



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Business Plan

2025 – 2026



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“This support will give me much-needed breathing space to manage my mental health conditions, and I truly believe it will improve my quality of life. I feel genuinely grateful to have been treated with respect by Social Security Scotland.”

Adult Disability Payment client

Chief Executive's introduction

In our seventh full operational and financial year, this year's Business Plan sets out our priorities for a pivotal year ahead of us as the Scottish Government's Social Security Programme approaches its planned end in 2026. Social Security Scotland will continue to work closely with Scottish Government to launch the remaining devolved social security benefits, including the launch of a revised Pension Age Winter Heating Payment, Scottish Carer Supplement and Carer Additional Person Payment. Preparations for the new Two Child Limit Payment are also well underway, and we will begin accepting applications in March next year. At less than 15 months from when it was announced in the Scottish budget, this will be the fastest that a Scottish social security benefit has been delivered. The national rollout of Pension Age Disability Payment was completed in April 2025. The launch of these additional benefits represents a significant milestone in the number of clients that Social Security Scotland will be delivering benefits to, reaching around 2 million people in Scotland.

We will also carefully consider the recommendations of a number of key independent reports which are due this year, including the Independent Review of Adult Disability Payment being chaired by Edel Harris OBE, a performance audit of Adult Disability Payment by Audit Scotland and the findings of the Scottish Commission on Social Security on people with communication needs and how they access the Scottish social security system. As set out in Our Charter, we want to design services that meet the needs of the people we

serve and will welcome these insights as a way to continually improve our service to our clients. Our Mainstreaming Equality Report 2025 includes case studies that demonstrate our progress towards becoming an inclusive employer and public service for Scotland's diverse communities.

The coming year will also see further major developments for Social Security Scotland as an organisation. With the Social Security Programme coming to a planned end, we will bring together skills and expertise of Social Security Programme along with Social Security Scotland, as well as the functions, processes and capabilities required to deliver benefits for the people of Scotland. Much of this hugely important work is already underway, and we will continue this year to build solid foundations for our future.

Our Business Plan for 2025/26 continues to be closely aligned to the strategic goals set out in our Corporate Plan. Underpinning everything we do is our contribution to Public Service Reform, ensuring Social Security Scotland continues to deliver our commitments in Our Charter, to contribute to Scottish Government National Outcomes, and to fulfil our statutory obligations.

As we continually improve our service, we understand the difference the payments we deliver make to the people of Scotland. This Business Plan aims to set out how we will continue to deliver a value for money service for our clients based on our values of dignity, fairness and respect.



David Wallace

David Wallace
Chief Executive, Social Security Scotland

About us

We administer the Scottish Government's social security benefits for the people of Scotland. We were established in September 2018 and sit within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice. We are also part of the Scottish Government's Director General Communities portfolio.

We contribute to these National Outcomes:

- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

Our governance framework supports an effective relationship with Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers and ensures alignment with ministerial priorities. Our Executive Advisory Body includes people with a broad range of skills and lived experience of social security. They provide strategic advice and constructive challenge to help us continue delivering social security in line with the principles laid down in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 and Our Charter.

