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Social Security Experience Panels - Others speaking to Social Security Scotland for clients



EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY*



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Introduction

In March 2020, the Scottish Government carried out a survey with Experience Panel members on the process for someone else being able to contact Social Security Scotland on behalf of a client.

This work was part of the Scottish Government's Social Security Experience Panels programme of research. In total, 247 Experience Panel members took part in this survey (a response rate of 11 per cent). The findings of this survey reflect the views of the respondents only. This report details the findings and key themes that emerged from this work.

Summary

Over half of respondents (54 per cent) had no experience of someone else contacting an organisation on their behalf, compared to over four in ten (45 per cent) who did.

We asked respondents what went well about the experience. The most common response was that they felt that those who spoke on their behalf were in a better position to liaise with the organisation in question. For some, this was because they thought the person speaking for them knew more about the benefits system. Or they felt they were better at communicating key points and dealing with any challenges. Some respondents said that someone else speaking on their behalf also helped relieve some of the stress and anxiety of contacting an organisation. Other respondents said they got the result they hoped for or that the organisation made it easy for someone else to speak on their behalf.

We asked respondents what could have gone better about their experience of someone contacting an organisation on their behalf. The most common response was that they felt the process of nominating and verifying the person they wished to speak for them could have been made easier and quicker.

Eight in ten respondents (80 per cent) said they thought they might, at some point, want someone else to be able to speak to Social Security Scotland on their behalf. 16 per cent said they would always want this, just under half of respondents (49 per cent) said they would sometimes want this, and 15 per cent said they would rarely want this. Just over one in ten respondents (12 per cent) said they would never want someone else to be able to speak to Social Security Scotland on their behalf.

Of respondents who said they would never want someone else to be able to speak to Social Security Scotland on their behalf, two thirds (66 per cent) said they would not need it. Under three in ten (28 per cent) said they would not feel comfortable. No respondents said they would not know who to ask.

Of respondents who said they would want someone else to speak on their behalf, just under eight in ten (79 per cent) said they would want a professional supporter (e.g. support worker, advocate, Citizen's Advice Bureau, local authority worker) to speak for them. Seven in ten respondents (72 per cent) said they would want a friend or family member to speak to Social Security Scotland. Just under two thirds (65 per cent) said they would want a medical professional to do it.

Just under nine in ten of those same respondents said they would want the person contacting Social Security Scotland on their behalf to support with a redetermination or appeal (88 per cent). Around eight in ten said they would want the person to seek an explanation of a decision (81 per cent) or get help with an application (79 per cent). Two thirds (66 per cent) said they would want the person to have any ongoing contact with Social Security Scotland on their behalf.

Combined, around four in ten respondents (44 per cent) said they would want to let Social Security Scotland know that they were happy with someone else speaking on their behalf through an online method (computer, mobile phone or tablet). This was followed by 18 per cent of respondents who said telephone, and 16 per cent who selected post using a paper form. One in ten respondents (10 per cent) said they would like to tell Social Security Scotland in person during a home visit, whilst only 3 per cent said they would like to do so in person at a Social Security Scotland location.

Just under half of respondents (49 per cent) said the kind of information that they would want being shared would not be different depending on who the representative was. Just under three in ten (29 per cent) said it would be different. Around one fifth (22 per cent) said they did not know.

Respondents who said the information would be different depending on who their representative was or that they did not know, said it very much depended on the representative, individual relationships, the situation and information being discussed. Respondents who said that the information would not be different depending on who the representative was mostly said that they would trust the representative, the information would already be known to the person or that it was necessary and in their best interests that they did.

Over eight in ten respondents (86 per cent) said they would feel comfortable with Social Security Scotland discussing their benefits with someone else in an emergency.

In an emergency, most respondents said they would be happy for Social Security Scotland to discuss information about the emergency (85 per cent), information about their application (70 per cent), and information to support a claim (78 per cent).

We asked respondents if there is anything else they would like to say about other people contacting Social Security Scotland on their behalf. Most respondents said that it is important for strict confidentiality safeguards to be in place, with Social

Security Scotland only speaking to others with a client's consent and approval. These respondents felt that information about the process and remit of other people speaking to Social Security Scotland on behalf of a client should be clear and accessible. Some respondents said that it would be important for Social Security Scotland to record and regularly review who could speak to them on behalf a client.

