Social Security Scotland Corporate Plan Consultation - Analytical Report Visual Summary

Background

Social Security Scotland is an executive agency of the Scottish Government. It was set up in 2018 to deliver the social security benefits that are gradually being devolved from the UK Government.

In late 2019 consultation research was carried out with Social Security Staff and stakeholder organisations.

This research was to inform Social Security Scotland's Corporate Plan. It built on the previous engagement with people with lived experience which resulted in Our Charter and the Charter Measurement Framework.

This report outlines the findings from this activity. Publication of this report was delayed by COVID-19.

About the research

This report gives the findings from a series of workshops across Scotland in 2019. Some sessions were with staff. Others were with organisations who represent or work on behalf of people that are served by the social security system.

The research took place in:

2019

11 Sessions

112 Participants

The research: Collected the views, opinions and ideas of participants in workshops, asking:

WHY? Why Social Security Scotland exists

WHAT? What sort of organisation Social Security Scotland will become

HOW? How Social Security Scotland will become that organisation

Why does Social Security Scotland exist?

WHY? Participants were asked why Social Security Scotland exists. This could also be described as its Strategic Purpose. There were five strategic purposes in the discussions:

1. To enable people in Scotland to access all the devolved benefits to which they are entitled.

This was described by participants as the main purpose of Social Security Scotland.

"to make social security payments to the people of Scotland."

"to help support and care for those that most need it in society."

"to make access to support as easy as possible."

"to make sure benefits are easy to claim."

2. To deliver a social security system with compassion and fairness.

Participants agreed that the existence of Social Security Scotland is to deliver benefits in a 'new' way. So for example staff and stakeholders both suggested Social Security Scotland exists to:

Create a fairer system, without inequalities

Improve the experience of those claiming

Protect the vulnerable

Support and care for people

3. To be an exemplar of human rights based public service and the Scottish approach.

Participants referred to the system as being based on Human Rights as set out in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018. Participants wanted Social Security Scotland to be a model organisation for other public services.

Participants agreed that Social Security Scotland should use the expertise of people in Scotland to ensure our services are fit for purpose.

4. To contribute to tackling poverty in Scotland.

Participants believed that Social Security Scotland should know that it can address wider issues.

Examples given included:

Reduce poverty	Reduce inequality	Address stigma

5. To show that social security is a positive benefit to ALL people in Scotland.

Participants believed that the organisation should tackle the stigma around benefits and benefit claimants. They pointed out that all people in Scotland can and will need social security at some point.

They also suggested that paying benefits saves other public funds, for example in health and justice budgets.

Participants thought that a key purpose of Social Security Scotland was to help people in Scotland understand the positive impact of social security.

What sort of an organisation will Social Security Scotland become and how?

WHAT? Participants were asked **what** the long term goals should be for Social Security Scotland.

HOW? They were also asked **how** the organisation should reach these goals.

Clients - Dignity and respect

1 Participants described dignity and respect as where people experience a service that puts clients first.

"clients' needs should come before the needs of the system."

"treats people as human beings."

"designed for clients not for the government."

"for people not to people."

1 **What**: Put clients first

How: Work with clients to learn about and understand them and the barriers they face

How: Train and support staff to understand and deliver with kindness and empathy

Clients - Fairness

Participants talked about what fairness means to them. They focused on an equality based system where no one was discriminated against.

It was recognised that a system based on fairness means that not everyone should receive the same treatment. Sometimes people need extra support, help or payments.

Fairness could be delivered through both staff behaviour when interacting with clients, and making the system itself fair. Also fairness could be achieved by working with equalities partners.

"treat everyone as an individual."

"challenging views and beliefs that are contrary to."

"NOT one size fits all."

"applying the service fairly."

