Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Social Security Panels Research: Buildings in Dundee and Glasgow

social research

Contents

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1. Executive Summary

From July to August 2021, Client Panel and Experience Panel members took part in a survey about Social Security Scotland's buildings in Dundee and Glasgow. Panel members who lived within travelling distance of the buildings were invited to take part in the survey. The survey included questions about travelling to and entering the buildings, as well as staff uniform and behaviours. In total, 85 members across both Panels completed the survey. This report details the findings and key themes that emerged from this work. Below is a summary of these findings.

A majority of respondents said that they would consider visiting either the Dundee or Glasgow office for an appointment if they needed advice or support. Information about parking and about what to expect when arriving were ranked as the most important information to know before a visit.

Nearly four in ten (38 per cent) respondents said that they would like to approach a staff member when they were ready to ask for help. A majority (81 per cent) said that they would feel confident telling a staff member the reason for their visit. Most (89 per cent) said that the accessibility information they provide before an appointment should be shared with the staff who welcome them to the building.

Around half of respondents (49 per cent) said that staff should wear a uniform. One third (34 per cent) said that staff should wear their own clothes. The most popular style of uniform was a shirt (47 per cent). Many respondents, regardless of which style they preferred, said it was important that staff were easily recognisable.

The majority of respondents (80 per cent) said that security staff should wear a uniform. Of these respondents, almost all (84 per cent) said that this uniform should be different to that worn by other staff.

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2. Background and methodology

The aim of this research was to explore views about visiting Social Security Scotland's buildings in Dundee and Glasgow. This research was undertaken jointly between Social Security Scotland's Client Panels and the Scottish Government Experience Panels.

2.1. Background

The Experience Panels were established in 2017 to help design a social security system that works for the people of Scotland. Members have experience of at least one of the benefits delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions that has or will come to Scotland.[1] Established in 2020, the Client Panels are made up of Social Security Scotland clients from across Scotland. Research with Client Panel members explores what people's experience of Social Security Scotland has been like. The research informs decisions about Social Security Scotland's systems, processes and policies. Client Panel members who took part in this research have experience of at least one of:

- Best Start Foods / Best Start Grant
- Carer's Allowance Supplement
- Funeral Support Payment
- Young Carer Grant
- Scottish Child Payment
- Job Start Payment
- Child Winter Heating Allowance

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1 Social Security Experience Panels publications https://www.gov.scot/collections/social-security-experience-panels-publications/

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Social Security Scotland deliver services in every local authority area in Scotland. Through the Local Delivery service, people can arrange to speak with a Client Support Adviser at a location and time that suits them. This includes at a venue in their local community, at home, in a hospital or prison, via video call or telephone appointment. Social Security Scotland's Head Office is Agnes Husband House in Dundee, with a second office in Glasgow. These two buildings will be run and operated by Social Security Scotland staff.

2.2. Methodology

For this project, we wanted to hear from people who might want an appointment with Social Security Scotland staff at the Dundee or Glasgow offices in the future. Panel members who lived within travelling distance to the buildings were invited to take part in a survey to explore visiting the buildings. This project built upon existing research about expectations around Social Security Scotland buildings and facilities.[2] It explored questions about travelling to and entering the building, as well as staff uniform and behaviours.

The research took place between July and August 2021. Participation in all panels' research is optional. In total, 85 panel members completed the survey (Table 2.1). This represents a response rate of 13 per cent. Respondents were roughly evenly split between Client Panels and Experience Panels. Slightly more respondents lived in or around Glasgow than Dundee.

Table 2.1:   Number of survey responses

Panel	Dundee	Glasgow	Total
Client Panels	13	27	**40**
Experience Panels	20	25	**45**
Total	**33**	**52**	**85**

[2] Social Security Experience Panels (2019) Agency Buildings
https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-security-experience-panels-agency-buildings/pages/1/

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The results presented in this report only represent the views of the panel members who took part in the project. Results should not be interpreted as generalisable for Social Security Scotland's current or future client base as a whole.

Results shown in the report exclude any respondents who were either filtered out of the question or who left the response blank. Results presented in tables use percentages to show proportions between different answer options. Where the total number of responses is below 50, whole numbers are used instead. The number of respondents answering a question is shown in the title of the table as (n).

