

Social Security Charter Development Plan

March 2018

What do we want to achieve?

Drawing on evidence from the 2016 Consultation on Social Security; evidence taken by the Social Security Committee during the Bill process; the views of the Committee and its individual members, and evidence gathered from wider public and stakeholder engagement, there is a strong consensus that the charter should:

- Be widely accessible and provide a clear, plain English statement of what people are entitled to expect from the new system.
- Translate the principles in the Social Security Bill into commitments to deliver more specific outcomes; establishing a strong link between the principles and the way that the system actually performs.
- Be co-designed in close partnership with people who have direct experience of the system, including a strong voice for seldom heard groups.
- Enable robust, meaningful procedures for people to seek individual redress where their experience falls short of the standards articulated in the charter.
- Be underpinned, wherever possible, by clear outcomes and indicators of how progress against those outcomes will be evidenced. This will support future statutory reporting requirements.
- Be underpinned by strong arrangements for independent scrutiny and accountability.

The need for analytical rigour does not mean that the charter will itself be an analytical document – this would run contrary to the need to create something clear and accessible. Similar to the approach taken with e.g. the National Performance Framework; arrangements for measurement, the development of associated indicators and reporting requirements can underpin the charter without necessarily being included in it. Similarly, subject to the outcome of co-design, while the charter may include commitments or outcomes relating to specific parts of the system (e.g. appeals) it will not itself include detailed guidance, advice or procedures for these areas. The status of the charter as a clear statement of people's rights must be protected. Instead, this material will be made available alongside the charter and should be developed in a manner that is consistent with it.

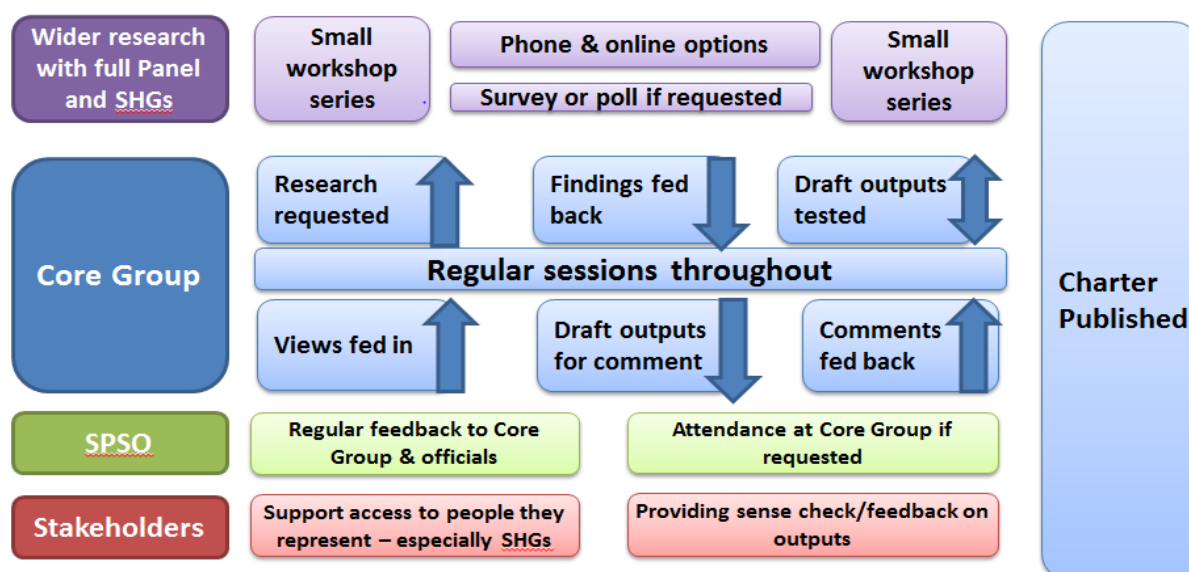
Who should be involved and what should they do?

To deliver a co-designed charter that meets these objectives, it will be necessary to draw on the experience and expertise of the following groups –

- **People with lived experience of the system**

To achieve genuine and effective co-design, people with lived experience will have the primary role in developing the charter. This will be delivered through a **Core Group** of approximately 20-30 people drawn from Experience Panels and seldom heard groups that will make key decisions and have oversight of the project from beginning to end.

It is also essential that flexibility is built into this process to ensure that all panel members and identified seldom heard groups are able to participate regardless of their support needs or location. These priorities have informed the following proposed co-design structure.



It is proposed that this **Core Group** will lead the work, meeting regularly throughout the project to consider and make decisions on wider research findings and any views offered by stakeholders. This Core Group will ensure consistent oversight and leadership of the project by those with lived experience of the system; making decisions on shaping the charter, supported by - but independent of - Scottish Government researchers.

