



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Equality outcomes

2021–2022



Dignity,
fairness,
respect.



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Glossary

- **Agency Leadership Team** – Senior colleagues within Social Security Scotland and the initial level of our governance structure.
- **Care experience** – This term covers anyone who currently is or who has ever been looked after, no matter for how short a time or if the setting was at home or away from home in kinship care, residential, foster or secure care. There is no age limit and it includes care leavers and adopted children who were previously looked after.
- **Community benefits (under procurement)** – ‘Community benefits’ in this context are contractual requirements which deliver a wider social benefit as well as the main purpose of the contract (in particular, requirements relating to targeted training and employment outcomes).
- **Discrimination** – The unfair or harmful treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age or sex.
- **Diversity** – The understanding that each person is unique and that we recognise our differences. These differences can be to do with race, ethnic background, gender, sexual preference, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, or religious, political or other beliefs.
- **Equality** – The right of people with different characteristics and backgrounds to have the same rights, social status, and access to the same opportunities.
- **Executive Advisory Body** – This group is chaired by our Chief Executive and provides advice. It is made up of our Executive Team and non-executive members. The non-executive members offer constructive challenge and advice to the Chief Executive on our strategy and effective governance.
- **Executive Team** – Our Executive Team set our strategic direction and make sure that we meet our objectives. They consider and approve all our organisation’s policies, plans and processes. They also consider decisions from the Scottish Government and consider how they might affect our staffing, finance and levels of client service.
- **Human rights** – Basic rights that every person has. These include, but are not limited to, the right to life, the right to freedom of religion and belief and the right to a fair trial.
- **Equality Act 2010** – Protects people from being treated unfairly because of who they are, including because of their age, religion or sex.
- **Equality impact assessment** – A testing process that assesses policies and proposals on how they will affect people with protected characteristics once put in place. Assessments aim to prevent discrimination and identify opportunities to promote equality.
- **Inclusive communication** – An approach to all communication that means the largest number of people can take part, and people receive information and can express themselves in ways that they find easiest.
- **Local delivery** – our staff teams, based in each of Scotland’s 32 local authority areas.

- **Mainstreaming equality** – A long-term, strategic approach to making sure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of an organisation’s culture and operations. Mainstreaming is an effective way of making sure that the whole institution is meeting its public-sector equality duty. In Scotland, there is a specific duty within the legislation for public authorities to mainstream equality across their activities.
- **Intersectionality** - This term comes from the American word intersection, meaning a place where many roads meet. Intersectionality places individuals at the centre of this junction, with each road representing a different form of discrimination. The experience of sexism for a black woman is different from a white woman, and how black men experience racism is different to that of black women. Instead of seeing categories of social difference as separate, intersectionality shows us how these many dimensions of our social identities meet, to form a person’s unique experience of privilege or discrimination.
- **National Performance Framework** –This framework measures Scotland’s progress against the National Outcomes. To do this, it uses ‘national indicators’. These indicators give a measure of national wellbeing. They include a range of economic, social and environmental indicators.
- **Non-executive members** – Our non-executive members sit on our Executive Advisory Body. They are recruited from members of the public and offer constructive challenge and advice to the Chief Executive of Social Security Scotland.
- **Policy** – A set of ideas or plans used as a basis for making decisions. An official organisation’s policy on a particular issue is their attitude and actions regarding that issue.
- **Poverty** – Not having access to enough income for a person’s basic needs. This means being unable to pay for food, drinking water, shelter, toiletries and other essential resources.
- **Procurement** – Sourcing and buying goods and services for business use from an outside source. Procurement is usually guided by a specific policy and process.
- **Public-sector equality duty** – Sometimes referred to as the general duty in the Equality Act 2010. This duty means Scottish public authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination;
 - advance equal opportunities; and
 - foster good relations.

In 2012 Scottish Ministers made regulations that placed specific duties on Scottish public bodies to help them meet the general duty. These are also known as the [Scottish Specific Duties](#).

