



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Benefit Delivery Quality Framework

Version 1

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

Foreword

The [Social Security Scotland Corporate Plan](#) and [Social Security Scotland Charter](#) set a strategic objective of being a high-quality, learning service. All employees of Social Security are responsible for delivering a quality service, that pay clients their correct entitlement whilst providing an efficient, value for money service and protecting public funds by minimising fraud and error.

This Quality Framework for Benefit Delivery establishes the high level standards and approaches required to achieve this. Each Benefit will operationalise the framework to support improved performance in their areas. Further work will be undertaken to expand the framework to wider Social Security Scotland.

Background

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 outlines the duty placed upon Scottish Ministers to ensure that individuals are given assistance to what they are entitled to. The [Scottish Public Finance Manual](#) requires the Scottish Government to deliver continuous improvement in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost.

Social Security Scotland developed its [Charter](#) and includes key elements related to quality:

- Make decisions in a way that is consistent and accurate – and aim to get them right first time
- Pay clients the right amount, on time
- Make sure our people are well trained, supported and equipped to do their jobs

To deliver our statutory and charter obligations, Social Security Scotland published its [Error Control Strategy](#). The Quality Framework for Benefit Delivery, ensures a standard approach to monitoring quality that maintains the right standards and drives continuous improvement.

Initial discovery work identified key areas to develop frameworks that will feed into an overarching Agency framework.



This Quality Framework covers **Process Measures and Controls** and includes:

- Benefit processing and decision-making activity
- Three lines of defence approach assurance activities
- Internal Benefit quality continuous improvement activities

Other business areas will develop a quality framework to support areas business plans and delivery strategies.

Quality PILLARs

Our definition of quality is to:

Do the right things, at the right time, with the right outcomes throughout the respective client journey.

Social Security Scotland have developed the PILLARS Quality Framework to support the quality within it's service delivery:

- P** - Prevent
- I** - Identify
- L** - Learning
- LA** – Leadership & Accountabilities
- R** - Resolution
- S** – Standards



Prevent

Social Security Scotland's focus is on preventing error from occurring.

Robust, in-depth guidance & processes: Careful consideration is given to provide clear guidance products and to ensure ease of use for our colleagues and partners; and is subject to careful controls and extensive user testing to refine these over time.

System controls: We will continually develop preventative controls to ensure that opportunities for error to occur are reduced wherever possible, ensuring that the benefits being devolved are secure by design, while also minimising impact on the customer journey and delivering value for money.

Automation: Social Security Scotland will seek to maximise opportunities to automate processes to reduce user error risk and allow resources to be focused on more complex areas that require user intervention to ensure accurate outcomes.

Change management: Social Security Scotland will ensure that Benefit launches and Change Initiatives are fully impacted from a quality perspective and that payment error risks are identified, with mitigation and resolution plans in place if issue cannot be fully resolved prior to implementation.

Bespoke Quality strategy: Each business area will outline how they will assure and embed quality within their area to prevent error. This will outline the ongoing measures, controls, and feedback loops within their area, aligning with PILLARS model.

Identify

Where error has occurred, we proactively seek to identify this at the earliest opportunity to limit the impact.

Quality and approval checking: Quality assurance will be undertaken pre and post payment to ensure awards are correct and enable tailored coaching support to our colleagues.

Data matching: we are committed to the Scottish Government objective to protect the public purse and will seek opportunities to collaborate in data matching activities with other government departments to assist identification of anomalies which may indicate error.

Scottish Administrative Exercise (SAE): Where Social Security Scotland identifies that legislation, policy or processes have been incorrectly applied for a group of clients, a proactive exercise will be undertaken to take corrective action for underpayments.

Monetary Value of Fraud and Error (MVFE): Provides statistically valid estimate of error within the benefit caseload and are independent of Operational areas.

Internal Audit: undertake Audit Assurance of Social Security Scotland provide reports and recommendations while also undertaking compliance checks on individual benefits.

Learning

We will identify opportunities to safeguard our service through error analysis and a commitment to continuous improvement.

This element of the framework relates to both the capability and learning of our people and our organisation, which are vital component of delivering excellent customer service and quality.

Our People

Ongoing training and upskilling: ensuring that our colleagues and partners who work with us receive adequate, ongoing training to support them in getting decisions right first time.

Coaching and feedback: is integral to delivering quality outcomes for our clients. Feedback should be delivered in a positive manner in all instances, regardless of the outcome of the assurance activity.

Embed quality into Training: courses should consider the quality principles and work in collaboration with key stakeholders across Social Security Scotland to enshrine the quality standards.

