Social Security Scotland
Recruitment Research

Contents

Executive Summary

Background and methods

This report presents the main findings from a research study exploring new employees' experiences of joining Social Security Scotland. The research was conducted on behalf of Social Security Scotland by Ipsos MORI Scotland. Fieldwork took place between April 2019 and December 2020.

The original scope of this research included speaking to candidates who had been unsuccessful in applying for a job at Social Security Scotland. However, when the research began, it became clear that it would not be possible to contact unsuccessful candidates. This was largely because applicants had not been informed in the recruitment process that their information may be used for research purposes or to contact them for future research. Social Security Scotland has indicated it remains committed to understanding the experiences of those who are unsuccessful in their applications to the organisation, that future research will focus on this and that work has begun to implement the appropriate measures to support this. Social Security Scotland has indicated that it is committed to investigating this area further and that it has begun work to facilitate this.

The Scottish Government has committed to a social security approach grounded in *'dignity, respect and human rights'* [1]. Social Security Scotland currently delivers 10 Scottish benefits, and adheres to 'key principles' which include respect for the dignity of individuals and the idea of social security as a human right. The commissioned research sought to determine the extent to which Social Security Scotland's recruitment and onboarding practices were in line with these principles. The main research question was *"To what extent are the recruitment and onboarding processes accessible and supportive, and what changes could be made to improve them?"*.

Fieldwork involved eight online surveys and three rounds of qualitative depth interviews. There were three rounds of 'Survey A', which focused on the application and interview process, and five rounds of 'Survey B', which focused on respondents' first three months in their new job. These survey findings were supplemented by 30 depth interviews (three rounds of ten).
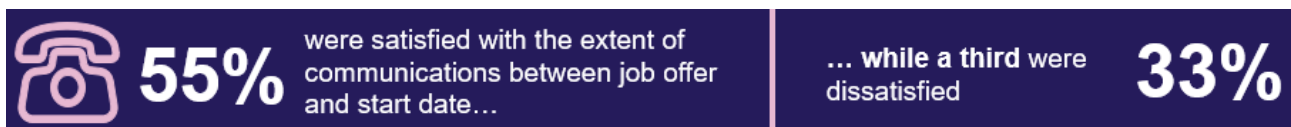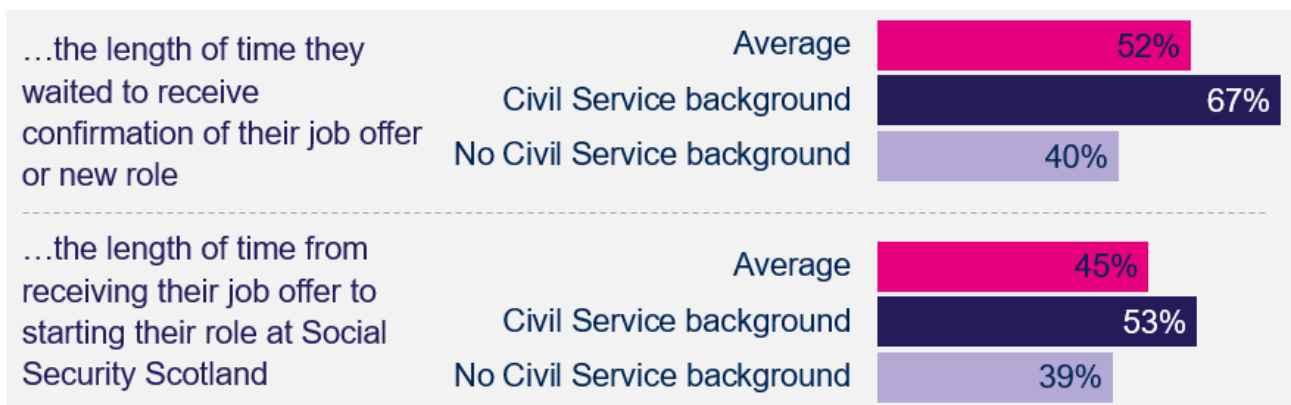
Applying to Social Security Scotland

79% Felt that the application process was straightforward

97% Agreed that they were treated with respect throughout

95% Would recommend others to apply for a role at Social Security Scotland

78% agreed that the role description was clear.

95% agreed that the description of essential criteria/skills in the job description was clear.

97% said the job advert made the role sound like something they could apply for.

88% agreed that the application form was easy to use.

Almost all (96%) were invited to a formal interview, and most agreed that it was clear what interview questions were asking (92%) and that it was held in a suitable location for them (87%).
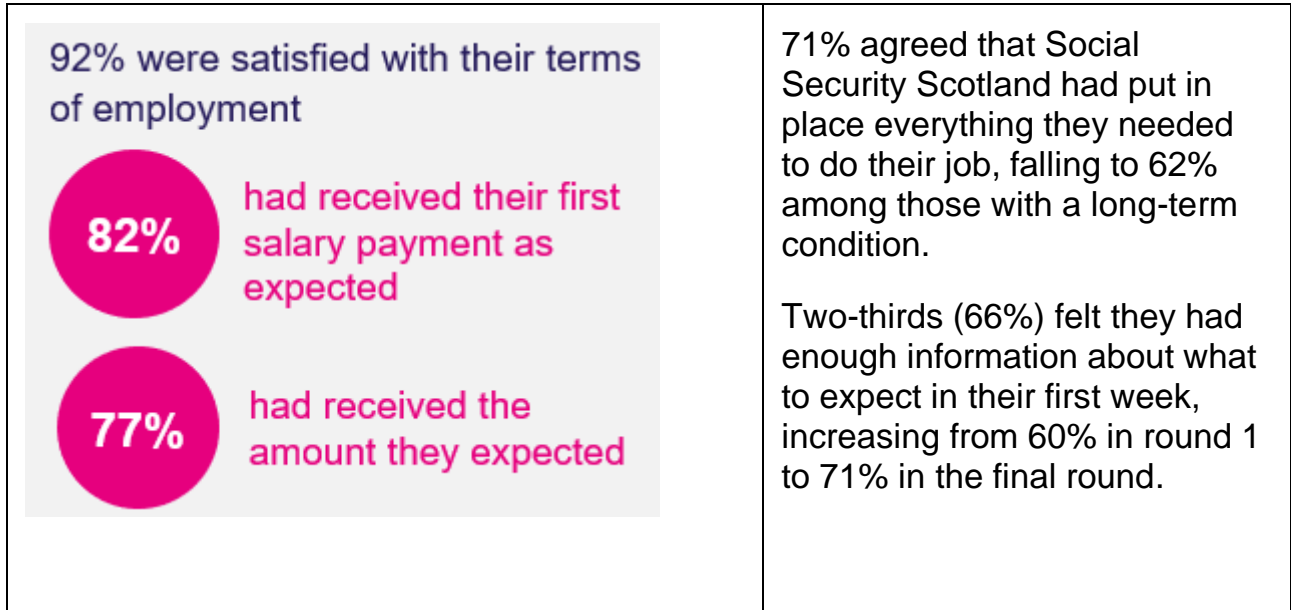
Being offered a job at Social Security Scotland

New recruits were less positive about their experience from the point that they were interviewed, and those with a Civil Service background were more likely to be satisfied. Qualitative research suggested that this was due to a greater understanding of process and a smoother transition process between Civil Service roles.

…the length of time they waited to receive confirmation of their job offer or new role

Average	52%
Civil Service background	67%
No Civil Service background	40%

…the length of time from receiving their job offer to starting their role at Social Security Scotland

Average	45%
Civil Service background	53%
No Civil Service background	39%

55% were satisfied with the extent of communications between job offer and start date…

… while a third were dissatisfied **33%**

Satisfaction with…

Starting a new job at Social Security Scotland

92% were satisfied with their terms of employment

82% had received their first salary payment as expected

77% had received the amount they expected

71% agreed that Social Security Scotland had put in place everything they needed to do their job, falling to 62% among those with a long-term condition.

Two-thirds (66%) felt they had enough information about what to expect in their first week, increasing from 60% in round 1 to 71% in the final round.

Nine out of ten employees (90%) agreed that they had received the help and support they needed from their colleagues.

75% ■ Received an induction   **81%** ■ Received training
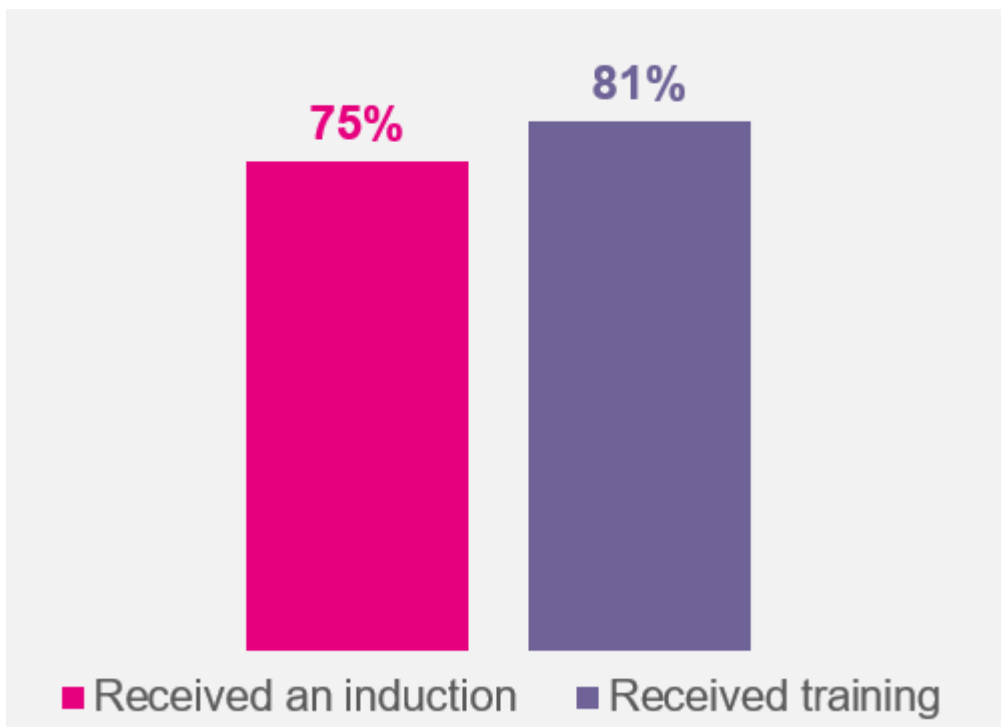
Seven in ten (71%) of those who received an induction agreed that it was informative and relevant to their role.

Almost two thirds (63%) of those who received training agreed that it enabled them to do their job effectively (falling to 47% in the final round).

Key recommendations

- Consider clarifying job role terminology, and improving the support on offer, to make the application process more accessible to external candidates

- Continue to focus on ensuring the processes between the job interview and job offer, and the job offer and start date, are as quick and smooth as possible. Keep in regular contact with applicants, regardless of whether there are any updates to give. Consider having a single point of contact for people during this process, and whether the new recruit's line manager can have a role in the process

- As far as possible, ensure applicants are clear at the recruitment stage what their role will involve and whether it is subject to change

- Consider making the buddy system and pre-start date office visits available to all new employees joining the organisation

- Ensure training is as role specific and as close to the 'on the job' experience as possible. This may include some shadowing of those already working in the role.

1. Introduction and methods

This report presents the findings from a programme of research on the recruitment and onboarding practices used by Social Security Scotland. 'Onboarding' is the process of introducing an incoming member of staff to the organisation, to their co-workers, and to their new role. The research was conducted by Ipsos MORI Scotland, on behalf of Social Security Scotland, between October 2018 and March 2021.

Background to Social Security Scotland's vision

Since the Scotland Act (2016)[1] devolved certain social security benefits to the Scottish Government, Social Security Scotland has been established and now delivers 10 benefits[2], with more planned for the future.

From the outset, the Scottish Government signalled its intention to take a different approach to social security in Scotland, focused on "dignity, respect and human rights"[3]. This vision is incorporated into the Social Security Scotland Act 2018[4], which emphasises that every aspect of the design, development and delivery of the new system will be defined by its adherence to the following 'key principles':

- social security is an investment in the people of Scotland

- social security is itself a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights

- respect for the dignity of individuals is to be at the heart of the Scottish social security system

- the Scottish Ministers have a role in ensuring that individuals are given what they are eligible to be given under the Scottish social security system

- the Scottish social security system is to be designed with the people of Scotland on the basis of evidence

- opportunities are to be sought to continuously improve the Scottish social security system in ways which put the needs of those who require assistance first

- the Scottish social security system is to be efficient and deliver value for money.

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[1] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/11/contents/enacted

[2] Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment, Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment, Best start Grant School Age Payment, Best Start Foods, Carer's Allowance Supplement, Funeral Support Payment, Job Start Payment, Young Carer Grant, and the Child Winter Heating Assistance and the Scottish Child Payment.

[3] Policy position paper – Social Security Scotland principles and a rights-based approach (2017) https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-principles-and-a-rights-based-approach/

[4] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/9/contents/enacted

In 2019, Social Security Scotland published a Charter[5], developed with those who have experience as clients of the social security system, setting out their rights and how the new approach will support them.

Social Security Scotland recruitment

Social Security Scotland continues to grow as it takes on more benefits and regularly publishes workforce statistics[6]. The main operational and management jobs are split between Dundee and Glasgow, with further roles located across Scotland to ensure people can access services as close to home as possible.

Social Security Scotland's focus on dignity, respect and human rights extends to the treatment of its employees (and potential employees); its website states: "We are committed to removing any barriers that there may be to people applying for our posts."[7] It is in this context that research was required to assess the extent to which its recruitment practices were in line with the organisation's stated principles.

Aims of the research

The main aim of this research was, therefore, to assess: *"To what extent are the recruitment and onboarding processes accessible and supportive, and what changes could be made to improve them?"*

The research was commissioned with the intention to learn from early recruitment rounds to improve experiences for those in later recruitment rounds. The results would therefore:

● summarise lessons learned

● inform how future recruitment is undertaken by Social Security Scotland

● allow Social Security Scotland to understand the experiences of unsuccessful[8] and successful candidates and make recommendations for improvements

● identify candidate requirements in terms of accessibility in recruitment and the barriers faced by candidates at each stage of the process

● review the onboarding process, early job satisfaction and attrition rate[9] for the new employees recruited.

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[5] https://www.gov.scot/publications/charter/

[6] Social Security Scotland - workforce information - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

[7] https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/jobs/equal-opportunities

[8] While the original aim was to include unsuccessful applicants in the research, this was not ultimately possible due to data protection considerations.

[9] We did not have the data available to review attrition rates.

Methodology

The study encompassed multiple rounds of recruitment to Social Security Scotland and comprised a series of eight online surveys coupled with follow-up qualitative interviews to explore issues identified in the surveys.

Two interim dashboard reports were provided, in December 2019 and October 2020, to provide initial learnings that would inform future recruitment rounds.

Surveys

Two online survey questionnaires were designed to separately cover the recruitment and onboarding processes. Survey A covered recent recruits' views on the application process from the job advert through to the interview while Survey B focused on new employees' first three months at Social Security Scotland, including any induction and training they received. Both questionnaires were designed by Ipsos MORI Scotland, in collaboration with Social Security Scotland (Appendix 1). The surveys each took around 10 minutes to complete.

Three rounds of Survey A and five rounds of Survey B were conducted across five recruitment cohorts. Table 1.1 details the timings and response rates for each survey round. Small changes were made to the Survey B questionnaire after round 1 but, otherwise, questionnaires remained the same throughout, allowing for change over time to be measured.

The sample for each survey round (all employees who had joined in a given period) was sent securely by Social Security Scotland to Ipsos MORI Scotland. Employees were then invited by email to complete the survey online.

Details of the demographic characteristics of those who completed the surveys are included in sample profiles at Appendix 2.