- **Protected characteristics** – With the Equality Act there are nine protected characteristics. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their age, race, gender reassignment, disability, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity. For the purposes of our equality strategy and our equality impact assessments we have added care experience as a 10th protected characteristic.
- **Public consultation** – involves the public in providing their views and feedback on a proposal for us to consider.
- **Reasonable adjustments** – We have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to put in place reasonable adjustments in the workplace where disabled staff would otherwise be put at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled colleagues. Employers cannot legally justify failing to keep to a duty to make a reasonable adjustment. Employers must take appropriate steps to removing, reducing or preventing any barriers that may negatively affect disabled colleagues and job applicants.
- **Reasonable Adjustment Passport** – A document, often electronic, which allows people to easily record information about their condition, any reasonable adjustments they may have in place and any difficulties they face. The passport helps to make sure there is a clear record and can be used with new line managers to explain what is needed in the workplace to help them carry out their role.
- **Rights-based** – Using accepted human-rights standards and principles when designing, putting in place, monitoring and evaluating related policies and programmes. The principle of equality and freedom from discrimination is central to a rights-based service, including discrimination based on sex and gender roles.
- **Scottish Government Fair Start Scotland** – This is the employability support service [Fair Start Scotland](#), launched in April 2018. Those taking part are entitled to up to 18 months' pre-employment support and a further 12 months in-work support.
- **Scottish Government** – The devolved government of Scotland. The government is led by the First Minister, who selects the cabinet secretaries, who attend cabinet, and the Ministers with the approval of Parliament. Government Ministers all sit in Parliament and are accountable to it.
- **Scottish Government's Social Security Directorate** - Work with the Department for Work and Pensions to make sure social security powers from the UK Government are safely and securely transferred, under the Scotland Act 2016. They are responsible for developing the necessary policies and legislation and establishing a social security agency to deliver the devolved benefits. They also work with the Department for Work and Pensions on the benefits that the United Kingdom Government keep responsibility for.

- **Social Impact Pledge** – The [Social Impact Pledge](#) initiative asks public-sector organisations across Scotland to increase their social impact by making a public commitment to changing three aspects of their current operations or policies. ‘Social impact’ is the effect an action, activity, project, programme or policy has on people and communities.
- **Social Security Scotland Act 2018** – Allows the Scottish Government to establish a new social security system better targeted at Scotland and which has dignity, fairness and respect at the heart of everything we do.
- **Stakeholders** – A person or organisation with an interest or concern in the activity of an organisation.
- **Trauma-informed approach** –An approach to delivering our service that is based on knowledge and understanding of how trauma (anything that is deeply distressing or disturbing) affects people's lives, how they use a service and what they need from that service. The main aim of this approach is to raise awareness among all staff about the wide impact of trauma and to prevent traumatising clients again in service settings.

Introduction

We have three [equality outcomes](#) that we want to achieve. This document is one of three linked documents that explain our approach. The other two documents are our [Equality Strategy](#) and [our Mainstreaming Equality Progress Report](#).

Our [equality outcomes](#) describe the changes we want to make to meet our equality duties and show that, as an employer and service provider, our values of dignity, fairness and respect are clear in everything we do.

The action we will take to achieve these outcomes forms a main part of our overall mainstreaming equality work from now until 2023. It does not cover everything we will do to reduce inequality, but describes our priorities for the coming year.

As a new and growing organisation we will review our outcomes every year, rather than the standard every four years.

We will make a report on our progress available to the public each year, and our two equalities networks may provide more frequent updates.

How we developed our outcomes

Our outcomes have been guided by feedback from a [public consultation](#) held between November 2019 and February 2020.

Further feedback from our two equalities networks helped finalise the outcomes in late 2020. Both networks were formed in July 2020, as part of our response to feedback from the public consultation.

Our Internal Network has 24 members from across Social Security Scotland, and our External Equalities Network has representatives from 16 stakeholder organisations (organisations with an interest in our work).

We have based the focus of our outcomes on recently published information about our workforce and clients, and evidence from equality impact assessments. As a new and rapidly growing organisation, our information history is limited. This means in some areas we haven't been able to set standards to meet.

The criteria our outcomes have to meet

Our outcomes have to be:

- meaningful, and understood by our staff, clients and stakeholders;
- based on the evidence we have, and measured to judge their progress;
- supported by action that will bring about positive change and which is linked to eliminating discrimination, advancing equal opportunity or fostering good relations (or all three); and
- linked to the key principles of the Social Security Act and the principle that social security is an investment in the people of Scotland.

The action we take to achieve these outcomes will also support and be in line with our other strategic plans. A number of our strategic plans have only just been published. We are committed to publishing an overall summary which will help people to understand the link between different parts of the organisation and building relationships with all our stakeholders.

A note on evidence

Where possible we will analyse the information we collect to measure progress on our outcomes by protected characteristics (and other population characteristics). We need to do this to assess whether our actions have been successful. (The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sex.) As part of our corporate parenting commitments, we have added care experience to the characteristics we include.