What: We treat everyone fairly

How: Challenge stigma using positive language and informing the public

How: Eliminate inequalities in the system, raise staff awareness

Client – Accessibility

Participants wanted to see accessibility of services in terms of general access and accessible communications.
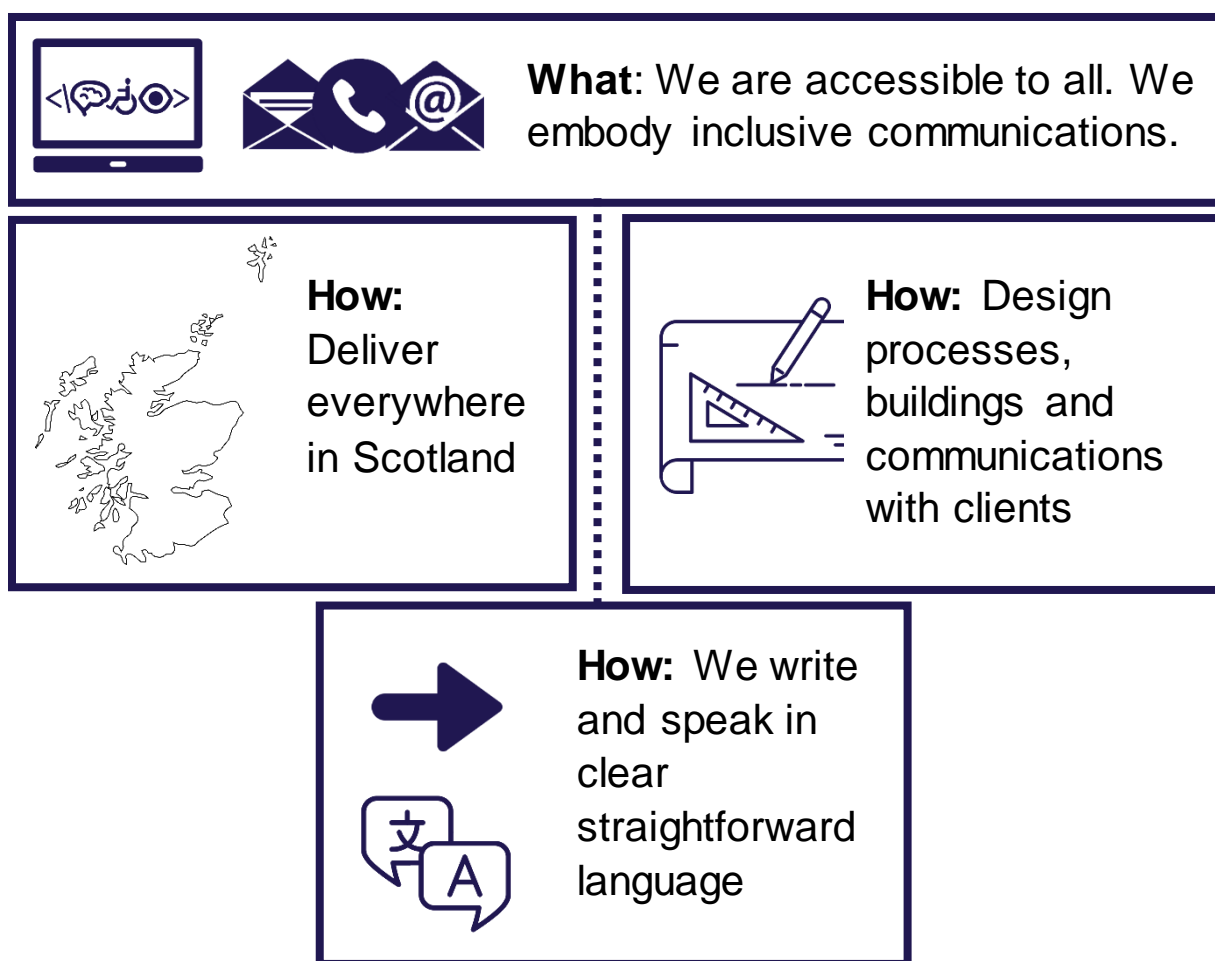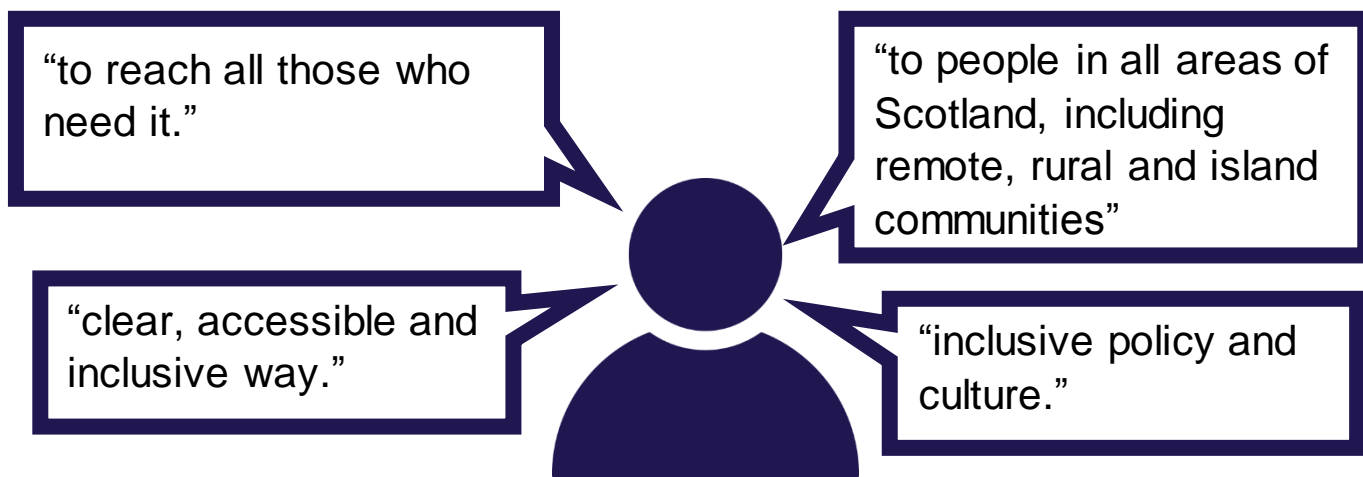
Accessibility included providing a choice for clients in how they communicate with the organisation. As well as how Social Security Scotland communicates with them.

