



Executive Advisory Body

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 26 May 2020
Time	10.00 – 12:00
Location	Conference Call

Attendees

Present

David Wallace (DW)	Chief Executive, Social Security Scotland (Chair)
Laura Brennan-Whitefield (LBW)	Non-Executive Member
Jessica Burns (JB)	Non-Executive Member
Chris Creegan (CC)	Non-Executive Member
Ewan Gurr (EG)	Non-Executive Member
Douglas Hutchens (DH)	Non-Executive Member
Elaine Noad (EN)	Non-Executive Member
Miriam Craven (MC)	Deputy Director of Strategy and Client Experience
Andy McClintock (AM)	Chief Digital Officer
James Wallace (JW)	Deputy Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Paul Knight (PK)	Paul Knight Head of Clinical Operations
Janet Richardson (JR)	Deputy Director of Operations and Local Delivery

In Attendance

DP	Governance Manager
ML	Business Manager (for Item 5 only)

Apologies

NMB	Corporate Assurance/Governance, Business Support Lead
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Secretariat	Governance and Business Co-ordinator
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1. Welcome & Conflicts of Interest

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance.
- 1.2. The Chair introduced and welcomed the new Governance Manager DP to the Executive Advisory Body meeting.
- 1.3. Members did not highlight any potential conflicts of interest.

2. Chair's Update

- 2.1. The Chair noted the announcement made by the First Minister on a phased COVID-19 recovery plan for Scotland and advised members that we will follow the guidance laid out by the First Minister. The Chair advised members that live services are operating well and the Agency is maintaining close contact with Social Security Programme and Scottish Government policy colleagues, to support our recovery response to COVID-19.
- 2.2. The Chair also highlighted his attendance at the Social Security Committee Evidence Session on the 30 April. The Chair provided support to the Cabinet Secretary on the operational impact of the revised delivery plan for benefit launches in response to COVID-19.
- 2.3. The Chair invited James Wallace (JW) to provide an update on our recovery response to COVID-19. JW advised members that Social Security Scotland has set up a Recovery Group, supporting our existing governance structures.
- 2.4. The Chair invited Janet Richardson (JR) to provide an update on live operations. She advised that the majority of staff were now working from home with a small cohort of staff providing cover, on a rota basis, for the mailroom in Dundee House. Strict social distancing measures remain in place. JR confirmed that we are maintaining a full service during this period, highlighting that the majority of claims are being made online. Working from home processes are in place and staff are well supported with regular team meetings and one-to-ones allowing us to manage and support staff appropriately. JR advised that the newly launched web chat service is operating well.
- 2.5. The Chair advised members that the previously agreed amendments to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, made under the Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill 2020, extending the upper time limit for responding to Freedom of Information requests from twenty days to sixty days has now reverted back to the original twenty working-day timeline.
- 2.6. Douglas Hutchens (DH) requested that we update the action tracker to clear any completed actions in advance of the next Executive Advisory Body meeting. He also requested that the minutes record thanks from the Non-Executive Members to all Social Security Staff for their hard work and efforts.



Action	Secretariat	To review the Action Tracker and remove any completed actions.
Action	Secretariat	To make sure the minutes reflect Members' thanks to the teams for work completed.

3. Wider Impacts of COVID-19

- 3.1. Miriam Craven (MC) introduced the Wider Impacts of COVID-19 update. She advised that the Social Security Scotland response to COVID-19 has been stood up at pace and we have documented and drawn together these changes as wider impacts. We want to ensure that we are delivering the right service for our clients, the right support for our people and that we are considering what a new state of 'normal' might look like.
- 3.2. The wider strategic impacts to consider are:
- Benefit Launch Dates
 - Recruitment
 - All Client Survey
 - The Corporate Plan
 - The Annual Accounts and Audit.
- 3.3. Elaine Noad (EN) asked if the Internal Audit Plan would go ahead in June 2020. MC advised it would and we will stick to the current timetable, although we don't have an exact date as yet.
- 3.4. DH noted it was a helpful paper and wondered what the longer term planning might be in terms of working from home and recruitment. He asked whether Social Security Scotland are beginning to think about the possibilities and opportunities for staff to work from home post COVID-19. MC responded that the paper focuses primarily on the short-term implications. The medium to longer term impacts and implications will be conversations for the future. In particular, Home working has always been an area of interest but our current climate dictates our current priorities.
- 3.5. DH requested a development session to discuss the Wider Impacts further including discussion around maintaining and supporting the organisational culture.
- 3.6. The Executive Advisory Body noted this update on the ways in which Social Security Scotland is responding to the Wider Impacts of COVID-19.