Table 1.1: timings and response

Cohort	Started at Social Security Scotland	Completed Survey A (Round)	Survey A response (completed/ issued)	Completed Survey B (Round)	Survey B response (completed/ issued)	Qualitative research (Round)
1	Sep - Dec 18	-	-	(1): Apr 19	64% (155 / 243)	(1): Dec 19
2	Jan - Mar 19	-	-	(2): Aug 19	62% (64/103)	(1): Dec 19
3	Apr- Jun 19	(1): Aug 19	80% (35 / 44)	(3): Nov 19	45% (25/55)	(1): Dec 19
4	Jul -Dec 19	(2): Feb 20	74% (115/155)	(4): Jul/Aug 20	57% (89/155)	(2): Oct 20
5	Feb -Apr 20	(3): Aug/ Sep 20	57% (155/272)	(5): Nov 20	40% (109/272)	(3): Dec 20
All			65% (305/471)		53% (442/828)	

Qualitative interviews

At the end of the surveys, respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in a more detailed follow-up interview. A total of 30 telephone in-depth interviews were conducted with participants from each of the cohorts across three qualitative rounds, each comprising 10 interviews (Table 1.1).

Interviews lasted around 20 minutes and were conducted by the Ipsos MORI project team. They were structured around a discussion guide designed by Ipsos MORI Scotland, and reviewed by Social Security Scotland, to explore survey findings in more depth. To maximise the potential to learn lessons and improve recruitment practices in future, the guide focused on areas in which the survey findings were less positive. The discussion guide is included at Appendix 3.

Quotas for participation were set on a broad range of characteristics in order to allow further exploration of the accessibility of the processes among different groups. These included:

- gender identity
- ethnicity
- whether they had a physical or mental health condition
- whether they required reasonable adjustments to their working environment
- highest qualification
- whether they previously worked in the Civil Service.

Again, to maximise the learning opportunities, the sample for the qualitative interviews was also skewed towards those who reported less positive experiences in response to key survey questions (including receipt of training and induction, satisfaction with communications from Social Security Scotland during recruitment and whether Social Security Scotland had put everything in place that they needed to do their job). The sample profile of the qualitative interviews is included at Appendix 4.

Scope and limitations

The research aimed to explore whether the application process was accessible and supported applications from a wide range of backgrounds. However, due to data protection requirements, it was only possible to include successful applicants in the research. Therefore, it was not possible to assess the application process experiences of those who viewed Social Security Scotland job adverts and decided not to apply or those who applied but were unsuccessful. This is a major limitation in accessing the accessibility of the application process. However, it was simply not possible to undertake as part of this study.

Furthermore, as Social Security Scotland does not collect monitoring data for unsuccessful applicants it was not possible to ascertain whether there are any groups who are more or less likely to be successful in the application process.

Report conventions and structure

The findings in this report are organised thematically, so that findings from the surveys and the qualitative research are reported together. Each chapter begins with a boxed summary of the key findings and a brief outline of the topics covered and the data sources used. Text boxes are used throughout to highlight points to consider in future recruitment and onboarding rounds. Chapter 3 (onboarding) also contains pen portraits of three new joiners. These are designed to provide a richer picture of some employees' experiences of different parts of the process. They have been selected to show a range of different impacts and should not be seen as representative. Names and some personal details have been amended to ensure anonymity.

Survey findings are always subject to a margin of error. These margins determine how confident we can be that any differences (for example over time or between sub-groups of survey respondents) are likely to be a true reflection of differences in the population, or may simply have occurred by chance. In this report, any differences highlighted are statistically significant at the 95% level, unless otherwise stated.

Where results do not sum to 100%, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of "don't know" categories.

When interpreting findings from the in-depth interviews it is important to remember that qualitative samples are designed to ensure that a range of different views and experiences are captured, rather than to estimate the prevalence of particular views or experiences. As such, quantifying language, such as 'all', 'most' or 'a few' is avoided as far as possible when discussing the qualitative findings in this report.

2. Recruitment

This chapter considers the supportiveness and accessibility of the recruitment process by exploring new joiners' experiences of applying for their role at Social Security Scotland, from first sight of the job advert through to the job interview. It begins with an assessment of their experience of the process as a whole, before going into detail about specific aspects.

It draws on data from the three rounds of Survey A, including an open text question where respondents were asked to note anything particularly good or bad about their experience and/or suggest improvements to the process.

Key findings

Respondents were positive about the overall experience of applying for a job at Social Security Scotland:

- 79% felt it was a straightforward process
- 97% said they were treated with respect throughout
- 94% would recommend others to apply for a role at Social Security Scotland.

Respondents had most often seen their role advertised on Civil Service job websites (47% on Civil Service jobs and 35% on Work for Scotland). Views on the job advert and application form were positive:

- 78% agreed that the description of the role was clear
- 95% felt that the description of the essential criteria/skills required for the role was clear
- 97% agreed that the job description made it sound like something they could apply for
- 88% agreed that the application form was easy to use.

Almost all employees (96%) had been invited to take part in a formal interview. The vast majority agreed that it was clear what the interview questions were asking (92%) and that it was held in a suitable location for them (87%).

Overall experience of applying for a role

Respondents were positive about their overall experience of applying for a job at Social Security Scotland.

As Figure 2.1 shows, most respondents (79%) found it to be a straightforward process, albeit with more of them saying it was 'fairly straightforward' (52%) than 'very' straightforward (28%). Around one in seven respondents (14%), however, felt it was complicated.

Figure 2.1: *How straightforward or complicated was the process of applying for [role] at Social Security Scotland?*

- Very straightforward
- Fairly straightforward
- Neither/nor
- Fairly complilcated
- Very complicated
- Don't know/can't remember
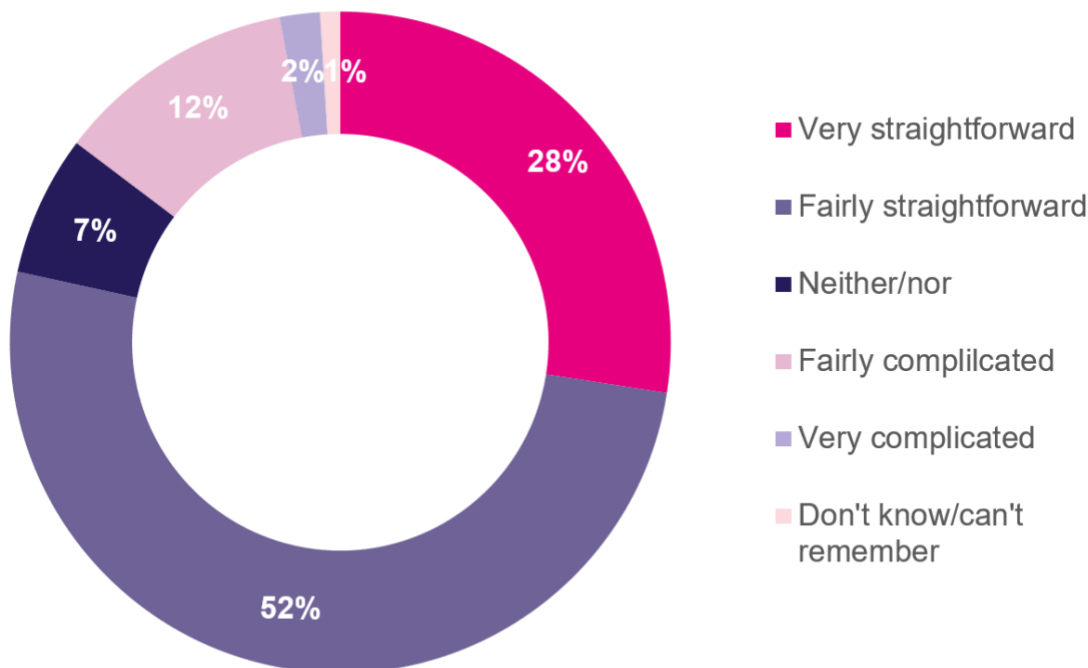
Base: All respondents to Survey A, rounds 1-3 (305)

One response to the open text question was particularly complimentary about the process.

> *Having worked in the Recruitment sector for 20 years I am very familiar with recruitment procedures and job applications. The Scottish Government [Social Security Scotland] recruitment process is easily the most streamlined, well-structured and rewarding process I have ever encountered.*

Survey A, round 2 respondent (open-text question)

Subgroup analysis suggests that the process may be easier for those already working in the Civil Service than those working elsewhere - 87% of those in the Civil Service agreed it was straightforward compared to 75% of those not. Responses to the open text question suggested that this may be due, at least in part, to experience of competency-based applications and interviews.

I would say there is a science to civil service applications and either working within another government agency or knowing someone from government agency improves your chances quite substantially. I consulted a work coach as I had the opportunity to work from a job centre once a week and therefore had built that relationship to gain support with my application. Without this I would have been unaware and would have [had to do] rigorous research to get my application up to the same standard.

Survey A, round 2 respondent (open-text question)

If I had not already been a temporary member of staff in Social Security, and applying for my own job on a permanent level, I may have struggled to be accepted for the job as the criteria and STARR format were hard to master. As a current employee I was given lots of assistance in applying, and how the applications should be formatted, but if I was applying externally, I would feel I was at a disadvantage not knowing all that was required being that SG applications are to be completed in a very specific way.

Survey A, round 2 respondent (open-text question)

Area for consideration: consider whether providing enhanced guidance and support throughout the application process would make it more accessible to external candidates.

In relation to Social Security Scotland's desire for its recruitment practices to be in keeping with its principles of respect, dignity and human rights, almost all respondents (97%) agreed (including 73% who 'strongly agreed') that they were treated fairly and with respect throughout the whole application process.
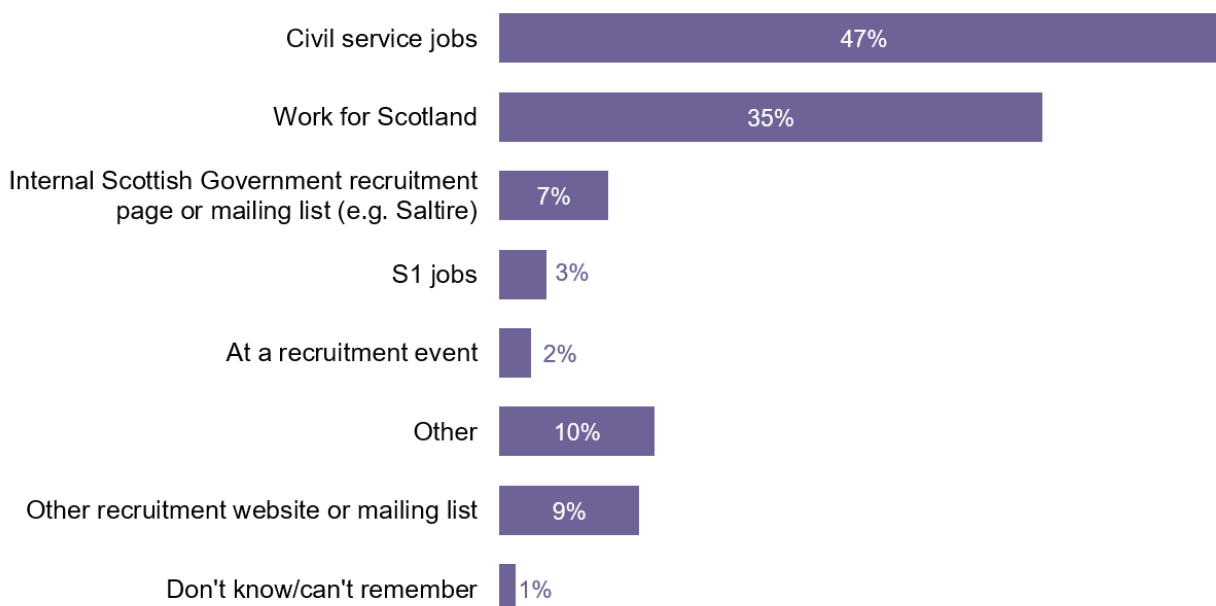
A similar proportion (95%) said that, based on their experience, they would be likely to recommend others to apply for a job at Social Security Scotland and just 1% indicated that they would not.

Job adverts

Employees were asked a number of questions on the job advert they had seen for their role. First, they were asked where they had seen the role advertised and, as Figure 2.2 shows, recruitment websites were by far the most common place - in particular those dedicated to Civil Service jobs (47% had seen their role on Civil Service Jobs and 35% on Work for Scotland). Among those who selected 'Other recruitment website or mailing list', sources mentioned included Indeed jobs, Apprentice.Scot, and My Job Scotland. For those who selected the general 'Other' response option, sources mentioned included word of mouth (through colleagues, friends and family) and employment advisors (for example Job Centre Plus staff).

A small minority (2%) had seen the role advertised at a recruitment event[10]. Respondents were able to provide more than one response.
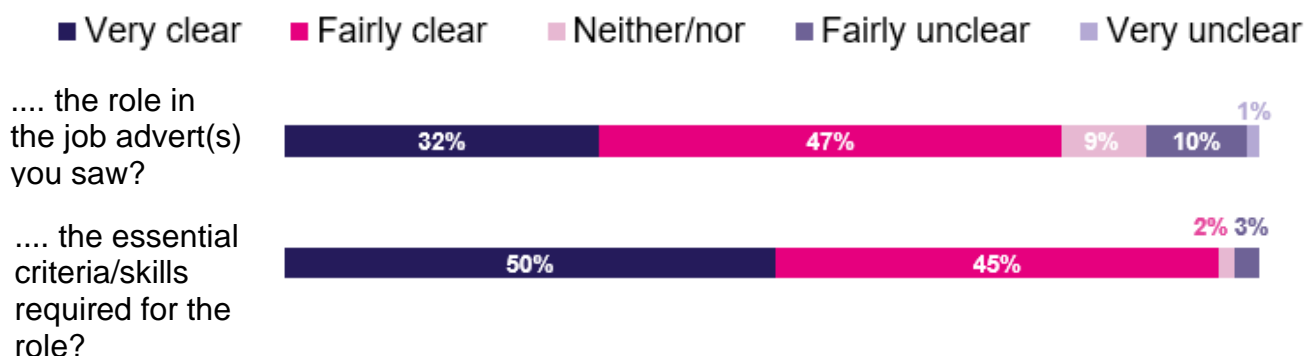
Figure 2.2: *Where did you see the role you applied for advertised?*

Civil service jobs	47%
Work for Scotland	35%
Internal Scottish Government recruitment page or mailing list (e.g. Saltire)	7%
S1 jobs	3%
At a recruitment event	2%
Other	10%
Other recruitment website or mailing list	9%
Don't know/can't remember	1%

Base: All respondents to Survey A, rounds 1-3 (305)

Respondents were broadly positive about the job advert they had seen. As Figure 2.3 shows, 78% agreed that the description of the role was clear while 95% said the same about the description of the essential criteria/skills required for the role (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: *'How clear or unclear was the description of…*

■ Very clear   ■ Fairly clear   ■ Neither/nor   ■ Fairly unclear   ■ Very unclear

	Very clear	Fairly clear	Neither/nor	Fairly unclear	Very unclear
.... the role in the job advert(s) you saw?	32%	47%	9%	10%	1%
.... the essential criteria/skills required for the role?	50%	45%	2%	3%	

Base: All Survey A respondents, rounds 1-3 (305)

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[10] As part of its commitment to encourage applications from a diverse range of applicants, Social Security Scotland held a series of recruitment roadshows at local venues such as Foodbanks, Community Hubs and a Muslim Women's Resource Centre. Unfortunately, the proportion of respondents who had attended such an event was too small to analyse further.

Those who were already working in the Civil Service before they applied for the Social Security Scotland job were more likely to say the role description in the job advert they saw was very or fairly clear (90% as compared to 71% of those not coming from a civil service background).

Area for consideration: consider whether terminology used to describe the role could be amended to make it clearer to people who do not have a Civil Service background.

Almost all (97%) agreed with the statement '*The job advert(s) made the role sound like something I could apply for'.* It is worth noting here that, as explained in Chapter 1, we were unable to survey unsuccessful applicants or those who saw the advert but chose not to apply.

Around a fifth of respondents (19%) had contacted someone at the organisation to ask questions about the job role after seeing it advertised. This was done via a range of communication methods - 40% asked their questions by telephone, 38% by email, and 21% asked in person. It was more common for those with a Civil Service background (29%) than those without (14%) to ask questions – despite the fact that those with Civil Service experience were more likely to agree that the job advert they saw was clear. Among those who did ask questions, around nine in ten (91%) were satisfied with the response they received.