It was seen as important that Social Security Scotland communicates using straightforward language. Also it is vital to remove physical barriers at buildings to make them accessible.

Participants talked about the importance of understanding peoples' circumstances. As well as communicating with people in the way that they want to reduce barriers.

"to reach all those who need it."

"to people in all areas of Scotland, including remote, rural and island communities"

"clear, accessible and inclusive way."

"inclusive policy and culture."

What: We are accessible to all. We embody inclusive communications.

How: Deliver everywhere in Scotland

How: Design processes, buildings and communications with clients

How: We write and speak in clear straightforward language

Staff – Right first time

Participants wanted Social Security Scotland to get things right from the first time. This is to ensure that client stress is reduced and that resources are efficiently used.

"administering a system to give the right people, the right award, at the right times."

"All staff should be trained by the experience experts (people with lived experience)."

"Staff need to be well trained and knowledgeable of all public services and all benefits."

"seeing staff training as an investment."

What: We get it right first time

How: Deliver high quality extensive training to all staff

Confident staff

Participants recognised that training is only part of ensuring excellent customer service. They also said that staff confidence needed to be boosted.

"by treating its people in the way it wants their customers to be treated."

"empowerment of staff."

"providing support for staff to deliver."

"proud to be part of Social Security Scotland."

What: Our staff are well trained and confident

How: Valuing, supporting and equipping staff

Staff – Diverse workforce

Participants thought it was important to have a diverse workforce. It would allow people from protected characteristic groups and a variety of life experience to be part of the workforce.

What: Our staff reflect the diversity of Scotland

How: Accessible recruitment methods and working practices and offices

Processes

Participants wanted to see a system with easy to use processes in the Corporate Plan. Many themes were related to points made in other sections.

The issue of choice was said to be important. Staff said that it was important to have a choice of how clients can connect. This includes web-based applications, paper applications, phone and face-to-face support for applications.

Participants felt that Social Security Scotland should offer a personal service with support when people need it. This support should be available throughout. This would help to make it easy for people to claim benefits and let them know what they are entitled to.
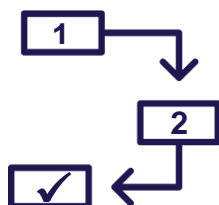
Participants said that the organisation should make the service user friendly for everyone. It should also have simple processes, quick assessments and simple forms.
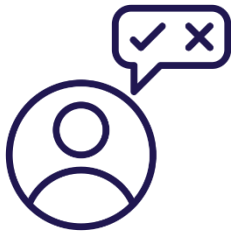
Participants, particularly stakeholders, said it is important to involve staff and clients in designing services and systems. The use of lived experience and feedback was seen as important too in order to continuously improve the organisation's processes.

What: Our processes are easy to use

How: Work with clients to simplify processes, eliminate repetition and unnecessary elements
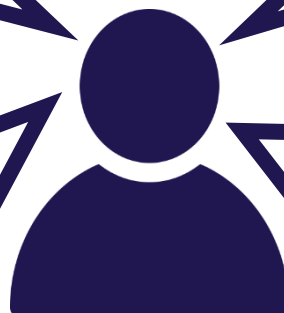
Trust and learning

RESPECT

TRUST

Participants wanted Social Security Scotland to be respected and trusted. They made suggestions how it could gain respect and build trust by showing it is a learning organisation.

