



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Equalities Strategy and Outcomes Review

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

Outcome 1 - Our workforce

Action	Priority	Progress update	Status	Due date
We will analyse the differences for specific protected characteristics (initially race and disability) that exist for each stage of the recruitment process to better focus our actions.	Long	<p>We set up our volume recruitment project in September 2021 to attract and hire diverse candidates with the right skills at pace. Before setting pass marks for applicants, statistical analysis was undertaken to ensure no adverse impacts were identified for protected groups. This analysis resulted in actions such as removing identifying information for candidates from the written application stage. We used a variety of marketing approaches to advertise roles including job boards, social media posts/advertising, working with employability stakeholders, bus/ bus stop adverts and stalls at local events such as Mardi Gla in June 2022 in Glasgow.</p> <p>There are regular meetings held between Social Security Scotland and Scottish Government. These include our design authority meetings, monthly best practice reviews and representation at Race Equality meetings. We have been working collaboratively to ensure improvements and implementations are carefully considered for their impact to all candidates but specifically those candidates from Minority Ethnic backgrounds. We have worked with the Race Equality Network on the government's Race Recruitment and Retention Plan. We continue to look to overlay this work with the principles within Our Charter to recruit a workforce reflective of the population of Scotland that we serve.</p>	Complete	Sep-22
We will analyse responses to disability questions asked during the recruitment process to understand the effect of adjustments to the workplace.	Short	<p>The Human Resources Transformation Team have successfully introduced a new survey mechanism to gather feedback from new starts (a few months after joining organisation). This looks at a range of aspects of their experience including any barriers to the recruitment process or concerns around Skills for Success/Competency requirements.</p> <p>The Resourcing team has produced a case study on the recent volume recruitment exercise including diversity statistics. Further work is required to expand this beyond the Volume Recruitment project, which provided substantial levels of feedback from Capita giving data as to how the decisions taken and how that positively affected our ability to support candidates with disabilities at every stage of the recruitment process.</p> <p>Updates to reasonable adjustments and our approach have had a positive impact and are also in keeping with Social Security Scotland securing Disability Confident level 2 accreditation this summer. We are working with Scottish Government to access diversity data at each stage of the recruitment journey to focus on any actions that are needed based on evidence</p>	Complete	Apr-22
We will review recommendations from the Scottish Government Reasonable Adjustment Project Team, to cover new employees and people changing posts within Social Security Scotland. This work will include asking people what they need to make reasonable adjustments rather than focusing on a specific cause (for example, a medical condition) and expanding the use of the Reasonable Adjustment Passport.	Medium	The Reasonable Adjustment Employee Passport was launched in August 2022.	Complete	Apr-22
We will increase understanding of the Reasonable Adjustment Process through workshops and guidance.	Short	Information sessions on the Employee Passport were run throughout September 2022. People Advice is in the process of developing a new online module to support staff as well as new intranet guidance.	Complete	Apr-22
We will put in place and build on the recommendations of the Scottish Government Race Recruitment and Retention Action Plan to help develop our Diversity Plan.	Medium	Work is ongoing to build connections with core Scottish Government Recruitment. Further information is required on our new online recruitment system to allow us to feed relevant information in to Scottish Government core recruitment team.	In progress	Apr-22
We will review the language, images and methods we use when recruiting and make sure we maintain a range of ways to apply for jobs.	Medium	<p>Our external facing website was reviewed and recommendations made to Resourcing for updating. There are ongoing conversations happening in Scottish Government on the Skills for Success competency framework and its accessibility, including whether it should be replaced by skills profiles.</p> <p>We have recently trialled video interviewing as part of the volume recruitment exercise:</p>	Complete	Apr-22

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video completion across a window of days allowing candidates the option of completing their interview outside normal working hours and allowing candidates to work around other commitments • Allowing candidates a “re-do” option on questions to get their best answer not their first answer • Videos are reviewed by trained professional assessors and a civil servant from the recruiting area allowing balanced review • Removing questions for candidates around skills we could teach later and focused on innate skills. 		
We will continue to deliver, with our stakeholders, workshops for candidates to help people understand our application and interview process.	Medium	Since the beginning of the Volume Recruitment Project in Summer 2021, over 180 live candidate workshops were held, and there were over 12,000 views on pre-recorded workshops. Reference to these workshops is included in job adverts as common practice.	Complete	Apr-22
We will increase the diversity of our non-executive members.	Short	Our recruitment campaign had a particular focus on attracting applicants from diverse backgrounds to join our Executive Advisory Body. New appointments in September 2021 have increased the diversity of our non-Executive membership.	Complete	Dec-21