Quotations are taken from comments left by respondents in open-text questions and have the label (survey respondent). Edits to spelling and grammar were made as appropriate.

Where possible, information from the survey was matched to demographic information supplied previously by panel members. Linking was not possible where there was missing or unclear information. The following demographic information is included to give context to the findings from the survey.

Over half of respondents (57 per cent) identified as women. Two fifths (40 per cent) of respondents were aged between 45 and 59. Two thirds (66 per cent) had caring responsibilities. Over half (58 per cent) had a disability or long-term health condition.

Among respondents who are Client Panel members, over two thirds (69 per cent) had experience of Carer's Allowance Supplement. Around a third had experience of Best Start Foods/Grant (38 per cent) or Scottish Child Payment (31 per cent). Among respondents who are Experience Panel members, the most common benefit experience was of Disability Living Allowance (65 per cent).

Further demographic information about the respondents can be found at Annex A.

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3. Before the visit

Respondents were asked a series of questions about visiting the Dundee and Glasgow offices. These included whether they would ever consider visiting the office for an appointment and what information that they would like to know before arriving. A majority said that they would consider visiting either Agnes Husband House or the Glasgow office for an appointment if they needed advice or support (Tables 3.1 and 3.2).

Table 3.1: In the future, if you needed advice or support, would you consider visiting Agnes Husband House for an appointment? (n=33)

Response options	Number
Yes	27
No	2
I'm not sure	4

Table 3.2: In the future, if you needed advice or support, would you consider visiting the Glasgow office for an appointment? (n=52)

Response options	Number
Yes	36
No	4
I'm not sure	12

3.1. Dundee

Respondents were asked to rank information that would be important for them to know before travelling to an appointment. Dundee respondents said information about parking and information on what to expect when arriving at the building were most important to them (Table 3.3). Directions for driving to the building and distance from the nearest train or bus stop were ranked as least important.

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Table 3.3: What would be important for you to know before you travelled to Agnes Husband House? (n=28)

Rank	Type of information
1	Information on parking, including disabled parking
2	Information on what to expect when I arrive
3	Facilities in the building
4	Bus routes (the number of the bus) that travel close to the building
5	Information about the layout of the building
6	Directions for driving to the building from different directions
7	Distance from the nearest train station or bus stop

Some respondents left comments about other types of information they would want before visiting Agnes Husband House. One respondent said information about road crossings near the building would be helpful. One mentioned what COVID-19 safety measures might be in place. Other respondents wanted to know about the inside of the building. One of these mentioned likely waiting times and seating arrangements. Two respondents left comments related to the layout of the building, explaining why this information is helpful to visitors with sensory needs.

"Images of the inside of the building, or a video walk through would be very helpful to me as an autistic adult. New places can be very overwhelming and knowing what to expect really helps. It also helps me identify what kinds of sensory overwhelm I'm likely to experience, so that I can prepare or bring someone with me for support." **Experience Panel member**

3.2. Glasgow

Glasgow respondents similarly ranked information about what to expect on arrival and information on parking as being the most important for them to know before travelling to the Glasgow office (Table 3.4). Directions for driving to the building and information about the building layout were ranked as least important.

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Table 3.4: **What would be important for you to know before you travelled to the Glasgow office?** (n=44)

	Types of information
1	Information about what to expect when I arrive
2	Information on parking, including disabled parking
3	Distance from the nearest train station or bus stop
4	Bus routes (the number of the bus) that travel close to the building
5	Facilities in the building
6	Directions for driving to the building from different directions
7	Information about the building layout

Some respondents left comments about other types of information they would want to know before visiting the Glasgow office. Most of these respondents elaborated on the response options above, commenting that they would like detailed information about the internal layout of the building and facilities. This included: seating arrangements; facilities for children; information about the number and location of stairs; lifts and disabled parking spaces. A few respondents mentioned that information on likely waiting times would be important. One Glasgow respondent commented on the importance of information about COVID-19 safety measures.