"administer a system that is fair and secure."

"demonstrating action on feedback and ideas."

"By evaluating and embracing continuous improvement about our processes for the people of Scotland."

"We need to show that we are resilient and prepared for things to go wrong by learning from these and getting better."

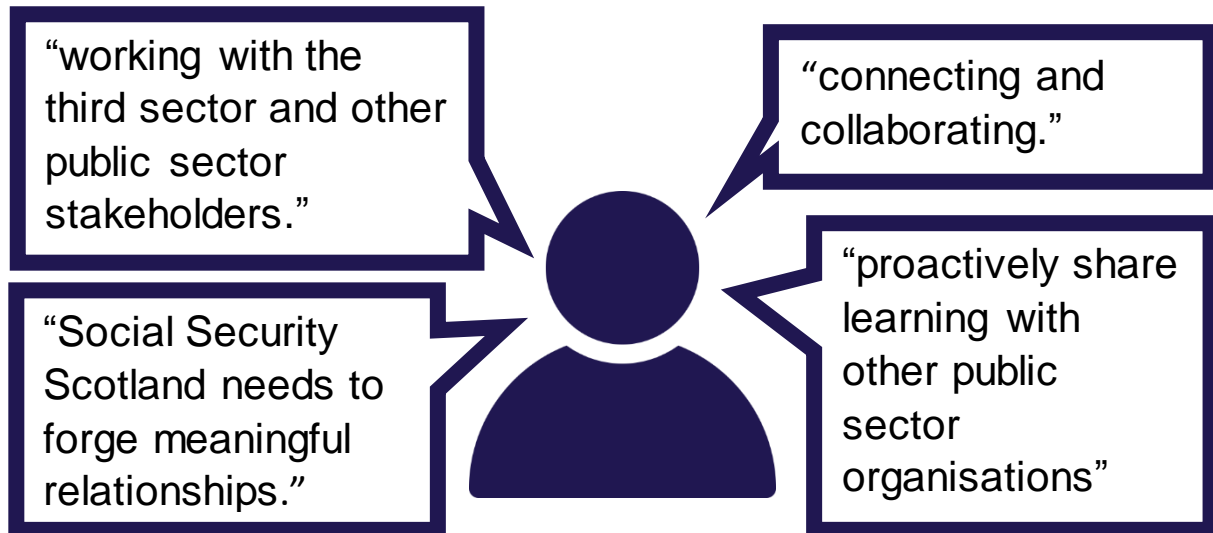| RESPECT TRUST	**What**: We are respected and trusted. We are a learning organisation.
How: Openly monitor, evaluate and publish results.	**How:** Proactively seek feedback, act on that feedback and report back on action taken.

Joined-up working

Participants discussed the importance of Social Security Scotland being joined up with clients, stakeholders and the local communities. The organisation should be connected to relevant third sector organisations and to other public sector organisations.

Participants felt that Social Security Scotland should recognise stakeholders as partners and they would support the delivery of the benefits. Advice, advocacy services and organisations that support clients were seen as important for achieving results for clients.

"working with the third sector and other public sector stakeholders."

"connecting and collaborating."

"Social Security Scotland needs to forge meaningful relationships."

"proactively share learning with other public sector organisations"

What: We are joined up with clients, communities and stakeholders

How: Reach out and build relationships to join-up with clients, communities and stakeholders

Take-up

The Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland's commitment to increase the take-up of benefits is a key issue for participants.

"inform people"

"reach out to people"

"support communities to understand entitlements"

"empower people"

What: Our services are well known and we have high levels of take-up

How: Promote our services, undertake extensive awareness raising and information dissemination

Value for money

Participants were aware that there is a need for Social Security Scotland to be a value for money organisation. They agreed that the new social security system would save money elsewhere. For example the new and better service could reduce poverty and improve people's health. This would save money on health services.

Efficiency was a key issue. Participants would like to see proof that resources were not wasted in needless bureaucracy and used for maximum impact. It is important that Social Security Scotland does not duplicate what others do.

What: Value for public money

How: Use resources for maximum impact

Next Steps

The report has been used as a guide to produce relevant headings for the Corporate Plan. All the views, opinions and ideas from Social Security Scotland staff and stakeholders have been included in the Corporate Plan.