Job application

Respondents to Survey A were asked a number of questions about the form they had filled out to apply for their role at Social Security Scotland. Almost all (97%) said they had completed an online form as part of their application and 94% were happy with this method, saying they preferred to fill out application forms online. Small minorities said they would rather fill out application forms on paper (3%) or via a different method (3%). Those who preferred a different method generally referred to downloading and completing the application form as a Word document before copying it over to the online form as they felt this would allow them to save as they went, make notes, check word count and review thoroughly before submitting[11]. Not having to worry about losing progress if they had an unstable internet connection was a further perceived benefit. A small number of those choosing the 'different method' option stated a preference for a CV and cover letter application format.

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[11] The online form does allow applicants to save and come back later. However, this may not have been clear to applicants – or they may simply have had a preference for a platform with which they were already familiar.

The application form was considered easy to use by most (88% of those who completed it) and only 3% said it was difficult.

> *The online application form was fairly intuitive, and I liked that you could save part way through and return - as it took me several attempts to be happy with my final submission.*
>
> Survey A, round 3 respondent (open-text question)

Respondents were similarly positive about the information provided on how to fill out the online form with 90% saying it was clear.

Online tests

A third (33%) of employees across the three rounds of Survey A were invited to complete an online test as part of their recruitment, after their initial application and in advance of the interview. These situational judgement tests are taken online and are used to assess a candidate's behavioural decision-making, and thought processes, when introduced to hypothetical, work-related scenarios. The test is usually multiple choice and is to rate the effectiveness of different actions that could be taken in response to the situations presented. As shown in Figure 2.4, the proportion reporting completing tests varied greatly across the survey rounds, with the highest proportion coming from the final survey round (who joined the organisation between January and July 2020).

Figure 2.4: Proportion invited to complete an online test as part of their recruitment at each round of Survey A

56%

23%

5%

■ August 2019   ■ February 2020   ■ August/September 2020
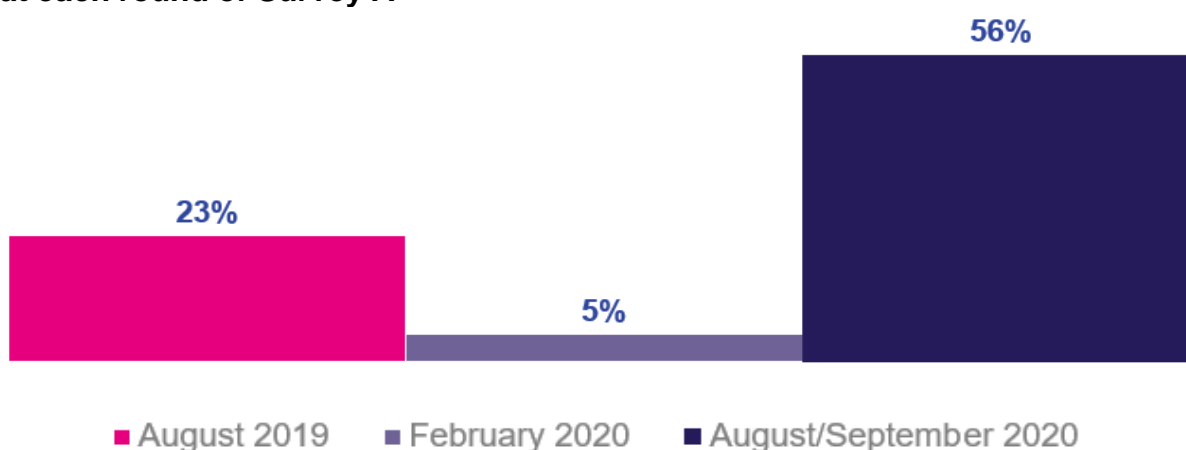
Base: All respondents at Survey A Round 1 (35), Round 2 (115) and Round 3 (155)

Those who had been asked to complete a test were largely positive about it:

- 69% felt they had been given 'just the right amount' of information in advance, while 14% felt they had not received enough and 2% too much. The remaining 15% said they did not know or could not remember.

- 80% agreed that 'It was clear what the questions in the test(s) were asking', while 6% disagreed

- 86% said the test itself (rather than the questions) was fairly or very easy to use and just 7% found it difficult.

Some concerns from those who were less positive about their experience of the test were raised through the open-ended survey question. These tended to relate to feelings of time pressure and stress, and feeling that the test did not assess skills they would need for their job.
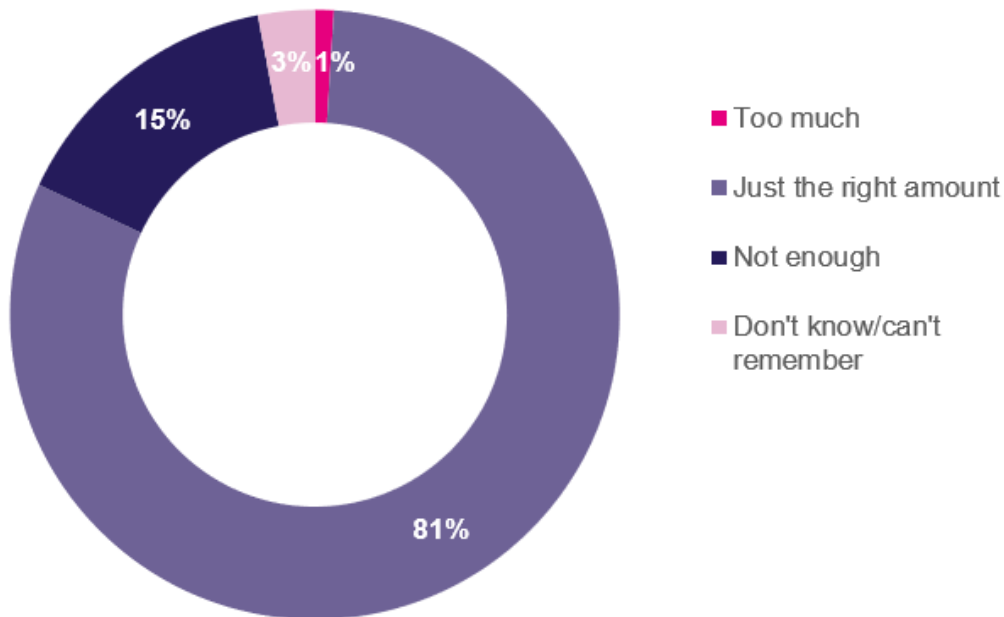
Interview

Respondents were asked about their experience of interviewing for their job at Social Security Scotland. This was to assess how accessible and supportive they had found the interview, and how it could be improved for future applicants. Overall, the findings were very positive.

Across the three rounds of Survey A, almost all employees (96%) had been invited to take part in a formal interview, while a much smaller proportion (2%) had been interviewed informally. Only 1% did not take part in an interview of any kind.

Around eight in ten respondents (81%) felt that the amount of information they had received before their interview had been 'just the right amount' (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: *Do you feel the amount of information you received in advance about what the interview would involve was too much, not enough or just the right amount?*

Legend:
- Too much
- Just the right amount
- Not enough
- Don't know/can't remember

Base: All respondents to Survey A (305)

In relation to the interview itself, more than nine in ten (92%) agreed that 'It was clear what the questions in the interview were asking' and just 4% felt this was not the case.

Views were also positive in relation to the interview venue with 87% agreeing that the interview was held in a suitable location for them and just 6% indicating that this was not the case.

The qualitative research focused on the experiences of participants during their first three months at Social Security Scotland, and so did not ask about job interviews. However, some respondents to Survey A used the open-ended questions to share their thoughts on the interview, which were generally very positive. In particular, participants felt that the interviewers were very friendly and made an effort to put applicants at ease.

> *The information given pre interview was very helpful and gave a clear picture what to expect at the interview. The interviewers created informal but respectful conversation which made me feel comfortable to answer the questions, engage in conversation and show my personality. I have been on many interviews and this approach made me decide to take this job as I felt treated fairly and I my needs also were taken into account.*
>
> Survey A, round 3 respondent (open-text question)

Other comments included mixed views on the fact that (for at least some roles) interviewers had not seen applicants' CVs or application forms ahead of the assessment. While there were positive comments that this avoided any pre-judgement of applicants, those who had not been informed in advance felt that it affected how they prepared their presentations – they were not against it but would have liked to have known before the interview. There was also a view that the level of assessment was higher than appropriate for the job role – either that they were asked for more competencies than was necessary for the job, or that the application process itself (forms, online tests and interviews) was too much to ask of people applying to lower job grades.

> *I feel the interview process of a 6 competency interview, a presentation & a group activity was far too much for the grade I applied for.*
>
> Survey A, round 2 respondent (open-text question)

> *The required competencies tested to higher standard than what is reasonably expected at B1 level - questions about finance management were asked, whereas I have no budget responsibilities. Based on the interview, I expected the job to be way more demanding and challenging.*
>
> Survey A, round 2 respondent (open-text question)

Area for consideration: Ensure that applicants are fully informed in advance about what the interview will involve and that they know whether or not interviews will have seen their application in advance.

3. Onboarding

This section covers the experiences of new joiners, from the point at which they were offered their role with Social Security Scotland. It begins by exploring their experiences of the period of time prior to their first day at the organisation, before considering their views on their terms of employment and the resources (and any reasonable adjustments) in place for them to do their job. It ends by looking at new joiners' experiences of the first few months of their employment, including the support they were provided and any induction and training they received.

The findings draw primarily on responses from the five rounds of Survey B (April 2019, August 2019, November 2019, July 2020 and November 2020), including responses to open-ended questions on improvements Social Security Scotland could make to better support new joiners, as well as data from the three rounds of qualitative research with participants who had completed Survey B.

Key findings

Employees were less positive about the period between applying for their role at Social Security Scotland and joining the organisation than they were about other parts of the recruitment and onboarding process:

● 52% were satisfied and 33% dissatisfied with the length of time they waited to receive confirmation of their job offer or new role

● 45% were satisfied and 44% dissatisfied with the length of time from receiving their job offer to starting their role at Social Security Scotland

● 55% of respondents were satisfied and 33% dissatisfied with the extent to which Social Security Scotland kept in touch with them during the period between their job offer and their first day.

Almost all respondents (92%) were satisfied with their terms of employment. Most had also received their first salary as expected (82%) and had received the amount they expected (77%).

The majority of respondents (71%) agreed that Social Security Scotland had put in place everything that they would need to do their job, and this had increased over time from 57% in the first survey round to 79% in the final round.

Two thirds (66%) of respondents felt that they had had enough information about what to expect in their first week at Social Security Scotland and this had also increased over time from 60% in the first round to 71% in the final round.

Employees were particularly positive about the supportiveness of Social Security Scotland as an organisation, with 90% agreeing that they had received the help and support they needed from colleagues.

Majorities of new joiners reported receiving induction (75%) and training (81%). The proportion receiving induction had fallen to 68% in the final survey round - a time when employees had joined during the pandemic and were working from home.

Views on the quality of the induction and training were positive. However, respondents who joined at the time of the pandemic and took part in the final survey round were less positive:

● 71% of those who received an induction agreed that it was informative and relevant to their role

● 63% of those who received training agreed that it enabled them to do their job effectively (falling to 47% in the final round).
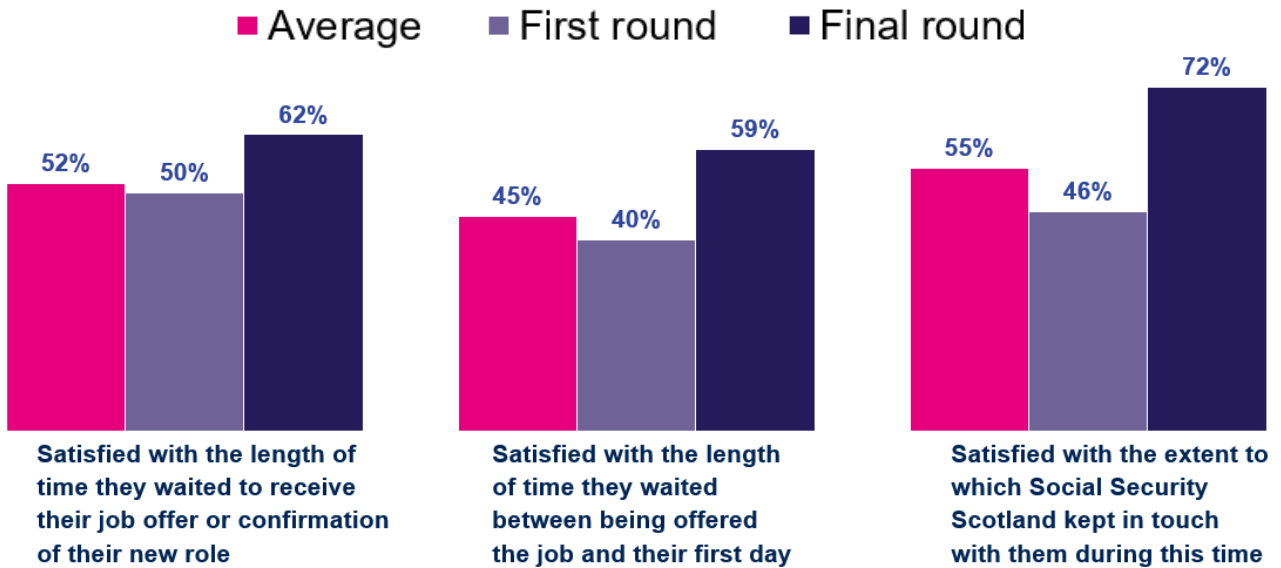
Period between being offered the job and starting at Social Security Scotland

Survey respondents were asked a number of questions about their satisfaction with the period of time between being offered their job at Social Security Scotland and starting at the organisation. They were less positive about this than other parts of the recruitment and onboarding process, expressing frustration with long wait times and poor communication before joining.

As Figure 3.1 shows, just over half (52%) said they were satisfied with the length of time they waited to be offered the job, or have their new role confirmed, while a third (33%) were dissatisfied with their wait time. Levels of dissatisfaction with the wait between being offered the job and starting at Social Security Scotland were higher, with almost equal proportions of respondents saying they were satisfied (45%) and dissatisfied (44%) with the length of time they waited. Views on communication during this period were also mixed – 55% of respondents said they were satisfied with the extent to which Social Security Scotland kept in touch with them during the period between their job offer and their first day, while a third (33%) were dissatisfied.

Levels of satisfaction varied over time across survey rounds but had improved between the first and last survey rounds (Figure 3.1).
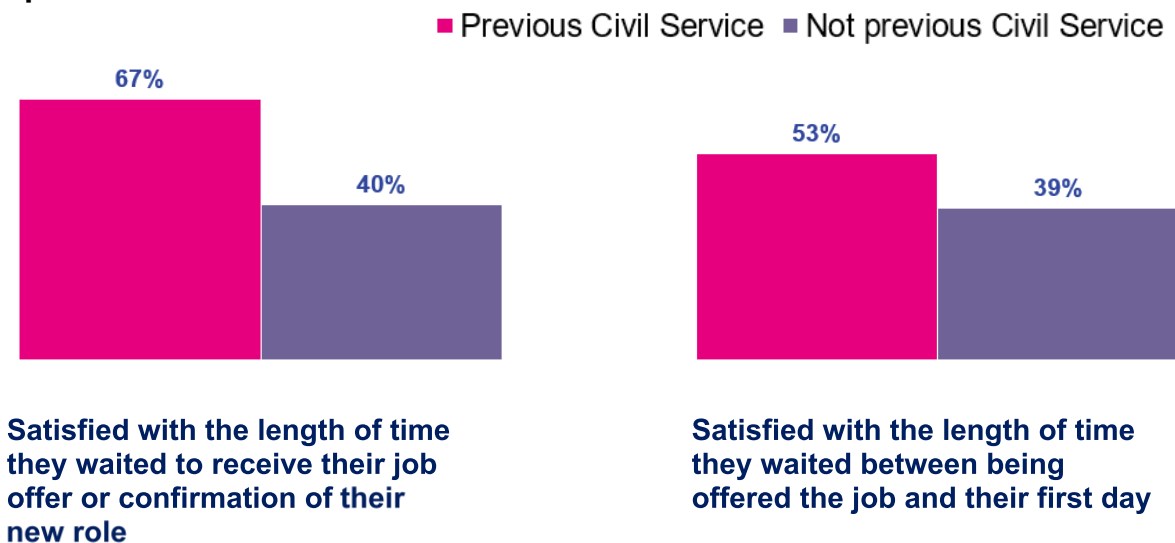
Figure 3.1: Satisfaction with the period before joining Social Security Scotland

■ Average   ■ First round   ■ Final round

Satisfied with the length of time they waited to receive their job offer or confirmation of their new role: Average 52%, First round 50%, Final round 62%

Satisfied with the length of time they waited between being offered the job and their first day: Average 45%, First round 40%, Final round 59%

Satisfied with the extent to which Social Security Scotland kept in touch with them during this time: Average 55%, First round 46%, Final round 72%

Base = All Survey B respondents (442), all Survey B round 1 respondents (155), all Survey B round 5 respondents (109)

Those who had joined Social Security Scotland from another Civil Service job were more likely to say they were satisfied with their wait periods than those who had not (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Levels of satisfaction with waiting periods by previous Civil Service experience

■ Previous Civil Service   ■ Not previous Civil Service

Satisfied with the length of time they waited to receive their job offer or confirmation of their new role: Previous Civil Service 67%, Not previous Civil Service 40%

Satisfied with the length of time they waited between being offered the job and their first day: Previous Civil Service 53%, Not previous Civil Service 39%

Base: All Survey B respondents (442)

The qualitative research helped to explain the differences between those joining from the Civil Service and those joining from elsewhere. Those already in the Civil Service reported that their familiarity with the processes helped them to manage any delays. In contrast, employees who were not joining from a previous Civil Service job explained that the long wait periods (particularly between job offer and start date) had caused problems for them when they had been in the process of negotiating notice periods with their previous employers, or where they were unemployed at the point at which they were offered the job. Such delays in starting their jobs also caused anxiety for participants as they were not able to plan ahead and began to worry about the security of their job offer.