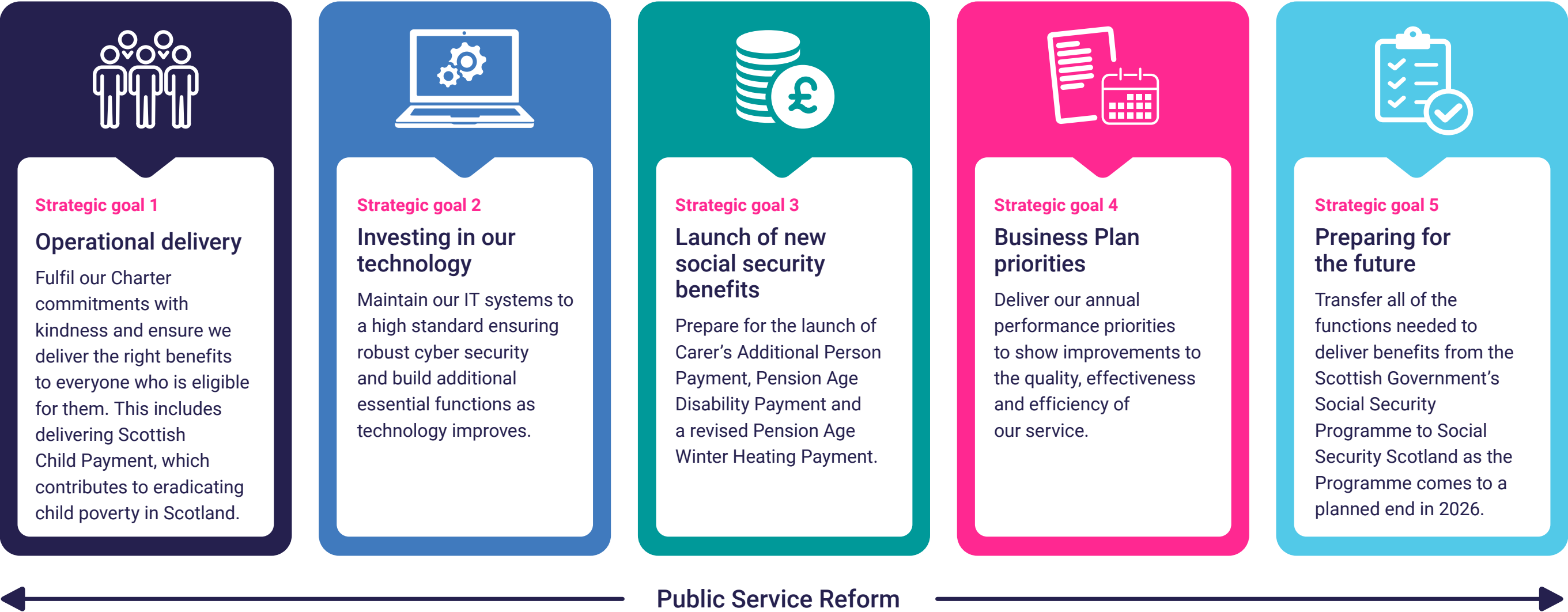
As set out in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, Our Charter sets out what people should expect from the social security system in Scotland. Our Charter was created by people with experience of social security, organisations that help or represent our clients, and our colleagues. Our Charter outlines our responsibilities and commitments to the people of Scotland and underpins all our work including our commitment to treating people with dignity, fairness and respect.

Our Business Plan outlines our goals in 2025-26 and is aligned to our three-year Corporate Plan for 2024-27. We report on progress each year in our Annual Report and Accounts.



Strategic goals

Our 2024-27 Corporate Plan sets out our five strategic goals



Operational delivery



Operational delivery improvements

We will continue to work to improve how we deliver our benefits. We will identify and improve our communications with clients through their application journey, making their experience better and easier to understand. We will continue to identify and implement improvements, which will help support our aim of ensuring clients receive the benefits they are entitled to. In the year ahead we will focus on automation opportunities across our benefits, streamlining processes and technology in order to help our colleagues respond more quickly and effectively to clients' needs. So we can offer our clients the right help at the right time, we will also enhance our approach to safeguarding clients who may be vulnerable and have safeguarding needs, and this will include continuing to improve the ways that other public services can share safeguarding information with us.

