



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Social Security Client Panels Research: Members' feedback survey



Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	3
2. Background and methodology.....	4
3. Overall attitudes about the Client Panels.....	5
4. Client Panels communications.....	9
4.1. Welcome message	9
4.2. Invites to research	10
5. Client Panel publications.....	11
5.1. Newsletters	13
5.2. Reports	11
5.3. Research summaries	12
6. Taking part in Client Panels research activities.....	13
6.1. Surveys	15
6.2. Interviews	16
6.3. Support to take part	18
6.4. Future research	19
7. What's next?.....	22
How to access background or source data.....	23

1. Executive Summary

In May 2022, 364 members of Social Security Scotland's Client Panels took part in a survey about their experience of the panel. Below is a summary of the key findings.

Overall attitudes

- Around nine in ten strongly agreed or agreed that Social Security Scotland values feedback (88%) and the Client Panels is a good way to help them improve (87%).
- Nine out of ten (90%) said they were glad to be a member of the Client Panels and that they could take part in a way that suited them.
- The majority (85%) said taking part in the Client Panels was worthwhile.
- Almost all (95%) who had taken part in a research activity said they were very likely or likely to take part again in the future.
- Respondents were pleased to have the chance to share their views and contribute towards making improvements.

Communications

- Almost all strongly agreed or agreed that the welcome message was easy to understand (94%) and the information was useful and clear (90%).
- Almost all who had been invited to a research project said the invite was easy to understand (94%) and made it clear how to take part (94%). Just slightly fewer (88%) said the closing date on the invitation gave them enough time to take part.

Publications

- Almost all who had read reports said they were easy to understand (94%) and were detailed enough (91%). Almost all (94%) found the report(s) they read interesting.
- The majority who had read a summary said it was easy to understand (93%) and was detailed enough (91%). A similar number (93%) found the summary they read interesting.
- Almost all said the newsletter was easy to understand (95%) and that they found it interesting (91%).

Taking part in research activities

- Almost all respondents who had taken part in a survey said the questions were easy to understand (91%) the survey was easy to complete (93%) and the length of the survey was about right (86%).
- Most (90%) said they had enough time to take part before the survey was closed.
- All or almost all who took part in an interview said it was straightforward, the questions were easy to understand, and they were able to take part in a convenient way.
- All strongly agreed or agreed that the interviewer had made them feel at ease and said they were treated with dignity, fairness and respect throughout the interview process.
- Around one in five said they would be interested in taking part in a focus group in person (29%) or online via video call (23%). Around a third said they would be interested in an in-person interview at a local location (35%). Slightly fewer said they would be interested in an individual interview in their home (28%).

2. Background and methodology

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.

The Client Panels are managed by a research team based in Social Security Scotland. The aim of this research was to gather feedback from members about their experience of being part of the panel. The Client Panels team will use this feedback to make sure: communications are clear and accessible; publications are interesting and informative; and members are supported to take part in research activities and have a good experience when they do. The findings will also be reported in the [2021-22 Charter Measurement Framework](#).

The survey took place in May 2022. All panel members were invited to take part in the survey and 364 members choose to take part (a response rate of 12%).

Findings in this report are presented in tables. The number of respondents answering a question is shown in the title of the table as (n). Where the total number of responses is below 50, whole numbers are used instead of percentages.

Quotations are taken from comments left by respondents in open-text questions and have the label (Client Panel member). 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. Like the make-up of the Client Panels overall, most respondents were women and less than half had a disability or long-term health condition. Again, like the panel overall, a minority lived in a rural area or were from an ethnic minority background. There were respondents with experience of all current Social Security Scotland benefits apart from Job Start Payment.

3. Overall attitudes about the Client Panels

Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the Client Panels. The first set of statements were about Social Security Scotland's approach towards feedback from clients (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=359-362)

	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree/ Disagree
Social Security Scotland values feedback from people who use their services.	88%	10%	1%
Being a member of the Client Panels helps Social Security Scotland improve.	87%	11%	2%
Being a member of the Client Panels is a good way to provide feedback to Social Security Scotland about the service I have received.	94%	5%	1%

Around nine in ten (88%) said they strongly agreed or agreed that Social Security Scotland values feedback. Around the same number said the Client Panels helps Social Security Scotland improve and is a good way for clients to provide feedback.

Respondents were also asked to say how much they agreed or disagreed with two statements about their experience of being a panel member (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=359-361)

	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree/ Disagree
I'm glad to be a member of the Client Panels.	90%	9%	1%
It's possible to take part in Client Panel activities in a way that is convenient to me.	90%	9%	1%

Nine out of ten (90%) respondents said they were glad to be a member of the Client Panels and that they could take part in a way that suited them.

