, reports and letters from GPs and medical professionals.



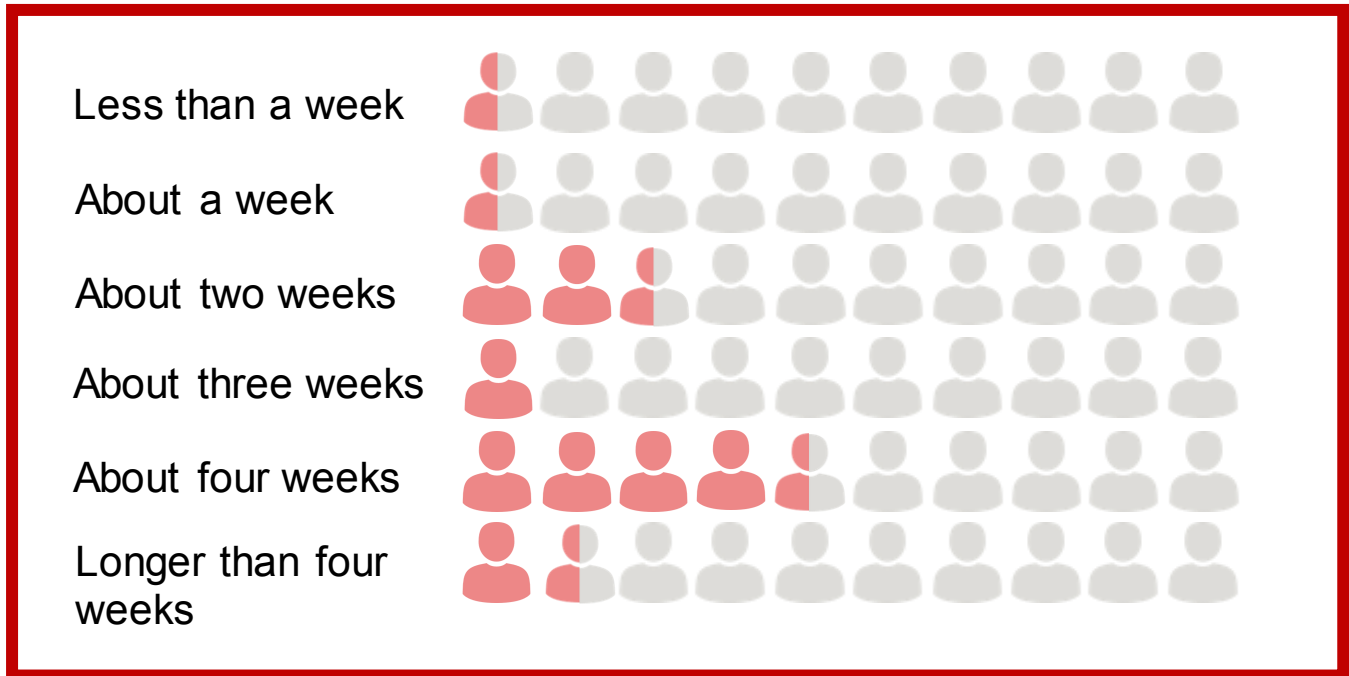
Some respondents had worries about privacy and sharing of personal information, and the accuracy of the information gathered.

A few said they would rather gather information themselves.



We asked respondents how long they think it should take for Social Security Scotland to gather supporting information for applicants.

Around four in ten respondents (44 per cent) thought it should take about four weeks:



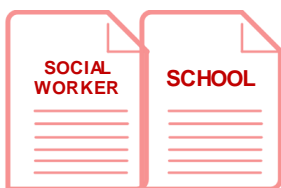
We asked if there is any supporting information respondents would rather gather themselves.



Four in ten respondents (40 per cent) said would rather gather a list of medicines themselves.



One fifth (21 per cent) said they would rather gather a letter from their doctor or consultant.



Very few respondents said they would rather gather a social work report (one per cent) or letter from a school or other educational establishment themselves (four per cent.)



One third of respondents selected 'something else.' Most of these respondents said they would rather gather a letter from a family member, friend or carer themselves. Some noted a combination of the information above.

Asking for more supporting information

We told respondents that sometimes Social Security Scotland might need to ask for more supporting information. This could happen if the supporting information provided by the applicant is not enough to make a decision.

We asked how they would prefer Social Security Scotland to contact them to request more supporting information.



The most popular options were by post (37 per cent) and email (31 per cent).



Just under two in ten respondents selected phone (18 per cent), and only six per cent selected text.



Just over eight in ten respondents (82 per cent) said they would like advance notice before Social Security Scotland called them to ask for more information.



Around one quarter of respondents (24 per cent) would like one day's notice that Social Security Scotland would call them.



Overall, half of respondents (52 per cent) said they would like notice of three days or less.

The other half (49 per cent) said four days or more.



Over eight in ten respondents (84 per cent) said that they would like advance notice of the questions they would be asked by Social Security Scotland.

“I would like an information sheet that this is what we will cover [...] without being hit with lots of information.”

What's Next?

The Scottish Government will continue to work with the Experience Panels in the development of Scotland's new social security system. In particular you told us:

A personal statement or a statement from a carer or family member would be useful for Social Security Scotland in demonstrating that applicants were eligible for a benefit.



Social Security Scotland will ensure that they are taking into account information from those who best understand the impact of the client's condition.



Case Managers will seek one source of supporting information from a formal source, such as confirmation of a diagnosis or letter from a support worker.

Social Security Scotland gathering supporting information on the applicant's behalf would be beneficial.



Case Managers will help applicants decide what types of supporting information are most useful and best for the client. Social Security Scotland will help them to gather that information.

Not every applicant will have supporting information.



No one will be disadvantaged by a lack of supporting information.



Face-to-face consultations (assessments) will only be used when there is no other reasonable way to gather information. Case Managers will have the power to make an award in the absence of supporting information.



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