

A New Future for Social Security

Consultation on Social Security in Scotland

Easy Read Summary



August 2016



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Introduction



New changes to the law mean that the Scottish Government will run its own social security service. We want to work with people across Scotland to find the best way to do this. We believe that everyone should have their say.

Part 1: Our Goals

Making our goals part of the law



One of our main goals is that social security in Scotland should be fair and should treat everyone with equal respect. We are thinking about how we can support this goal in the law.

The two ideas that we have are:

Idea A - A Claimant Charter

This would be a shared agreement between the Scottish Government and the people of Scotland. The Scottish Government staff who work in the social security agency should treat people claiming benefits in a certain way. The agreement would also say that our staff must be treated in the same way. This agreement should be put in writing.

Idea B: Writing values into the law

The new law could promise dignity and respect through openness and fairness for everyone.

The difference between these two ideas is that that we would be able to put more in the charter than we would be able to set out in law. A charter would be easier for people to read than parts of a new law. However a law might be easier to put into practice. We would like your views on these two ideas.

Outcomes and the user experience



The Scottish Government has worked with people, groups and organisations to come up with a set of outcomes. These targets will decide how we run the social security system in Scotland and help us to check how it is working the future.

This list sets out what we want our system to do:

People who are applying for or getting Scottish benefits:

- Are treated with dignity and respect
- Can get help and advice to claim benefits
- Are supported with applications and assessments
- Are given a choice about how their benefits are paid
- Have a good experience with the Scottish social security system

People who are getting Scottish benefits and their families:

- Have more control over their lives
- Have more confidence and security
- Are happier and healthier
- Are better able to be part of society and make the most of their lives

The Scottish social security system:

- Is run in a way that works best for the people who need it
- Is easy to use
- Works well with other services so people get the support they need
- Treats everyone the same

Scottish Benefits:

- Are given to the right people to work against poverty
- Make people's lives better
- Are paid to everyone who is entitled to them
- Are paid at the right time and at the right amount to help people

People living in Scotland:

- Know about benefits and who and what they are for
- Have a good attitude towards benefits and the people who get them
- Think that Scottish benefits are good value for money
- Know about the important work that carers do
- Think that social security is as important as any other public service

Other public services and charities:

- Are under less pressure because of changes to social security in Scotland

Along with the health and social care system:

- Social security should help people to live healthier lives in the community

We are also thinking about the best way to give social security services in Scotland. We want to make sure that:

- Communications are clear, and do not pick on anyone unfairly
- People can choose the way they want to contact us
- We involve people who get the benefits in the planning, development and testing of new systems. This will make sure the technology works well for the people who need to use it.

We would like your views on the outcomes which we have set out. We would like to know if you think there are any other outcomes which we have not included.

Delivering social security in Scotland



The Scottish Government could be in charge of giving benefits, or other organisations could be in charge of social security.

To help us decide the best way to run social security services, we would like you to think about these things:

Should social security payments in Scotland be cash only, or should there be a choice of goods and cash?

How can we best use technology for social security delivery in Scotland?

Should the social security services in Scotland allow you to speak to someone in person?

Independent advice



The UK Government has decided that the Scottish Parliament will now be able to make its own plans for social security in Scotland.

We would like to know if you think there should be an independent organisation in Scotland that looks at how the social security system is run. It could also advise on how it could work better.

Would you like a service set up to inspect social security?

Questions

We have told you our ideas on:

- Making our aims part of the law
- Delivering social security
- Independent advice



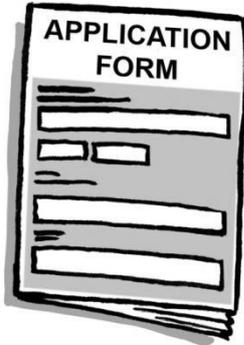
You may want to tell us what you think on all of these or just some of them. Please tell us what you are giving answers on when you answer the two key questions below:

What do you think about these ideas?

Is there anything else you would like to say about this section?