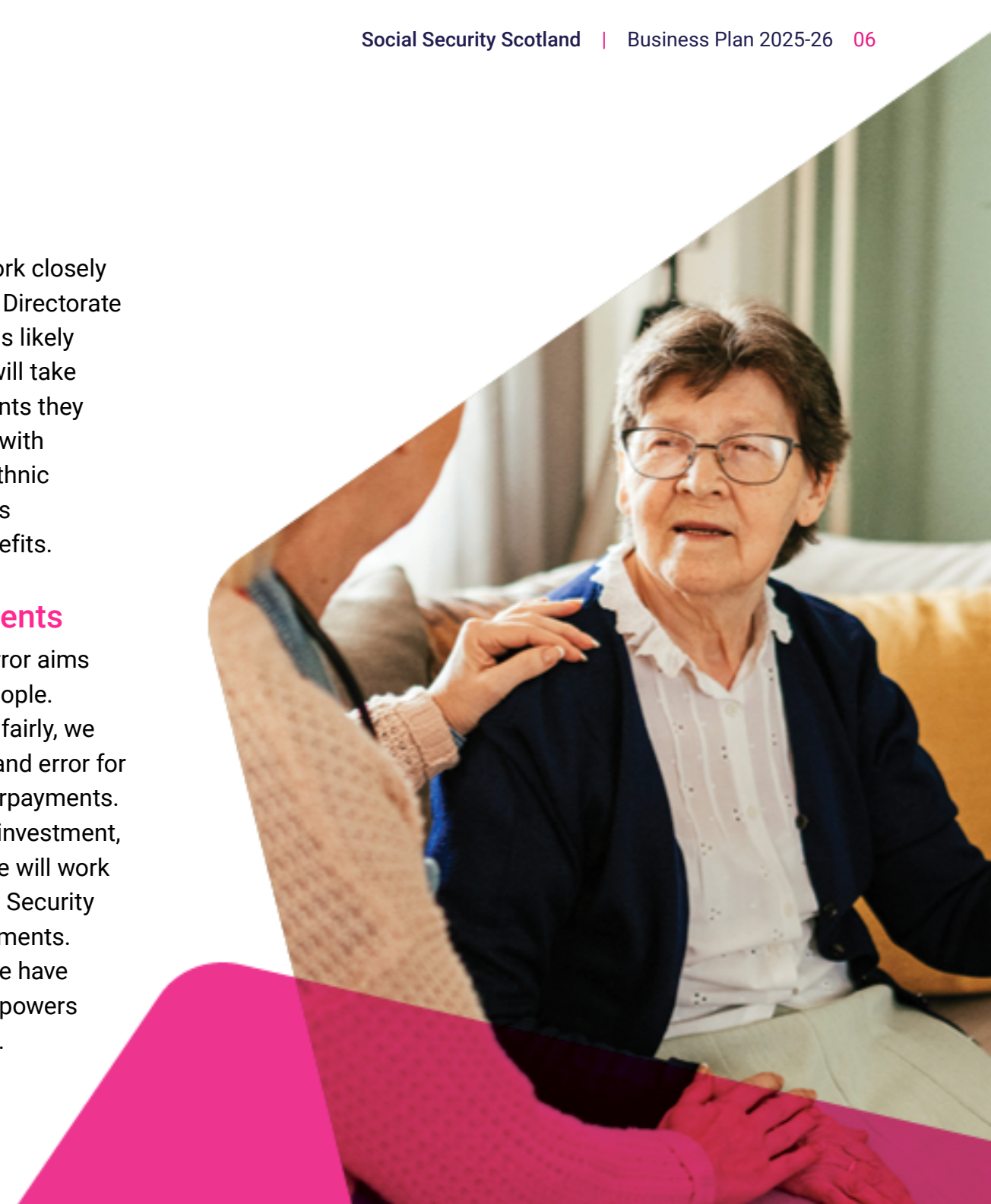
Benefit take-up

We are committed to making sure that everyone is aware of and able to access the benefits that they are entitled to. This includes supporting the introduction of new payments with clear communications as well as ongoing promotion of all the payments we administer.

We will draw on insight and evaluation and work closely with the Scottish Government Social Security Directorate to understand the reasons that people are less likely to apply for benefits they are entitled to. We will take steps to support people to receive the payments they qualify for. A key focus for us will be working with 13 seldom-heard groups, including minority ethnic groups and socially-isolated people, as well as tackling stigma associated with claiming benefits.

Fraud and error service improvements

Work to improve our approach to fraud and error aims to ensure the right money goes to the right people. To ensure we use public money correctly and fairly, we will continue to refine how we manage fraud and error for all our benefits, including how we recover overpayments. Fraud is a fast-evolving crime which requires investment, including improvements to our technology. We will work closely with the Scottish Government's Social Security Programme to implement a range of improvements. We will use our resources flexibly to ensure we have capability to prepare for additional legislative powers to measure monetary value of fraud and error.



Investing in our technology



Client payment system strategy

The technology we use to pay our benefits is critical to Social Security Scotland and to our clients. Social Security Scotland currently administers over £5 billion in benefits payments annually to approximately 1.7 million Scottish clients. This amount is expected to grow to about £7 billion by 2027. Currently, a number of our payments are delivered to our clients on our behalf by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). To ensure we continue to take the right approach, we will develop a client payment system strategy. Once complete, this will inform decisions about the future approach to the client payment system based on providing both a good service to our clients and value for money for the people of Scotland.

Critical digital maintenance

We will continue to invest in our critical digital services that support delivery of our benefits to our clients. We will undertake critical work to ensure readiness for the delivery of our Winter payment schedule, when we make a larger number of payments to our clients across Scotland. As data about our performance is important to our clients, our partners and the public, we will continue to make improvements to our data systems to support operational delivery and better meet our commitments to being open and transparent. More broadly, we will consider a range of options for investment in our technology based on an independent assessment of our digital capability undertaken last year with the aim of providing best value for money, better experience for our clients and fulfilling our legal duties.