"Distance from disabled car parking bays to entrance and is it level; how many disabled parking bays; is there more than one lift in the building?" **Experience Panel member**

"Is the entrance level with the pavement, if not, how many steps to reach the door? Are there lifts to the upper floors?" **Experience Panel member**

4. Entering the building

Respondents were asked a series of questions about entering either Agnes Husband House or the Glasgow office. Table 4.1 shows preferences for how staff should greet a visitor.

Table 4.1: **When you enter the building, how should a staff member greet you?** (n=79) Column percentages

Response options	All respondents (n=79)
I'd like to approach a staff member when I'm ready to ask for help	38%
A staff member should approach me as soon as I enter	25%
I don't mind	35%
Other	2%

Nearly four in ten (38 per cent) respondents said that they would like to approach a staff member when they ready to ask for help. A quarter (25 per cent) said that a staff member should approach them as soon as they enter the building. Over one third (35 per cent) of respondents said that they did not mind either way.

Most respondents (81 per cent) said that they would feel confident about telling a staff member the reason for their visit (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: **Would you feel confident about telling the staff member the reason for your visit? (**n=79) Column percentages

Response options	All respondents (n=79)
Yes, I'd feel comfortable explaining why I am there	81%
No, I'd like information before my visit to tell me what I should say	11%
Not sure	8%

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Around one in ten (11 per cent) said that they would like information before their visit to tell them what they should say on arrival.

Respondents were told that before visiting either of the buildings in Dundee or Glasgow, clients will be able to book an appointment to meet a member of staff. When they book an appointment, clients will be able to include information about their accessibility or other needs if they wish. Respondents were asked if this information should be shared with the staff who welcome you to the building (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: **Should this information be shared with the staff who welcome you to the building?** (n=79) Column percentages

Response options	All respondents (n=79)
Yes	89%
No	3%
Not sure	8%

A majority of respondents (89 per cent) said accessibility information should be shared with the staff who welcome clients to the building. Respondents were asked to provide reasons for this. Most said that sharing this information would simply enable staff to better help and support clients. It would mean plans could be put in place of advance of the visit, making the overall appointment experience personalised and efficient.

Respondents also felt that it would reduce any confusion or misunderstandings. For example, by removing the need for clients to repeat personal information about their needs in a public place. Some respondents said this would make them feel welcome and reduce any anxiety they felt about the visit and/or appointment.

"If the staff member is aware of any issues this will avoid the need to explain it again and make the interaction smoother." **Client Panel member**

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> *"If the person welcoming is aware of any accessibility issues then any necessary allowances can already be sorted (translators, signers etc)."* **Client Panel member**

> *"I think the staff greeting clients into the building should be made aware of any additional needs prior to the clients arrival. This helps with peoples' anxiety of the unknown when they get there."* **Client Panel member**

> *"I'm of the opinion that staff are there to help, and the more they know about a customer's needs or requirements the better they are positioned to help."* **Client Panel member**

5. Team name

Respondents were asked what the team of staff who welcome visitors to the buildings could be called. Around 60 respondents left suggestions. The most common suggestions were for a name that included "reception" for example, "Receptionists" or "Reception Staff" (17 comments). "Welcome" was also a popular term across the suggestions (12 comments).

> *"'Reception' - that's what people expect when going into a building. A Reception Staff covers all these important duties."* **Experience Panel member**

> *"The welcome team. A name which makes it clear what it is they do."* **Client Panel member**

There were a number of other suggestions:

- Social Security Scotland Ambassadors
- Customer/client support or adviser
- Front house staff
- The Meet & Greet team

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- First contact team
- Go To Staff
- Guides

Respondents were told that 'front of house team' was one suggestion for the name of the team. Respondents were asked if it was clear from the name who these staff were and what they do (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: **Is it clear from the name of the team (front of house) who these staff are what they do?** (n=79) Column percentages

Response options	All respondents (n=79)
Yes, it's clear from the name 'front of house' who these staff are what they do	61%
No, the name 'front of house' doesn't make it clear who these staff are or what they do	27%
Not sure	13%

Six out of ten respondents (61 per cent) said that the name was clear. However, when combined, four out of ten said the name either was not clear (27 per cent) or that they were unsure (13 per cent). Respondents were asked to explain their answer. Those respondents who agreed that the name was clear said it was simple and straightforward and accurately described the staff role.