Background and research methods

The Scottish Government is becoming responsible for some of the benefits currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

As part of the work to prepare for this change, the Scottish Government set up the Social Security Experience Panels. People from across Scotland who have recent experience of at least one of the benefits coming to Scotland were eligible to join. Over 2,400 people registered as Experience Panel members when it was launched in 2017. The Scottish Government is working with Experience Panel members to design a new social security system that works for the people of Scotland, based on the principles of dignity, fairness and respect.

In this research project, we sought Experience Panel members' views on someone else being able to contact Social Security Scotland on behalf of a client. At the moment, adults with incapacity can have an appointee or guardian contact Social Security Scotland on their behalf. Alongside this, the Scottish Government are also putting in place funded advocates. Advocates will be available to contact Social Security Scotland on behalf of disabled people.¹

However, there are many people who don't have an appointee, guardian or advocate. These people may also want someone else to contact Social Security Scotland on their behalf. This could be a professional, for example, a doctor, nurse, support worker or welfare officer. It could also be a personal friend, a relative, or a neighbour. This option could be open to clients for any kind of communication with Social Security Scotland.

We used a survey to ask Experience Panel members their experiences and views on:

- Whether they would feel comfortable with someone else being able to contact Social Security Scotland on their behalf.
- What they would want someone else to contact Social Security Scotland about.
- How to give their permission for someone to contact Social Security Scotland on their behalf.

This report details the findings and key themes that emerged from this survey with Experience Panel members.

¹ More information is available at: <https://www.mygov.scot/get-extra-support-applying-for-benefits-in-scotland/>

Respondents were recruited from the Scottish Government Experience Panels. All Experience Panel members were invited to take part in the survey. The Social Security Experience Panels are a longitudinal research project. The panels are made up of volunteers from the Scottish population who have relevant experience. The results of this work should be regarded as being reflective of the experience and views of the participants only, and are not indicative of the views of a wider Scottish population. Percentages are given only to show a broad sense of the balance of opinion across participants.

Survey method

Information from the survey was added to information from the ‘*About Your Benefits and You*² and ‘*Social Security Experience Panels: Who is in the panels and their experiences so far*³ surveys. The demographic data collected in these surveys was linked to the information supplied by respondents of this survey as part of the longitudinal data set for the wider Experience Panels project. Demographic data was only available for around half of survey respondents. This is because participation in our About You surveys is voluntary and not all panel members have responded and provided us with their demographic information. In addition, some demographic data which was recently collected for newly registered Experience Panel members was also not yet available at the time of writing. The following demographic information is given to provide context to the findings from the survey.

One third of respondents who we have demographic information for identified as ‘man or boy’ (34 per cent) and two thirds (66 per cent) identified as ‘woman or girl’.

Table 1: Gender of survey respondents (n=146)

Gender	%
Woman or girl	66
Man or boy	34
Total	100

² Scottish Government (2017). *Social Security Experience Panels: About Your Benefits and You – Quantitative Research Findings*. [Online] Available at: www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/7769/

³ Scottish Government (2018). *Social Security Experience Panels: Who is in the panels and their experiences so far*. [Online] Available at: www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/10/3083/

Half of respondents were aged 45 to 59 (50 per cent) and over one third were aged 60 to 79 (36 per cent). 14 per cent of respondents were aged between 25 and 44.

Table 2: Age of survey respondents (n=146)

Age	%
Under 25	0
25 – 44	14
45 – 59	50
60 – 79	36
80 or over	1
Total	101

Under nine in ten respondents (87 per cent) had a disability or long term health condition.

Table 3: Disability status of respondents (n=147)

Disability status	
Disabled	87
Not disabled	14
Total	101

Six in ten respondents had a physical disability (62 per cent) or chronic pain (62 per cent). One third had a mental health condition (33 per cent) and around one in ten had a severe hearing impairment (13 per cent). Under one in ten had a severe visual impairment (five per cent) or a learning disability (eight per cent). Six in ten told us they had some other kind of disability or long term health condition (61 per cent)

Table 4: Disability types of respondents (n=147)⁴

Disability Types	%
Has a physical disability	62
Has chronic pain	62
Has a mental health condition	33
Has a severe hearing impairment	13
Has a severe visual impairment	5
Has a learning disability	8
Has another kind of disability or long term health condition	61

Around four in ten respondents (44 per cent) said they were a carer.

Table 5: Caring status of respondents (n=146)

Caring status	%
Carer	44
Not a carer	55
Prefer not to say	1
Total	100

Of survey respondents who said they were a carer, 75 per cent cared for an adult friend or relative. One third were a carer due to old age (36 per cent). Two in ten cared for a disabled child (20 per cent).