> *The length of time the process - from application to start date - was far too long. Employment is dire in 2020, and for some people, like myself, having to wait months for a decision on a start date was very stressful. It can be the deciding factor between having to use the Welfare System or staying at a job which is temporary and dependent on funding. When you are trying to make big life decisions and do the best for your future and your family, it's not ideal having to wait so long.*

> Survey A round 3 respondent (open-text question)

A desire for more regular communication and reassurance (even when Social Security Scotland had nothing specific to update them on) was expressed by those who were less satisfied with this element of the application process, via both the qualitative research and the survey open-ended questions. As the quote below illustrates, communication problems at this stage were frustrating for new joiners but could also create a negative first impression of the organisation.

> *It was like dragging a rock around, just no help whatsoever. Every time I rang up, it was 'Oh, didn't you receive this?' or 'Oh, somebody should have told you that' and I'm saying 'No – nobody told me, nobody rang me, nobody wrote to me.' So, I think in your mind you just get this vision of an office where nobody knows what anybody is doing. It didn't put me off the job, don't get me wrong, as I do understand that recruitment is totally separate to the whole operational side. But it did exasperate me a lot… [communication] was a one-way street all the way.'*

> Qualitative participant

Those who found this period less stressful tended to be those who had regular contact throughout the process, and those whose line manager was in touch in advance of their first day. Participants were also more understanding about delays when they felt the process (and how long it might take) had been communicated to them clearly from the outset. Participants in the final round of qualitative interviews (conducted in December 2020) were more positive about pre-start date communication than those in earlier rounds – partly because there was a sense that communication had been managed well in the context of the pandemic.

> *I was very satisfied [with the level and type of communication]. I thought it was pitched at the right level. Certainly, around that issue of pausing recruitment [due to the COVID-19 pandemic], I wasn't awash with different, conflicting information – I was very clear that it was paused, why it was paused, and that they would absolutely be getting in contact with me again when they were ready to pick recruitment back up again. I was reassured by that.*

Qualitative participant

Employee experience: Rachel's experience of the period between being offered her role as a Client Advisor and her first day at Social Security Scotland in Spring 2019:

Rachel was employed by another organisation (not Civil Service) when she saw her Social Security Scotland role advertised and felt that this would be a good opportunity for her to develop her skills.

Rachel was successful with her application but did not start in her post at Social Security Scotland until seven months after first applying for the role. She was unhappy with both the length of the wait and the level of communication from Social Security Scotland during that time - only a few emails from HR, with little information about her likely start date or reassurance that her offer was secure. This caused her stress and financial worry as she had to try to extend her current fixed-term contract, while not having a firm start date for her new role at Social Security Scotland.

Communication improved as she got closer to her start date and she began to have contact with her line manager, including meeting him for coffee. This calmed her nerves about starting a new job and made her feel excited about the role.

Rachel has settled in well to Social Security Scotland and has found the organisation to be very supportive. In future, however, she would like to see Social Security Scotland reducing the length of time from application to start date in future and improving the communication with new joiners during this time.

Area for consideration: Continue to focus on ensuring the processes between the job interview and job offer, and the job offer and start date, are as quick and smooth as possible. Regardless of whether there are any updates to give, regular communication should be maintained. Specific improvements might include:

● having a single point of contact for people during this process

● when the line manager of the new recruit is known in advance, consider the role they can have in maintaining contact prior to the start date.

Before new recruits can begin their job at Social Security Scotland, they must go through pre-employment checks which involve having key documents verified. Most respondents (75% of those asked for documents) found it very or fairly easy to gather the documents required for pre-employment checks while 13% found it very or fairly difficult. This could lead to stress, as the quote below illustrates.

> *I would say the negative part for me was definitely getting the security checks. I phoned and they told me they had received half of my ID and was waiting on me posting the rest when in actual fact I had posted it all together in the same envelope. This caused stress as I then thought they had lost [one document]. Eventually they came across this document. I would then get calls from the Dundee office asking about it all and I would tell them that I had sent all the documents to the Edinburgh office that was on the letter. Nobody really seemed to know what they were doing.*

Survey A round 2 respondent (open-text question)

Terms of employment

Levels of satisfaction with Social Security Scotland's terms of employment were very high – across the five waves of Survey B, 92% said they were satisfied and just a very small minority (2%) said they were dissatisfied (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: *'How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the terms of employment offered to you for your new role (for example, your working hours)?'*
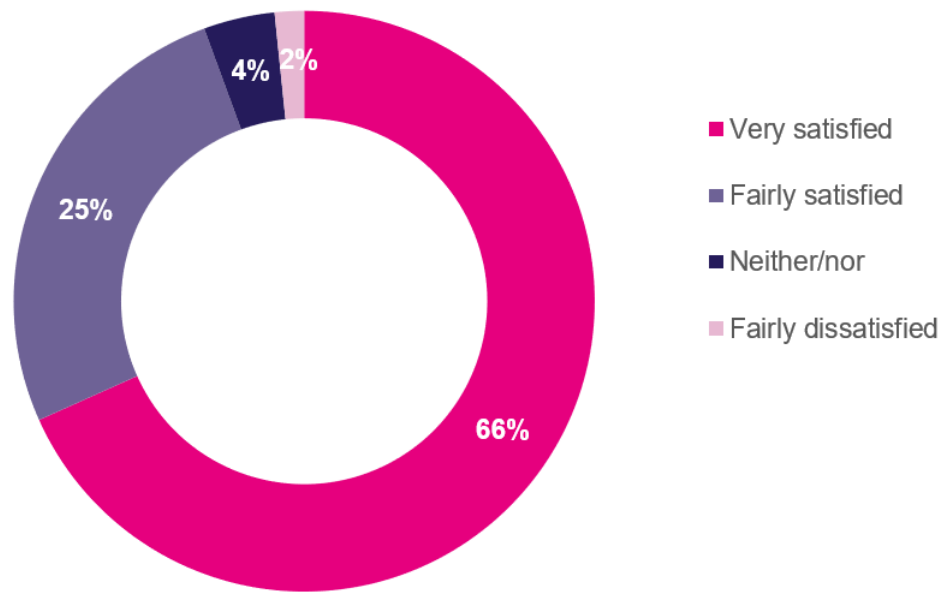
Base: All Survey B respondents (442)

Respondents were also asked about their experience of their first salary payment. At each round of the survey, most reported that they had received their first salary payment as expected (82%) and that the amount was as they expected (77%). Those who took part in round 1 of Survey B (having joined Social Security Scotland between September and December 2018) were more likely than those who had joined at a later date to have experienced a problem with their first salary payment (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: First salary payment
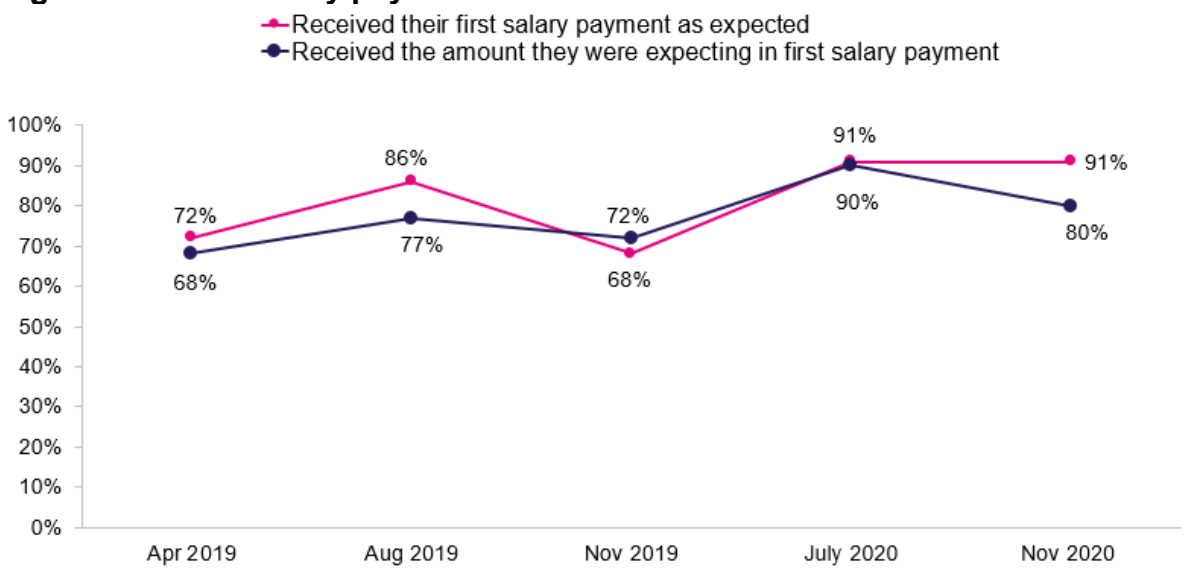
Base: All Survey B respondents at round 1 (155), round 2 (64), round 3 (25), round 4 (89) and round 5 (109)

The open text question illustrated some of the financial difficulties experienced by those who had had problems with their first salary payments, for example mortgage issues and reliance on credit cards.

> *I did not receive my correct salary for 3 months and as such have had issues with my mortgage etc, not good enough for a 21st century organisation.*
>
> Survey B round 4 respondent (open-text question)

> *I had to use credit cards to get to work due to my payroll not being set up correctly - this lasted 3 months.*
>
> Survey B round 3 respondent (open-text question)

Resources and reasonable adjustments

In order to assess the efficiency and accessibility of the onboarding process, respondents were asked about their experiences of acquiring the resources needed to do their job. Overall, employees were positive about this aspect of their onboarding experience - and became more so over time. Where there were problems, these tended to be delays before reasonable adjustments and other workplace resources (especially building access) were put in place.

Over the five rounds of Survey B, the majority (71%) agreed that Social Security Scotland had put in place everything they would need to do their job, while around a fifth (19%) indicated that this was not the case. As Figure 3.5 shows, the proportion agreeing that everything had been put in place increased after the first round of the survey, from 57% in April 2019 to between 76% and 81% in later survey rounds. The later survey rounds included respondents who joined after the COVID-19 lockdown began, and who worked from home from the beginning of their post. Qualitative research participants who had joined after COVID-19 lockdowns were particularly positive about essential equipment arriving at their home quickly, with the opportunity to also request less 'essential' kit (e.g. office chairs).

Figure 3.5: *How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'Social Security Scotland had put in place everything I would need to do my job.'*
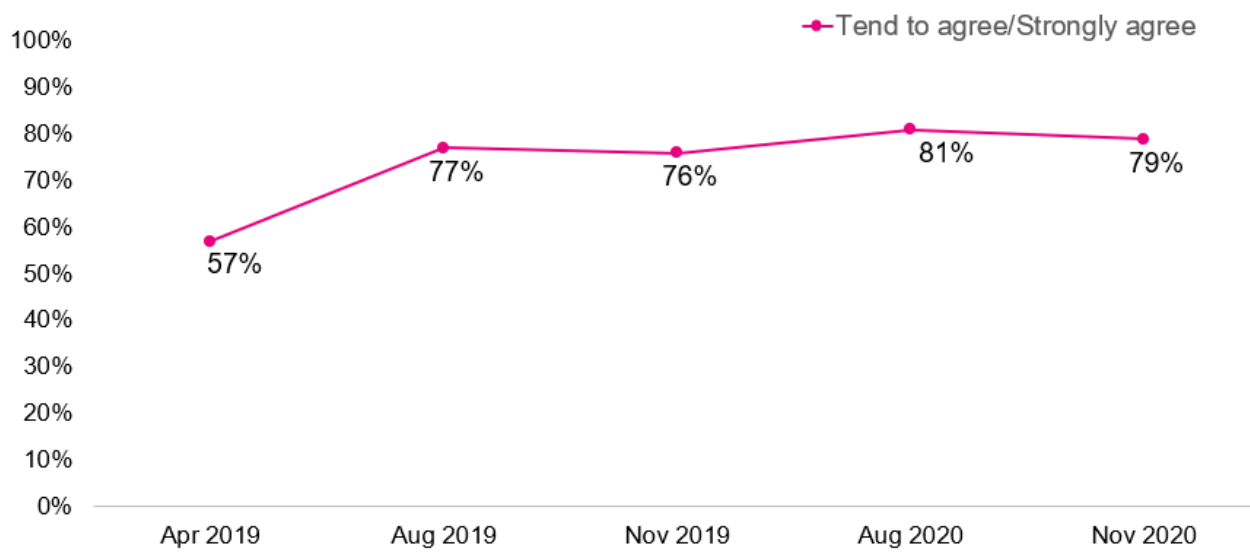
Base: All Survey B respondents at round 1 (155), round 2 (64), round 3 (25), round 4 (89) and round 5 (109)

Among the small number of those who disagreed (n = 35 in survey rounds 2-5) that Social Security Scotland had put in place everything they would need, the most common issue was around building access, with almost half (49%) reporting that this was not in place. This finding was elaborated on in the qualitative research, where participants reported that it caused problems such as having to ask a colleague whenever they wanted to exit the floor to use the toilet. Other resources reported not to be in place included IT access and equipment (46% and 37% respectively of those who disagreed) and other work items in the working environment (37%). Survey B Round 1 is not included here, as those respondents were given different response options.

One factor affecting whether or not resources were in place was disability status – those who said they did not have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more were more likely (74%) to agree that everything they needed had been put in place than those who did (62%).

Survey respondents were also asked about their experiences of seeking reasonable adjustments to their work equipment, as one way of assessing the accessibility of the organisation to new recruits. Almost a fifth (18%) of respondents had requested that Social Security Scotland make reasonable adjustments to their physical working environment in order that they could do their job. Among those who had sought reasonable adjustments (n = 79), experiences were mixed. Across the five rounds of survey, the majority (an average of 71%) agreed that these adjustments had been put in place. This figure has improved over time, with the proportion in agreement rising from 57% at the first round (April 2019) to 92% by the final round (November 2020) of the survey.

However, the qualitative research highlighted instances where there had been delays before adjustments were put in place, and perceived poor communication between the occupational health contractors and Social Security Scotland Scotland. One participant, interviewed in November 2019, had experienced a range of difficulties due to problems with her occupational health assessment - she reported not receiving the physical assessment, adapted phone or specific chair she needed.

> *Initially, their accommodation team didn't have a clue about anybody's disabilities – they were bringing me chairs that were totally unsuitable and did actually cause damage to my back […] I feel it's just… it's like they're not listening.*

<div align="right">Qualitative participant</div>

Participants from later rounds of the qualitative research reported more positive experiences. However, some issues of communication between occupational health and Social Security Scotland remained.