"The name says it all. They are there to welcome people to the facility." **Client Panel member**

"Front of house indicates they are first point of contact." **Client Panel member**

"It conveys what they're there for and the concept of welcoming." **Experience Panel member**

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Other respondents described the name 'front of house team' as confusing. These respondents said the name held connotations with the entertainment and hospitality sector and that it did not seem appropriate for the organisation. Even those respondents who did understand the name commented that it may not be obvious to others.

"Office staff are likely to understand this...but recently bereaved pensioners or young carers may not." **Client Panel member**

"Front of house seems more appropriate to a hotel or restaurant than an office." **Experience Panel member**

"Sounds like a theatre or entertainment environment not government building." **Experience Panel member**

"It doesn't really explain their job." **Experience Panel member**

6. Uniform

Respondents were asked whether staff should wear a uniform (Table 6.1) and if so, what style this uniform should be (Table 6.2).

Table 6.1:   Preference for staff to wear a uniform (n=79) Column percentages

Response options	All respondents (n=79)
Yes	49%
No, staff should wear their own clothes	34%
Not sure	16%

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Table 6.2: **Preferred style of uniform** (n=51) Column percentages

Response options	Respondents who selected uniform (n=51)
Shirt	47%
Polo shirt	37%
Neither	16%

Around half of respondents (49 per cent) said that staff should wear a uniform. Around one third (34 per cent) said that staff should wear their own clothes. The most popular style of uniform was a shirt (47 per cent). Respondents who preferred shirts said this style was smart and professional. Those who preferred polo shirts said they liked a less formal uniform style.

"Either is fine, I just think that the marginally more formal look of a shirt with collar and sleeves may be more reassuring for a lot of people". **Experience Panel member**

"I selected shirt because I don't think staff should appear too casual." **Client Panel member**

"Approachable not formal but still easily identifiable." **Experience Panel member who preferred polo shirt**

"More comfortable for staff member and would be viewed as less officious, making clients more relaxed." **Client Panel member who preferred polo shirt**

Many respondents, regardless of which style they preferred, said it was important that staff were easily recognised. Comments said clients must be able to tell the difference between staff and other visitors to the building.

"It is much less stressful if you can tell who is staff when you enter a building. I think if staff are dressed in a smart professional way I would feel that I am being attended to by well trained professional people. They could be wearing their own clothes but with a very clear viz vest type of thing and a clear badge worn around the neck this would be sufficient." **Experience Panel member**

"Polo shirt - more comfortable for the person wearing it. Main thing is they don't just look like a member of public." **Experience Panel member**
"I would not be really bothered about the style of the uniform, just something that makes staff easily identifiable to clients." **Experience Panel member**

6.1. Shirts

Respondents who said staff should wear a shirt were asked to choose their preferred style from two options (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: **Preferred style of shirt** (n=24)

Response options	Respondents who selected shirt (n=24)
Oxford	15
Poplin	8
Neither	1

Most respondents (15 of 24) who said staff should wear a shirt preferred the Oxford style. These respondents were asked to select their preferred colour in this style (Table 6.4). Most said that either the blue or white colour of this shirt style was fine.

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Table 6.4: **Preferred colour of Oxford shirt** (n=15)

Response options	Respondents who selected Oxford shirt (n=15)
Blue	5
White	3
Either	7

Fewer respondents said they preferred the poplin shirt style (8 of 24). Of these, almost all said they preferred the style in navy compared to pink (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5: **Preferred colour of poplin shirt** (n=8)

Response options	Respondents who selected Poplin Shirt (n=8)
Navy	6
Pink	1
Either	1

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6.2. Ties

Respondents who said staff should wear a shirt were asked if this uniform style should include a tie (Table 6.6). Most said they didn't mind whether staff wore a tie with their shirt (14 of 24).

Table 6.6:   Preference for staff wear a tie with their shirt (n=24)

Response options	Respondents who selected shirt (n=24)
Yes	7
No	3
I don't mind	14

Respondents who said that staff should wear a tie with their shirt said that this was 'smarter' and set expectations around professionalism and seniority.