Table 6: Who do respondents care for? (n=64)

Care status	%
Cares for an adult	75
Cares for a child	20
Carer due to old age	36

⁴ The percentage is of total respondents, not disabled respondents. Respondents were able to select multiple disability types.

Survey respondents took part from 28 of 32 local authority areas in Scotland. The majority lived in an urban area (82 per cent).⁵

Table 7: Location of respondents (n=135)

Location	%
Urban	82
Rural	19
Total	101

Survey respondents who took part had experience of claiming or helping someone else to claim a wide range of benefits. The most common benefits claimed by survey respondents were Personal Independence Payment (65 per cent) and Disability Living Allowance (59 per cent). The least common benefits claimed were for Funeral Expenses (six per cent) and Industrial Injuries Disability Benefit (one per cent).

⁵ 17 per cent of the Scottish population lives in a rural area. Scottish Government (2018). *Rural Scotland Key Facts 2018*. [Online] Available at: www2.gov.scot/Resource/0054/00541327.pdf

Table 8: Respondents benefit experience (n=233)⁶

Benefit	%
Personal Independence Payment	65
Disability Living Allowance	59
Carer's Allowance	31
Cold Weather Payment	31
Winter Fuel Payment	32
Discretionary Housing Payment	26
Scottish Welfare Fund	19
Attendance Allowance	18
Universal Credit	18
Severe Disablement Allowance	13
Funeral Expenses	6
Sure Start Maternity Grant	24
Industrial Injuries Disability Benefit	1

More detailed demographic information on the Experience Panels as a whole can be found in '*Social Security Experience Panels: Who is in the panels and their experiences so far.*⁷

⁶ Respondents had experience of applying for (themselves or someone else) or receiving these benefits within the last three years, but were not necessarily in receipt of the benefit at the time of the survey.

⁷ Scottish Government (2018). *Social Security Experience Panels: Who is in the panels and their experiences so far.* [Online] Available at: www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/10/3083

Others speaking to Social Security Scotland for clients

Respondents had mixed experience of someone else contacting an organisation on their behalf. Over half (54 per cent) had no experience of this, compared to over four in ten (45 per cent) who did.

Table 9: Have you ever had someone else contact an organisation (e.g. Department of Work and Pensions) on your behalf? (n=246)

	%
Yes	45
No	54
Don't know	0
Total	99 ⁸

We asked respondents who said yes what their experience of someone contacting an organisation on their behalf was like. Many respondents said someone else contacted the DWP on their behalf during a benefit application process or when appealing a decision. Others said they needed someone to speak on their behalf to resolve a specific issue.

“CAB called the DWP on my behalf as I had been suffering from mental health issues and was not able to fully understand what they were asking me for. The CAB advisor was taking the question and explaining it to me and then giving the DWP advisor my answer in an appropriate way but with my agreement.”

Respondents said people from various organisations had made contact with another organisation on their behalf: help and welfare rights organisations, disability specific charities, advocacy workers and social workers. Some respondents said that a family member had contacted an organisation for them.

“It was my husband who spoke to them with my permission. It actually helped me as I was feeling very stressed that day and so was unable to speak to them without getting upset. My husband could then relate the conversation to me himself afterwards.”

⁸ Results are presented as whole numbers for ease of reading. Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to exactly 100 per cent.

“I was ill and had a timed response to a letter. My daughter had to phone them to explain the situation.”

As in the excerpt above, some respondents described why they needed someone else to contact an organisation for them, with a few saying that their disability or health condition meant that it was necessary either on certain occasions or all of the time.

“The member of staff phoned on my behalf because I am hearing impaired.”

“I am autistic and do not speak on the phone. This makes contacting organisations extremely difficult as normally the only contact method is phoning. In the past I have to rely on carers, family members, medical professionals phoning for me. Often people don't understand why I can't speak on the phone which causes many issues. The normal procedure seems to be having to send a letter giving written permission of a named individual to speak for me.”

Some respondents described more than one occasion when someone else contacted an organisation on their behalf.

What went well

We asked respondents with experience of people contacting organisations on their behalf what went well about the experience. The most common response was that they felt that those who spoke on their behalf were in a better position to liaise with the organisation in question. For some, this was because they thought the person speaking knew more about the benefits system or they felt they were better at communicating key points and dealing with any challenges. For respondents who described applying for a benefit or appealing a decision, having someone speak on their behalf and support them through the process gave them reassurance that their query was being dealt with efficiently.