Action	Secretariat	To look for a suitable time for a development session to cover Wider Impacts.
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4. Finance Report

- 4.1. JW presented the Financial Report showing the provisional 2019-20 results for Social Security Scotland.
- 4.2. JW noted that these results were subject to change as we work through the year end and audit process.
- 4.3. JW noted that that we spent less than expected on operational expenditure for 2019-20. Most of this had been expected and included in the previous forecast but there was a further underspend because of changes to our staff recruitment and accommodation plans.
- 4.4. JW provided some additional explanation on Funeral Support Payments which have been funded through Financial Transactions – essentially these are treated as loans for accounting purposes. A small proportion of these payments may be recovered but not all. As a consequence we have to write off those unrecoverable. We lacked a budget for this specific element in 2019-20, this will be resolved for 2020-21.
- 4.5. Members noted the Financial Report.

5. Equalities Strategy – Consultation Evaluation Report and Next Steps

- 5.1. ML introduced the *Equalities Strategy – Consultation Analysis Report and Next Steps*. The purpose of the paper was to provide an overview of the recent public consultation on our Mainstreaming Equalities outcome and proposed next steps.
- 5.2. ML noted that the Equalities Strategy is necessary for Social Security Scotland to fulfil our obligations under section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (The Public Sector Equality Duty) and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 as amended.
- 5.3. ML noted that the public consultation on the draft Mainstreaming Equality outcomes was concluded at the end of February 2020. This consisted of public events as well as consultation with stakeholder organisations and staff and with supporting analysis conducted by the research consultancy, Rocket Science. The final consultation analysis report will be published on the www.gov.scot website and www.consult.gov.scot hub. A communications plan is being created to inform the public and a link to the report will be available on Social Security Scotland's Corporate Website.
- 5.4. ML advised the members that there had been good stakeholder engagement with the Public Consultation events which had produced a number of key findings. This has enabled us to revise the equalities outcomes making them more focused and ambitious. To support this work, Social Security Scotland will establish two equality networks: one internal and one external. This enables external organisations to provide a supporting role to us as critical friends and



also integrating and embedding the equality strategy into Social Security Scotland through our internal network.

- 5.5. The Chair stressed to members that Social Security Scotland wants to be an exemplar in our approach to equality and inclusion and to move beyond basic compliance. MC noted the need to take the Equality Strategy beyond the protected characteristics, to include income, social mobility and the role of carers.
- 5.6. EN noted her thanks for all the hard work that had gone into the Equalities Strategy and for the detail covered by Rocket Science.
- 5.7. Ewan Gurr (EG) also wanted to express his appreciation. He had the opportunity to attend consultation events and acknowledged the work that had been accomplished to date.
- 5.8. ML advised members that the next steps in the process will be to publish an initial Mainstreaming Report and a revised set of Equality outcomes establishing two equalities networks. An internal network will include representatives from Social Security Scotland with links to Social Security Directorate and Scottish Government Equalities Unit. This network will co-ordinate our required work on Equality Impact Assessment. The external network will include representatives from key stakeholder organisations that represent the issues of those with one or more protected characteristic as well as those with lived experiences of the benefits system and recipients of our services. This network will help to provide the necessary critical challenge to inform our work.
- 5.9. The Executive Advisory Body noted their support of the approach.

6. Any other Business

- 6.1. Members approved the minutes of the Executive Advisory Body meeting on the 14 April 2020. In line with our commitment to proactively publish the agenda, meeting papers, minutes and action tracker, we will publish these on the Social Security Scotland website within twelve weeks of this meeting.
- 6.2. Laura Brennan-Whitefield (LBW) asked if it would be possible to have the next meeting via video conferencing.
- 6.3. No other business was noted.

Action	AM	To see if there are suitable video conferencing options for the next meeting.
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Date of next meeting: Tuesday 7 July 2020





Action(AP)/Decision(DP)	Detail	Owner	Due Date	Status
AP – 03/03/2020 – 01	To update the Calendar of Business with deep-dive themes for consideration.	Secretariat	7 July 2020	Colleagues emailed to consider themes, returns due by 29 June 2020
AP – 03/03/2020 – 02	To liaise with the communications team to update the Terms of Reference and information relating to Executive Advisory Body on the corporate website.	Secretariat	7 July 2020	Communications team currently working on updating the Corporate website
AP – 03/03/2020 – 03	To liaise with the Social Security Operations and Delivery Analysis team to discuss including in the balanced scorecard, diversity statistics across all protected characteristics as well as those not coming from a civil service background.	Secretariat	After the meeting	Completed
AP – 12/04/2020 - 01	To contact the Analysis & Insights team to	Secretariat	After the meeting	Completed



Action(AP)/Decision(DP)	Detail	Owner	Due Date	Status
	confirm a date for the diversity statistics requested.			
AP – 12/04/2020 – 02	To provide the Executive Advisory Body members with an update on the Child Disability Payment pilot once confirmed	Secretariat	After the meeting	Completed
AP – 12/04/2020 – 03	To consider the impact of COVID-19 on the current calendar of business.	MC/NMB/Secretariat	After the meeting	Completed
AP – 26/05/2020 - 03	To look for a suitable time for a development session to cover Wider Impacts.	MC/NMB/Secretariat	After the meeting	Completed
AP – 26/05/2020 - 04	To see if there are suitable video conferencing options for the next meeting.	AM	7 July 2020	Completed