

**Portfolio Sponsor Meeting**

Date of Meeting	12 April 2024
Time	13:00 – 14:30
Location	Virtual
Chair	Louise Macdonald, DG Communities

Attendees**Members**

Louise Macdonald (LM)	DG Communities – Chair and Portfolio Sponsor
David Wallace (DW)	Chief Executive, Social Security Scotland
Janet Richardson (JR)	Deputy Director Client Services Delivery, Social Security Scotland
Frances Conlan (FC)	Governance and Strategy Lead, DG Communities,
Chris Creegan (CC)	Non-executive, Social Security Scotland

Secretariat

AMG	Governance Manager, Social Security Scotland
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Attendees

SG	Corporate Finance Lead, Social Security Scotland
DP	Head of Strategy and Corporate Support, Social Security Scotland

Apologies

Ally MacPhail	Deputy Director Organisational Strategy and Performance, Social Security Scotland
Jayne Scott	Non-executive, Scottish Government

1. Welcome

- 1.1. LM welcomed members and introductions were held. LM and DW discussed the revised format and membership of this meeting, noting items on the agenda allow for continued assurance regarding risk, performance, finance and governance.

2. Engagement with Scottish Ministers

- 2.1. DW and JR provided an update on the Deputy First Minister (DFM) visit to Agnes Husband House on Wednesday 10 April. The DFM met with a number of Social Security Scotland colleagues from Client Services, and Health and Social Care to discuss productivity and efficiencies in place. Further discussion was held regarding the building of networks across Dundee, and how Social Security Scotland engage with organisations, such as schools or the NHS.
- 2.2. DW noted that further discussion took place with DFM and the VoiceAbility representative, who provides a free and independent advocacy service to support disabled people to access the benefits we deliver.
- 2.3. DW highlighted the quarterly meeting being held with the Cabinet Secretary and Social Security Scotland Executive Team. LM emphasised the importance of focussing on delivery at these meetings, ensuring a link to the Cabinet Secretary's interconnected policies which include child poverty and inequalities.
- 2.4. Discussion was held on the recent Ipsos survey, with members welcoming the outcomes from this.

3. Risk Update

- 3.1. DW introduced DP who presented the Risk agenda item.
- 3.2. DP provided an overview of the Social Security Scotland strategic risk register, highlighting the main areas of risk across the organisation.
- 3.3. LM thanked DP for his update, and held further discussion with members on the main risk topics of fraud and transition planning. DW provided assurance around the governance arrangements for overseeing risk. FC reflected on a recent information governance risk identified, which relates to Open Government and Transparency.

Action – FC to tie in with DP to discuss implications and ensure a joined up approach

- 3.4. In relation to fraud, DW informed members of our fraud tolerance level which prioritises the delivery of benefits payments. SG further noted the work being taken forward in relation to financial controls and internal controls, with a focus on identifying any gaps relating to fraud.

Action – DW to update LM on where we store the confirmation on our approach to risk, and detail how we are articulating this going forward.

4. Performance Update

- 4.1. DW and JR presented the Performance item, providing a summary of the key points within the Balanced Scorecard.
- 4.2. Members discussed the main areas of note which include the number of applications received against forecast, processing times, client experience and

redeterminations and appeals. In addition, DW and JR noted the increase in Annual Working Days Lost across the organisation.

- 4.3. JR provided an update on resource allocation in relation to processing times, and the work being taken forward regarding telephony options and improving the client experience. As chair of the Executive Advisory Body, CC provided assurance that performance is a standing agenda item at all meetings, and is regularly reviewed.
- 4.4. LM thanked DW and JR for the update, and highlighted the significant work being done in Scottish Government regarding performance data, being led by the DFM.

Action – DW to ensure performance management data is aligned between Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland

- 4.5. Further discussion took place regarding the number of applications received digitally, which seems fairly static. JR noted there is an appetite to focus on how we handle applications and look at improvements to encourage more people to use this functionality. CC noted that the current digital figure shouldn't be underestimated, as is a great achievement.

5. Finance Update

- 5.1. DW introduced SG who presented the Finance agenda item
- 5.2. SG provided an overview of our 24-25 Budget paper, noting our budget allocation and the associated risks.
- 5.3. SG discussed the governance arrangements in place to prioritise and identify efficiencies. This includes the introduction of a Finance and Investment forum responsible for reviewing business cases up to a value of £50k, as well as the Audit and Assurance Committee fulfilling an ongoing scrutiny role.

6. Internal Audit Plan 24-25

- 6.1. DW provided an overview of the proposed Internal Audit Plan agenda item, highlighting the importance of Annex C, which details the previous three years audit activities. DW noted that we routinely share audit reports with Social Security Programme, and these are available for further sharing with LM.
- 6.2. LM advised the Audit Plan paper was very helpful and asked for further information relating to recommendations that have previously been made, and the status of each. LM also discussed the need to ensure that the plan covers everything we need, in consideration with the complex year of delivery ahead.

Action – DW to share Audit and Assurance paper which contains details of recommendations and current status.

Action – DW to reflect on the annual audit plan 24-25 and confirm we are happy it focusses on the right areas, taking into account the increasing focus of transition and delivery.

7. Any other business

- 7.1. To maximise the ongoing value of these meetings, LM would welcome feedback on the format and content of future sessions.

Action – Secretariat to gather feedback on meeting format from members

- 7.2. DW noted a preference for the next Portfolio Sponsor meeting being held in person.

Action – Secretariat to work with Chief Executive Business Support to identify availability of members to attend the next Portfolio Sponsor meeting in person.