



Operational Reference Group Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 29 th March 2021
Time	13:00 – 15:00
Location	Virtual Meeting

Attendees

Present

- Miriam Craven (Chair) – Social Security Scotland
- YS - Social Security Scotland
- AM - Social Security Scotland
- GD - Social Security Scotland
- SS - Social Security Scotland
- AB - One Parent Families Scotland
- JN - Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- SM - Skills Development Scotland
- FC - Carers Scotland
- RG - Citizens Advice Scotland
- DB - NHS Health Scotland
- KM - Child Poverty Action Group
- CC - Coalition of Carers in Scotland
- IP - Public Commercial Services Union
- PC - Action on Asbestos
- RG - The Alliance
- RG - Rights Advice Scotland

Presenters

- RM - Social Security Scotland
- LH - Social Security Scotland
- BH - Social Security Scotland
- MF - Social Security Scotland
- CP - Social Security Scotland

Secretariat

- RE - Social Security Scotland

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. The Chair, Miriam Craven (MC) welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced new members. .
- 1.2. MC Social Security Scotland is currently preparing to deliver Child Disability Payment. The pilot will launch on 26 July 2021 in Dundee, Perth and Kinross and the Western Isles.
- 1.3. Social Security Scotland published the results from its first All Client Survey in February. The survey was designed to learn about the experiences and needs of Social Security Scotland's clients. The results are being used to measure how Social Security Scotland is performing and where it can improve. The results of the survey are positive. 90% of clients said their overall experience was 'good' or 'very good'. Further information on the report can be found on Social Security Scotland's website: [Social Security Scotland - Social Security Scotland Client Survey 2018-2020](#). Social Security Scotland used the All Client Survey to recruit people to join our new Client Panel. The Client Panel will work alongside the Experience Panel research we have done to date. It will allow us to test different parts of our survey with the people that use it. 1000 people have now offered to take part.
- 1.4. Social Security Scotland's New Head Quarters in Dundee, has been named Agnes Husband House.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1. RM presented an updated version of the Terms of Reference for the Group. The revised Terms of reference were agreed. Members agreed that the Terms of Reference and future minutes of the meetings would be proactively published on Social Security Scotland's website.

Members agreed that the groups would start to meet every two months as there were lots of topics to consider ahead of the rollout of disability benefits.

3. Operational Update

- 3.1. LH, Social Security Scotland provided an update on Social Security Scotland's operational delivery. The following points were made:
- 3.2. There has been good uptake of Scottish Child Payment so far. We have received a great number of applications since the benefit went live.
- 3.3. We will keep take-up under review though and take any necessary action to reach families who haven't applied yet. More detailed information on application outcomes and payments, including at a local authority level, will be included in the next release of Official Statistics which will cover the period to the end of March and is due to be published on 11 May 2021.

- 3.4. We expect everyone who has applied before 15 February 2021 to receive their decision by the end of April. Anyone who has applied later will receive a decision after that date but their date of claim will be protected and any money they are owed will be backdated.
- 3.5. The four month window between applications opening and Scottish Child Payment actually going live gave Social Security Scotland time to prepare and process the large number of applications we received.
- 3.6. Since Scottish Child Payment went live applications to our Best Start Grant Benefits have also increased as we are using one application form.

4. Child Disability Payment

- 4.1. BH and RM gave the group an update on the communication and stakeholder engagement plans for Child Disability Payment.
- 4.2. Stakeholder engagement activity will start from May and will be aiming to reach the widest range of people as possible. The initial focus will be on the pilot areas; Dundee City, the Western Isles and Perth and Kinross. Relevant national stakeholders such as advice organisations will also be engaged at this stage. This engagement will then broaden out ahead of national rollout in the autumn.
- 4.3. Client-focused communication will start much closer to the pilot launch date to stop people trying to apply too early.
- 4.4. Social Security Scotland is working on a communicating and marketing strategy to reach seldom heard groups and feedback from members on effective strategies they have would be welcome.
- 4.5. Social Security Scotland was looking to develop a set of learning and guidance materials for stakeholders ahead of the launch of the Child Disability Payment pilot. The intention is to provide stakeholders with everything they need to prepare their services and support clients at the start of delivery. The group made a number of suggestions for stakeholders who could help share messages about Child Disability Payment.
- 4.6. KM suggested there may be reluctance to claim because it may trigger a claim for Universal Credit and there may be a requirement for specific communications around this.
- 4.7. It was agreed that Child Disability Payment will become a standing agenda item.

5. Debt Strategy

- 5.1. CP and MF Social Security Scotland, presented to Social Security Scotland's Debt Management Strategy 2021-24. They informed group members that prevention will be key. We want to stop people getting into debt in the first place but where there is a debt problem our vision is to operate a fair, sustainable and efficient debt repayment system that supports clients.

The Debt Recovery Team will look at all expenses going in and out of the client's bank to ensure they have enough to live on before making a decision. Existing third party deductions will also be considered and nothing will be done that pushes a client into hardship.

- 5.2. The group was content with the overall approach for Social Security Scotland's Debt Strategy.
- 5.3. MF updated Social Security Scotland suspended debt recovery work from April 2020 due to Covid-19. A further suspension has just been applied until October 2021. At that point we will reconsider our approach based on what is happening with the Covid 19 pandemic.

6. Any other business

- 6.1. MC thanked everyone for attending and for their input.

Date of next meeting: 24 May 2021

