



Executive Advisory Body

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 07 July 2020
Time	10.00 – 12:00
Location	Video conference

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

BG	Head of People Services
DP	Governance Team Leader
RC	Business Support Manager

Secretariat	Governance and Business Co-ordinator
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1. Welcome and Conflicts of Interest

- 1.1. The Chair, David Wallace (DW), welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance.
- 1.2. Members did not highlight any potential conflicts of interest.
- 1.3. The Executive Advisory Body endorsed the minutes of the last meeting.
- 1.4. DW highlighted to the Executive Advisory Body members our intention to proactively publish, agenda, minutes and papers for meetings and that minutes of 14 April 2020 were now published on our [corporate website](#).

2. Chair's Update

- 2.1. DW invited Janet Richardson (JR) to update the members on the reinstated inbound telephony service. JR advised we are currently working with seventy to eighty trained client advisers with forty available to take calls at any one time. Inbound call lines are currently open Monday to Friday from 0900 – 1500, with a view to extend this and bring this in line with original service levels. On day one of the service, Friday 03 July 2020, inbound calls were high, as anticipated, however current call handling times and waiting times have now reduced. Additional support is in place to support client advisers, working round their domestic arrangements and ensuring confidence in the new service. JR noted that this has been a soft launch and on Thursday 9 July 2020 we will publicly announce the service.

DW highlighted recent conversations around introducing an 'invite to apply', a significant point of difference between UK and Scottish Systems, which could lead to a significant upturn in calls to Social Security Scotland.
- 2.2. DW advised members he gave evidence to the Social Security Committee and that the Cabinet Secretary made it clear that this was a partnership with both the UK Government and the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 2.3. DW highlighted that Social Security Scotland has continued to induct new people virtually into the organisation during lockdown. As anticipated it is slightly harder to bring them into the live, operational environment when they are working from a home environment. JR set out the range of support available to new starts and the training and coaching offer. DW highlighted that trying to bring people into a new system remotely is challenging. PK set out some of the specific training challenges in relation to the new disability benefits. JW updated the Executive Advisory Body on the recruitment freeze with sixty-six recruitment campaigns on hold and thirty-eight new recruits awaiting start dates.
- 2.4. DW raised Executive Advisory Body reappointment letters and revised supporting guidance and noted that there would be an opportunity to discuss this after the meeting directly with Miriam Craven (MC) and DP. Executive



Advisory Body members were reminded they could contact DW with any specific issues.

Action	-	No actions noted from this item.
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3. People Strategy Plan

- 3.1. DW thanked JB and Elaine Noad (EN) for their expertise, input and views on the People Strategy and People Plan in advance of today's meeting.
- 3.2. Setting the scene for discussion, DW invited Members to consider the need for any further changes to the strategy in light of COVID-19; whether the People Strategy should stay the same or become more flexible; and to consider whether Social Security Scotland is doing enough.
- 3.3. DW invited BG to provide the update.
- 3.4. BG noted the People Strategy has changed considerably since it was like last brought to the Executive Advisory Body on the 28 May 2019 and has now been developed into two documents: the People Strategy and People Plan. Both have been subject to consultation and scrutiny from internal and external stakeholders to gather their comments and improve the content and style of the document. BG highlighted that the People Strategy does not directly paint a picture of Social Security Scotland post COVID-19 but does provide the framework and shape of activities we will need to build on. The format of the People Strategy has a flexible structure to enable us to review and update it.
- 3.5. BG opened the floor to questions and asked the members to consider if the People Strategy has helped us to:
 - break down barriers to enable us to develop a diverse workforce
 - progress on improving career development opportunities for people with protected characteristic
 - build the culture we want to support our core values
 - identify the framework needed to support us post COVID-19.
- 3.6. BG summarised the next steps, which will be to take this feedback, review and incorporate into the People Strategy and People Plan. This will provide the recognition of the impact of COVID-19 and the framework to work through the challenges identified, including to:
 - Review policies for working from home as it will look different post COVID-19.
 - Consider the impact of video conferencing to improve the home working environment – the activities listed in the People Strategy give us a framework to work with this.
 - Expansion and further development of our cultural values, wellbeing and engagement.



- Seek additional support from stakeholders to include older people – making our engagement with them more attractive.
- Poverty space – not all have access to online technology look at how we can overcome these barriers.
- Look at credibility of badges.

3.7. DW asked members to email any further comments to the secretariat.

3.8. The Executive Advisory Body members requested to see the final draught of the People Strategy once completed.

3.9. No further comments were noted and DW invited the members to take a ten-minute break.

Action	BG	Update the People Strategy to reflect comments and action points from the meeting today.
Action	BG	Circulate the final draft of the People Strategy with the Executive Advisory Body members once completed.