Respondents who had participated in a Client Panels project via a survey or interview were asked about their experience of taking part (Tables 3.3 and 3.4).

Table 3.3: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Taking part in Client Panels research is worthwhile for me (n=164)

Response options	
Strongly agree / agree	85%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%
Disagree / strongly disagree	-

Table 3.4: Based on your experience so far, how likely are you take part again in the future? (n=164)

Response options	
Very likely / likely	95%
Neither likely nor unlikely	5%
Unlikely / very unlikely	-

The majority (85%) said taking part in the Client Panels was worthwhile. Almost all (95%) said they were very likely or likely to take part again in the future.

Respondents had the chance to leave comments about their experience of the Client Panels. There was praise for Social Security Scotland's openness to learn and improve. Some highlighted the value of the Client Panels as a way for clients to provide feedback about their experience.

“I feel Social Security Scotland is taking lots of time to try to get as many views as possible and engage people to work together. It feels very good to be invited to contribute and feel listened [to].” **Client Panel member**

“[The Client Panels] are a great way to help and get things right for future clients who will need the services provided by Social Security Scotland and I get to talk with very nice people.” **Client Panel member**

“Please keep them [the Panels] going as it sends out a strong message that this organisation is run by people for people who care about people. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to take part in this.” **Client Panel member**

Many left positive comments about their experience of being a panel member. Respondents were pleased to have the chance to share their views and contribute towards making improvements.

“So far it’s been an enjoyable experience and I feel I’ve really as an individual contributed to all you will be doing to set up this new social security system.” **Client Panel member**

“I enjoy taking part in the panels and feel like my contributions are taken seriously.” **Client Panel member**

4. Client Panels communications

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the Client Panels communications they have received. These are welcome messages and invitations to take part in research projects. Respondents who said they hadn't read these communications were directed away from these questions.

4.1. Welcome messages

All new members are sent a welcome message with information about the Client Panels. Just over half of respondents (55%) said they had read a welcome message. These respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with various statements about the message (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=214-219)

Response options	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Can't remember
The message was easy to understand	94%	3%	-	2%
The message had useful information.	90%	6%	-	3%
The message made it clear what the Client Panels do.	90%	6%	-	3%

Almost all respondents (94%) said they strongly agreed or agreed the welcome message was easy to understand. A similar number (90%) said the information was useful and made it clear what the panels do.

The welcome message contains a range of information about what the panels do, how members can get in touch and what happens to their data. Respondents were

asked to rate the level of detail of this information (Table 4.2). Almost nine in ten (89%) said the detail was about right.

Table 4.2: Was the information in the welcome message detailed enough?
(n=219)

Response options	
Yes, it was about right	89%
No, there wasn't enough detail	4%
No, there was too much detail	2%
Can't remember	5%

4.2. Invites to research

Client Panel members receive invitations to take part in research activities such as surveys or interviews. Three quarters (75%) said they had read an invitation to take part in a research activity. These respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about the invitations they have received (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=291-292)

Response options	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Can't remember
The invite was easy to understand	94%	4%	-	1%
The invite made it clear how to take part in the activity if I wanted to.	94%	4%	1%	1%
The closing date gave me enough time to take part if I wanted to.	88%	6%	2%	4%

Most respondents said the invite was easy to understand (94%) and made it clear how to take part (94%). Just slightly less (88%) said the closing date on the invitation gave them enough time to take part.

5. Client Panel publications

Findings from Client Panels research are published in a report which can be read online at Social Security Scotland's website. A copy of the report is sent to members who took part in the project. A research summary is published for each research project. Information about Client Panels research is also published in a regular newsletter to members. The survey included questions about each of these publications.

5.1. Reports

Around one in ten (11%) respondents said they had read a Client Panels report. These respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about reports (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=68-69)

Response options	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Can't remember
The report was easy to understand.	94%	1%	1%	3%
The information in the report was detailed enough.	91%	3%	1%	4%
The report was interesting.	94%	3%	-	3%

Almost all respondents said the report was easy to understand (94%) and the information in the report was detailed enough (91%). Almost all (94%) said they found the report(s) they read interesting.

Respondents were asked what was good about the report(s) they read. The most common themes were that the report had interesting information and was easy to read. Respondents also said they liked that reports included information about how Social Security Scotland would use the research findings to make improvements. A few respondents left comments about what could improve Client Panels reports. Two said reports could be shorter and two said reports could be clearer and easier to access.

