

Operational Reference Group Meeting

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 12 th July 2022
Time	14:30 – 16:30
Location	Virtual Meeting

Attendees

Present

- Janet Richardson – Chair – Social Security Scotland
- KM - Child Poverty Action Group
- MK - Inclusion Scotland
- MD - Public Health Scotland
- PC - Action on Asbestos
- LG - Department For Work and Pensions
- AB - One Parent Families Scotland
- CJ - West Lothian Council
- RG - Rights Advice Scotland
- LW - BLESMA
- EM - VoiceAbility
- AC - VoiceAbility
- GJ - VoiceAbility
- EJ - VoiceAbility

- DH - Social Security Scotland
- LH - Social Security Scotland
- CA - Social Security Scotland
- SS - Social Security Scotland
- HF - Social Security Scotland
- KC - Social Security Scotland
- JH - Social Security Scotland
- AM - Social Security Scotland
- MW - Social Security Scotland
- TB - Social Security Scotland

Secretariat

- RE – Social Security Scotland

1. Welcome and Update

- 1.1. The Chair, Janet Richardson, Deputy Director Client Services, welcomed the group and introduced new members, guest presenters and other attendees.
- 1.2. The group approved the minutes from the meeting on 17 May 2022.
- 1.3. Janet Richardson reviewed the actions from the previous meeting. **ACTION:** The action log will be shared with members.
- 1.4. From 9 November 2020 to 31 March 2022, 157,755 applications were received for Scottish Child Payment. Between 15 February 2021 and 31 March 2022, the total value of Scottish Child Payments issued was around £58.6 million, with £55.1 million paid out in the 2021/22 financial year. As of 31 March 2022, it is estimated that 103,000 children were in receipt of Scottish Child Payment. [Social Security Scotland - Scottish Child Payment: high level statistics to 31 March 2022](#)
- 1.5. The total value of Young Carer Grant payments issued to clients by 30 April 2022 was £1.8 million. [Social Security Scotland - Young Carer Grant: high level statistics to 30 April 2022](#).

- 1.6. [The Funeral Support Payment: evaluation](#) report was published on 1 July 2022. Funeral Support Payment has made positive progress towards its policy outcomes. In terms of impact, Funeral Support Payment reduces (and sometimes removes) the need for people to borrow money to arrange a funeral, and is perceived to be a helpful contribution towards funeral costs.
- 1.7. [The Social Security Experience Panels report for mobile population](#) was published on the 4 July 2022. The 'seldom heard voices' research was designed to ensure their voices are included in the design of social security services. There are four groups identified as 'Seldom Heard' in this research programme: Mobile Populations, Vulnerable Groups, End of Life, and Carers and Care Experienced.
- 1.8. **ACTION:** Links for all publications will be shared following the meeting.
- 1.9. On 26 May 2022, the UK Government announced a range of interventions to address the cost of living crisis. The payments will be administered by the Department for work and Pensions and will be paid automatically. The Scottish Government is working with the Department for Work and Pensions on the required information sharing agreement and processes to make payments of the non means tested £150 disability cost of living payment to those in receipt of Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment.
- 1.10. School Age Payment applications are now open. The application window is from 1 June 2022 to 28 February 2023. Members were encouraged to inform families to check whether they are eligible for this one-off payment of £267.65 when a child is old enough to start primary school.
- 1.11. Carers in Scotland who were getting Carer's Allowance on 11 April 2022 received a Carer's Allowance Supplement of £245.70 on 10 June 2022.
- 1.12. The National Engagement team are planning a series of events to support the launch of Low Income Winter Heating Assistance and the changes to Scottish Child Payment. Members will be kept up to date regarding announced dates once the Communications plan has been finalised.
- 1.13. On 17 June 2022, the first of nine million special 'Could you get this milk for free?' bottles hit the shelves across the country in the supermarket, Iceland. The campaign is designed to help raise awareness of Best Start Foods and benefit support available to eligible families across Scotland.

2. Client Services Update

- 2.1. LH, Operational Leader, provided an operational update with focus on the Adult Disability Payment Pilot.

- 2.2. It has been 16 weeks since the first Adult Disability Payment pilot launched in Dundee City, the Western Isles and Perth and Kinross. The third phase of the pilot will start on 25 July 2022 in 6 new local authority areas: North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Fife, City of Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Moray, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire. Adult Disability Payment will rollout nationwide from 29 August 2022.
- 2.3. Case Managers and the Practitioner teams have been working on an internal pilot to make sure assessments and decision making is efficient and accurate. Learning from this pilot will be shared and implemented within the Disability and Carers benefits teams.
- 2.4. Where clients don't provide supporting evidence when submitting their application, Social Security Scotland staff source this information. We are working with health professionals and local authorities to make clear what supporting information we need for an individual's application. **ACTION:** Members were encouraged to support their networks and raise awareness of what information we need.
- 2.5. PC, Action on Asbestos, asked how Social Security Scotland works with external organisations and agencies to obtain this evidence. **ACTION:** HF, Head of National Engagement, will meet with PC and AB, One Parent Families Scotland, regarding third party representatives.
- 2.6. RG, Rights Advice Scotland, raised a point regarding delays for accessing supporting information from education settings due to the summer holidays. LH ensured members that we were aware of this and had made appropriate allowances for it.
- 2.7. PG enquired about representation for clients during benefit appeals. **ACTION:** Client experience and appeals to be an agenda item for the meeting on 20 September 2022

3. Case Transfer

- 3.1. DH, Senior Policy Officer, gave an overview of the plans for Case Transfers. DH outlined information regarding the Case Transfer principles, selection criteria, the client journey, and a timeline of activities. The presentation was followed by a group discussion.
- 3.2. RG discussed the potential impact of Case Transfers for individuals in residential care settings. DH shared with the group the background to the policy decisions around this area.

4. VoiceAbility – Independent Advocacy Service

- 4.1. Representatives from VoiceAbility gave an overview on its Independent Advocacy Service. The presentation outlined their approach, the referral process, how an advocate can support clients, how they receive the requests for advocacy support, and what accessibility support was available.
- 4.2. CA and HF facilitated discussions on how best to promote the VoiceAbility Advocacy service with key stakeholder's networks and the individuals they support.
- 4.3. PC asked for more information on how VoiceAbility Scotland supports clients with applications whilst ensuring no detriment if other benefits are in payment. **ACTION:** The National Engagement Team will arrange for the Scottish Government Lead for VoiceAbility meet PC.

5. Any Other Business

- 5.1. The group discussed future agenda items which included the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit. Members were encouraged to contact the National Engagement Team with ideas for future agenda items.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 20 September 2022, 2.30 – 4.30 pm