Employee experience: Jordan's experience of joining Social Security Scotland, having a health condition and requiring reasonable adjustments:

Jordan has a disability which means he needs adjustments to his working environment. He decided to apply for an administrative role at Social Security Scotland having worked in the Civil Service previously and knowing them to be a supportive employer for people with disabilities.

He joined Social Security Scotland two months after applying for the role. During this time, he was required to have a medical assessment to ascertain the adaptations he would need. He had fairly frequent contact with HR throughout this period regarding the medical aspects as well as other practicalities. Prior to starting, his line manager was also in touch to provide more detail on what the role would involve.

He was happy with the communication he had in advance of his start date and felt that the only thing that would have made it better would have been being able to visit the office to meet colleagues before his first day.

On his first day, he found that there had been some problems with the communication between the organisation that had undertaken his medical and Social Security Scotland and he did not have everything in place he would need to do his job. After raising this with his line manager, most things were rectified quickly, although he had to wait two weeks for an adapted mouse.

Support

A key aim of this research was to assess the supportiveness of recruitment and onboarding. For this reason, research participants were asked about their experiences of starting work at Social Security Scotland, including whether they felt they were provided with enough information in advance of their start date and their experiences of support during their first three months in the organisation.

Introduction to role at Social Security Scotland

Across the five survey rounds, the majority of respondents (66%) agreed that they were given enough information about what to expect in their first week at Social Security Scotland. The proportion agreeing increased over time from 60% and 58% in the first two rounds to 80%, 72% and 71% in rounds 3, 4 and 5 (Figure 3.6).

Respondents who were employed by the Civil Service prior to joining Social Security Scotland were more likely than those who joined from elsewhere to agree with this statement (71%, compared with 61%).

Figure 3.6: Agree that 'I was given enough information about what to expect in my first week at Social Security Scotland'
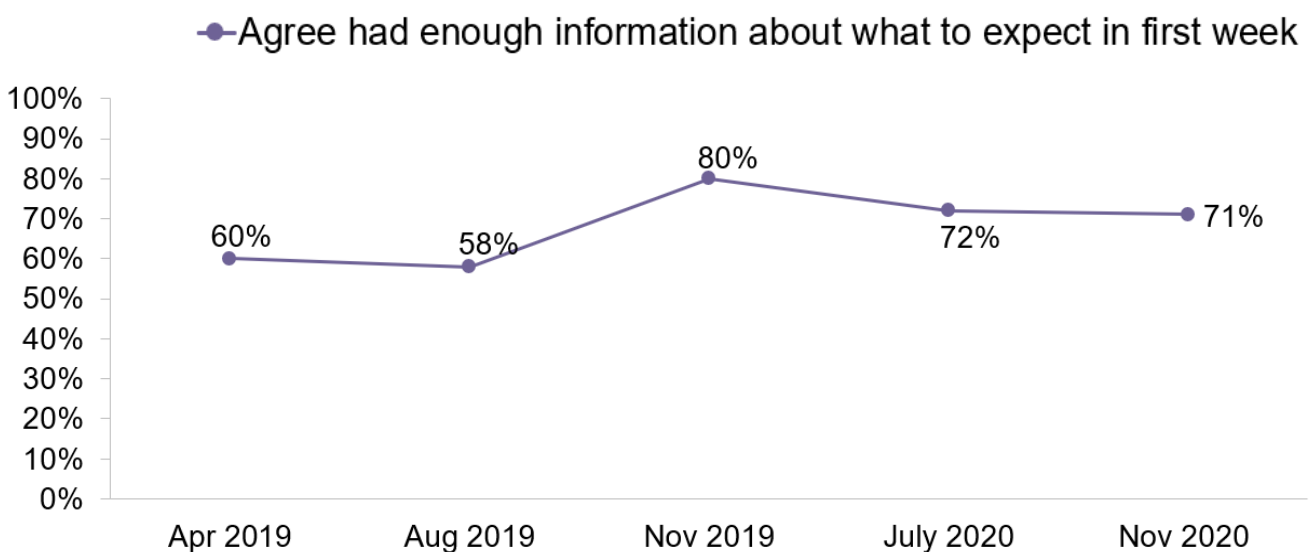
Base: All Survey B respondents at round 1 (155), round 2 (64), round 3 (25), round 4 (89) and round 5 (109)

Employees' roles had not always been what they expected, with just over half (54%) agreeing that 'my role has been different to what I had expected'. A further 17% neither agreed nor disagreed with this while 29% disagreed, feeling that their role had been as expected.

The qualitative research provided further detail on role expectations. More senior employees, particularly those who had joined at an early stage in the organisation's development, reported being very involved in the development of their roles during their first few months. They expected this when joining a new organisation and, for the most part, reported enjoying the autonomy it afforded them – although some would have preferred a little more structure and support at this stage. Other participants acknowledged that Social Security Scotland was often recruiting for a number of roles at a time and felt that the initial job descriptions had been left deliberately vague at the advert stage to allow for more detailed roles to be agreed at the interview/offer stage.

There were also, however, participants who would have preferred their role to have been made clearer from the application stage and who were not always completely satisfied with their current role. Finally, COVID-19 had necessitated redeployments and changes in roles for some employees while others were able to continue in the roles, albeit from home.

> I think the pandemic has changed the way in which we should interact with new staff. The role I did in the 1st 3 months bore no resemblance to the role I was recruited for, which was fine as it wasn't possible to complete my role. I believe we need to be open and honest that the roles being recruited for may be different, working from home to working in the office, to ensure all employees understand the challenges they face
>
> Survey B round 5 respondent (open-text question)

Area for consideration: as far as possible, ensure applicants are clear at the recruitment stage what their role will involve and whether it is subject to change

Support during first three months at Social Security Scotland

Across the five rounds of Survey B, nine in ten respondents (90%) agreed with the statement '*I have had the help and support I needed from colleagues at Social Security Scotland.*' Levels of agreement with this statement were consistently high but were highest (97%) in round 4 (July 2020).

In rounds 2-5 of Survey B, respondents were also asked about sources of support during their first three months. They reported receiving support from both line managers (76%) and team managers (63%). However, the most commonly reported source of support was other colleagues (89%). Only a small minority (1%) reported that they had not received support or help at all during their first three months working at Social Security Scotland.

Respondents were also asked about whether they were treated with respect as they joined the organisation. Almost all respondents at Survey B rounds 2-5 (95%) agreed with the statement *'I was treated with respect by my colleagues at Social Security Scotland during the recruitment process and first three months in the organisation'*. Survey B round 1 respondents were asked a slightly different question, but the results were still largely positive: 88% agreed with the statement *'I have been treated with respect by my colleagues at Social Security Scotland.'*

These high levels of satisfaction with the support received upon joining were echoed in the qualitative interviews. Qualitative participants found that their new colleagues were very welcoming and always happy to answer questions. Those who had personal difficulties at the time of joining were particularly impressed with the way in which Social Security Scotland had supported them, as exemplified by the following quote:

> *I couldn't speak highly enough of the organisation and the support I was shown. I had particularly difficult circumstances at home that I hadn't anticipated – so difficult that I said to my manager […] that, had I been aware of how difficult those issues were going to be, I wouldn't have moved [job] in the first place… it was that difficult. But the support that he and his manager provided me was absolutely textbook and beyond that, in fact. I couldn't thank them enough for the understanding, the support and the flexibility they provided me… it was just outstanding.*

> Qualitative participant

Participants in later rounds reported some problems relating to starting a new job during the pandemic – for example, feeling disconnected from their team, and finding it difficult to adjust to working from home. However, participants were very positive about the way that Social Security Scotland supported them through this transition, especially when changes to their personal circumstances had affected their work.

> *They were great, especially if you had any sort of circumstances that needed special consideration. Home-schooling young children while doing training from home, they were very considerate regarding that. You didn't have to explain yourself – if I was late logging in, I didn't have to spend hours with my line manager explaining what was going on, I just had to say 'I'm sorry I'm late, I had some problems with my kids' and that was it. That was really good.*

> Qualitative participant

Overall, new employees' experiences of support appear to have been very positive. Ideas for improving support during the first three months included newsletters to incoming employees, advice on managing your email inbox, an FAQ document including information on HR policies, welcome packs, a 'buddy' system (which has since been introduced), and being introduced to the office and co-workers before starting the job (some employees are offered this, but it appears to vary by line manager and other circumstances).

Area for consideration: Consider making the buddy system and pre-start date office visits available to all new employees joining the organisation. Consider providing a welcome pack to new joiners.
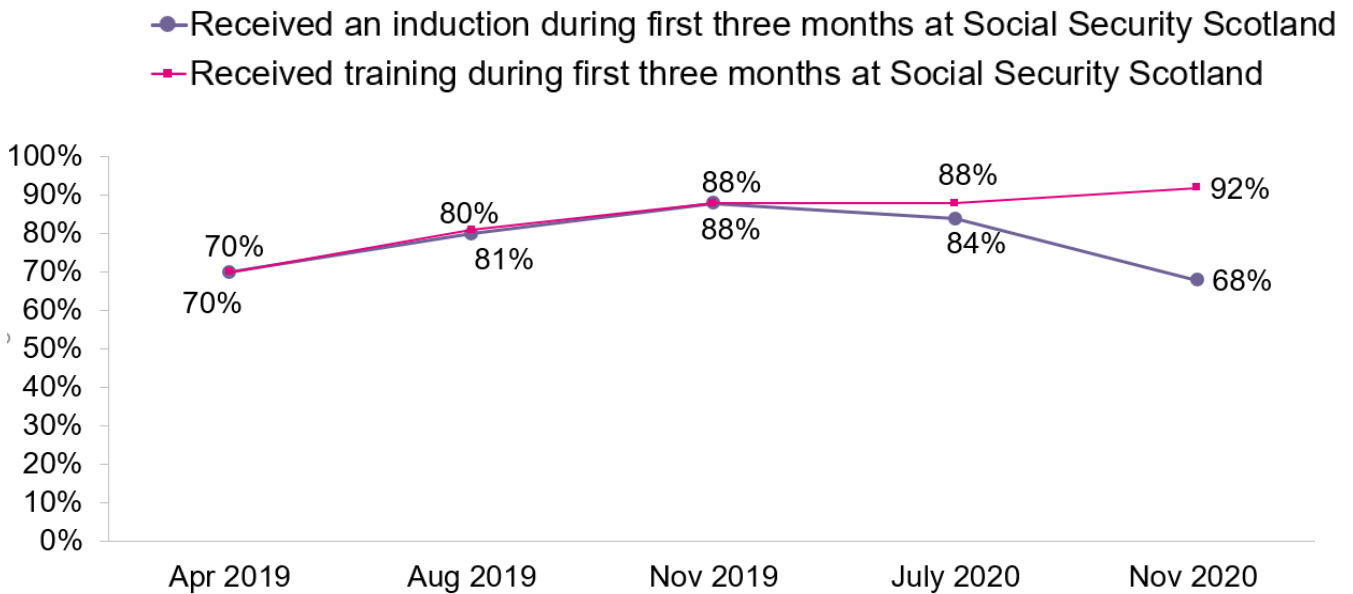
Induction and training

The majority of employees reported receiving an induction (75%) and training (81%) during their first three months at Social Security Scotland[12]. As Figure 3.7 shows, the proportions receiving both induction and training had increased over time. However, the proportion reporting they had received an induction fell in the final round of the survey, a cohort of employees who joined during the COVID-19 pandemic.

> *My own experience is a negative one. There was no formal team induction or training programme set up. I was asked to read screeds of papers and do online courses and some buddying with other colleagues. It was all very poor.*

> Survey B round 5 respondent (open-text question)

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[12] All new joiners are offered an induction while training is offered to those in operational roles only. It is not clear why a higher proportion of respondents reported receiving training than induction. However, one possible explanation is that the distinction between induction and training may not always have been clear to employees.

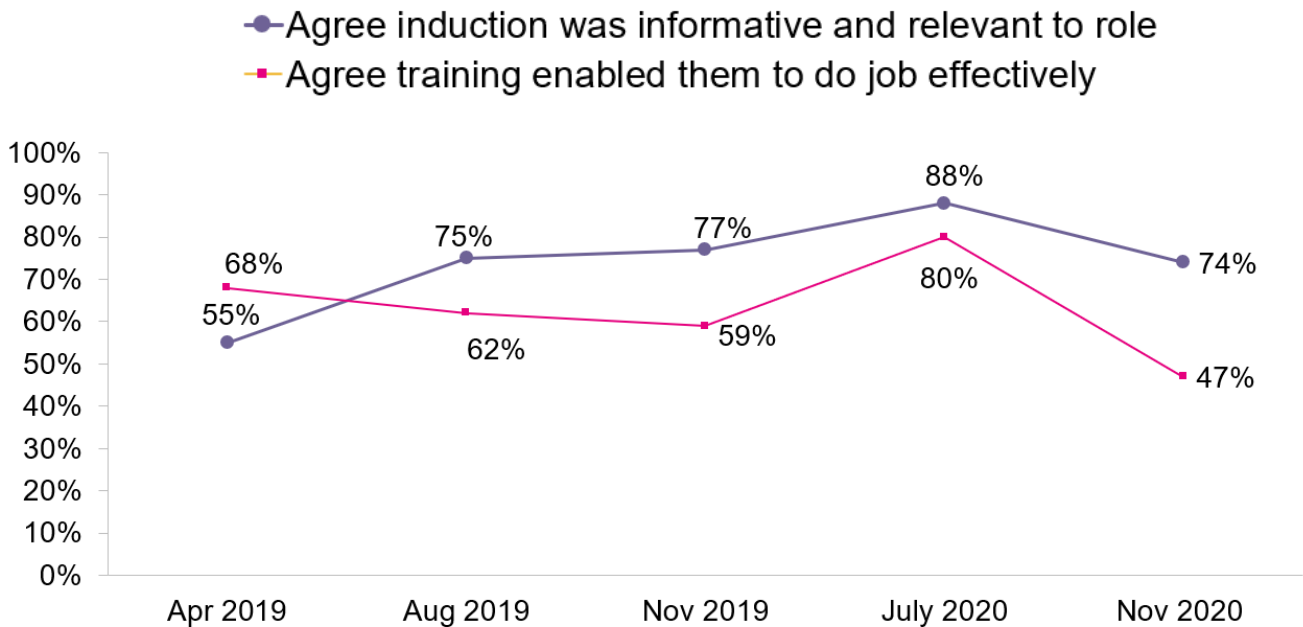**Figure 3.7: Induction and training received in first three months**

Base: All Survey B respondents at round 1 (155), round 2 (64), round 3 (25), round 4 (89) and round 5 (109)

Overall, respondents were more positive about the induction than about the training they received. Among those who received an induction, 71% agreed that it was informative and relevant to their role while 63% of those who reported receiving training agreed that the training enabled them to do their job effectively (Figure 4.5.2). Those with a degree were less likely to say that the induction had been informative and relevant to their role (65%) than were those who did not have a degree (77%).

As Figure 3.8 shows, views on induction and training changed over time. The proportion of respondents agreeing that the induction was useful increased from the first survey round before falling again between the fourth and fifth rounds when, as discussed above, the number who reported receiving an induction also decreased.

A similar pattern existed in relation to training. However, the drop in those agreeing that it enabled them to do their job effectively between survey rounds 4 and 5 was greater (88% to 47%).

Figure 3.8: Views on induction and training

Base: All Survey B respondents at round 1 (155), round 2 (64), round 3 (25), round 4 (89) and round 5 (109)

The qualitative research provided further detail on employees' experiences of induction and training. Among employees who joined pre-pandemic (before the first UK lockdown on 23rd March 2020), and were inducted in-person, there were positive reports about the induction, with it being described as well-organised and interactive, helping new joiners to learn about the organisation and get to know colleagues. However, another view was that the induction process was inconsistent, with sessions being neither mandatory nor well communicated. It was suggested that there should be a standard induction process for all new employees which might involve an induction checklist or pack as well as a 'first week plan' and the assignment of a buddy. There were also those who had not received any formal induction/training but felt that there were good reasons for this. For example: they had transferred from another Civil Service role, so the induction was less relevant, or they had joined the organisation in the set-up stages.