“Clear and concise format with the content easy to understand. Written words were plain and not over stated.” **Client Panel member**

“It was good to find out how my information helped shape the overall outlook of the system and to read other's thoughts I hadn't thought of myself.” **Client Panel member**

5.2. Research summaries

A research summary is a short PDF document which summarises the findings from a research report. One in ten (10%) respondents said they had read a summary. These respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about Client Panels research summaries (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=67-68)

Response options	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Can't remember
The summary was easy to understand.	93%	3%	-	4%
The information in the summary was detailed enough.	91%	4%	-	4%
The summary was interesting.	93%	1%	-	6%

Most respondents said the summary was easy to understand (93%) and the information was detailed enough (91%). A similar number (93%) found the summary or summaries they read interesting.

In their comments, respondents said that summaries were clear, concise and easy to read. One respondent said summaries should use more visualisations to present the findings.

“It was easy reading, simple and straightforward, the way any summary should be.” **Client Panel member**

“Possibly more visualizations. Simple graphs are always nicer on the eye than blocks of text.” **Client Panel member**

5.3. Newsletters

Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about the members’ newsletter. Around a quarter (24%) of respondents said they had read a newsletter. Table 5.1 shows that almost all of these respondents said the newsletter was easy to understand (95%) and that they found it interesting (91%).

Dignity, fairness, respect.

Table 5.1: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=108-110)

Response options	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Can't remember
The newsletter was easy to understand.	95%	3%	-	2%
The newsletter was interesting.	91%	7%	-	2%

Respondents were also asked how often they would like to receive the newsletter (Table 5.2). The most popular frequency was every three months (59%).

Table 5.2: How often would you like to receive a newsletter with updates about the Client Panels? (n=111)

Response options	
Monthly	2%
Every three months	59%
Every six months	26%
Once a year	10%
Other	4%

Respondents were asked if they had any ideas or suggestions for the content of newsletter. A common theme was interest in updates about the transfer of benefits to Scotland. Other themes included updates on how research findings are used and links to information about benefits and other support.

“About new support we can receive as service users. Upcoming changes to legislation and how it may affect us.” **Client Panel member**

“How findings of research have been implemented is always interesting.” **Client Panel member**

6. Taking part in Client Panels research activities

Research is carried out with Client Panel members via surveys or interviews. Members can take part in a way that suits them for example, online or over the phone. Participation in all Client Panels research is voluntary and members can take part as much or as little as they like.

6.1. Surveys

Respondents who had taken part in at least one survey were asked questions about their experience (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=142-143)

Response options	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Can't remember
The questions were easy to understand.	91%	4%	-	5%
The survey was easy to complete.	93%	3%	-	4%
I was given enough time to take part before the closing date.	90%	3%	2%	5%

The majority of respondents who had taken part in a survey said the questions were easy to understand (91%) and the survey was easy to complete (93%). Around the same number (90%) said they had enough time to take part before the survey was closed.

Table 6.2 shows that most respondents (86%) said the length of the survey was about right. A small number said the survey they completed felt too long (4%) or too short (1%).

Table 6.2: Thinking about the number of questions, how long did the survey you completed feel? (n=142)

Response options	
Too long	4%
Just about right	86%
Too short	1%
Can't remember	8%

When asked what was good about the survey(s) they had completed, respondents said it was easy to take part, didn't take up too much time, and that the questions were clear. A couple of respondents said surveys had been too long or had repetitive questions or the closing date gave too little time to take part.

"[The survey had] easy to understand questions and didn't take too long to complete." **Client Panel member**

"It felt as if you kept repeating yourself as most of the questions are quite closely related." **Client Panel member**

6.2. Interviews

Respondents who had taken part in a research interview were asked questions about their experience. Firstly, they said how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=22)

Response options	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Can't remember
The sign up process was clear and straightforward.	22	-	-	-
The interview questions were easy to understand.	20	-	1	1
I was able to take part in a way that suited me.	22	-	-	-
The interviewer made me feel at ease.	22	-	-	-
Throughout the interview process I was treated with dignity, fairness and respect.	22	-	-	-

Feedback about Client Panels interviews was very positive. All or almost all said taking part was straightforward, the interview questions were easy to understand, and they were able to take part in a convenient way. All strongly agreed or agreed that the interviewer had made them feel at ease. All said they were treated with dignity, fairness and respect throughout the interview process.

Respondents had the chance to leave comments about the interview(s) they had taken part in. Almost all left comments praising the attitude of the interviewer. Respondents said researchers were friendly, professional and treated participants with respect.

