

Audit and Assurance Committee

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 17 th May 2022
Subject	Register of Compliance Obligations Update
Agenda No.	10
Paper No.	17.9
Prepared By	Corporate Assurance Team
Purpose	Note

1. Background

- 1.1. The Corporate Assurance Team within Social Security Scotland are responsible for ensuring we meet the expectations on us as a public body and monitor the delivery of our statutory functions under the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018.
- 1.2. This is the bi-annual report on the progress of the Register of Compliance Framework.

2. Public Body Duty Updates

- 2.1 Highlighted below are specific pieces of work we wanted to bring to the Committee's attention. We have not provided the full Register of Compliance Obligations, but this is available on request.

The Equalities Act 2010 including The Equalities Act (Specific Duties Scotland) Regulations 2012

- 2.2 The Equality strategy was published in June 2021 and is currently on the Social Security Scotland website. Our mainstreaming report was published in May 2021 and outlines our long-term, strategic approach to making sure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our culture and operations. Mainstreaming is an effective way of making sure that the whole institution is meeting its public-sector equality duties. In Scotland, there is a specific duty within the legislation for public authorities to mainstream equality across their activities.

Currently there are two equalities networks - an internal and external network. The internal network is attended by colleagues from across the agency and is currently chaired led by the Corporate Assurance and Risk Team Lead, pending the appointment of a new Diversity and Inclusion Manager within the branch. The external network is led by [Redacted], Head of Strategy and

Communications, and has a broad representation from key stakeholders. Membership for both groups is regularly reviewed.

There is currently ongoing recruitment for three Diversity and Inclusion specialists (2 B3 roles, and 1 C1 role) across the organisation to boost our resource and capability in this area. This also reflects the needs of a growing organisation and client base as we deliver a range of new benefits and expand our workforce to around 3,500 staff.

Implementation of the action plan to support delivery of the three outcomes and commitments within the strategy is coordinated via the Internal Network. Scrutiny and challenge is provided from the External Network.

Gender Representation on Boards(Scotland) Act 2018

- 2.3 A lessons learned exercise was carried out on 3 February 2022 to capture good practice and areas for improvement in relation to last year's Executive Advisory Body recruitment. The exercise reflected on success in attracting candidates with protected characteristics to apply for these Non-Executive roles. Specifically in relation to gender representation on our boards, there is currently gender balance on the Executive Advisory Body in line with the objective. We will consider the best practice guidance in respect of Non-Executive Member recruitment.

Regulation of Investigatory Powers(Scotland) Act 2000(RIP(S)A)

- 2.4 Authorising Officers have now completed professionally accredited training [Redacted]. Arrangements remain in place with DWP for the appropriate authorisation of surveillance operations under the agency agreement. The third IPCO inspection took place. [Redacted]

3. Statutory Functions

- 3.1 For monitoring the delivery of our statutory functions under the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, we have mapped this out and similarly to the Register of Compliance Obligations, are seeking evidence from across the organisation on delivery.

Areas we have been focused on during the last period include:

- **Duties in relation to new benefits**
The Corporate Assurance Team continue to map out obligations and gather required evidence at the introduction of each new benefit to ensure each requirement is met. This includes specific operational guidance and letters which must be in place for each benefit.

- **Duty to promote Take Up**

The second Benefit Take-up Strategy was published on 21 October 2021 and sets out how the Scottish Government are going to work to increase benefit take-up over the next five years, in order to maximise income and improve the financial wellbeing of individuals and families. The strategy is built upon learning from the first strategy, through a combination of lessons learned from the projects funded through the £500,000 Benefit Take-up Fund and the £100,000 Income Maximisation Fund, as well as research carried out through Experience Panels, and from engagement with stakeholders.

At the heart of the second strategy is people, and an emphasis on removing the barriers to benefit take-up; the delivery of the Welfare Advice and Health Partnership (WAHP's) pilot service aims to tackle this. The Scottish Government have committed to expanding Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships through investment of £3.17 million over 2 years from September 2021 to place welfare rights advisors in up to 150 GP surgeries in Scotland's most deprived areas. These practices will be able to refer patients directly to an in-house welfare rights officer for advice on increasing income, social security eligibility, debt resolution, housing, and employability issues as well as helping with representation at tribunals. Advisors are currently placed in 139 GP practices and the decision is currently being made on where in Scotland to place the remaining 11.

The new Social Security Advocacy Service was launched on 31 Jan 2022. The service will support disabled people across the country to access Social Security Scotland assistance. The Scottish Government has committed to investing £20.4M in the service over the next four years, and will be delivered by VoiceAbility, a charity with 40 years' experience of delivering independent advocacy services.

The Stakeholder Take-up Reference Group has been reinstated, after a pause during the pandemic, with the aim to increase the membership to include a wider range of stakeholders from Seldom Heard groups, a commitment made in the Strategy. The group will have input in the implementation of the Strategy, and policy officials will ensure that the voices of these under-represented groups are considered in policy work going forward.

The corporate assurance team have assigned leads to each area of the business so that there is a single point of contact for providing support and gathering updates on our statutory functions.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 This is our sixth progress report on the Register of Compliance Obligations and the team would welcome any comments the Committee has on format and content. The Committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

4.2 A copy of this paper will be shared with the Executive Advisory Body.

5. GOVERNANCE CHECKLIST

Please ensure that you detail which Corporate Plan Strategic Objective the paper contributes to. These strategic considerations should be used to assist you with the content of your paper.

Strategic Objective	Contribution
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<p>Dignity, fairness and respect</p> <p>Delivering a service with dignity, fairness and respect at its core.</p>	<p>This paper has an impact to some extent on all the strategic objectives. Our compliance obligations cover a wide range of areas, and specifically target and help us achieve all of them.</p>
<p>Equality and tackling poverty</p> <p>Promoting equality and tackling poverty.</p>	<p>This paper has an impact to some extent on all the strategic objectives. Our compliance obligations cover a wide range of areas and specifically target and help us achieve all of them.</p>
<p>Efficiency and alignment</p> <p>Ensuring efficiency and aligning our activities with wider public sector for the benefit of the people we serve.</p>	<p>This paper has an impact to some extent on all the strategic objectives. Our compliance obligations cover a wide range of areas and specifically target and help us achieve all of them.</p>
<p>Economy, society and environment</p> <p>Contributing to our economy, society and protection of our environment.</p>	<p>This paper has an impact to some extent on all the strategic objectives. Our compliance obligations cover a wide range of areas and specifically target and help us achieve all of them.</p>

Strategic consideration	Impact
Environment	There are a number of public body obligations that consider the environment and we are using these to inform our wider environmental strategic approach.
Governance	The Compliance Framework is a tool for good governance enabling us to keep track and report effectively on our compliance obligations.
Data	Data will be collated as the Compliance Framework embeds and this will be fed into a number of wider reporting mechanisms.
Finance	There are a number of public obligations that consider Finance, which our Finance Unit are leading on.
Staff	Not applicable
Equalities	There are a number of public body obligations that consider equality and we are using these to inform our wider environmental strategic approach.

Strategic consideration	Impact
Estates	Environmental obligations should be considered as part of the decisions in this area. See above note on Environment.
Communications and Presentation	Not Applicable

Impact Assessment

Non applicable