Outcome 2 – Our culture

Action	Priority	Progress update	Status	Due date
We will put in place action to increase the number of complete responses from staff on our internal database (where we record information about staff diversity), particularly to reduce the number of 'Unknowns' for disability, race and sex	Short	<p>Additional guidance on the importance of completing diversity information has been developed and sent to managers, with guidance available on the staff intranet and this is also included in Corporate Inductions. This work is ongoing.</p> <p>There is a diversity declaration eLearning module available on our online learning portal.</p>	In progress	Dec-22
We will carry out an equality analysis of staff working their probation period, retaining staff, learning and development, appraisal and promotion (temporary and permanent) information by gender, disability, ethnicity and grade.	Long	<p>We will use our existing data to determine whether those with different protected characteristics are more likely to fail to complete their probation period or have their probation extended. To do this we have analysed data about staff leaving the organisation and promotion data. The development of the new Enterprise Resource Planning system will hopefully make it easier for us to extract and cross-match data to allow for regular monitoring. The revised due date for this work is June 2023 and this will be incorporated in our future Equalities Strategy and Outcomes.</p> <p>Now the Social Security Scotland workforce is stabilising in terms of numbers, it should allow us to see if there are higher numbers of staff leaving us at various stages from different groups with protected characteristics and whether there are any differences in access to promotion or learning opportunities, for example.</p>	In progress	Sep-22
We will set baseline information on gender, race and disability pay gaps.	Long	We will learn from our gender pay gap reporting in March 2023 to develop tools to allow us to establish baseline information across gender, race and disability.	In progress	Sep-22
We will continue to work with our stakeholders to develop our learning and development programmes in order to make sure our workforce understand the lives of people eligible for the benefits available.	Long	<p>Learning for colleagues working in Client Services Delivery is designed on the basis of lived experience. This is primarily delivered as part of their 4-8 week initial training induction via our eLearning platform. For staff coming in through non-operational roles, they must complete our Ignite programme which covers our values and Our Charter, which outline in detail our commitment to our clients and to understand their individual circumstances.</p> <p>The basis for this learning is knowledge collected through surveys with clients carried out with Alliance, which is specifically tailored around Social Security Scotland and our work and through working with advocacy organisations such as Voiceability. User research is also carried out by Scottish Government colleagues during the recovery stage of new benefits. Further quotes and experiences are sourced via our Corporate Parenting Group.</p> <p>Adult Disability Payment case studies were developed with our Health and Social Care Team - the selection of health conditions and co-morbidities was influenced by the team and their experience. They were delivered to 203 colleagues since the start of the 2022 calendar year.</p> <p>We also deliver modules on 'Meet Our Clients' and 'Meet the Families' which provide an introduction to our client via case studies, and the design team works with clients to inform this.</p>	Complete	Apr-22
We will carry out more workshops and update guidance to help increase the understanding of equality impact assessments.	Short	<p>Workshops delivered October 2020 – December 2021. Equality Impact Assessment guidance has been rewritten and templates drafted, and these are now in place following input from stakeholders National Engagement, Analysis and Insight and Communications.</p> <p>We are engaged with the Business Support Network to provide additional support to business areas and Deputy Directors in getting Assessments signed off on and published.</p>	Complete	Dec-22
We will trial the role of Fairness Advocates to offer support to victims of bullying, harassment and discrimination.	Medium	Our Grievance Procedure has been reviewed and updated in consultation with stakeholders including the Trade Union. The People Advice team has also expanded their offer with more People Advice Partners, as well as two full-time People Advice and Wellbeing Counsellors.	Complete	Jun-22