In relation to training, those in senior roles were generally satisfied with the minimal role-specific training employees had received - there was an understanding that they were recruited for their pre-existing expertise, and were to help set up their departments. Where they felt they needed more information or training, they were comfortable seeking it out.

Suggestions for improvements to the training programme tended to come from employees working on operational roles, with the overarching theme being a need for more role specific, 'on the job' training. One element of this was the balance of time afforded to different aspects of training – colleagues suggested that it should shift towards more practical training, including an increased amount of consolidation time, and away from the more theoretical learnings.

Further suggestions were for the Client Advisor training to be delivered by experienced Client Advisors (as opposed to colleagues with no direct experience of the role) and on a test system more similar to the live system.

> *To ensure that the training provided reflects the reality of the job and to ensure that test systems are working so that practice can be undertaken prior to live running. To give at least a week for observing an experienced advisor working cases as the test systems and e-learning are tick box perfect - not giving a clear view of the reality of the processes involved. The training does not prepare one for the reality of the role and all the added dimensions.*
>
> Survey B round 5 respondent (open-text question)

The qualitative research and responses to the open-ended survey question do not fully explain the reasons for less positive survey responses on induction and, particularly, training in the final survey round and it may simply be that their perceived effectiveness fell due to the fact Social Security Scotland had to adapt sessions, which had been designed to be delivered face-to-face, to remote learnings at short notice. However, given the suggestions throughout the study for more practical, 'on the job' training, it may be that these issues are magnified while employees are working at home, without the same ability to draw on the support of their colleagues. It was suggested that shadowing would be a useful way for new colleagues to learn, and that this may still be possible while working at home.

> *Provide much, much more training on the computer system we process applications on, let us shadow other advisors. While working from home (Covid 19) this could be done by listening in to advisors making/receiving calls whilst they share their screen.*
>
> Survey B round 5 respondent (open-text question)

There may also be issues linked to role specific training. Firstly, there were employees who reported being redeployed, as a result of the pandemic, into different roles than they applied for but still receiving training for their original role. This training tended not to be considered relevant to the role they were currently doing.

> *The pandemic we are in the midst of has thrown challenges across the board in Social Security Scotland, however, the job I applied for is not the job I have ended up with. Never have I felt so unsure in a job and constantly fretting that I'm doing the right thing. The training we had did not cover even half of what the actual job entails, it has left me questioning myself and this is a shame as I was so excited and grateful to be given the chance to apply to Scottish Government. For the new recruits, I hope that everything is quicker, and that the training is very specific.*
>
> Survey B round 5 respondent (open-text question)

A final, specific, issue was that Client Experience colleagues reported being given Client Advisor training which was not directly relevant to their role.

> *A lot of the training was for the processing perspective so that would be what the Client Advisors do when they take out an application. That was helpful but I think most of us felt that we would have liked more focus on the actual ins and out of our day job. We do need the background stuff as well but we seemed to spend a lot of days, even, going through dummy applications on the test systems whereas I don't really feel that gave us much. It would have been more helpful to even do a bit of shadowing, virtually obviously to see the process rather than learning how it was done.*

Qualitative participant

Employee experience: Mark's experience of joining Social Security Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the induction and training he received:

Mark joined Social Security Scotland, from another part of the Civil Service, in August 2020.

A few weeks before starting, he received a call from his line manager explaining that his role would be changing temporarily due to the pandemic. He was a bit nervous as he had no experience related to the new role, but he understood the reasoning and was just glad that he was still able to start with Social Security Scotland at that time. He has been working at home since starting his role and received his induction and training remotely. He did not feel that the quality of the training and recruitment was reduced due to it being delivered remotely. However, he was trained for the role he originally applied for rather than the one he was redeployed to. This has resulted in him having to learn his current role 'on the job' with support from his line manager. As his redeployment is going to last a number of months, he feels that he will have forgotten what he learnt.

Area for consideration: Consider ways in which the face-to-face induction and training experiences can be better replicated remotely. Ensure training is as role specific and as close to the 'on the job' experience as possible. This may include some shadowing of those already working in the role.

Culture, values and vision

Almost all new joiners reported having had the culture and values of Social Security Scotland explained to them (93%) and being provided with information on Social Security Scotland's journey and vision (90%) when they first joined the organisation.

Having received an induction, and having found the induction informative, made agreement with these statements more likely:

● 95% of those who received an induction agreed that they had had Social Security Scotland's culture and values explained to them compared with 79% who had not

● 97% of those who found the induction informative and relevant agreed that they had had the Social Security Scotland's culture and values explained to them compared to 87% who did not

● 95% of those who received an induction agreed that they had been provided with information on Social Security Scotland's journey and vision compared with 69% who had not received an induction.

4. Conclusions

Social Security Scotland aims to have recruitment and onboarding processes which are both accessible and supportive. This research provides an assessment on the extent to which that aim has been met. It also considers what improvements could be made to existing processes.

Recruitment

In considering the application and interview process, it is difficult to fully assess the extent to which Social Security Scotland is fulfilling its aims. This is due to the fact that the research was unable to capture the views of people who had been unsuccessful in their application to Social Security Scotland, or those who had seen the job adverts but had decided not to apply. Any future research should seek to capture the views of these groups.

It can be said that successful applicants were extremely positive about the application and interview process, feeling that it was a straightforward process throughout which they were treated respectfully. Based on their experience, almost all successful applicants would recommend to others that they apply for a job at Social Security Scotland.

However, there was evidence that elements of the process were more challenging for people who had not previously worked in the Civil Service - they were less likely than those who had previous Civil Service experience to find the overall process straightforward and to feel that the description of the role in the job advert was clear. The qualitative research and open text responses pointed to this difference being explained, at least in part, by familiarity with aspects of Civil Service applications, such as the competency-based approach. There is, therefore, a risk that external applicants are both put off applying, due to a lack of clarity about the role, and are less likely to be successful, because they are unfamiliar with the format of the application and interview. While this research suggests that the application process may be slightly less accessible to those without previous Civil Service experience, further research, including analysis of application data, would be required to examine this fully.

Onboarding

The period of time between applicants being offered a role and their first day at Social Security Scotland is where the recruitment and onboarding process is least effective in supporting future employees. Many respondents were frustrated with the length of the wait and level of communication from Social Security Scotland during this time, leading to concerns about the security of the offer and difficulties negotiating end dates with current employers. These issues also raise considerations about the accessibility of the process for different groups, as delays and uncertainties disproportionately affect people not in employment or in temporary employment during the recruitment and onboarding process.

While satisfaction with this period of time was relatively low across the survey rounds, there had been a positive change over time, suggesting that some improvements had been made to the process.

Employees' experiences of their first three months at Social Security Scotland were largely positive. The organisation showed itself to be a supportive and accessible employer - new employees were particularly enthusiastic about the welcome and support they had received from colleagues and, on the whole, reasonable adjustments to employee workspaces had been put in place for those who needed them (although satisfaction around adjustments was lower among those with long term health conditions). Notably, the generally high satisfaction with workplace resources includes new employees who joined during the pandemic and were working from home.

Views in relation to induction and training received on starting at the organisation were slightly more mixed, with sizeable minorities disagreeing that these were relevant and that they had enabled them to do their job. This indicates that improvements may be required in order to better support new employees to carry out their jobs effectively.

To conclude, Social Security Scotland is largely meeting its aim of being supportive and accessible to applicants and new employers. Its intent to treat people fairly and with respect was apparent and the positive changes over time on a number of measures reflect its commitment to continuous improvement. There are, however, improvements that can be made and the section below summarises the recommendations that would help Social Security Scotland further enhance its recruitment and onboarding processes.

Further Research

As mentioned previously, future research should return to the original scope of this research: to understand more about the applicants who are unsuccessful. Social Security Scotland has indicated that it is committed to investigating this area further and that it has begun work to facilitate this. Further research should also include successful candidates so as to track changes to Social Security Scotland's recruitment and onboarding. This will help Social Security Scotland to further enhance recruitment and onboarding processes.

Recommendations

The following improvements to the recruitment and onboarding processes are recommended.

Recruitment:

- Consider whether providing enhanced guidance and support throughout the application process would make it more accessible, particularly to external candidates

- Consider whether terminology used to describe the role could be amended to make it clearer, particularly to people who do not have a Civil Service background

- Ensure that applicants are fully informed in advance about what the interview will involve and that they know whether or not interviewers will have seen their application in advance.

Onboarding:

- Continue to focus on ensuring the processes between the job interview and job offer, and the job offer and start date, are as quick and smooth as possible. Regardless of whether there are any updates to give, regular communication should be maintained. Specific improvements might include:
  - having a single point of contact for people during this process
  - when the line manager of the new recruit is known in advance, consider the role they can have in maintaining contact prior to the start date

- As far as possible, ensure applicants are clear at the recruitment stage what their role will involve and whether it is subject to change

- Consider making the buddy system and pre-start date office visits available to all new employees joining the organisation

- Consider providing a welcome pack to new joiners

- Consider ways in which the face-to-face induction and training experiences can be better replicated remotely.

- Ensure training is as role specific and as close to the 'on the job' experience as possible. This may include some shadowing of those already working in the role.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey questionnaires

Survey A questionnaire

[INTRO SCREEN]

This survey is being carried out by Ipsos MORI, the independent research organisation, on behalf of Social Security Scotland. **Social Security Scotland wants to hear about your experience of applying for a role within the organisation.**

They are keen to find out applicants' views on how the role was advertised and on how the application process worked as a whole. The findings will help the organisation to improve the experience of potential applicants for new roles in the future, to ensure that the process is as inclusive as possible.

As someone who recently applied for a job at Social Security Scotland, your views are really important. **The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.**

[NEXT SCREEN]

We understand that the range of recruitment experiences at Social Security Scotland has been very diverse. As such, please complete all questions choosing the option closest to your experience. If you feel you really cannot answer a question, select the 'Don't know' response box.

You can leave the questionnaire at any time and return to it later by clicking on the link in the e-mail sent to you.

Individual responses will be completely confidential and anonymous and will not be seen by anybody outside of Ipsos MORI, the independent research organisation. It will not to be possible to identify any individuals from the results – only aggregated statistics will be reported. All your data (survey responses) will be securely stored by Ipsos MORI in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

If you would like any more information on the survey, please contact **SSSsurvey**@ipsos.com

Please click 'next' to begin the survey.

[ASK ALL]

StartDate

Q1. When did you start working for Social Security Scotland?

If you cannot remember the exact day you started, please just put the month and year.

[Allow participants to move on if month and year filled but day blank)

1 DD/MM/YY
2 Don't know/can't remember
3 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

FrstJob

Q1. Before your application for your current role had you applied for a job with the civil service before- either with the Scottish Government or UK Government?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know/can't remember
4 Prefer not to say
[ASK ID FRSTJOB=1]

PrvCS

Q2. And when you applied for [your current role, were you currently employed by the civil service- either with the Scottish Government or UK Government?

[single code only]

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know/can't remember
4 Prefer not to say

Thinking now about the advertisement for the role you applied for…

[ASK ALL]

WADVERT

Q3. Where did you see the role you applied for advertised?

Please select all that apply to you.

1 Work for Scotland
2 Civil Service Jobs
3 S1 jobs
4 Internal Scottish Government recruitment page or mailing list (e.g. Saltire)
5 Other recruitment website or mailing list, please specify [specify box]
6 At a recruitment event, please specify [specify box]
7 Other, please specify [specify box]
8 Don't know/can't remember
9 Prefer not to say
10 Not applicable

[ASK IF WADVERT = 1 THRU 8]

WADVERT1

Q4. How clear or unclear was the description of the role in the job advert(s) you saw?

1 Very clear
2 Fairly clear
3 Neither clear nor unclear
4 Fairly unclear
5 Very unclear
6 I did not see a job description for the role
7 Don't know/ can't remember
8 Prefer not to say
9 N/A

[ASK IF WADVERT = 1 THRU 8]

WADVERT2

Q5. How clear or unclear was the description of the essential criteria/skills required for the role?

1   Very clear
2   Fairly clear
3   Neither clear nor unclear
4   Fairly unclear
5   Very unclear
6   Don't know/ can't remember
7   Prefer not to say
8   N/A

[ASK IF WADVERT = 1 THRU 8]

WADVERT3

Q6. How strongly would you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"The job advert(s) made the role sound like something I could apply for."

1   Strongly agree
2   Tend to agree
3   Neither agree nor disagree
4   Tend to disagree
5   Strongly disagree
6   Don't know/ can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK IF PrvCS= 2]

WQUES1

Q7. Did you contact Social Security Scotland / the recruitment manager/ a named contact to ask any questions about the job role, after seeing the advert?

1   Yes
2   No
3   Don't know/can't remember
4   Prefer not to say

[ASK ID WQUES1 = 1]

HWQUES

Q8. And how did you contact Social Security Scotland/ the recruitment manager/ a named contact to ask these questions?

1 By email
2 By telephone
3 In person
4 Don't know/can't remember
5 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF WQUES1=1]

WQUES2

Q9. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the response to your questions about the job role?

1 Very satisfied
2 Fairly satisfied
3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4 Fairly dissatisfied
5 Very dissatisfied
6 Don't know/ can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF Q5=5]

WRECRUITE

Q10. How useful, if at all, did you find attending the recruitment event?

[single code only]

1 Very useful
2 Fairly useful
3 Not very useful
4 Not at all useful
5 Don't know/ can't remember
6 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

AppWeb1

Q11. Which of the following statements most applies to you…?

Select one answer only.

1   I prefer to fill out application forms online
2   I prefer to fill out application forms on paper
3   I prefer a different method of application, please specify [SPECIFY BOX]
4   Don't know/can't remember
5   Prefer not to say

Thinking now about the online application form…

[ASK ALL]

AppWeb2

Q12. Did you complete an online form as part of your application?

1   Yes
2   No
3   Don't know/can't remember
4   Prefer not to say

[ASK IF AppWeb2=1]

AppEase

Q13. How easy or difficult was the online application form to use?

[Single code only]

1   Very easy
2   Fairly easy
3   Neither easy nor difficult
4   Fairly difficult
5   Very difficult
6   Don't know/ can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK IF AppWeb2=1]

AppQual

Q14. How clear or unclear was the information provided about how to fill in the online application form?

[Single code only]

1 Very clear
2 Fairly clear
3 Neither clear nor unclear
4 Fairly unclear
5 Very unclear
6 Don't know/ can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

Thinking about what happened after you applied for your new role

[ASK IF **OnlineTest**=1]

Test1

Q15. Were you invited to complete an online test after your initial application?

[Single code only]

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know/ can't remember

[ASK IF Test1=1]

Test2

Q116. Do you feel the amount of information you received in advance about what the test(s) would involve was too much, not enough or just the right amount?

[Single code only]

1 Too much
2 Not enough
3 Just the right amount
4 Don't know/ can't remember
5 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF Test1=1]

Test3

Q17. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"It was clear what the questions in the test(s) were asking."

[Single code only]

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF Test1=1]

Test4

Q18. Leaving aside how easy or difficult the questions themselves were, how easy or difficult was it to use the online test(s)?

[Single code only]

1 Very easy
2 Fairly easy
3 Neither easy nor difficult
4 Fairly difficult
5 Very difficult
6 Don't know/ can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Int1

Q19. Were you invited to take part in an interview after your initial application?

[Single code only]

1 Yes – I was invited to take part in a formal interview
2 Yes- I was invited to take part in an informal interview
3 No – I did not take part in an interview
4 Don't know/ can't remember

[ASK IF Int1=1 or 2]

Int2

Q20. Do you feel the amount of information you received in advance about what the interview would involve was too much, not enough or just the right amount?

[Single code only]

1 Too much
2 Not enough
3 Just the right amount
4 Don't know/ can't remember
5 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF Int1=1 or 2]

Int3

Q21. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"It was clear what the questions in the interview were asking."

[Single code only]

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF Int1=1]

IntLoc

Q22a. In which location did you interview take place?

1 Dundee
2 Edinburgh
3 Glasgow
4 Inverness
5 Stornoway
6 Dumfries
7 Other, please write in:
8 Don't know/can't remember
9 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF IntLoc=1]

IntLoc1

Q22b. And in which Dundee location did your interview take place?

