Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Executive Advisory Body

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 3 November 2020
Subject	Inclusive Communication
Agenda No.	4
Paper No.	19.3
Prepared By	[Redacted]
Purpose	Discuss

1.   Background

1.1.   The Executive Advisory Body discussed inclusive communication at its meeting on 28 September 2020. You were interested in getting some more detail on the work we are taking forward and what we are learning as a result.

2.   Key points

2.1.   Inclusive communication is a long term piece of work. We will need sustained effort from teams across Social Security Scotland and we need to work closely with our colleagues in the Social Security Programme and Policy teams. To be truly successful, we must make communicating in an inclusive way an integral part of Social Security Scotland's culture.

2.2.   We are working to achieve the following five Assets:

- ✓ Leadership and ownership across the organisation.
- ✓ Effective engagement with people who understand and express themselves in different ways
- ✓ Inclusive and accessible systems, processes and locations.
- ✓ Knowledgeable and skilled workforce.
- ✓ Shared inclusive communication resources readily available.

2.3.   We are using four key inclusive communication principles to guide our actions:

1. Recognise all communities and groups include people who communicate in different ways.
2. Find out how people prefer to communicate.
3. Take action:
   a. Adapt the physical environment.
   b. Match the way you communicate to the ways people understand.
   c. Respond positively to the different ways people express themselves.
4. Evaluate and change.

3.   Conclusions

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3.1. We ask the Executive Advisory Body to note the contents of this paper and discuss the following questions:

- In the paper we have set out a flavour of the activities underway. Are they what you expected?

- Is there anything else you think we should be considering?

4. GOVERNANCE CHECKLIST

Strategic Objective	Contribution
Dignity, fairness and respect Delivering a service with dignity, fairness and respect at its core.	Will ensure that clients with additional communication support needs are: • able to access help and advice to claim the benefits they are entitled to • supported throughout the application assessment process able to enjoy a positive experience of the Scottish social security system.
Equality and tackling poverty Promoting equality and tackling poverty.	Our work on inclusive communications will be a key part of our Equalities Strategy. Getting inclusive communication right should also support our work to increase take-up amongst the most vulnerable groups helping to get money to where it is needed most.
Efficiency and alignment Ensuring efficiency and aligning our activities with wider public sector for the benefit of the people we serve.	An embedded, mainstream approach to inclusive communication should help to simplify the system we deliver for our staff and clients and improve the quality of our communications activity and client interactions. It may help to reduce the amount of error caused by a lack of understanding of the system.
Economy, society and environment Contributing to our economy, society and protection of our environment.	Will ensure that Social Security Scotland best meets the needs of people with a communication disadvantage and support our work to recruit a diverse workforce.

Strategic consideration	Impact
Environment	N/A
Governance	N/A

Strategic consideration	Impact
Data	N/A
Finance	Will impact on format of governance papers and way meetings are run. Consultation held with Governance Team
Staff	Developing a measurement framework will require data collection and need alignment with other measurement frameworks. Analytical team are being consulted.
Equalities	No new financial burdens.
Estates	Staff will require new ways of working. This change will be supported and teams across the organisation consulted throughout the project.
Communications and Presentation	A key part of our Equalities Strategy. Consultation and joint working is ongoing.

Impact Assessment
We have not conducted an impact assessment for our work on inclusive communication but the activities underway have been recognised as an important mitigation for many of the impacts identified through equality impact assessments on other Social Security Scotland policies.

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Introduction

This paper sets out examples of some activities we have completed or are progressing to deliver each of the five inclusive communication assets:

- ✓ Leadership and ownership across the organisation.
- ✓ Effective engagement with people who understand and express themselves in different ways
- ✓ Inclusive and accessible systems, processes and locations.
- ✓ Knowledgeable and skilled workforce.
- ✓ Shared inclusive communication resources readily available.

It also sets out some of the lessons we are learning through the project.

1. Leadership and ownership across the organisation

In our last presentation to the Executive Advisory Board we reported that our aim is to ensure inclusive communication becomes a central part of our organisational culture. This requires sustained effort from every team within Social Security Scotland and close work with Policy and Programme colleagues.

Developing an inclusive communication culture will take time and commitment to generate change. We do a lot of internal stakeholder engagement to build understanding of what inclusive communication is, why it is important and how it applies to the work of different teams.

We have also created an Internal Coordination Group which is responsible for helping to lead change across the organisation. We make regular presentations to Social Security Scotland's governance groups and to the equivalent groups in the Social Security Programme and Policy structures. We also use Social Security Scotland's quality review process to highlight where teams need to think more about inclusive communication and provide advice and support to help them to do that.

The work is paying off. There is much greater awareness and interest from teams across Social Security Scotland and colleagues in the Social Security Programme and Policy teams.

There is still a key risk for us though that people think that inclusive communication is just something that the Inclusive Communication Team do. We have more work to do to make sure that people realise that it is everyone's responsibility to make sure it is integrated into everything we do.

2. Systems, processes and places that support inclusive communication

a) Telephony

We have been working with Social Security programme colleagues as they develop the telephony strategic solution.

Members of the Stakeholder Reference Group have provided comment, asked questions and identified potential gaps in the design of our telephony systems. They cover subjects such as client adviser training, user research and operational processes. These questions and comments have been very useful in helping inform the set-up of the new system.

