



Executive Advisory Body

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 26 May 2020
Subject	Wider Impacts – COVID-19
Agenda No.	3
Paper No.	15.1
Prepared By	Miriam Craven
Purpose	Discuss

1. Background

- 1.1. Social Security Scotland's response to Covid-19 has been stood up at pace and has been effective in supporting the delivery of our critical service to clients. Many of the decisions taken have been done so to protect our services, and to support the health and wellbeing of our people.
- 1.2. We are now moving into a phase of supporting the maintenance of these services, while considering what a recovery to a new normal will look like. As part of this we are considering the more wider strategic impacts of Covid-19 for discussion by the Executive Advisory Body.

2. Key points

- 2.1. There have been a number of wider strategic impacts that the organisation is starting to understand as a result of the impact of Covid-19. These are areas where we have had to make a decision to delay or change approach. These are summarised below, and will be outlined further at the meeting.
- 2.2. Benefit Launch Dates – Members will be familiar with the details of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People statement to Parliament in April. This noted the priority to introduce Scottish Child Payment as soon as possible, but also expected delays to the introduction of future disability payments. Social Security Scotland continues to work with the Social Security Programme on the impacts of this decision.
- 2.3. Recruitment – Similarly to wider Scottish Government and other public bodies we have had to pause all our live recruitment campaigns. Whilst we were able to start a large number of staff in April and May, there are still applications to be reviewed for a number of posts which will have to wait until further guidance is provided by Scottish Government. We have been able to support the induction of our new staff through an exclusively virtual delivery approach from our Learning and Development Team.

- 2.4. All Client Survey – In April 2020, Social Security Scotland was due to issue an All-Client Survey as part of the Client Insights research programme. This has now been postponed for a number of reasons,. This postponement will impact the extent to which we will be able to measure performance against our Charter commitments and the availability of client data to include in the upcoming Social Security Scotland Annual Report. We are looking at ways to mitigate this impact however so we can undertake some form of reporting using existing data sources. Options for re-starting this work are being considered also.
- 2.5. Corporate Plan – The Agency’s Corporate Plan was written following a consultation exercise carried out in 2019, with external stakeholders, Social Security Scotland staff and the Executive Advisory Body. The Corporate Plan was set to introduce updated objectives for the next 3 years based on the outcomes of the consultation, however it has been postponed to allow further work to be done based on the Covid-19 impact.
- 2.6. Annual Accounts and Audit – Social Security Scotland and Audit Scotland have been meeting regularly to discuss the impact on the timetable for our Annual Accounts and Audit process. It is expected that there will be a relaxation of information required within our Performance Report (mitigating the risk outlined above with regards to the All Client Survey), and it is anticipated the audit will take longer as it is carried out remotely. While the organisation will work towards the existing timetable for sign off, it is more likely this will be delayed and we have scheduled further Audit and Assurance Committee meetings to mitigate this risk. Any sign off will align to that of the Scottish Government and we will continue to liaise closely with them.
- 2.7. Similarly we have taken a decision to pause our intended Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21. We are currently reconsidering the priorities, so we can re-instate this from June 2020

3. Conclusions

- 3.1. Executive Advisory Body members are asked to note the paper for further discussion at the meeting.



4. GOVERNANCE CHECKLIST

Strategic Objective	Contribution
<p>Dignity, fairness and respect</p> <p>Delivering a service with dignity, fairness and respect at its core.</p>	<p>Covid-19 has had an impact across all of strategic objectives some to a lesser extent than others. Social Security Scotland has however responded to the incident well, and in making decisions have considered these objectives to ensure we can still deliver a service to our clients, while safeguarding the safety and well-being of our people.</p> <p>As noted above work is ongoing to update our strategic objectives, however this has been paused to reflect on the wider impacts.</p>
<p>Equality and tackling poverty</p> <p>Promoting equality and tackling poverty.</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>Economy, society and environment</p> <p>Contributing to our economy, society and protection of our environment.</p>	

Strategic consideration	Impact
Environment	N/A
Governance	Social Security Scotland Governance Structure has remained as is during the pandemic with the Executive Team and Agency Leadership Team responsible for decision making at appropriate levels. The Executive Advisory Body have also continued to meet and be updated as appropriate as action and decisions were taken.
Data	The Client Insights Team have contributed to the paper specially on the impact to the All Client Survey.
Finance	Finance were consulted to identify wider impact and have provided input on the Annual Accounts and Audit.
Staff	Corporate Services were consulted on identify wider impact and have provided input on recruitment.
Equalities	N/A



Strategic consideration	Impact
Estates	N/A
Communications and Presentation	N/A

Impact Assessment
N/A