1 Dundee, Dundee House
2 Dundee, Caledonian House
3 Dundee, Remploy limited, Nethergate
4 Dundee, West Park
5 Dundee, Malmaison Hotel
6 Dundee, Skills Development Scotland
7 Dundee, Apex Hotel
8 Other, please write in
9 Don't know/can't remember
10 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF IntLoc=2]

IntLoc2

Q22b. And in which Edinburgh location did your interview take place?

1 Edinburgh, St Andrew's House
2 Edinburgh, Saughton House
3 Other, please write in
4 Don't know/can't remember
5 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF IntLoc=3]

IntLoc3

Q22b. And in which Glasgow location did your interview take place?

1 Glasgow, Atlantic Quay 4
2 Glasgow, Atlantic Quay 5
3 Glasgow, Scottish Government, 220 High Street
4 Glasgow, Marriott Hotel
5 Glasgow, Grand Central Hotel
6 Other, please write in
7 Don't know/can't remember
8 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF Int1=1]

Int4

Q22c. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The interview was held in a suitable location for me."

[Single code only]

1   Strongly agree
2   Tend to agree
3   Neither agree nor disagree
4   Tend to disagree
5   Strongly disagree
6   Don't know/can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Feedback1

Q23. Did you choose to receive feedback about your application from Social Security Scotland?

[Single code only]

1   Yes
2   No
3   Feedback was not available to me
4   Don't know/can't remember
5   Prefer not to say

[ASK IF FEEDBACK1=1]

Feedback3

Q24. How did you receive feedback about your application?

Select one answer only.

[Single code]

1   Face to face
2   By email
3   By telephone
4   Don't know
5   Prefer not to say

Feedback4

Q25. How useful, if at all, was the feedback you received in helping you to understand why your application was successful?

Select one answer only.

[Single code]

1   Very useful
2   Fairly useful
3   Not very useful
4   Not at all useful
5   Don't know / can't remember
6   Prefer not to say

Finally, thinking about your overall experience of applying for a job at Social Security Scotland…

OvrAll1

Q26. How straightforward or complicated was the process of applying for [role] at Social Security Scotland?

[Single code]

1   Very straightforward
2   Fairly straightforward
3   Neither straightforward nor complicated
4   Fairly complicated
5   Very complicated
6   Don't know/ can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

OvrAll2

Q27. Thinking about the whole process of applying for a job with Social Security Scotland, how strongly would you agree or disagree that you were treated fairly and with respect throughout?

[Single code only]

1   Strongly agree
2   Tend to agree
3   Neither agree nor disagree
4   Tend to disagree
5   Strongly disagree
6   Don't know/can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK IF OVRALL2 = 4 OR 5]

OvrAll3

Q28. Do you feel you were treated less fairly for any of the following reasons?

MULTICODE

1   Your age
2   Your gender
3   Your ethnic group
4   Your religion
5   A disability
6   Your sexual orientation
7   Other, please describe [SPECIFY BOX]
8   Don't know/ can't remember
9   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Rccmd

Q29. Based on your experience, how likely or unlikely would you be to recommend others to apply for a job with Social Security Scotland, if there were jobs available?

[Single code only]

1 Very likely
2 Fairly likely
3 Neither likely nor unlikely
4 Fairly unlikely
5 Very unlikely
6 Don't know
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

FinalCom

Q30. Please describe anything you think was particularly good or bad about your experience of applying to Social Security Scotland, and any suggestions you have for improving the process for other people who are applying in the future".

[Open text]

[NEXT PAGE]

And finally, we'd like to ask a few questions about you to understand how different people experience applying for a job at Social Security Scotland. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept in the strictest confidence, and used for research purposes only. It will not be used to identify you.

[ASK ALL]

Postcode

Q31. What is your postcode?

1 [postcode text box]
2 Don't know
3 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

RGENDER

Q32. How would you describe your gender identity?

[single code only]

1 Man
2 Woman
3 In another way, please describe [specify box]
4 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

[ASK ALL]

RAGE

Q33. What is your date of birth?

1 [Date of birth text fill box]
2 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

SEXOR

Q34. Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself?

Please select one answer only.

1 Heterosexual
2 Bisexual
3 Gay or Lesbian
4 In another way, please write in: [specify box]
5 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

DISABILITY

Q35a. Do you have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

[single code only]

1 Yes
2 No
3 Prefer not to say

[IF Q34A=1]

IFDISAB

Q36b. Does this condition or illness affect you in any of the following areas?

MULTICODE

1   Vision (for example blindness or partial sight)
2   Hearing (for example deafness or partial hearing)
3   Mobility (for example walking short distances or climbing stairs)
4   Dexterity (for example lifting or carrying objects, using a keyboard)
5   Learning or understanding or concentrating
6   Memory
7   Stamina or breathing or fatigue
8   Socially or behaviourally (for example associated with Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder or Asperger's Syndrome)
9   Other [specify box]
10   None of the above
11   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

RELIG

Q37. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?

Please select one answer only.

1   None
2   Church of Scotland
3   Roman Catholic
4   Other Christian, please say what [specify box]
5   Muslim
6   Buddhist
7   Sikh
8   Jewish
9   Hindu
10   Pagan
11   Another religion, please say what [specify box]
12   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

ETHNICG

Q38. What is your ethnic group?

Please select the one that most applies to you

White

1   Scottish
2   British
3   English
4   Irish
5   Welsh
6   Gypsy / Traveller
7   Northern Irish
8   Polish
9   Other white ethnic group

Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

1   Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British
2   Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British
3   Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British
4   Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British
5   Other Asian ethnic group

African, Caribbean or Black

1   African, African Scottish or African British
2   Black, Black Scottish or Black British
3   Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British
4   Other African, Caribbean or Black ethnic group

Other ethnic group

1   Arab
2   Other, please write in

Mixed

1   Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups
2   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Hedband

Q39. What is the highest educational or professional qualification you have obtained?

[single code]

Please select one response only.

1   No formal qualifications
2   'O' Grade; Standard Grade; GCSE; Intermediate 1; Intermediate 2
3   Vocational qualification (SVQ1-2 or equivalent)
4   Higher grade; A levels; SVQ level 3 or equivalent
5   HND; HNC; RSA Higher Diploma; SVQ Level 4-5 or equivalent
6   First degree; higher degree or equivalent professional qualification
7   Other (write in)
8   Don't know
9   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Employ

Q40. When you applied for [ROLE] at Social Security Scotland, were you…

[Single code]

Please select one response only.

1   Working 30 hours or more a week (Full time)
2   Working 8 - 29 hours a week (Part-time)
3   Not working (under 8 hrs) – looking after home
4   Not working (under 8 hrs) - unemployed
5   Not working (under 8 hrs) - unemployed (not registered but seeking work)
6   Not working (under 8 hrs) - retired
7   Not working (under 8 hrs) - student
8   Not working (under 8 hrs) - other (inc. sick or disabled)
9   Don't know
10 Prefer not to say

[NEXT SCREEN SHOW]

RECONTACT

Just to let you know, as part of a wider programme of research, Ipsos MORI Scotland may want to conduct follow up research with Social Security Scotland staff. Your work contact details would not be shared with anybody outwith the Ipsos MORI team.

If you are invited to take part in the follow up research, you will be free to refuse if you then decide you do not want to take part.

RECONTACT1

Are you willing to have your name and work contact details retained by Ipsos MORI for this purpose?

1 Yes
2 No

[ASK IF RECONTACT1 =1]

RECONTACT2

Just to check, are you currently working as a Client Advisor at the agency, or in a different role?

1 Client Advisor
2 Other role

[ASK IF RECONTACT2 =1]

CallHndlr

As your role is in live operations, in order to invite you to participate in further research, you would need to be contacted by a member of the Social Security Scotland research team. This means that the Social Security Scotland research team would know you are willing to take part in follow up research, but they would not know what your responses to any questions would be. If you are happy to be contacted in this way for further research, please click yes.

1 Yes
2 No

[ASK IF RECONTACT2 =2]

Otherole

Thanks very much. Please can you confirm the best work phone number and work email address to reach you on

1   Phone number: _____
2   Email address: _____

[NEXT SCREEN SHOW]

You have now reached the end of the survey. To submit your answers, please click the 'Submit' button below. Once you have clicked this, you will not be able to change your answers to the survey.

If you wish to make any changes, please use the 'Back' button to move back through the questions. Once you have completed your changes, please return to this page and click the 'Submit' button.

[NEXT SCREEN SHOW]

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

Survey B questionnaire

[INTRO SCREEN]

This survey is being carried out by Ipsos MORI, the independent research organisation, on behalf of Social Security Scotland. **Social Security Scotland wants to hear about the experiences of people who have recently begun working for the organisation.**

They are keen to find out your views on the induction process and your first few months of employment. The findings will help the organisation to improve the experience of new employees who join in the future.

As someone who recently started working at Social Security Scotland, your views are really important. **The survey should take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete.**

[NEXT SCREEN]

Please complete all questions choosing the option closest to your experience. If you feel you really cannot answer a question, select the 'Don't know' response box.

You can leave the questionnaire at any time and return to it later by clicking on the link in the e-mail sent to you.

Individual responses will be **completely confidential** and **anonymous** and will not be seen by anybody outside of Ipsos MORI, the independent research organisation. It will **not** to be possible to identify any individuals from the results – only aggregated statistics will be reported. All your data (survey responses) will be **securely stored by Ipsos MORI** in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

If you would like any more information on the survey, please contact SSSsurvey@ipsos.com

Please click 'next' to begin the survey.

[ASK ALL]

StartDate

Q1. When did you start working for Social Security Scotland?

If you cannot remember the exact day you started, please just put the month and year.

[Allow participants to move on if month and year filled but day blank)

1 DD/MM/YY
2 Don't know/can't remember
3 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

BfreSoc

Q2. And before you started working in Social Security Scotland, were you employed by the civil service- either with the Scottish Government or UK Government?

[single code only]

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know/can't remember
4 Prefer not to say

Thinking now about the time between your interview (or equivalent) and your first day at Social Security Scotland…

[ASK ALL]

LgthTm1

[Single code only]

Q3. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the length of time you waited to receive your job offer or confirmation of your new role?

1 Very satisfied
2 Fairly satisfied
3 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4 Fairly dissatisfied
5 Very dissatisfied
6 Don't know/ can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

LgthTm2

[Single code only]

Q4. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the length of time you waited between being offered the job and your first day in your new role?

1   Very satisfied
2   Fairly satisfied
3   Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4   Fairly dissatisfied
5   Very dissatisfied
6   Don't know/ can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

ComsWt

[Single code only]

Q5. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the extent to which Social Security Scotland kept in touch with you during this time?

1   Very satisfied
2   Fairly satisfied
3   Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4   Fairly dissatisfied
5   Very dissatisfied
6   Don't know/ can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

TOEmp1

[Single code only]

Q6a. And how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the terms of employment offered to you for your new role (for example, your working hours)?

1   Very satisfied
2   Fairly satisfied
3   Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4   Fairly dissatisfied
5   Very dissatisfied
6   Don't know/ can't remember
7   Not applicable
8   Prefer not to say

[ASK IF TOEMP1 = 4 OR 5]

TOEmp2

[Single code only]

Q6b. What aspects of the terms of employment were you dissatisfied with?

MULTICODE

1   Your pay
2   Your working hours
3   Your holiday allowance
4   Your office location
5   Something else, please describe [SPECIFY BOX]
6   Don't know/can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Supp1

Q7. What could Social Security Scotland do to better support applicants between their interviews (or equivalent) and their first day?

[OPEN TEXT]

[ASK ALL]

PreChk1

[Single code]

Q8. How easy or difficult was it to gather the documents required for pre-employment checks?

1 Very easy
2 Fairly easy
3 Neither easy nor difficult
4 Fairly difficult
5 Very difficult
6 Don't know/ can't remember
7 Not applicable
8 Prefer not to say

Thinking now about your first three months working at Social Security Scotland…

[ASK ALL]

InfFstDy

[Single code]

Q9. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'On joining Social Security Scotland, I was given enough information about what to expect on my first week at Social Security Scotland.'

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

ReasAdjst1

[Single code]

Q10a. Did you require Social Security Scotland to make any reasonable adjustments to your physical working environment, so that you were able to do your job?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know/can't remember
4 Prefer not to say

[IF REASADJST = 1]

ReasAdjst2

Q10b. And to what extent would you agree or disagree that these had been put in place by Social Security Scotland?

[Single code]

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[[ASK ALL] but if 1 at **ReasAdjst1** add the description in brackets]

Resrces

[Single code]

Q11. [Thinking more generally now about things you would need to do your job,] How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'Social Security Scotland had put in place everything I would need to do my job.'

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF RESRCES=4 or 5]

WtResrces

[Single code]

Q12. Which of the below resources were not in place for you?

MULTICODE

1   IT equipment, such as laptops and phones
2   IT access, such as your account and log in information for IT equipment
3   Building access, such as your building access card
4   Items in my physical working environment, such as an appropriate chair or desk
5   Something else, please say what [SPECIFY BOX]
6   Don't know/can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Spprt1

Q13A. Thinking now about any help and support you received during your first three months at Social Security Scotland, please select all that apply:

1   I received help and support from my line manager
2   I received help and support from my team manager
3   I received help and support from other colleagues
4   I did not receive any help or support during my first three months at Social Security Scotland
5   Don't know/can't remember
6   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Spprt2

[Single code]

Q13B. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'I have had the help and support I needed from colleagues at Social Security Scotland.'

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

DiffRle

[Single code]

Q14. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'My role has been different to what I had expected.'

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

RspctC

[Single code]

Q15. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'I was treated with respect by my colleagues at Social Security Scotland during the recruitment process and first three months in the organisation.'

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

TInduct1

[Single code]

Q16. Did you receive an induction during your first three months working for Social Security Scotland?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know/can't remember
4 Prefer not to say

[ASK IF TINDUCT1=1]

TInduct2

[Single code]

Q17. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'The induction was informative and relevant to my role.'

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

SSSvals

Q18. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'The culture and values of Social Security Scotland were explained to me when I first joined the agency.'

1   Strongly agree
2   Tend to agree
3   Neither agree nor disagree
4   Tend to disagree
5   Strongly disagree
6   Don't know/can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

SSSvis

Q19. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'I was provided with information on Social Security Scotland's journey and vision when I first joined the agency.'

1   Strongly agree
2   Tend to agree
3   Neither agree nor disagree
4   Tend to disagree
5   Strongly disagree
6   Don't know/can't remember
7   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

TTrain1

Q20. Were you given any training during your first three months working for Social Security Scotland?

1   Yes
2   No
3   Don't know/can't remember
4   Prefer not to say

[ASK IF TTRAIN1=1]

TTrain2

[Single code]

Q21. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

'The training provided enabled me to do my job effectively.'

1 Strongly agree
2 Tend to agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Tend to disagree
5 Strongly disagree
6 Don't know/can't remember
7 Prefer not to say

[ask all]

FrstPay1

[Single code]

Q22. Did you receive your first salary payment as expected?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know/can't remember
4 Prefer not to say

[ask all]

FrstPay2

[Single code]

Q23. And was the amount of your first salary payment what you expected?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Don't know/can't remember
4 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Supp2

Q24. What could Social Security Scotland do to improve support for people in their first three months in post?

[OPEN TEXT]

[NEXT PAGE]

And finally, we'd like to ask a few questions about you to understand how different people experience applying for a job at Social Security Scotland. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept in the strictest confidence, and used for research purposes only. It will not be used to identify you.

[ASK ALL]

Postcode

Q25. What is your postcode?

1   [postcode text box]
2   Don't know
3   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

RGENDER

Q26. How would you describe your gender identity?

[single code only]

1   Man
2   Woman
3   In another way, please describe [specify box]
4   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

RAGE

Q27. What is your date of birth?

1 [Date of birth text fill box]
2 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

SEXOR

Q28. Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself?

Please select one answer only.

1 Heterosexual
2 Bisexual
3 Gay or Lesbian
4 In another way, please write in: [specify box]
5 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

DISABILITY

Q29a. Do you have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

[single code only]

1 Yes
2 No
3 Prefer not to say

[IF Q34A=1]

IFDISAB

Q29b. Does this condition or illness affect you in any of the following areas?