Outcome 3 - Delivering and improving our service

Action	Priority	Progress update	Status	Due date
We will carry out more analysis of clients' diversity and equalities information, in particular the disabled people category and intersectionality.	Medium	Case studies are being developed to understand the impact on these groups and action required. We currently publish a range of statistics about the benefits we deliver; diversity and equality information about our clients, and information about our workforce as well as any research we undertake.	In progress	Apr-22
We will build on the work of the National Engagement and Local Delivery teams to understand the needs of specific equality groups and communities. This includes demand for translated information, making our application process easier, and specific support needs.	Long	<p>We produce our Factsheets for all our benefits in EasyRead format, as well as thinking specifically about the experiences of specific groups and communities. For example, we collaborated with the Minority Ethnic Carers of Older People Project (MECOPP) to produce a series of bespoke videos for the Gypsy/Traveller communities, made by local voices and posted on their own networks. You can view the videos here: https://www.mecopp.org.uk/cv19-videos/</p> <p>Social Security Scotland currently has the following capability in place to support inclusive communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Translation and Interpretation: services cover the production of translations into over 100 languages, Braille, Audio, Large Print and Easy Read formats. Interpreter-assisted calls are available to people who call the helpline, enabling people to apply over the phone in any of over 100 languages. The services also cover face to face language interpretation. • Information on benefits is proactively translated into 11 languages used in communities across Scotland, including Urdu, Polish and Gaelic. Key materials have also been translated into Ukrainian and Russian to help refugees and displaced people access benefits. Translated information on all of Social Security Scotland's benefits can be accessed via the stakeholder resources section of the Social Security Scotland website. • All letters, information and guidance are available in Braille, large print, Easy Read and various audio formats. • Online content follows the Scottish Government's accessibility design standards. It is compatible with screen reader software on Jaws, Voiceover and Non Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) platforms. • Deafened and Hearing Impaired Community: As part of support of the Scottish Government National BSL Action Plan, current provision has been reviewed and, with stakeholder input, a new specification of requirements for providing services for this community has been drafted. A British Sign Language (BSL) video relay service will soon be available through Contact Scotland. <p>We are reviewing and expanding membership of the External Equalities Network to ensure we still have a broad and diverse reach in local communities and vulnerable groups.</p>	In progress	Sep-22
We will be aware of and understand the findings from client panels, experience panels and equalities research when we are developing and improving our services.	Long	Social research outcomes are published on our website here: Social Security Scotland - Social Research	In progress	Sep-22
In line with our commitment under the Social Impact Pledge, we will encourage everyone to use their allocated volunteering hours. This will help to increase awareness of the differing needs and the specific inequalities faced by our current and potential clients.	Long	We have encouraged staff to use their allocated paid volunteering hours through internal communications such as the manager's cascade. Once we have reached steady state in 2023 following the launch of Adult Disability Payment and we have published our Social Impact Pledge, the communications strategy will have a specific activity around volunteering incorporated. The Social Impact Pledge will make clear our commitment to volunteering, as well as a structure for how and where we volunteer.	Complete	May-22
We will improve joint working with our Policy and Directorate colleagues, particularly in relation to the Maximising Benefit Uptake Strategy and Policy Evaluation Strategy for Benefits.	Long	<p>Take-up and Equalities/Protected Characteristics</p> <p>Ensuring that families can access all of the Social Security Benefits to which they are entitled is a moral duty and fundamental priority of the Scottish Government. Our second Benefit Take-up Strategy, published in October sets out how we are working to ensure people from all walks of life can access the support they are entitled to.</p> <p>We are expanding the membership of the Stakeholder Take-up Reference Group to include more voices and to ensure that both stakeholders representing the protected characteristics and seldom heard groups of the population are heard in policy making going forward.</p>	In progress	Sep-22

We will continue to work closely with stakeholders representing the Protected Characteristics groups of the population, particularly through our Stakeholder Take-up Reference Group which meets quarterly and is considered a sounding board for policy work.

Joined Up Working

As part of a collaborative and joined up approach to increasing the take-up of benefits, SG policy officials are working closely with Social Security Scotland.

We are currently re-establishing the Benefit Take-up Internal Working Group which includes policy officials and agency colleagues, with a focus on driving forward the implementation of the Benefit Take-up Strategy.

Adopting a collaborative and joined up approach to maximising the take-up of benefits is a commitment made in the strategy and this commitment extends but is not limited to our continued engagement with Social Security Scotland, Third Sector organisations and Local Authorities.

SG policy officials are working closely with Agency colleagues to tackle the issue of stigma. Stigma has been identified as one of the key barriers to benefit take-up for both protected characteristics and seldom heard groups.

A key focus of the Internal Working Group is to develop a strand of work to understand the needs of Seldom Heard groups; specifically the main barriers, where there are any gaps, and how best to market benefits to Seldom Heard groups.

Implementation of the Benefit Take-up Strategy, and meeting the commitments set out in it, is a shared responsibility and a joint effort. The policy team engages with Social Security Scotland regularly on a variety of work streams including Inclusive Communication, Comms and Marketing, Local Delivery, and the Insights and Engagement Forum. We will continue to work in this collaborative way going forward.