Launch of new social security benefits



As part of the final year of the Social Security Programme, we will continue to launch further Social Security benefits at pace. We will roll out a revised Pension Age Winter Heating Payment, Scottish Carer Supplement and Carer Additional Person Payment. Alongside this, we are preparing for the launch of the new Two Child Limit Payment, case transfer for Disability

Living Allowance, and have recently completed the national roll out of Pension Age Disability Payment. We will work with policy colleagues to understand any impacts from UK Government social security reforms. The scale and pace of the work is significant. Against this demanding backdrop, our focus will remain as delivering value for money and quality service for our clients.



Pension Age Disability Payment national roll-out and Case Transfer

Extra money for people who have reached state pension age and have care needs because of a disability or long-term health condition; or who have a terminal illness.



Scottish Carer Supplement

An extra payment for unpaid carers. It will replace Carer's Allowance Supplement and will be paid at the same time as Carer Support Payment.



Case transfer for Disability Living Allowance

Disability Living Allowance is being replaced by Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance for adults in Scotland. This will happen automatically.



Two Child Limit Payment

A new payment which will be paid to families living in Scotland impacted by the Universal Credit two child limit policy. It will be equivalent to the Universal Credit child element and paid monthly in arrears.



Carer Additional Person Payment

Extra money on top of Carer Support Payment for people who care for more than one person.



Revised Pension Age Winter Heating Payment

To be introduced in winter 2025/2026 for all pensioners with an income of less than £35,000 in Scotland.

Preparing for the future



Preparing for Programme closure

As the Scottish Government's Social Security Programme comes to its planned end in March 2026, full responsibility for the operational delivery of devolved benefits for the people of Scotland will sit with Social Security Scotland. To prepare for this, we will set out how our people, processes, and technology will come together to work most effectively. In particular, we will deepen expertise in change delivery by bringing together our skills in Social Security Scotland with those from Social Security Programme. This integration of skills helps us fulfil the commitment in Our Charter to a people's service that works and will ensure that operational delivery is maintained to a high standard while any changes are being implemented. We will continue to work closely with Social Security Policy in Scottish Government to ensure that ministerial priorities are successfully designed and implemented.

Investing in our people

We will continue to invest in our people as our organisation continues to evolve. The closure of the Social Security Programme will provide us with the opportunity to bring together key skills, experience and expertise already in Social Security Scotland and Social Security Programme into one place. We will continue to undertake work to support and develop our people. In particular, we will continue our

investment in management and leadership across the organisation, including continuing our commitment to the operational delivery and other professions. This includes everyone in Social Security Scotland using our new Framework of Practice to deliver our Equality outcomes 2025 – 2029. These outcomes focus on improving our mainstreaming culture; improving diversity in management and leadership structures; and improving the service for, and experience, of our diverse clients. This is how we will continue to be an inclusive employer and inclusive public service. We will also take forward our focus on our wellbeing by responding to issues raised in our People Survey and provide career and development opportunities for all our colleagues, ensuring we have the skills and capability we need for today, and tomorrow.



Public Service Reform

The establishment of the social security system in Scotland, including the creation of Social Security Scotland, is the most significant example of Public Service Reform since devolution.

As set out in our Corporate Plan 2024-27, Public Service Reform underpins all our strategic goals. As well as all the improvements set out above to continually improve services to clients and to increase efficiencies, we are committed to continually seeking opportunities to work closely with other organisations and listen to our clients to improve public services. In particular, we are committed to the appropriate sharing of data and evidence across the services and systems to facilitate effective and efficient delivery of public services for the people who rely on them. Examples of the contributions we will make to Public Service Reform in Scotland this year include the following:



As part of tackling child poverty, Social Security Scotland will work closely with Local Authorities to help improve the take-up of Free School Meals. We will do this through lawful sharing of data that will make access to Free School Meals for eligible Primary 6 and 7 pupils in receipt of Scottish Child Payment easier and more efficient.



We also continue to share data, where appropriate, with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority, His Majesty's Revenue and Customs, and Department for Work and Pensions to allow these organisations to efficiently deliver service to our clients.

Social Security Scotland continues to contribute to Public Service Reform through fulfilling the commitments in Our Charter, our contribution to the achievement of National Outcomes and implementation of our statutory duties.



Our Charter

Our Charter outlines our responsibilities and commitments to the people of Scotland and underpins all our work including our commitment to treating people with dignity, fairness and respect. We will continue to publish annually a Charter Measurement Report, showing how we have performed against the commitments in Our Charter.

