

EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Experience Panels: Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme

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 the work to prepare for this change, the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels.

**Department
For Work
and
Pensions**



**Scottish
Government**



2,400+

**Experience Panel
members**

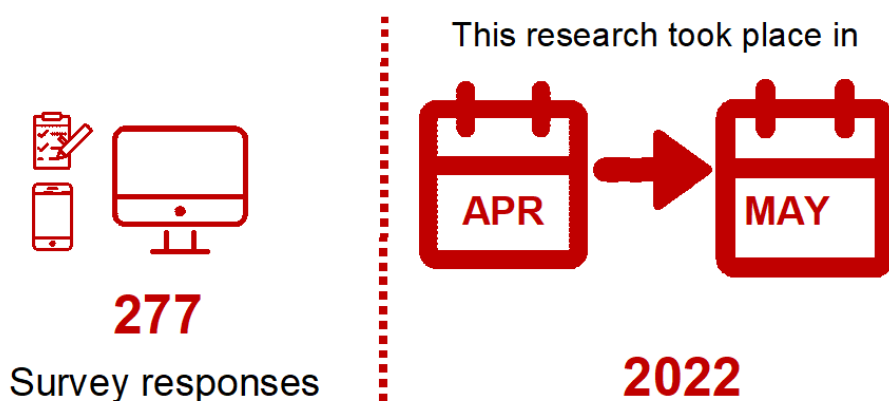
Over 2,400 people from across Scotland joined the Experience Panels when they started in 2017. They all have recent experience of the benefits that are coming to Scotland.

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

About the research

This report sets out the future development of Social Security Scotland's Accessible Vehicles and Equipment (AVE) scheme. The AVE scheme is better known as "Motability". This is the name of the charity that runs the service for Social Security Scotland and DWP.

The goal of the research was to identify panel members with experience of the current scheme and to hear about their overall experiences of using this service.



The research focused on:



Information about who took part, such as their characteristics or experience of different benefits.



Why some respondents had not used the scheme.



What other respondents' experience of the scheme were like.

Who took part:

Participants were aged between

25-80

years old



42%

Man or boy



57%

Woman or girl

The **majority** of survey **respondents** had a **disability** or **long term health condition** including:



Severe hearing
impairments



severe visual
impairments



Learning disability

More than half (**60 per cent**) of survey **respondents** had **caring responsibilities** including:



Care for a
disabled
adult



Care for
someone due to
old age



Care for a
disabled child

Who had used the scheme:



Three quarters (75 per cent) of survey respondents had used the Motability scheme.

Around one in seven (15 per cent) had never used the Motability scheme.

Almost one in ten (nine per cent) had never used the scheme but might consider using it in the future.

Why people had not used the Motability scheme



28% said that they don't qualify.



28% said that they needed their disability allowance to pay for other things.



Other reasons for not using the scheme were:

- preferring to use their own vehicle
- unaware of the scheme
- not interested in what the scheme offers
- do not drive
- medical condition stops them driving or using a mobility scooter
- finding the system “complicated” or “complex”

A few respondents referred to the fact that the qualifying criteria for Motability are **reliant on disability benefits**. They described how **concerns around having their benefits reduced led to them avoiding making changes** that might

have given them eligibility for Motability which they did not currently have.

Quote from panel member:



“Complicated, too fearful of assessments with DWP, not on higher rate mobility, should be on higher for years, but whole thing makes me feel so anxious.”

One respondent highlighted a fear of losing their vehicle should they be reassessed and lose their qualifying benefit.

Quote from panel member:



“Been scared to use it for car under current DWP, as hear and read horror stories of people getting their car taken off them when unfairly assessed.”

Experience of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme



Many respondents **described** their **communications** with the service **very positively**. They found it **quick** and **easy to access** the **help** and **support** needed. A few **expressed frustrations** and described longer **waiting times to speak to staff** on the **phone**.



Some appreciated how **comprehensive** the **service** is, where **running costs, other than fuel, are all included** in the package.



Many respondents described **positive experiences** with dealerships, garages, insurance companies and breakdown cover. This was often the case when they had experienced “**helpful**”, “**caring**” **staff**, and **simple processes**.



Some people said they could **access equipment** and services which would **otherwise** have been **unaffordable** to them.



Many described the **positive impact** the scheme had **on their lives**, including increased **independence** and **mobility**.

Quote from panel member:



“Without it and the fact that all services, breakdowns and tyres are covered, gives me worry free driving and without it I would be housebound”

Experiences of servicing and repair were dependent on the individual garages or dealerships involved.



Ranged from finding staff “**caring**” and **helpful**, to feeling that the service from staff was **poor** and the quality of work done was not acceptable.



Respondents living in rural areas described the specific challenges of accessing an approved service provider in their local area.



Many described their **communications** with the service **very positively**, finding it **quick and easy to access the help and support needed**.

Experience of the costs of accessing some AVE scheme vehicles



Many respondents felt that the **advanced payments** for some vehicles were **too high**, and had increased in recent years.



Others **objected** to having to **pay large** sums for **car adaptations** required for them to be able to drive.



A number of respondents mentioned the **higher cost** of advanced payments required for **larger wheelchair accessible vehicles and automatic cars**.

Quotes from panel members:



“The amount needed by the benefit recipient to put towards a car had increased hugely when I moved from my first to second Motability car. I was therefore really restricted in choice...”



“If you need any adaptations at all, you pay a massive upfront ‘deposit’ that they make sure you never see again. No matter how well kept the vehicle is when it comes time to hand it back.”



“The scheme allows me to lead a relatively ‘normal’ life when it comes to getting around. My Motability vehicle is a lifeline, allowing me to get to the shops, etc. I couldn’t do without it!”

Choices of vehicles



Many felt there was a **good range of vehicles and equipment on offer.**



Some felt the **options available for their specific requirements were more limited and not always affordable for them.**

Experiences in relation to losing their vehicles if their qualifying benefit were stopped



A few described how **helpful the service had been in supporting them** when this happened.



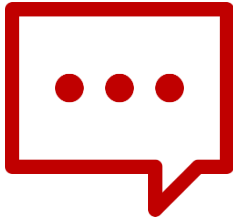
Others found the **experience stressful** and that the **vehicle should not have to be returned before the appeal process** was completed.

Positive impact of the scheme

Quotes from panel members:



“They have been fantastic because I need a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) that can take my large power chair. Without this service I would be permanently house bound, due to the level of care and support I need. This WAV is an absolute lifeline”



“It enables me to essentially cope with looking after my disabled daughter, getting to hospital especially. It is appropriate for her and her wheelchair too. Crucially I don’t have time to think about maintenance and breakdown, I’m hugely grateful for this peace of mind especially when my daughter can be so unwell at times and everything is exhausting and worrying. It is the biggest help to me.”

Next steps



The Scottish Government will use these findings, along with wider research with disabled people and the organisations who support them, to inform the delivery of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme.



The Scottish Government will continue to work with people with experience of the benefits system in the development of Scotland's new social security system.



The Scottish Government will undertake a dedicated evaluation of the Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme as part of its disability benefits evaluation strategy. The findings outlined in this report will be used to supplement the feedback from the evaluation and the views expressed as a result of other stakeholder engagement.



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