MULTICODE

1 Vision (for example blindness or partial sight)
2 Hearing (for example deafness or partial hearing)
3 Mobility (for example walking short distances or climbing stairs)
4 Dexterity (for example lifting or carrying objects, using a keyboard)
5 Learning or understanding or concentrating
6 Memory

7   Stamina or breathing or fatigue

8   Socially or behaviourally (for example associated with Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder or Asperger's Syndrome)

9   Other [specify box]

10   None of the above

11   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

RELIG

Q30. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?

Please select one answer only.

1   None

2   Church of Scotland

3   Roman Catholic

4   Other Christian, please say what [specify box]

5   Muslim

6   Buddhist

7   Sikh

8   Jewish

9   Hindu

10   Pagan

11   Another religion, please say what [specify box]

12   Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

ETHNICG

Q31. What is your ethnic group?

Please select the one that most applies to you

White

1   Scottish

2   British

3   English

4   Irish

5   Welsh

6   Gypsy / Traveller

7   Northern Irish

8   Polish

9   Other white ethnic group

Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

1 Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British
2 Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British
3 Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British
4 Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British
5 Other Asian ethnic group

African, Caribbean or Black

1 African, African Scottish or African British
2 Black, Black Scottish or Black British
3 Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British
4 Other African, Caribbean or Black ethnic group

Other ethnic group

1 Arab
2 Other, please write in

Mixed

1 Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups
2 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Hedband

Q32. What is the highest educational or professional qualification you have obtained?

[single code]

Please select one response only.

1 No formal qualifications
2 'O' Grade; Standard Grade; GCSE; Intermediate 1; Intermediate 2
3 Vocational qualification (SVQ1-2 or equivalent)
4 Higher grade; A levels; SVQ level 3 or equivalent
5 HND; HNC; RSA Higher Diploma; SVQ Level 4-5 or equivalent
6 First degree; higher degree or equivalent professional qualification
7 Other (write in)
8 Don't know
9 Prefer not to say

[ASK ALL]

Employ

Q33. When you applied for your post at Social Security Scotland, were you…

[Single code]

Please select one response only.

1   Working 30 hours or more a week (Full time)
2   Working 8 - 29 hours a week (Part-time)
3   Not working (under 8 hrs) – looking after home
4   Not working (under 8 hrs) - unemployed
5   Not working (under 8 hrs) - unemployed (not registered but seeking work)
6   Not working (under 8 hrs) - retired
7   Not working (under 8 hrs) - student
8   Not working (under 8 hrs) - other (inc. sick or disabled)
9   Don't know
10   Prefer not to say

[NEXT SCREEN SHOW]

RECONTACT

Just to let you know, as part of a wider programme of research, Ipsos MORI Scotland may want to conduct follow up research with Social Security Scotland staff. Your work contact details would not be shared with anybody outwith the Ipsos MORI team.

If you are invited to take part in the follow up research, you will be free to refuse if you then decide you do not want to take part.

RECONTACT1

Are you willing to have your name and work contact details retained by Ipsos MORI for this purpose?

1   Yes
2   No

[ASK IF RECONTACT1 =1]

RECONTACT2

Just to check, are you currently working as a Client Advisor at the agency, or in a different role?

1 Client Advisor
2 Other role

[ASK IF RECONTACT2 =1]

CallHndlr

As your role is in live operations, in order to invite you to participate in further research, you would need to be contacted by a member of the Social Security Scotland research team. This means that the Social Security Scotland research team would know you are willing to take part in follow up research, but they would not know what your responses to any questions would be. If you are happy to be contacted in this way for further research, please click yes.

1 Yes
2 No

[ASK IF RECONTACT2 =2]

Otherole

Thanks very much. Please can you confirm the best work phone number and work email address to reach you on

1 Phone number: _____
2 Email address: _____

[NEXT SCREEN SHOW]

You have now reached the end of the survey. To submit your answers, please click the 'Submit' button below. Once you have clicked this, you will not be able to change your answers to the survey.

If you wish to make any changes, please use the 'Back' button to move back through the questions. Once you have completed your changes, please return to this page and click the 'Submit' button.

[NEXT SCREEN SHOW]

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix 2: Qualitative discussion guide

Social Security Scotland, Qualitative phase topic guide (third round), V1

Introduction (2 mins)

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI

- **Introduce the research:** Social Security Scotland wants to hear about the experiences of people who have applied for roles at the agency. It has commissioned us (Ipsos MORI) to undertake a programme of research in order to inform decisions about any potential changes to the process of applying for and starting a job at Social Security Scotland. You have already completed one or more online surveys for us, and this interview is to allow us to hear in a bit more depth about your experience of applying to and joining Social Security Scotland.

- Explain that the interview will last about 20 minutes

- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be passed on to anyone outwith the Ipsos MORI research team, so Social Security Scotland will not be able to identify individuals in any reports that Ipsos MORI produce.

- **IF NON-CALL HANDLER:** Social Security Scotland will not know that you have taken part in this interview. If there is anything you say during the interview that you would not like included in the report, please tell us.

- **IF CALL HANDLER**: The research team at Social Security Scotland will know that you have taken part in an interview. However, your responses will be anonymous, and they will not be told who said what. If there is anything you say during the interview that you would not like included in the report, please tell us.

- Request permission to record interview. Explain that this is for transcription purposes and recordings will not be shared with Social Security Scotland.

Participants background (2 mins)

Note to interviewer: A short background section to confirm participants' circumstances, and get a bit of background as to why they applied for the agency as a warm up.

- Background on respondents
- Job title
- Main roles and responsibilities
- Confirm if participant works full or part time

- How long have you worked for Social Security Scotland?

- Why did you decide to apply for a job at Social Security Scotland– what was it about the organisation and the role that appealed to you?

- Has your role changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? Are you working from home?

Communication with Social Security Scotland prior to starting role (5 mins)

I'd now like to ask some questions about the period between you receiving your job offer and starting your new role at Social Security Scotland.

- How much contact did you have with Social Security Scotland and Scottish Government HR between receiving your job offer and starting your new role, if any?

PROBE:

- What was the communication about?

- What form did the communication take (e.g. email or phone calls)?

- Who within the agency were you in contact with? Who initiated it?

- And how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the level and type of communication?

  PROBE for positives and negatives: Reasons why? Too little / enough / too much? Length of time to get back to you?

  IF TOO LITTLE: Did the lack of communication cause any problems for you?

  PROBE: In relation to leaving previous job? Anything else?

- Do you think the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic was ongoing at this time had any impact on your communications with Social Security Scotland?

  PROBE:

  - In what way?

  - Did the pandemic affect the level of communication you needed or wanted?

  - How much information, if any, did Social Security Scotland give you about how COVID-19 might impact your new role?

  - What else might have been useful?

  - More generally, how should Social Security Scotland communicate with people who are about to join the organisation?

PROBE:

- **What** do they need to communicate about (for example, what to expect on first day? Updates to start date?)?
- **How often** should they get in touch during this time?
- Would you still want to hear from them even if they had no update?
- **Who** should make the contact during this time (HR, line manager?)?
- What form should the communication take (e.g. telephone, email?)?
- How quickly would you expect them to respond to any communication initiated by the new recruit?

Starting at Social Security Scotland (5 mins)

(lower priority if time if time is tight)

And I'd now like to ask some questions about starting your role at Social Security Scotland

- Before you started at Social Security Scotland, were you clear what your role would involve?
- Where did you get/find information about what the job would involve?
- PROBE: Job advert? Interview? Contacting Social Security Scotland with questions?
- IF NOT CLEAR: What was the impact of this? What would have helped you be clear on what your role would involve?

- And when you started, was your role as you expected?

PROBE IF DIFFERENT:

- And how did your role differ to your expectations?
- To what extent was that due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- At what stage was this change communicated to you?
- How satisfied were you about this? Could it have been improved?
- What was the impact of the change in role?
- What could Social Security Scotland do to prevent this happening in future?

- And were you provided with everything you need to do your job when you started your new role?
  EXAMPLES: A desk, laptop, phones, building access cards, IT log ins etc.?

  PROBE IF NO:

  - Was this resolved?

  - How long did you wait for this to be resolved?

  - Did you feel that was an acceptable length of time?

  - What was the impact of not having X when you started your role?
    [IF WORKING FROM HOME AS A RESULT OF PANDEMIC]

- Were you provided with everything you needed to work from home successfully? How easy or difficult was it to access that equipment?

- And how do you feel about the level of support you received during your first three months in your role?

  PROBE: Support from line manager/team manager/other colleagues

  PROBE for positives and negatives

- Do you feel that you needed any extra support having started during the pandemic?

- And did you get this?

- What support would you have liked to have in place during the first three months in your role?

- Is there anything specifically related to having started during the pandemic that would have been useful?

Induction and training (5 mins)

The next questions are about any induction and training you may have received during your first three months at Social Security Scotland.

- Firstly, did you receive an induction during your first three months at Social Security Scotland?
  IF YES:

- What did it involve?

- Do you know if it was different than usual due to the pandemic?

- When did it take place?

- How relevant was your induction to your role?

- Did the induction cover the types of things you would expect from an induction?

- How could the induction have been improved, if at all?

IF NO:

- Do you know if this was due to the pandemic?

- What would you like to have received as part of an induction?

- When would you like this to take place?

- What was the impact, if any, of not having an induction?

- Did you receive any training during your first three months at Social Security Scotland?

IF YES:

- What did this involve?

- Do you know if it was different than usual due to the pandemic?

- When did this take place?

- How relevant was your training to your role?

- Did your training cover the types of thing you would have expected?

- Were there any gaps? What impact did that have?

- How could the training have been improved, if at all?

IF NO:

- Do you know if this was due to the pandemic?

- What training would you like to have received (for example, role specific training? training about the agency?)?

- When would you like this to take place (for example, first week? First month? What was the impact, if any, of not receiving training?

Wrap up (1 min)

We've covered a few specific topics in relation to the recruitment and induction of staff to Social Security Scotland. Is there anything else related to your application to Social Security Scotland or the first three months after joining the agency that you would like to raise?

- If you could feed back one thing to Social Security Scotland about the process of applying for and starting at new role at the organisation, what would this be?

- And, finally, if you could suggest one improvement to the application and onboarding process, what would this be?

- THANK AND CLOSE

Appendix 3: Sample profiles

Sample profile: Survey A

Characteristic	Proportion
Gender	**%**
Man	32
Woman	66
In another way	1
Prefer not to say	1
Previously worked for the Civil Service	
Yes	36
No	64
Working status prior to joining Social Security Scotland	
Working full-time	76
Working part-time	11
Not working	11
Prefer not to say	2
Highest qualification	
O Grade/Standard Grade	6
Higher	21
HND	18
Degree or above	44

Other	6
Don't know/prefer not to say	5
Health status	
Disability/long term health condition	18
No disability/long term health condition/prefer not to say	82

Sample profile: Survey B

Characteristic	Proportion
Gender	**%**
Man	36
Woman	59
In another way	0
Prefer not to say	5
Previously worked for the Civil Service	
Yes	47
No	53
Working status prior to joining Social Security Scotland	
Working full-time	79
Working part-time	9
Not working	9
Prefer not to say	3

Highest qualification	
O Grade/Standard Grade	7
Higher	19
HND	19
Degree or above	43
Other	5
Don't know/prefer not to say	6
Health status	
Disability/long term health condition	23
No disability/long term health condition/prefer not to say	77

Sample profile: Qualitative interviews

Characteristic	Number of participants
Gender	
Man	14
Woman	15
In another way	1
Previously worked for the Civil Service	
Yes	16
No	14

Survey round	
Survey B round 1	3
Survey B round 2	5
Survey B round 3	2
Survey B round 4	10
Survey B round 5	10
Highest qualification	
Degree	14
No degree	16
Health status	
Disability/long term health condition	12
No disability/long term health condition/prefer not to say	18
Reasonable adjustments	
Required reasonable adjustments	8
Do not require reasonable adjustments	22
Ethnic background	
Minority ethnic	3
Not minority ethnic	17
Role at Social Security Scotland	
Call handler	10
Non-call handler	20

Sample demographics: Survey A

Gender

- Man: 32%
- Woman: 66%
- In another way: 1%
- Prefer not to say: 1%

36% had previously worked for the civil service

Highest qualification

- O Grade/Standard grade: 6%
- Higher: 21%
- HND: 18%
- Degree or above: 44%
- Other: 6%
- Don't know/prefer not to say: 5%

Working status prior to Social Security Scotland

- Working full time: 76%
- Working part time: 11%
- Not working: 11%
- Prefer not to say: 2%

18% have a health condition
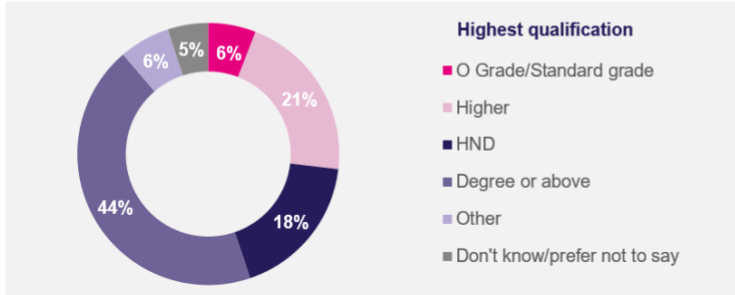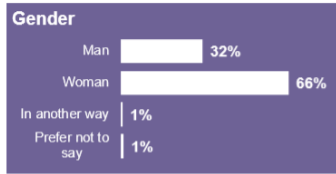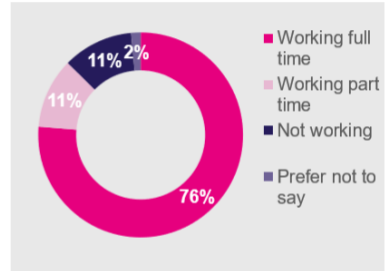
Base: All Survey A (305)

Sample demographics: Survey B

Gender

- Man: 36%
- Woman: 59%
- In another way: 0%
- Prefer not to say: 5%

47% had previously worked for the civil service

Highest qualification

- O Grade/Standard Grade: 7%
- Higher: 19%
- HND: 19%
- Degree or above: 43%
- Other: 5%
- Don't know/prefer not to say: 6%

Working status prior to Social Security Scotland

- Working full time: 79%
- Working part time: 9%
- Not working: 9%
- Prefer not to say: 3%

23% have a health condition
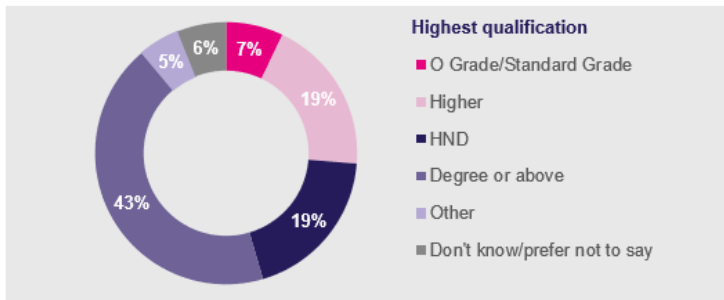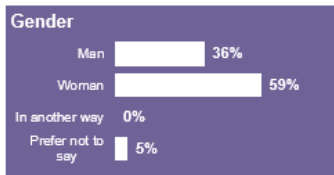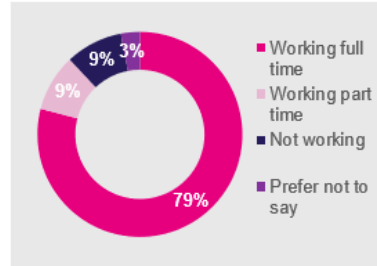
Base: All Survey B (442)

Sample demographics: Qualitative interviews

Survey B round 1	3 people
Survey B round 2	5 people
Survey B round 3	2 people
Survey B round 4	10 people
Survey B round 5	10 people

15 women

14 men

And 1 non-binary person

8 people	22 people

- Require reasonable adjustments
- Do not require reasonable adjustments

10 call handlers   20 non-call handlers

14 had degrees   16 did not have degrees

16 people we spoke to had previously worked for the civil service

12 people we spoke to have a physical or mental health condition

3 people we spoke to are minority ethnic

Base: All qualitative (30)