Alongside this core group, further opportunities to engage would be offered to representative sub-groups, the whole panel and wider representatives of seldom heard groups, as appropriate, as part of the 'wider research' strand. The Core Group could contribute to the design of these. Examples include

1. **Small co-design workshops** undertaken in five locations across the country – once at the outset of the project to get initial views on content for the charter, and then repeated later (once or twice) at the same locations to review draft charter materials.
2. **Telephone interviews** would also be offered to allow broad participation, and separate activities would be undertaken with seldom heard groups if necessary. Findings from wider Experience Panels research would be fed in to these sessions (including any standalone Seldom Heard Groups work).
3. **Surveys and shorter polling exercises** could also be used to test draft outputs or explore preferences on key decisions with the panel as a whole. These would be commissioned by the Core Group.

Work is on-going to identify groups not adequately represented on Panels (e.g. gypsy travellers and those from specific ethnic groups) and to establish the most appropriate means of reaching and engaging them. Where helpful, work will also be progressed with our existing stakeholder networks to support this effort. The main

benefit of this proposed design is that it allows true ownership of the project by those with lived experience of the system. Human rights colleagues advise that participation of this strength would be strongly reflective of a rights based approach.

The risks associated with this approach lie in the complexity of the layered design. The Core Group is vulnerable to attrition over time, which could erode representation across locations or groups. Every effort will be made to mitigate these risks, including managing the frequency of engagement, monitoring the representation of key groups and topping up if necessary throughout the project, and basing events in suitable locations.

- **The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)**

The importance of delivering effective redress, is the most common and significant concern that has been expressed in relation to the charter. In line with her evidence to the Committee, the Ombudsman should therefore play a key role in ensuring that the charter is specific enough to allow it to be applied as a clear set of standards to hold the system to effective account and deliver individual redress.

The Ombudsman will be engaged through regular communication with lead officials and will be invited to provide advice on iterations as they emerge. As the capacity and confidence of the Core Group increases, it may also be useful for them to meet with the Ombudsman, to allow her to hear their perspective first hand.

- **The Social Security Committee/Scottish Parliament**

The Scottish Government has committed to bringing an amendment to the Bill at Stage 3 that would give Parliament the right to approve the final charter. This will enhance the robustness, importance and objectivity of the charter, making it more difficult for future Governments to amend or dilute the approach to social security it is intended to define.

- **Disability and Carers' Benefits Expert Advisory Group (DACBEAG)**

In addition to the advice already provided to officials by Dr Sally Wicher and Dr Jim McCormick, DACBEAG has proposed taking on a more formal role in supporting work to develop the charter and has discussed the with the Minister. Two main proposals emerged from that discussion:

1. That the Group provide a source of expert advice to officials and Ministers as the project progresses and where challenges inevitably arise. Having regular and informal access to Dr McCormick and Dr Wicher in this capacity has been helpful and continuing a similar relationship with the wider group would be useful.
2. The group could also support the stakeholder engagement strand of this work e.g. by helping to identify key seldom heard groups and facilitating access to those groups.

This paper will be helpful to the group in determining whether it can provide further support.

- **Stakeholders**

In line with the intended primacy of those with lived experience of the system, the principal role of stakeholders will be to help the project to access the views of the people they represent – especially in relation to seldom heard groups not well represented on Experience Panels.

In addition, key stakeholders will periodically act as a touchstone to sense-check and flag any unforeseen risks or critical gaps, to be fed back to the Core Group for consideration. However, stakeholders will not be given sign-off on the charter, and any views expressed in these discussions will not be privileged over those of participants with lived experience.

When the Core Group is considering particular themes e.g. human rights, it would also be helpful for relevant stakeholders to provide evidence to the Core Group. The Group may also wish to invite stakeholders to sessions to discuss particular topics or themes.

Appropriate stakeholders will be identified through our existing engagement networks, bolstered by any advice from DACBEAG and any organisations that may emerge through work to identify and access seldom heard groups.

- **Staff**

The principles of the charter will require to be enacted in the culture and behaviours of agency staff. It is therefore proposed that staff who will work in the agency, especially those with a role in recruitment, performance management, branding and establishing culture and values are kept fully informed of this work.

The proposal is therefore to work with senior agency officials as an informal sounding board to highlight any practical difficulties and to advise on the extent to which recommendations emerging from co-design work could be successfully embedded in agency practice.

Similarly, PCS may be a valuable source of advice, given their strong evidence at stage 1 on the reasons for the erosion of trust between DWP staff and service users.

- **Public**

It is also worth considering whether there is value in work to engage the wider public, and on what scale this should take place. An option may be to purchase questions in the monthly omnibus public survey. A longer-term aim could be to work with strategic comms to consider how the charter could be used as a means of positively engaging the wider public on social security; making clear the efficient services and rights based treatment people can expect should they ever need to access the system. This could form part of a wider strategy to highlight the strength of the system's rights based approach and to establish social security as a publicly admired and valued public service in the manner of the NHS.

REDACTED

How does the charter work?