“The lady was very polite and well spoken, offered me time out when I got breathless. Was interested in what I was explaining and asked relevant questions.” **Client Panel member**

“He was patient, polite and explained everything in a clear and concise way.”
Client Panel member

“The fact that I was always reminded I never needed to answer if I didn't want to and never felt judged on the answer I gave.” **Client Panel member**

6.3. Support to take part

It is important that members are able to take part in Client Panels research if they want to. Respondents who had been invited to but not yet participated in a research activity were asked why they hadn't taken part so far (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4: Can you tell us why you haven't taken part in a research activity so far?* (n=182)

Response options	
I didn't notice the invite when it arrived or I forgot about it	37%
I didn't have the time to take part	25%
Not sure how to take part	11%
I have particular needs and it wasn't clear how I could take part in a way that suits me	9%
Invites have not been relevant to me	7%
My experience with Social Security Scotland was a long time ago	4%
Too many invitations	1%
Other	30%

*Respondents could choose multiple answers

Respondents who choose 'other' left comments to say things such as caring and work commitments or health and wellbeing concerns mean it isn't always possible to take part when invited.

Respondents who were presented with these questions were asked if there was anything that would make it easier for them to take part in Client Panels research activities. Suggestions included:

- Sending reminders and extending the time given to take part
- Offering incentives
- Making it as accessible as possible to take part for example, offering different languages and making questions clearer
- Making the subject line of emails clearer
- Making sure members are invited to activities that are relevant to them.

6.4. Future research

To date, Client Panels research activities have been carried out online, via post or over the phone. Research with members in person hasn't been possible due to COVID-19 restrictions. This may change and become possible in the future.

Respondents were asked if they would be interested in taking part in focus group activities (Table 6.5). A focus group is a group interview with two or more Client Panel members. This could be online via video call or in person at a local location.

Table 6.5: In the future, would you be interested in taking part in these activities? (n=354-55)

Response options	Focus groups online via video call	Focus groups in person at a local location
Yes	23%	29%
No	37%	31%
Maybe	40%	40%

Slightly more respondents said they would be interested in focus groups in person (29%) compared to via video call (23%). Two in five (40%) respondents said they might be interested in taking part in a focus group online or in person.

Around one in ten (13%) said they would be interested in taking part in a focus group *either* online or in person. Slightly more were *only* interested in taking part in focus groups at a location (5%) than *only* online (3%).

As well as focus groups, it may be possible to take part in interviews in person in the future. Respondents were asked if they might be interested in taking part at a location or in their home (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6: In the future, would you be interested in taking part in these activities? (n=352-54)

Response options	Individual interviews at a local location	Individual interviews in your home
Yes	35%	28%
No	25%	35%
Maybe	40%	37%

Slightly more respondents said they would be interested in an interview at a local location (35%) compared to in their home (28%). Around two in five respondents said they might be interested in taking part in an interview at a local location (40%) or in their home (37%).

One in five (20%) said they would be interested in taking part in an interview *either* in person at a location or in their home. More respondents said they would *only* be interested in an in-person interview at a local location (5%) than *only* at home (1%).

Respondents who said ‘maybe’ to any of these questions were asked whether they had any concerns about taking part and what support could be put in place. Some respondents said mental or physical conditions can make it difficult to take part in group or in-person activities. Others mentioned caring or work responsibilities which can make it difficult to find the time to participate in research activities.

Many said the location of in-person activities was important and mentioned things like travel time and cost as well as public transport options. Some respondents said they were concerned about COVID-19 and were continuing to stay at home or would want safety measures to be in place at any location where in-person activities were taking place. A few respondents mentioned accessibility issues which they felt could make it difficult to take part. These included language issues and needing specialist equipment. A few respondents mentioned concerns about privacy and confidentiality if taking part in group activities.

“I don’t have any concerns as such except where they might be held and ease of getting there. If taxis were provided that would make travel easier.” **Client Panel member**

“My main concern would be whether it was easy to get to the location and that COVID-19 mitigation measures such as masks and social distancing were observed.” **Client Panel member**

“Confidentiality with other members.” **Client Panel member**

7. What's next?

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 Client Panels team have reviewed the findings from this research. The team were pleased to hear that many members have had a positive experience so far.

The Client Panels team will use this feedback to continue to make sure communications are clear and accessible and publications are interesting and informative. The team will continue to think about how best to let members know how Social Security Scotland uses research findings to make improvements.

To make sure as many members as possible are able to take part in research activities, support such as translation or an interpreter and flexible timing for interviews is now made clearer in invitations for all Client Panels research. The team will consider how and when to send reminders to members and how to improve the subject line of email invitations. The team will also consider the time given to members to take part and consider increasing this where appropriate.

In the future, if research is carried out in-person, members will be reimbursed for any expenses such as travel costs. Venues will be chosen which are as accessible as possible and other adjustments will be made available on request.

The findings will also be shared across Social Security Scotland and with other colleagues who work with the team. Lastly, some findings from this work have been used as part of Social Security Scotland's annual reporting of performance against the commitments set out in Our Charter, the [2021-22 Charter Measurement Framework](#).

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.



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