



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Social Security Client Panels research – Web Chat

Summary report

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.



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Background

This report presents a summary of results from a survey with Client Panel members. Established in 2020, the Client Panels are made up of Social Security Scotland clients from across Scotland. Researchers speak to panel members to find out what people's experience of Social Security Scotland has been like. The research informs decisions about Social Security Scotland's systems, processes and policies.

The survey took place between November 2021 and January 2022. The survey explored views about Social Security Scotland's web chat service. All panel members were invited to take part in the survey. In total, 170 members took part in the survey (a response rate of 9%).

The results only represent the views of the Client Panel members who took part in the survey. Results shouldn't be interpreted as being representative of all Social Security Scotland clients.



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Experiences using web chat

Only 25 respondents (15%) said they had used the service. All rated their overall experience as 'good' or 'very good'. All said it was likely or very likely that they would use web chat if they had to contact Social Security Scotland again in the future. All, or all but one, said:

- it was clear they were chatting with an adviser and not an automated bot
- they felt confident sharing personal information in the chat, and
- they were treated with dignity, fairness and respect.



Around half of respondents (47%) hadn't heard of the web chat service.

"Everything was clear on the website."

Survey respondent

"It [was] easy to access and got someone quickly to sort my problem out."

"I got connected really easily. It was easy to use and a great additional service which I find the best for me personally to use."

Survey respondent

Views of respondents who hadn't used web chat

- Around two thirds (67%) of those who hadn't used or heard of the service said they were likely or very likely to use web chat in the future.
- Over a third (35%) said they would always use web chat as their preferred way to get in touch with Social Security Scotland.
- Those who hadn't used the service but would in the future said they would want to use web chat to: get advice or general information (84%) update their details (73%).
- Some respondents said they wouldn't use web chat for things like making an application, challenging a decision or discussing financial details.



Most said information about web chat should be made available on the website, on letters, and during the

"Possibly to try to fix any payment mistakes I would rather talk to an adviser."

Survey respondent

"If I was querying a benefits decision I'd almost certainly prefer to put my query in writing and send it by post to be signed for, so I'd have proof positive that you received it. In all honesty I'd probably want to do the same if submitting an application for a benefit I believed I was eligible for. Hard copy is still the safest to keep copies of important/legal documents."

Improvements

Respondents were asked for ideas about how the service could be improved.

Clients can start a web page via a link on mygov.scot website. Two respondents who had used the service said it was difficult to start a chat and hard to find the homepage.

A few respondents left comments about the drop down box which asks which benefit the user wants to discuss. Respondents said it was important that this included an option to choose 'other'.

Other suggestions for information it would be helpful to have on the homepage were:

- Advice on the best method of contact for different purposes and the types of queries that web chat advisers can help with
- Information on who else can see the chat and about data security

"I found it hard to find on your website and found I had to google, Social Security Scotland web chat to find it."

Survey respondent who has used web chat

"As long as the drop box has "other" as subject it looks fine. The drop down box is unlikely to list every issue someone has."

Survey respondent who

"A reminder on every page about which Social Security benefits can be discussed using web chat."

Survey respondent who hasn't used web chat

"Will the chat be saved, and if so where? Who else will access the chat [and] are my details kept private?"

Survey respondent who hasn't used web chat

Chat Window

- One respondent who had used the service said the button to send a message should be easier to use.
- Among respondents who hadn't used the service, the most frequent suggestion was for more information about the adviser. For example, a staff number, a picture and working location.
- Other suggestions for the chat window were:
 - A button to make a comment, a complaint, or request a call back
 - A reference number or code for the chat
 - The time and date
 - Wait times for replies
 - A reminder to have personal details and information ready and not to share bank details in the chat

"Maybe a picture of the staff member to make it more personal."

"A request a call back button."

Survey respondent who hasn't used web chat

"Maybe a reference number for the chat? This might help for any follow-up queries that were needed, or if the applicant needed to refer to the specific chat?"

Additional functions

In the future, Social Security Scotland may add further functions to the web chat service.

Suggestions included:

- Ability to upload a document or image
- Information on how the chat could be adapted for clients with accessibility needs.
- Ability to pause and return to the chat at a later time.

Respondents were asked to rank four possible additional functions from most to least important. The most popular were:

1. Estimated waiting time to chat with an adviser
2. A button to request a transcript
3. Ability to adapt the chat window e.g. move the window or change the colour of the text
4. An automatic survey to provide feedback at the end of a chat.

“Perhaps a button to add an image. For instance a letter that has been received by the member of public. Or for the chat staff to send helpful screenshots for the customer so they can see what the advisor is meaning.”

“Accessibility features like changing the text size.”

Survey respondent who hasn't used web chat

“[People should be able to] take a break and come back to the chat later if they wish or need. Reassure them that there is no time limit on them, and they can come and go, without having to repeat themselves each time.”

Survey respondent

Next Steps

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

The findings have been shared with leaders who manage the web chat service. They were pleased with the positive experiences reported by respondents and are making plans to share and celebrate this within their teams and across the organisation.

The findings will also be used in decision-making about how to develop the service. This will include how to increase the awareness of, and promote, the web chat service to clients. Feedback about the homepage and chat window, as well as ideas for additional functions will also be used to decide on and prioritise improvements. Design and delivery teams in Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government will do this when planning for the future of the service.



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