We will ask the Reference Group for further comment using an updated telephony schematic illustrating the client journey from initial point of contact through to call end. We will share these further comments with telephony programme colleagues as they continue to develop the systems.

b) Accommodation

A range of teams are working to ensure that our buildings support inclusive communication.

i) Local Delivery
Our Local Delivery Project and Places Programme have worked with Inch Architecture to develop a Local Delivery Accessibility Toolkit. The toolkit will provide our Local Delivery teams with a tool to assess buildings against agreed accessibility criteria. This assessment will be a key part of the decision making process for deciding where to deliver our face to face services from. The next step is considering how the tool can be used to support all of Social Security Scotland's accommodation projects so we have a universal accommodation standard.

ii) Look Book
The Inclusive Communication Stakeholder Group have been advising us on the contents of the Look Book. This sets the standard for the look and feel of our buildings. For example, what the walls and floors should look like and what furniture, fixtures and fittings are used.

iii) Dundee Headquarters
A working group is developing plans for the ground floor of our new Dundee headquarters building. This will ensure that the Local Delivery area and the meeting room space meet the needs of people who communicate in different ways. We have also started engagement with a range of local stakeholders and will continue to work collaboratively with them to design a space that will work for the wider community.

iv) Wayfinding
The Wayfinding Project is looking at what signage we need to have in our buildings. The project will start with the Dundee offices and then move to Glasgow. We are planning some user research on what icons we need to include in our signage to support people's understanding.

3. Effective involvement of people who understand and express themselves in different ways.

a) Unacceptable Behaviours

The team developing our Unacceptable Behaviour policy, process and guidance made a recent presentation to the Inclusive Communication Stakeholder Reference Group. They wanted to get feedback on whether the approach was suitable for people who communicate in different ways.

The presentation was based on the fact that people who communicate differently may be incorrectly labelled as 'difficult' or 'challenging'. Often behaviours may be because of communication difference and frustration.

The group raised key questions in terms of process, training, and communication profiling which are now being considered by the service design team.

As a result of this work, other service design areas are interested in doing similar presentations.

We learnt more about how best to run presentations and user research like this. The service design team and the Inclusive Communication Team spent time producing a background paper and presentation which was easy to understand. It gave enough information but not too much and was stripped of jargon. This helped everyone to participate in the discussion.

b) User Research

We are working closely with the User Researchers in the Programme to ensure that they routinely include people who communicate in different ways within their research plans.

4. Knowledgeable and skilled staff

Our corporate induction now includes content related to inclusive communication. This includes an outline of the organisational responsibility for putting it into practice and information on what staff need to do personally.

We are also developing a more detailed e-learning module. The module will be intended for all staff. It is being developed in partnership with potential users (including members of the Inclusive Communication Internal Coordination Group) and stakeholders from the Inclusive Communication Stakeholder Reference Group. People with lived experience are involved in its development and the content in terms of audio/video material and sources of further information.

Operational guidance is in place for staff on how to carry out tasks such as using a foreign language interpreter or the Contact Scotland British Sign Language relay service.

We are currently considering what other training and guidance is needed to support our people to communicate in an inclusive way. This will include things like guidance on things like writing in an inclusive way and specific skills training for client-facing staff on how to have productive conversations with people who communicate in different ways. On the job training will also be important to upskill people so we are considering how best to take this forward.

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5. Shared Inclusive Communication Resources readily available to staff

a) Easy Read Standards

Standards for the production of materials in Easy Read are now available. These will be used by the Communications Team when they produce materials internally, and when they are commissioned externally. These standards will ensure we control the quality of our documents and maintain a consistent look and feel. It also ensures that there is clear information available for all staff about when it is appropriate to use Easy Read.

b) Icons

We are developing a bank of Social Security Scotland icons to be used internally and externally. Once complete, these icons will help aid staff and client understanding. Our icons have been based on the existing set of icons used by the NHS. The consistent use of icons across organisations will make them more universal, leading to a wider acceptance and better understanding. NHS developed their icons following extensive research with a very similar client base to Social Security Scotland.

Initially, the Communications team have under taken user research to test the use of icons in agenda and meeting papers to understand how this impacts user needs. It focused on whether icons aid the reading of the documents or cause confusion.

The research found that:

- ✓ The use of icons in meeting documents aids comprehension and is easier to navigate.
- ✓ Using icons creates a positive tone allowing all users to feel included and more engaged with the document.
- ✓ Icons need to be universally recognised and be an accurate representation of the text.
- ✓ Increasing the font size and adding extra line spacing when there is a lot of text makes documents more accessible and inclusive.
- ✓ The use of icons on documents is seen as a positive reflection of the Social Security Scotland brand values dignity, fairness and respect.

With this clear evidence, we are now working with communications team to develop and refine the NHS icons. Once complete, when creating agenda and meeting papers, as an organisation, we will use these icons where appropriate.

Further user testing will take place to test whether the use of icons also helps aid understanding when used in signage and on the Social Security Scotland website.

c) Use of visuals to aid understanding

There is a wider piece of work on the general use of visuals to aid understanding. For example we are working with Programme colleagues on this as part of the development of the disability benefits application forms.

Conclusion

Activity is underway against each of the 5 Assets but there is more that we can do. Continuing to get ownership from teams across Social Security Scotland and colleagues in the Programme and Policy Teams will be critical to the success of this work.

We are placing particular importance on the effective involvement of people who understand and express themselves in different ways. This will help to ensure our service is inclusive by design and that we continually improve based on people's experiences. We are receiving lots of help from members of the Inclusive Communication Stakeholder Reference Group to do this.

We are learning as we go and sharing that learning with colleagues across Scottish Government. A key challenge for us is developing a measurement framework that supports this learning so we are working closely with our analytical colleagues and the members of our Internal Coordination Group to develop this.