"Feel it presents a professional image and therefore I can expect to be dealt with in a professional manner." **Client Panel member**

"More business-like and this is means that you are more likely to be able to assist. If there are three people, one with a polo one with an open neck shirt and one with a shirt and tie the assumption is that the person with a shirt and tie is in authority." **Client Panel member**

Other respondents said that staff should not wear a tie because it is too formal. One respondent had concerns about staff safety.

"Although more formal etc I cannot help but be concerned that someone desperate or indeed just daft could pull the tie causing harm to the staff member, that is I hope very unlikely but better safe as they say." **Experience Panel member**

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Respondents who said that they did not mind whether staff wore a tie felt that it should be optional and left to personal choice. Others felt that shirt uniforms can look professional without a tie. These respondents also said that a uniform can set expectations for clients. They reasoned that not wearing a tie may make staff appear more approachable to clients and make them feel comfortable and relaxed.

> *"I do think it's important that staff look smart and professional but I don't feel a tie is essential to look smart."* **Experience Panel member**

> *"It's very smart but when you're dealing with nervous customers the tie can be very formal when people maybe want an informal chat."* **Client Panel member**

> *"Staff need to feel comfortable, this communicates to clients making them more relaxed and truthful about any issues."* **Experience Panel member**

Respondents also said whether all staff should wear the same colour of tie (Table 6.7). Most said yes (9 of 21) but only slightly fewer said they didn't mind.

Table 6.7: **Preference for staff to wear the same colour of tie** (n=21)

Response options	Respondents who selected shirt (n=21)
Yes	9
No	5
I don't mind	7

Respondents who said that all staff should wear the same colour of tie said that uniformity was important. Wearing the same colour and uniform would clearly identify staff as being part of the same organisation and team. These respondents felt that all staff should look and be treated the same. Those respondents who said they did not mind said that staff should be allowed to pick their own colour of tie to express their individuality.

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"Makes everyone look part of a team and helps visitors identify staff." **Client Panel member**

6.3. Polo shirts

Respondents who said staff should wear a polo shirt as uniform were asked which colour they preferred (Table 6.8). Most chose either pink or navy (8 of 18).

Table 6.8: **Preferred polo shirt colour** (n=18)

Response options	Respondents who selected polo shirt (n=18)
Pink	6
Navy	4
Either	8

6.4. Logos

Respondents who said that staff should wear a uniform were shown two designs for logos or branding. One design included the Social Security Scotland icon with text. The second design included only the icon (Table 6.9).

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Table 6.9:   Preferred logo style (n=51) Column percentages

Response options	Respondents who selected uniform (n=51)
Icon with text	86%
Icon only	6%
Either	8%

Almost all respondents (86 per cent) said they preferred the logo design that included both the icon and text.

6.5. Security staff uniform

Respondents were asked if security staff should wear a uniform (Table 6.10) and if so, if this uniform should be different to that worn by other staff (Table 6.11).

Table 6.10:   Preference for security staff uniform (n=79) Column percentages

Response options	All respondents (n=79)
Yes	80%
No	14%
Not sure	6%

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Table 6.11: **Preference for type of security staff uniform** (n=68) Column percentages

Response options	Respondents who selected security uniform or unsure (n=68)
Yes, security staff should wear a different uniform that looks different to other staff	84%
No, security staff should wear the same uniform as other staff	9%
Not sure	7%

The majority of respondents (80 per cent) said that security staff should wear a uniform. Of these respondents, most (84 per cent) said that this uniform should be different to that worn by other staff.

In their comments, respondents said it was important that visitors were able to easily tell the difference between staff and security personnel. Respondents said this was important to make clear what their role is and indicate the types of assistance they can provide. Some respondents said they would feel confident or reassured if security staff were clearly distinguished from other staff. They said this would help them to feel safe should they need assistance. Others said that a distinctive uniform would clearly signal that security staff cannot answer questions about benefits. These respondents said this would help avoid confusion about staff's job roles and what questions they might be able to help with.