The range and detail of evidence and findings we use to help us set and measure the outcomes will change as we grow as an organisation. We will base the focus of each outcome on the information available at the time this document is published.

We have limited information on the breakdown of people with protected characteristics in both our workforce and client groups. We need to do further analysis to understand the need for specific actions in relation to protected characteristics and develop a stronger intersectional understanding of connected characteristics.

We will be able to carry out further analysis early in 2021, and this work will support our approach throughout the lifetime of these outcomes. Due to COVID-19, some sources of information have been delayed or were not available this year.

The order of priority of our actions may change once we have analysed the information further.

We share a number of systems and services with the Scottish Government. These include:

- recruitment processes;
- human resources recording systems;
- performance and appraisal frameworks; and
- information analyst services.

Our progress in those areas will depend on maintaining strong relationships and sharing ideas for development. As we grow as an organisation, we will be better able to develop our own approach.

Action plan

In our Equality Strategy, we have published an action plan on how we will achieve these outcomes. The plan will set out the link to the specific 'general equality' duty, and builds on the Internal Equalities Network's current action plan. We have highlighted some of the main actions in the 'How' section for each equality outcome.

Outcome one – Our workforce

What

Our workforce will be as diverse as the people entitled to our service.

We particularly want to increase the number of employees who are disabled or from ethnic minority backgrounds. We aim to do this by ‘narrowing the gap’ in the recruitment process from application to job offer for people from an ethnic minority or disabled candidates, compared with people who are white or who are not disabled.

Why

Our recruitment information shows that the number of people from ethnic minorities or disabled people who apply to work with us is increasing. However, more people who are white or not disabled make it through the recruitment process than people from an ethnic minority background or who are disabled. We will analyse this further to understand barriers to working within the public sector.

How

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.

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.

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.

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.

We will continue to deliver, with our stakeholders, workshops for candidates to help people understand our application and interview process.

We will increase the diversity of our non-executive members.

When

We will present progress reports to both of our equalities networks at least every six months.

We will review our actions as part of our review of outcomes in 2022.

We will report formally within our Mainstreaming Report in 2023.

Who

Internal Equalities Network

Corporate Assurance Team

Resourcing Team – People Services

National Engagement Team

Local Delivery Leads

General equality duty

Eliminate discrimination

Advance equal opportunity

Outcome two – Our culture

What

We will take action to encourage an inclusive, listening and responsive culture.

We will increase the diversity of our workforce at decision-making and management levels.

In particular, we will support people from ethnic minorities and people who are disabled to move on to more senior levels.

Why

An organisation that welcomes the diversity and first-hand experience of its workforce is a stronger, more caring organisation.

We need to make sure we provide a range of activities to develop people's confidence and skills so that they can progress in their career.

Our workforce will be more involved and we will support them to be better team members and develop as more effective leaders.

How

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.

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.

We will set baseline information on gender, race and disability pay gaps.

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.

We will trial the role of Fairness Advocates to offer support to victims of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

When

We will present progress reports to both equalities networks at least every six months.

We will review our actions as part of our review of outcomes in 2022.

We will report formally within our Mainstreaming Report in 2023.

Who

Learning and Development Team

National Engagement Team

Corporate Assurance Team

Operations and Local Delivery

General equality duty

Advance equality of opportunity

Outcome three – Delivering and improving our service

What

We will learn from people entitled to our service, and those organisations who provide support and representation, so that we can increase the number of people asking for our services and improve how we deliver them to those who are eligible. This includes people who:

- currently use our service;
- may use it in the future; and
- are eligible for our services but not currently using them.

In particular, we will increase awareness among and contact with people from ethnic minority communities, people who communicate in different ways and people with care experience.

Why

One of our main principles is a commitment to continue to improve so that we put the needs of people entitled to our service first. We recognise that working alongside organisations who support current and future clients is critical to achieving the most effective service for the highest number of people eligible to use it.

How

We will carry out more analysis of clients' diversity and equalities information, in particular the disabled people category and intersectionality.

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.

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.

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.

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 (include links to documents).

When

We will present progress reports to both equalities networks at least every six months.

We will review our actions as part of our review of outcomes in 2022.

We will report formally within our Mainstreaming Report in 2023.

Who

Corporate Assurance Team as key liaison point

Operations and Local Delivery

National Engagement Team

General equality duty

Encourage good relations