Calibrations sessions: group exercises for considerative decision making to ensure that the correct interpretation of policy intent and/or guidance. Sessions seek to achieve consensus on outcomes in specific scenarios to support consistency through common understanding of considerations and weighting of elements.

Our Organisation

Effective use of data: capturing robust, detailed management information will provide high quality continuous feedback on operational performance and client experience and supports continuous improvement.

Specialist Expertise: close working with analytical, quality checking and continuous improvement colleagues will ensure we can draw maximum benefit from the management information we capture.

Effective targeting of risk areas: understanding our risk will allow us to undertake proactive detection work against a selection of the most appropriate claims for review activity, minimising nugatory work and delivering value for money by maximising the number and value errors identified.

Feedback to Internal Stakeholders: quickly sharing information with stakeholders such as operational teams and learning and development colleagues will provide useful intelligence to ensure we are responsive to emerging error patterns.

Decision Support Team: share feedback of complex enquiries from policy and legal.

Continuous Improvement: Lessons learned / Sharing best practice between benefits to enable cross cutting working to improve the end-to-end client journey. Where appropriate, raise issues or suggestions to Business owners/ live support

Leadership & Accountability

As part of delivering a great service to our clients that upholds our values of fairness, dignity and respect, all colleagues have a responsibility to deliver Quality. Leaders must ensure that colleagues understand the importance of quality and adhere to the Quality Framework as an integral part of daily activity, ensuring that clients receive a great service and Social Security Scotland delivers efficient use of resources.

The Organisational accountabilities are as follows:

Executive Team

- Provides the strategic oversight and deployment of the Quality Framework within Social Security Scotland.

Benefits Performance Review

- Ensuring compliance with the Quality Framework across all benefits and directorates.
- Seeking assurance that resources are effectively deployed to deliver continuous improvements in every aspect of service delivery.
- Reviewing progress against strategic or operational risks.
- Reviewing service improvement, measured through the Performance Dashboards.
- Empowering and endorsing the Error Control Working group promoting consistency, sustainability and value for money when driving the quality agenda.
- Agreed areas for service improvement will be delegated to the Error Control Working Group for action and monitoring. The group focus will be reducing levels of official error both under and overpayments.

Client Services Delivery

- Ensuring appropriate volume, frequency and standard of quality checking is in place and feedback is provided to colleagues and stakeholders.
- Ensuring quality is included in all performance discussions and forums.
- Collaborating with other divisions and enabling services to improve quality performance through identifying good practice and building capability.
- Ensure that compliance with guidance and processes with no local variations are developed

Fraud and Error Resolution

- Undertake corrective activity on proactive error identification exercises and reactive error referrals from Client Service Delivery.
- Provide Social Security Scotland with insight on Fraud and Error risks and trends.
- Provide error risk analysis for projects and new initiatives to ensure quality is not negatively impacted.

Resolution

We have robust and effective processes in place to quickly control and resolve error when it does occur.

Empowered People: where appropriate our people should be able to take action to correct errors as they find them, while our no-blame culture will encourage colleagues to be forthcoming about mistakes they have made to seek assistance with quick resolution. Feedback will be actively encouraged as a valuable source of suggestions and ideas for continuous improvements.

Effective interfaces: ensuring close working relationships between people and systems will ensure that all overpayments are referred for recovery action while underpayments are quickly paid to the client.

Cross Cutting continuous improvement: each business area will collaborate with team upstream and downstream of the client journey to ensure effective targeting of top error areas.

Best practice: Developing approach to identify, validate and share best practice within Social Security Scotland and other public sector organisations, fostering a lesson learned culture that ensures client receives correct entitlement and support.

Standards

Each operational business area will have clear, robust quality standards at individual, team and benefit level.

Individual Quality & Performance Key Work Objective: Each team member will have an individual Key Work Objectives setting out how they will achieve Quality and Performance.

Benefit quality target: each benefit will have a quality target that can be monitored and measured via analysis and Insight team checking model to understand error levels and cost of rework.

Consistent assurance approach: a consistent approach to assurance checking and error correction across all assurance teams through aligned error descriptors and methodologies to ensure a common understanding of top risk areas.

Standard assurance documentation: Each benefit will have detailed guidance on assurance checking for each tier outlining check criteria, required standard and risks being addressed.

Monitoring

Quality Data will be monitored and analysed to identify quality trends and risks to ensure that continuous improvement activities are successful and internal controls are robust. The Error Control Group will monitor Agency wide data and controls, highlighting any gaps or concerns to Benefits Performance Review forum.

Success Measures

The Performance Framework contains quality related measures and will be used to monitor the success of the Quality Framework.