Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 Benefit Take-up Strategy

Easy Read

December 2019

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Benefit Take-up Plan

The Scottish Government wants more people to claim the benefits they are entitled to. We will work with other organisations to make sure this happens.

This plan says how the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland will do this.

The Principles of Social Security

We asked people what they thought about the UK Social Security system. A lot of people said it was stressful, complicated and treated them badly.

The Scottish Government wants to do things differently.

We will make a fair, respectful system that treats people well.

We made a law called The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, which has 8 principles for the new system:

1. Social security is an investment in people.
2. Social security is a human right.
3. Giving social security is a public service.
4. Respecting people will be at the heart of the system.
5. It will help to reduce poverty.
6. It will be designed with people based on facts.
7. It will continue to improve.
8. The system will work well and be good value for money.

A People's Service

Our service makes 13 promises to clients. We will:

1. Be patient, kind and think about how clients feel.
2. Listen to clients, trust them and treat them like people
3. Treat everyone equally and fairly.
4. Support clients through their application and explain what will happen and why.
5. Make sure staff can help clients get what they are entitled to.
6. Refer clients for advice and support. Clients can also ask for someone that they know to support them.
7. Make decisions that are the same for everyone and aim to get them right first time.
8. Be honest and give clear reasons for decisions. Explain what to do if a client disagrees.
9. Pay clients the right amount at the right time.
10. Refer clients to other organisations or services that could help make their life better.
11. Tell clients if we think they might be entitled to benefits not given by Social Security Scotland.
12. Have staff who care about giving a service based on equality, respect, dignity and human rights.
13. Involve people with different life experiences of social security when training staff.

These promises help make the Scottish Social Security system welcoming and supportive.

Reasons for not claiming benefits

There are three main reasons for people not claiming benefits:

Social Barriers

People think they will be looked down on, they feel like they don't need benefits, or they don't trust the government. We have called these "social barriers".

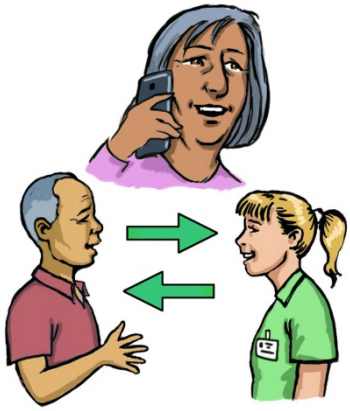
To remove social barriers we will:

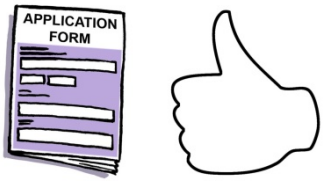
- Put people at the centre of everything we do.
- Involve people with experience of the benefits system.
- Build an easy-to-use benefits system.
- Work with minority groups to make sure that the system works for all.
- Work with other organisations to find out who is not applying for benefits.
- Hold two events with organisations who support disabled people and those on low incomes.

Hard to Access

Applications are too complicated. People don't have the time or money. People do not know how to make a claim and what to say. People find it hard to travel to appointments.

To make benefits easier to access, we will:





- Give people a number of ways to apply.
- Make it clear who can apply for which benefits.
- Make the application process simple.
- Make it easier for people to get supporting information.
- Make some payments automatic. The person will get it without applying for it.
- Keep making the system better based on what we learn as we go along.

Lack of Information

People don’t know what benefits are available or how to apply for them.

To make information available and accessible, we will:

- Have people working close by to help clients understand benefits.
- Work closely with other organisations.
- Make communication plans for each benefit so we can reach different groups.

- Make information easy to get and easy to understand.
- Set up a reference group and provide resources like leaflets and information to help organisations support people.
- Offer £500,000 to charities who support people to claim Scottish benefits.

- Offer £100,000 to organisations who support people from minority groups to get the benefits that they are entitled to.

New take-up ideas

The Benefit Take-up Plan should help people to understand more about Scottish benefits and be able to apply for them more easily.

Benefit Take-up Funds

A new **£500,000 fund** to help organisations who support people to apply for Scottish benefits.

A new **£100,000 fund** to help organisations who support people who don't apply for the benefits they are due.

Organisations will be able to apply for both funds in **November 2019**, and awards will be made in **March 2020**.

Events

To look at the delivery and take-up of Scottish benefits we will hold two events in 2020 on:

- Disability Assistance; and
- Scottish low-income benefits (including the Scottish Child Payment).

Both events will be run with organisations who support particular groups to take-up of benefits. They will be accessible. We will also make sure that people get help to speak at the events.

The main point of these events is to think about what stops people applying for benefits, and ways to fix that

Benefit Take-up Weeks

The Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland will run special weeks to promote the take-up of benefits. These will be organised with help from charities and local councils.

They will be aimed at key groups and all of the benefits they can get. These will be for services who help people claim benefits and not the people themselves.

Take-up Reference Group

We will help other organisations to give the best service to people applying for Scottish benefits. We will talk to these organisations through a new Take-up Reference Group.

This group will be made up of people and organisations who have the experience and who talk to other groups to help us carry out our plans.

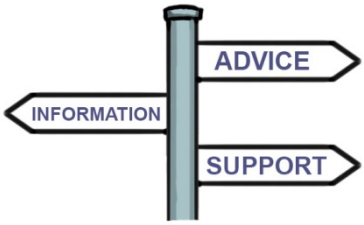
Take-up Tools

We will develop a package of information called a toolkit. This will be for charities and councils. The toolkit will help services support their clients with issues about non-take-up.

The toolkit will include:

- Information on what each benefit is for and who can apply.
- Information on working with Social Security Scotland.

- Information on minority groups and the best ways to reach them.
- Information on Scottish benefits in different formats.
- Examples of existing services and how they make sure their clients get support.
- A list of contacts.



We will work closely with organisations so the toolkit meets their needs.

Evaluation and Improvement

The new take-up ideas will be evaluated – meaning that we will look at how well this first plan works and if it has done what we want it to.

This will help us make the second plan and we will keep learning.

Next Steps

This is the first Benefit Take-up Plan. The second plan will be made by October 2021.

The reference group will play an important role in carrying out this plan. It will also help us make the next plan.

We want individuals and families across Scotland to apply for the benefits they are entitled to.

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