Contribution to National Outcomes

Social Security Scotland contributes to the following National Outcomes:

- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

Statutory requirements

Social Security Scotland undertakes a wide range of work to meet statutory requirements. Some examples include:

- Making decisions about spending public money in line with the Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000
- Contributing to Scottish Ministers' duty to make Scotland a Net Zero country by 2045
- Respecting and fulfilling children's rights in our actions and decisions
- Processing our clients' data in line with General Data Protection Principles
- Enabling transparency about our performance by producing an Annual Report and Audit Accounts
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the Civil Service code
- Fulfilling our Public Sector Equality Duty and inclusive communication responsibilities

We will continue to engage with internal and external stakeholders to ensure we fulfil our obligations, working in partnership to ensure that collectively meet the needs of people in Scotland. We will report annually to our Audit and Assurance Committee, highlighting any key issues and areas for improvement. We will also publish our Annual Report and Accounts for 2024-25, detailing how we have spent our budget and how we have performed against our goals.

Stakeholder and client engagement

As part of fulfilling Our Charter commitment to "Processes that Work", we continue to design services with the people who use them. We do this through our relationships with clients and stakeholders who help us design services that respond to our clients' needs. As well as raising awareness of our benefits, we will continue to listen to our clients' and stakeholders' experiences and incorporate it when we are able, ensuring that the views of people from diverse backgrounds are heard. We do this in a number of ways, including through our annual Client Survey and our Client Panel, our research for the Charter Measurement Framework, improving our services through user-centred design, as well as through our Operational Reference Group, comprising of representatives of key stakeholder groups in the third sector and public services.

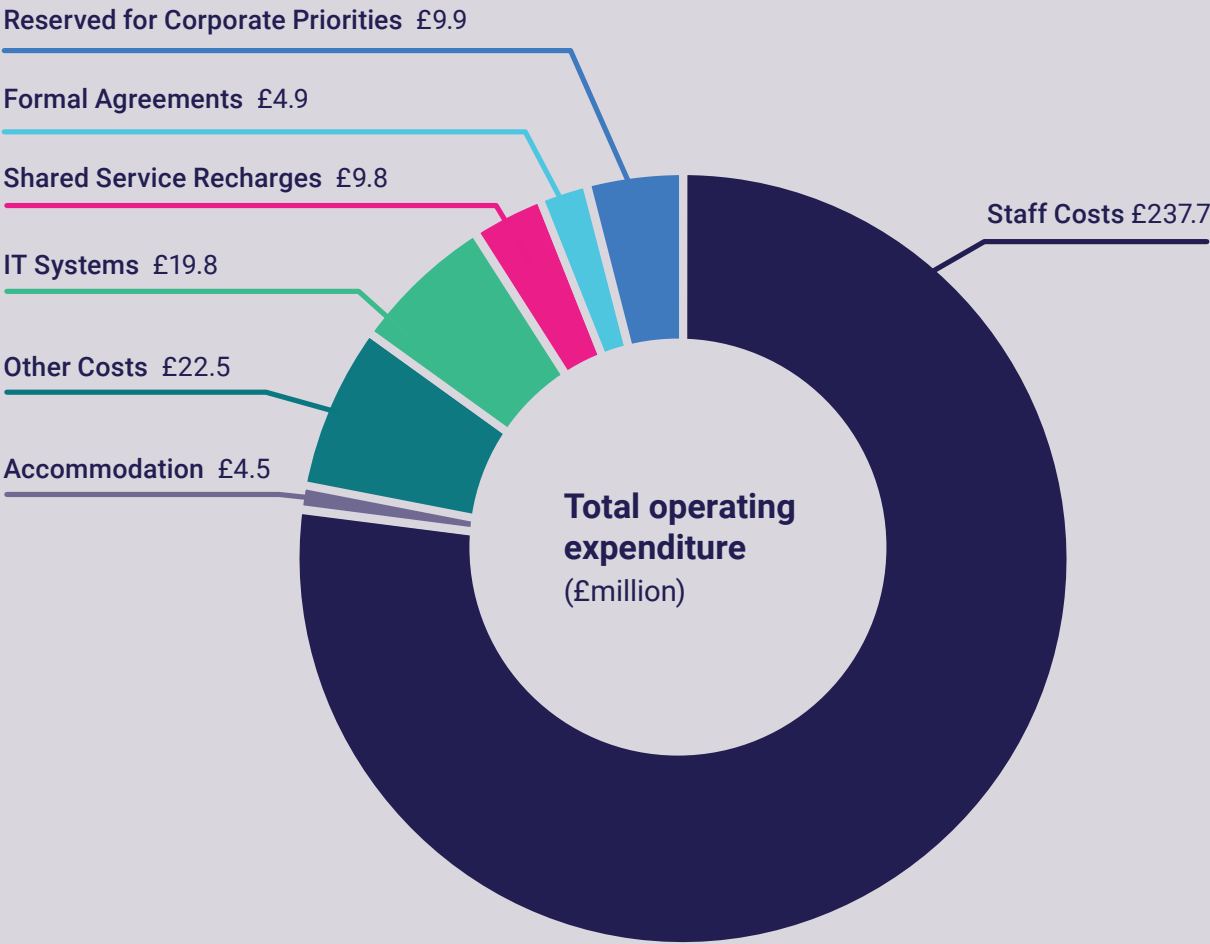
"I just wanted to say thank you for getting things sorted in a fast and really HUMAN way. Thank you so much!"

