

Operational Reference Group Meeting

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 20 th September 2022
Time	14:30 – 16:30
Location	Virtual Meeting

Attendees

Present

- Alastair MacPhail – Chair – Social Security Scotland

- KM - Child Poverty Action Group
- MK - Inclusion Scotland
- MD - Public Health Scotland
- PC - Action on Asbestos
- AS - Department For Work and Pensions
- RG - Rights Advice Scotland
- LW – BLESMA
- LK – Social Work Scotland
- JC – Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

- SS - Social Security Scotland
- JH - Social Security Scotland
- MJ - Social Security Scotland
- RM – Social Security Scotland
- PC – Social Security Scotland
- MG – Social Security Scotland

- OF – Scottish Government

Secretariat

- RE – Social Security Scotland

1. Welcome and update

- 1.1. The Chair, Alastair MacPhail, Deputy Director Client Services, welcomed the group and introduced new members, guest presenters and other attendees.
- 1.2. Amendments were noted for the minutes from 12 July 2022 by PC, Action Against Asbestos. **ACTION:** Once updated, the minutes will be re-shared with the group.
- 1.3. SS, National Engagement and Partnership Lead, reviewed and updated the group on the actions from the previous meeting.
- 1.4. The 1-year anniversary for Child Disability Payment was on 26 July 2022. From this date, we have had almost 15,000 part one applications. Between 26 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, the total value of Child Disability Payments issued was £17.1 million. Of this total, £11.3 million was issued to new applicants and a further £5.8 million was issued to clients who have transferred to Child Disability Payment.
- 1.5. From 9 November 2020 to 30 June 2022, over 170,000 applications were received for Scottish Child Payment. Between 15 February 2021 and 30 June 2022, the total value of Scottish Child Payments issued was around £83.9 million, with £25.3 million paid out in the 2022/23 financial year. As of 30 June 2022, it is estimated that 104,000 children were actively in receipt of Scottish Child Payment.
- 1.6. Our Business Plan 2022-23 was published on 11 August and sets out what we will deliver in the year ahead. We have set out our priorities detailing what will be delivered to ensure that we continue to make progress against our commitments. The Business Plan also includes information on how we will report on each priority and how we will measure the quality of the service we provide to our clients.
- 1.7. We celebrated Local Delivery's 10,000th appointment. In the space of a year, Local Delivery has grown from a team of 150 to nearly 600. Additionally, they are now based in every local authority in Scotland. This service has supported thousands of clients to access our services and receive the benefits that they are entitled to.

- 1.8. We have reached our goal of offering over 2,000 people employment through our Volume Recruitment Project. The project is now complete and we will return to our 'business as usual' recruitment processes.
- 1.9. Our online roadshows on the upcoming changes to Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grants are available to book onto. **ACTION:** Links and dates of these events will be shared with the group.
- 1.10. The National Engagement Team have returned to exhibiting at a number of face-to-face events and conferences to raise awareness of our benefits. If members have any events they would like the National Engagement team to attend, please get in touch by emailing NationalEngagementandPartnershipTeam@SocialSecurity.gov.scot.

2. Client Services update

- 2.1. RM, Operations Lead, provided an update from Client Services with a focus on the Adult Disability Payment national launch on 29 August 2022.
- 2.2. The Adult Disability Payment application volume since the launch is as predicted.
- 2.3. We are currently on boarding over 1000 new staff members who will be working on Adult Disability Payment. This involves comprehensive training, job shadowing and enhanced consolidation with the support of Case Managers and Health and Social Care Practitioners.
- 2.4. RM shared examples of positive feedback from clients.
- 2.5. LW, BLESMA, requested an update on obtaining supporting information from health professionals. RM informed the group of the positive work taking place to build strong relationships between Social Security Scotland and Health and Social Care professionals to make the gathering of supporting information as straightforward as possible.

3. New service for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people

- 3.1. PC, Programme Inclusive Communications Lead, provided an update on our new service for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people.
- 3.2. Until recently, deaf and hard of hearing people have only been able to communicate with Social Security Scotland via Contact Scotland BSL (British Sign Language), a Scottish Government-funded public sector framework providing instant British Sign Language video relay services.
- 3.3. Our new service offers a choice of channels to communicate with Social Security Scotland that meets with the client's preference.
- 3.4. Video Remote Interpreting and face-to-face interpreting are scheduled in advance. Video Remote Interpreting allows the client, Client Support Advisor and interpreter to be in different locations whereas, for face-to-face meetings, the interpreter meets with the client and Client Support Advisor in the same geographic location.
- 3.5. MK, Inclusion Scotland, asked if there is support available for clients who need a translation service as well as additional support due to disability. PC discussed the current position and the need to develop the service.
- 3.6. **ACTION:** Paul Chalmers will contact LK, Social Work Scotland, and MK, to discuss collaboration and future developments of the service.

4. Changes to disability benefit applications

- 4.1. Product Leads updated the group on the current developments on the Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment applications.
- 4.2. This review is to ensure we gather the best information from clients, or their representatives, to allow for smooth and fast decision-making.
- 4.3. We have conducted a wide range of user research on the digital and paper application forms with support organisations, Case Managers and Decision Team Managers. Additionally, we have captured the insights from user research findings, live service and other client feedback.
- 4.4. Next steps for application improvements:
 - We will test the recommended improvements to application form with users

- We will use feedback from testing to refine and finalise design. Please note, the details shared in the meeting are only proposed changes and therefore may be amended following further user testing.
 - Design and development work will be scheduled for next appropriate release
 - We will align changes across all application channels: the digital portal, paper form, Application Capture Tool (ACT), Intelligent Evidence Gathering (IEG), and Social Program Management (SPM)
- 4.5. KM, Child Poverty Action Group, inquired if there are plans for ongoing opportunities to provide feedback. OF, Product Lead, assured the group that continuous improvement is ongoing and encouraged the group to feedback.
- 4.6. LW, BLESMA asked a question on the percentage of clients completing both part 1 and 2 applications. **ACTION:** SS will follow up with RM, and feedback to the group.
- 4.7. RG, The ALLIANCE, shared how useful they found the presentation for understanding what changes are possible in-line with regulations. MJ, Product Lead, discussed how our approach to these developments are user-centred.
- 4.8. Any feedback from stakeholders can be sent to the National Engagement and Partnership Team by emailing NationalEngagementandPartnershipTeam@SocialSecurity.gov.scot.

5. Feedback session on Adult Disability Payment

- 5.1. A group discussion took place on the experiences of front-line colleagues and the individuals they support since the launch of Adult Disability Payment.
- 5.2. The feedback was very positive with no significant issues raised.
- 5.3. LW, BLESMA discussed the length of the application form and the steps BLESMA takes, from the outset, to explain to clients how long it will take to complete.
- 5.4. KM, Child Poverty Action Group fed back that the individuals they support are having positive experiences with Social Security Scotland in relation to Adult Disability Payment. **ACTION:** KM to get in touch with SS regarding more complex individual queries from clients.

6 Any Other Business

- 5.5. The Chair offered the group an opportunity to raise any other business and summarised the discussion.
- 5.6. The group agreed that from January 2023, the meetings will move to quarterly and will take place in person.
- 5.7. The next meeting will no longer take place on 8 November 2022. **ACTION:** A new date in late November/early December 2022 will be shared with members.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 29 November 2022