"This would identify security staff and their uniform should be more formal." **Experience Panel member**

"They should stand out from other staff so as to indicate that they are security staff and avoid any awkwardness if a client should ask them about something regarding their appointment which is of course nothing to do with the duties of a security guard." **Client Panel member**

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"Security should have a distinctive uniform to make them easily identifiable. This is reassuring to me, when I can see that security are around to help if they are needed." **Client Panel member**

"Yes, security staff should wear a different colour, black tends to work. If they look the same as the other staff you might approach them to ask a question they might not be able to answer. It should be clear they are security." **Client Panel member**

Four respondents who said security staff should wear the same uniform as other staff left comments. One mentioned that job role should be included on identification, such as on a lanyard. One said by wearing the same uniform as other staff, security staff could blend in without distinguishing themselves. One said it would be confusing if different staff wore different uniforms. One said security staff should be employed by the Scottish Government and not contractors.

Two respondents who weren't sure if security should wear the same uniform as other staff said security guards could be intimidating for visitors.

"I don't think reception and advisors should wear uniforms. I'm not sure about security staff. It sends a powerful message if security staff are in uniform and it depends if that is the message the new agency wants to send." **Experience Panel Member**

"Some find typical security staff in general and their uniforms intimidating, so thought should be given to this." **Experience Panel Member**

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6.6. Name badges

Respondents were asked to select their favourite name badge from five designs (Table 6.12.)

Table 6.12: Preferred for staff badge design (n=79) Column percentages

Response options		All respondents (n=79)
	First name and team name	48%
	Full name and team name	25%
	Full name	16%
	First name	8%
	Team name	3%

The most preferred design included staff first name and team name. The second most popular design was for full staff name and team name. The least preferred design was the team name without staff name.

7. What's next?

Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government will continue to work with the Client and Experience Panels to make sure the social security system works for the people of Scotland.

The views presented in this report are being taken into consideration by the teams who are preparing the Dundee and Glasgow buildings to welcome visitors. All aspects of the plans, layout and furniture in Agnes Husband House will be carefully planned to support clients.

Preferences for the appearance of staff are being used to help make decisions around what staff will wear and their identification. Proposals about security staff's uniforms and the design of name badges are being developed in line with the findings presented in this report. Views about staff behaviour will be used to provide staff with training on how best to support clients who visit these buildings.

Alongside previous research, these findings are also being used by colleagues who support clients in their local areas across Scotland. For example, the types of information respondents want before a visit to a Social Security Scotland location. This includes the offices in Dundee and Glasgow and the Outreach venues located across the country.

8. Annex A: Survey respondent characteristics tables

Table A1: Gender

Response options	All respondents (n=76)
Men	43%
Women	57%

Table A2: Age

Response options	All respondents (n=75)
Under 25	0%
25-44	29%
45-59	40%
60-79	28%
79+	*
Prefer not to say	*

*Suppressed due to low numbers.

Table A3: Caring responsibility

Response options	All respondents (n=76)
Has caring responsibilities	66%
No caring responsibilities	32%
Prefer not to say	*

*Suppressed due to low numbers.

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Table A4: Disability

Response options	All respondents (n=76)
Has a physical or mental health condition	58%
No condition	39%
Prefer not to say	*

*Suppressed due to low numbers.

Table A5: Geographical location

Response options	All respondents (n=82)
Urban	94%
Rural	6%

Table A6: Client Panels respondents' benefit experience

Response options	All respondents (n=39)
Carer's Allowance Supplement	69%
Best Start Foods/Grant	38%
Scottish Child Payment	31%
Job Start Payment	0%
Child Winter Heating Assistance	*
Funeral Support Payment	*
Young Carer Grant	*

*Suppressed due to low numbers.

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Table A7: Experience Panels respondents' benefit experience (n=38-43)

Response options	All respondents
Disability Living Allowance	65%
Personal Independence Payment	60%
Carer's Allowance	42%
Winter Fuel Payment	26%
Cold Weather Payment	23%
Discretionary Housing Payment	21%
Severe Disablement Allowance	16%
Attendance Allowance	*
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	*
Scottish Welfare Fund	*
Universal Credit	*

*Suppressed due to low numbers.

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this report:

☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics

☐ are available via an alternative route

☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact ResearchRequests@socialsecurity.gov.scot for further information.

☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.