“I felt the person contacting the DWP were listened to more than myself so it went well as everything was factual and she spoke up for me.”

“They were able to communicate with them as they knew all about benefits, which I didn't.”

“That person could communicate my problems better.”

Some respondents said that someone else speaking on their behalf also helped relieve some of the feelings of stress and anxiety which could accompany contacting an organisation. Referring to a benefit application or appeal process, some respondents said the person speaking on their behalf provided emotional

support, that 'having someone there' reduced the stress of trying to 'cope doing it all alone.' Other respondents said that what went well about someone else speaking on their behalf was that they got the result they hoped for.

"I did not have the stress of trawling through a mountain of 'guides', often written in a way that's difficult to comprehend, fit to personal circumstances, or, see which of various options, best suited me individually. I was taken through options in a calm, stress-less manner and information conveyed to the appropriate authorities/agencies, on my behalf."

"The advisor from CAB helped me to win each appeal. He knew what to do and when whereas I was simply overwhelmed with the process and the paperwork. He enabled me to speak when I had to and spoke for me when I couldn't."

Finally, some respondents said that their experience of someone contacting an organisation on their behalf went well because it was easy to set up and that the organisation were understanding of their need for this.

"The DWP staff were generally polite and accepting of my need to have someone else handle the call. The project workers accurately relayed what was said or used speakerphone."

"Once I've named someone and given written consent in a letter it normally works well and my Mum usually speaks for me and I give her any written notes of what I want saying."

What could have gone better

We also asked respondents with experience, what could have gone better with their experience of someone contacting an organisation on their behalf. Some respondents described a negative experience or difficulties, often because the organisation being contacted would not speak to the person they had asked to speak for them.

"It was quite difficult as they insisted in talking to me and not the person who was speaking on my behalf."

"Not great. They always want to speak to me despite me being unable or unwilling to call them due to my conditions. I've had this issue every time trying to call the DWP. With support workers or husband it's the same, are you an appointee, no. We can't tell you anything other than there'll be a letter in the post. Sometimes they'd let me agree to let whoever was supporting me hear but they always tried their hardest to keep talking to me despite my need for a support worker or husband to speak on my behalf. Not ideal."

Most of these respondents therefore felt the process of nominating and verifying the person they wished to speak for them could have been made easier and quicker. Respondents said it would have been better if they could nominate someone in advance and not have to verify this so thoroughly during a single communication. Other respondents said that communication should have been quicker, for example, shorter waiting times on the phone or between letters.

“Have people on file that are authorised to speak on your behalf.”

“Less having to repeatedly confirm my mentor to talk on my behalf every time the call was transferred or called back etc.”

Someone contacting Social Security Scotland for clients

Eight in ten of all respondents (80 per cent) said they thought they might, at some point, want someone else to be able to speak to Social Security Scotland on their behalf. 16 per cent said they would always want this, just under half of respondents (49 per cent) said they would sometimes want this, and 15 per cent said they would rarely want this. Over one in ten respondents (12 per cent) said they would never want someone else to be able to speak to Social Security Scotland on their behalf. Eight per cent said they did not know.

Table 10: Do you think you would ever want someone else to be able to speak to Social Security Scotland on your behalf? (n=245)

	%
Always	16
Sometimes	49
Rarely	15
Never	12
Don't know	8
Total	100

Of respondents who said they would never want someone else to be able to speak to Social Security Scotland on their behalf, two thirds (66 per cent) said they would not need it.

“I would rather speak myself.”

“I feel confident enough to know what to say and why.”

Just under three in ten (28 per cent) said they would not feel comfortable.

“I sometimes don't like to ask.”

“I would rather deal with such private matters myself as long as I am able.”

No respondents said they would not know who to ask.

Table 11: Why would you never want someone else to speak to Social Security Scotland on your behalf? (n=29)

	%
I would not need it	66
I would not feel comfortable	28
Other	7
I would not know who to ask	0
Total	100

Who could speak on a client's behalf

Of respondents who said they would want someone else to speak on their behalf, just under eight in ten (79 per cent) said they would want a professional supporter, for example, a support worker, advocate, Citizen's Advice Bureau or local authority worker, to contact Social Security Scotland on their behalf.

“The system at times can be very complicated to work round so a professional adviser is always a good thing they have all the knowledge.”

Seven in ten respondents (72 per cent) said they would want a friend or family member to speak to Social Security Scotland.