Child Disability Payment client

How we will spend our budget

Social Security Scotland	Original Budget 2024-25	Budget 2025-26	Increase/ (decrease)
	£million	£million	£million
Operating Expenditure	309.6	309.1	(0.5)
Capital Expenditure	5.0	4.1	(0.9)
Depreciation (Non-Cash)	7.4	7.4	-
Total Social Security Scotland administration	322.0	320.6	(1.4)
Benefit expenditure	6,133.4	6,726.6	593.2

We have allocated our budget as follows:



The Scottish Fiscal Commission, whose forecasts we base the budget for benefits delivery on, estimate that we will spend the following:

The figures for the 2025-26 budget have been taken from the Scottish Fiscal Commission’s Publication - **Scotland’s Economic and Fiscal Forecasts** – December 2024 | Scottish Fiscal Commission (table 5 Social Security Figures)

Job Start Payment and Young Carer Grant forecasts are provided by the Social Security Analysis Forecasting and Evaluation team.

Budgets are allocated against the replacement benefits administered by Social Security Scotland in line with the Scottish Fiscal Commission’s Economic and Fiscal Forecasts. However, some spend will continue to be reported against the UK equivalent benefit on a reducing basis until case transfer is complete.

Divisional budget allocation	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Budget
Delivered by Social Security Scotland	£million	£million
Adult Disability Payment	3,146.1	3,604.6
Best Start Foods	15.8	19.3
Best Start Grant	20.3	21.4
Carer's Allowance Supplement	53.8	62.0
Carer Support Payment	401.8	458.7
Child Disability Payment	518.0	617.7
Child Winter Heating Payment	10.2	11.9
Funeral Support Payment	12.9	13.9
Job Start Payment	0.3	0.3
Pension Age Disability Payment	763.8	833.5
Pension Age Winter Heating Payment	32.3	100.6
Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance	435.2	393.9
Scottish Child Payment	456.0	471.0
Winter Heating Payment	28.8	28.3
Young Carer Grant	1.6	1.8
Total delivered by Social Security Scotland	5,896.9	6,638.9
Delivered by the Department for Work & Pensions		
Industrial Injuries Disablement Scheme	83.7	83.4
Severe Disablement Allowance	5.2	4.4
Total Delivered by Department for Work & Pensions	88.9	87.8
Total	5,985.8	6,726.7

Measuring our success

We will report on how we have delivered the priorities in our Business Plan in a number of ways. These surveys and publications will clearly demonstrate how we are meeting our Corporate Plan strategic goals and contributing to Public Service Reform.

We will:

- Publish our Annual Report and Accounts for 2025-26, detailing how we have spent our budget and how we have performed against our goals
- Publish a Charter Measurement Report, showing how we have performed against the commitments in Our Charter
- Continue our annual People Survey to ensure we are meeting our obligations to our colleagues, as set out in our People Plan
- Undertake a Client Survey every year to gather valuable feedback from people about their experience of claiming benefits with us and use this to inform continuous improvement
- Publish a range of detailed statistical reports about our performance on the benefits we administer. These will show the impact we make on people's lives and offer suggestions for improvements to our services
- Publish our mainstreaming equality report in 2025
- Publish and report against our Quality and Performance Management Framework

Information on all our publications can be found here:

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/publications

“You made me feel right at ease and I appreciated the assistance given throughout the application and advice given. You are a superstar. This has made my day much better.”

Scottish Child Payment client

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