4. Human Resources Update

4.1. DW invited BG to provide the Human Resources update.

4.2. BG highlighted key metrics for the quarter ending 31 March 2020 and activity taking place within Social Security Scotland’s people function. The key points in the report provided information on headcount, wellbeing, diversity and inclusion.

4.3. BG noted the following key points;

- **Head Count** – Data reflected the intake of B1 / B2 grade staff recruited for Scottish Child Payment. BG noted the upward trend in Head Count following their addition.
- **Resourcing and Learning** – Learning and Development have delivered all training virtually via webinar and self-learning. Post COVID-19, we will review the way we deliver learning and development moving forward. In time, we will revert back to face-to-face learning in the office environment but this will be one approach as part of a much wider range of learning methods than we were using previously. New entrants have been extremely positive about their training experience.
- **Wellbeing** – Data highlights average days lost per full-time equivalent. This has been measured against core Scottish Government data to the end of March, the date does not include the impact of COVID-19, as this became prevalent in April and May.

There was a drop in average days lost in December and January which is not typical in the winter months, we would normally expect a slight increase, so these figures were unexpected.



- **Main Reasons for Absence** – these were reported as ‘Stress, Anxiety or Upset, Ill-defined and Mental’. BG noted these are categories set by the Cabinet Office to aid consistent reporting across the Civil Service.
- **Mental Health Support** – BG highlighted what we have done to support our staff during lockdown. BG noted there has been a lot of good advice on the Scottish Government intranet pages. Social Security Scotland has consistently shown no significant COVID-19 absence rates.
- **Further Support and Information Gathering** – Further support and information gathering was conducted working alongside the organisation ‘See Me’. Social Security Scotland conducted a mental health check of all staff with a positive outcome. This builds on the support already available from People Advice and Support. Moving forward we have established further actions including more sessions building staff resilience and protecting wellbeing.
- **Diversity** – Focusing on 4 areas:
 - **Percentage of people declaring a disability**
 - **Percentage of people from ethnic minority backgrounds** – BG noted this is an area of challenge for many organisations. This can be positively influenced by our external recruitment as this is the best way to bring in a more diverse workforce. We are making positive steps but there is always more to do in this space.
 - **Percentage of people identifying as LGBTQ**
 - **Percentage gender split** – BG advised the gender split provided does not distinguish between grades. JW advised that Social Security Scotland currently has a positive pay gap where the female average is higher than the male average.
- **Stakeholder and Partner Engagement** – BG noted we continue to work with the Health and Social Care Alliance to look at the support we can provide or input around lived experience of disability and benefits.

4.4. DW noted next steps should be to include the People Update in the forward planner on a quarterly basis with a six month review to allow wider discussion. All members agreed this course of action.

4.5. MC asked members to email any additional information they feel we should have captured to the secretariat to collate.

4.6. The Executive Advisory Body noted the contents of the report.

Action	BG	Add additional context to statistics to provide a wider comparison – seeking additional advice from CIPD.
Action	BG	Commission research to highlight additional barriers to work.
Action	BG	To build racial equality into future presentations.



Action	Secretariat	Include the People Update quarterly in the forward planner with a six monthly review.
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5. Any other Business

- 5.1. Members approved the minutes of the Executive Advisory Body meeting on the 26 May 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.
- 5.2. DW thanked everybody for attending the meeting and asked members to feedback any comments in regards to joining the meeting via Microsoft Teams to the secretariat.
- 5.3. No other business was noted.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 18 August 2020



Action(AP)/Decision(DP)	Detail	Owner	Due Date	Status
AP – 07/007/2020 - 01	Update the People Strategy to reflect comments and action points from the meeting today.	BG	Update due for September meeting	BG is currently working on the paper and will meet with colleagues to discuss further.
AP – 07/007/2020 - 02	Circulate the final draft of the People Strategy with the Executive Advisory Body members once completed.	BG	Update due for September meeting	BG is currently working on updating the paper and will liaise with the secretariat to share with the Executive Advisory Body once completed.
AP – 07/007/2020 - 03	Add additional context to statistics to provide a wider comparison – seeking additional advice from CIPD.	BG	Update due for September meeting	BG is currently commissioning work related to this action point and will contact CIPD.
AP – 26/05/2020 - 04	Commission research to highlight additional barriers to work.	BG	Update due for September meeting	BG is currently commissioning work related to this action point
AP – 07/007/2020 - 05	To build racial equality into future presentations.	BG	Update due for September meeting	BG is currently commissioning work



				related to this action point
AP – 07/007/2020 - 06	Include the People Update in the forward planner with a six monthly review.	Secretariat	After the meeting	Completed