“Family members know you better than anyone else. They know your symptoms and how to help you.”

Just under two thirds (65 per cent) said they would want a medical professional to do it.

“I think that doctors should be able to speak on behalf of clients as, everything is assessed based on medical need or disability and apart from the applicant themselves, doctors will know the most accurate information.”

7 per cent of respondents said they would want someone outside of these groups to speak to Social Security Scotland on their behalf. These respondents said they would want carers, charities, employers or MSPs.

Table 12: Who might you want to speak to Social Security Scotland on your behalf? (tick all that apply) (n=215)

	%
A professional that supports you (e.g. support worker, advocate, Citizen's Advice Bureau, local authority worker)	79
A friend or family member	72
A medical professional (e.g. doctor, nurse, or occupational therapist)	64
Other	7

What someone might speak on a client's behalf about

Just under nine in ten of those same respondents said they would want the person contacting Social Security Scotland on their behalf to talk about a redetermination or appeal (88 per cent). Around eight in ten said they would want the person to seek an explanation of a decision (81 per cent) or get help with an application (79 per cent). Two thirds said they would want the person to report a change of circumstances (66 per cent) and just under six in ten have any ongoing contact with Social Security Scotland on their behalf (59 per cent).

Table 13: What would you want the person contacting Social Security Scotland for you to talk to staff about? (tick all that apply) (n=213)

	%
Supporting with a redetermination or appeal	88
Seeking an explanation of a decision	81
Helping with an application	79
Reporting a change of circumstances	66
Any ongoing contact	59

Giving consent for someone else to speak to Social Security Scotland

We told respondents that if they were to be represented by someone else, they would need to inform Social Security Scotland that they were happy to be represented by that person.

One quarter of respondents (25 per cent) said they would want to let Social Security Scotland know that they were happy with someone else speaking on their behalf online using a computer. This was followed by 18 per cent of respondents who said telephone, and 16 per cent who selected post using a paper form. One in ten respondents (10 per cent) said they would like to tell Social Security Scotland in person during a home visit, whilst only 3 per cent said they would like to do so in person at a Social Security Scotland location.

Combined, around four in ten respondents (44 per cent) said they would want to let Social Security Scotland know through an online method (computer, mobile phone or tablet). Eight per cent of respondents selected 'another way'. These respondents listed a combination of the categories listed.

Table 14: How would you want to let Social Security Scotland know that you were happy with someone else speaking to them on your behalf? (n=214)

	%
Online using a computer	25
Telephone	18
Post using a paper form	16
Online using a mobile phone	14
In person through a home visit	10
Online using a tablet	6
Another way	8
In person at a Social Security Scotland location	3
Total	100

Sharing information

We told respondents there are certain kinds of information that Social Security Scotland would never share with anyone other than the client themselves due to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). This means that, even if someone

had a client's permission to talk to Social Security Scotland on their behalf, the following information about the client would never be discussed with that person:

- Addresses
- Dates of birth
- National insurance numbers
- Bank details
- Telephone numbers
- Names of household members
- Names of employers or former employers

What information should be shared

We asked respondents if there was any other kind of information they would not want shared between Social Security Scotland and someone making contact on their behalf. Most respondents said no, or left responses related to the categories provided above. Some respondents explained that they trusted anyone they asked to speak on their behalf with their personal information.

“Anyone that was acting on my behalf would have my full confidence to respect any information as personal and would not use any such information to my detriment.”

A few respondents questioned how someone else could speak to Social Security Scotland on their behalf without discussing or verifying the information above.

“If I've given permission, would they not need some of the items listed above to be sure it was my account they were discussing?”

“I find it difficult to understand how anyone could conduct business on my behalf if the above details could not be discussed.”

On the other hand, some respondents said they would not want any medical information such as disability, health condition or medication shared between Social Security Scotland and someone making contact on their behalf. Others said they would not want information about their religion or ethnicity shared, or financial information about the benefits they are receiving.

Some respondents said that the kind of information they would not want shared between Social Security Scotland and someone making contact on their behalf depended on who was making the contact for them.

“Depending on who it was, they may well have this information already.”

“It depends on who is representing me and how much I trusted them.”

Effect of who representative is

Just under half of respondents (49 per cent) said the kind of information that they would want being shared would not be different depending on who the representative was, just under three in ten (29 per cent) said it did. Around one fifth (22 per cent) said they did not know.

Table 15: Would the kind of information that you would want being shared be different if your representative was a professional or a friend or a family member (n=213)

	%
Yes	29
No	49
Don't know	22
Total	100

We asked respondents to explain their answer. Respondents who said that the information would not be different mostly said that they would trust the representative, the information would already be known to the person or that it was necessary and in their best interests that they did.

“If someone is acting on my behalf, then they should be entitled to all information required to help my case.”

“They require this information.”

“If you are asking someone to speak on your behalf, there must be an element of trust.”

Respondents who said that the information would be different, or that they did not know, said it very much depended on the context: who the representative was, relationship to the representative, the situation and the information being discussed.

“Being asked if you've ever been suicidal in front of a family member who maybe didn't know. Being asked if you wet the bed in front of a CAB representative. Some questions may have to be asked because of the way the system is structured but the DWP should be more sensitive about who is present when they ask them.”

For example, some respondents said they would want 'more' information shared with family and friends.

“I would be happy for the family member to have any information but it would depend on the professional as to what health information I would like to share.”

For others, this was the opposite.

“Professionals may need to know something I want to protect my family from.”

“Don't want friends or family to know all personal information.”

Contacting without direct consent in an emergency

We told respondents that if a client does not give permission for someone else to represent them, Social Security Scotland will not discuss them or their case with anyone else. However, there could be some emergencies, where a client may wish to be supported by someone, but they are unable to give their consent at that time. For example a client could be in hospital and unable to contact Social Security Scotland themselves. So they may ask someone else to contact Social Security Scotland on their behalf about their benefits.

Over eight in ten respondents (86 per cent) said they would feel comfortable with Social Security Scotland discussing their benefits with someone else in an emergency.

Table 16: In an emergency, would you feel comfortable with Social Security Scotland discussing your benefits with that person? (n=214)

	%
Yes	86
No	7
Don't know	7
Total	100

In an emergency, most respondents said they would be happy for Social Security Scotland to discuss information about the emergency (85 per cent), information about their application (70 per cent), and information to support a claim (78 per cent). Most respondents who selected 'other' said they would be happy for any and all necessary information to be shared.

Table 17: In an emergency, what kind of information would you want to be shared between Social Security Scotland and the person making contact on your behalf? (tick all that apply) (n=185)

	%
Information about the emergency	85
Any information to support your claim	78
Any information about your application process	70
Other	8

We asked respondents if there is anything else they would like to say about other people contacting Social Security Scotland on their behalf. Most respondents said that it is important for strict confidentiality safeguards to be in place. This included Social Security Scotland only speaking to others with a client’s consent and approval and only discussing or sharing relevant information.

“Make sure they can prove who they are and can act on your behalf officially.”

“That only relevant information regarding the situation is given and used.”

These respondents felt that information about the process and remit of other people speaking to Social Security Scotland on behalf a client should be clear and accessible. This included confidentiality and how to nominate someone.

“Information about this process and who can do what must be clear, accessible and widely available so everyone has the right information.”

“Would need a lot of clarity regarding confidentiality and who would be allowed to speak to them on my behalf.”

Some respondents said that it would be important for Social Security Scotland to record and regularly review who could speak to them on behalf of a client. Another respondent said it would be important to have more than one named representative.

“I would like to nominate people and to be asked by social security Scotland after a period of time if I’m still comfortable with these people helping me.”

“Would like to have more than one named person who able to contact SSS on my behalf. This is to ensure someone available when needed. Ease of being able to change the named persons, to account for their changing circumstances. Reminders about keeping such information up to date needed too.”

Other respondents said that the idea of others speaking to Social Security Scotland on behalf of a client was a positive one.

“I think it is really needed for some people in times of stress or when people can't speak for themselves either because of an illness or incapacity to do so.”

Next steps

Insights from this research are informing decisions about how others will be able to speak to Social Security Scotland on behalf of a client.

They are informing decisions about how Social Security Scotland collects and stores the details of representatives (including those from organisations) speaking on behalf of a client. They are also shaping decisions about what client information is then able to be shared with representatives.

The findings from this work are also being used to provide guidance for Social Security Scotland staff. This guidance will help staff to have conversations with those who call Social Security Scotland on behalf of someone else. It will also help staff to be prepared for certain scenarios that involve another person speaking to Social Security on behalf of a client. For example, specific guidance now exists for staff that covers the scenario where a client is too ill to speak to Social Security Scotland and wishes somebody else to do so on their behalf.

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

- Are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- May be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact socialsecurityexperience@gov.scot for further information.
- Cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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