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Part 2: Benefits the Scottish Government will provide



The Scottish Government will now be in charge of some benefits. These are called 'devolved benefits'.

They are:

- **Ill Health and Disability Benefits** which means - Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Attendance Allowance (AA), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) and Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit (IIDB)
- **Carer's Allowance**
- **Sure Start Maternity Grants** (which we want to replace with a new benefit called Best Start Grant)
- **Funeral Payments**
- **Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments**
- **Discretionary Housing Payments**
- Some parts of **Universal Credit**

The Scottish Government also wants to start a new **Job Grant** for young people, who have been unemployed for more than 6 months, and who are looking for work.

Ill Health and Disability Benefits



We want your views on UK disability benefits and how they work. We would like to ask you some questions that will help the Scottish Government take charge of these benefits and make any changes that are needed.

Over 500,000 people in Scotland get Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Personal Independence Payment. We want to hear your views, ideas and experiences so the new system treats everyone the same.

Our first aim is to change to the new system smoothly. We want to make sure everyone knows what's happening and keeps getting their benefits.

We are also looking at ways in which we can help lower costs for disabled people and carers.

In the longer term we want to make sure that disability benefits and other services work together. We are also thinking about a 'whole-of-life' disability benefit that meets people's needs at different stages of their life.

Carer's Allowance



Caring can be rewarding and positive for both carers and those being cared for. But caring can also lead to poor mental and physical health. It can stop people doing things like working or going to college or university.

The Scottish Government wants to raise Carer's Allowance so that it is paid at the same level as Jobseeker's Allowance. Carers who qualify will each get around £600 more a year. We will also think about starting a Young Carers Allowance to give extra support for young people who are carers.

We want to allow people who care for others to be able to do other things in their life, like working or going to college or university.

Best Start Grant



The Scottish Government wants to bring in a new 'Best Start Grant'. This would replace the Sure Start Maternity Grant. This grant makes a payment to some families on benefits when they have their first baby. We want to increase the amount we pay. We want to give a payment for all babies. We want to make a payment when children start nursery and school.

The support provided through the new Best Start Grant will help to treat everyone equally. We want a benefit that is easy to apply for and that gives good support to families in the early years.

Funeral Payments

The current DWP funeral payment is a grant for some people on low income benefits who have to pay for a funeral.

The funeral payment is one of the ways that helps some people who cannot pay for funerals. We want to give more people the funeral payment so they don't need to borrow money to pay for funerals. We also want people to know how much the benefit will pay them so they can plan for a funeral.

We are looking for ideas about the best ways to do this.



Winter Fuel Payments

This is a yearly payment made to all pensioners to help towards their winter heating costs.

Cold Weather Payments

This is given to help those on low incomes pay extra heating costs during cold weather.

Discretionary Housing Payments



Discretionary Housing Payments are made by councils. They are for people who need extra help to pay their housing costs.

This has been given to people whose housing benefit or Universal Credit has been reduced because of welfare changes like the 'bedroom tax'.

We suggest that Discretionary Housing Payments should not change.

Universal Credit

The law gives choices for the way Universal Credit is worked out and paid. The choices are being introduced to make it easier for people to manage their Universal Credit payments. These are:

- Having the choice to be paid Universal Credit twice a month instead of once a month.
- Having the choice to have your rent part be paid directly to council or housing association landlords.

These changes are meant to give people more choice and control over their Universal Credit payments.

We would also like to look at the idea of paying rent to Private Landlords directly.

Job Grant

The Scottish Government wants to set up a new Job Grant to help young people aged 16-24, who are going back to work after being unemployed for 6 months. This would be a single payment of £100, or £250 for those who have children. We also plan to give them free bus travel for three months.

Questions



We have told you our ideas on:

- Ill Health and Disability Benefits
- Carer's Allowance
- Best Start Grant
- Funeral Payments
- Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Universal Credit
- Job Grant

You may want to give us your answers on all of these or just some of them.

What do you think about the ideas?

Is there anything else you would like to say about this section?

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Part 3: Making it work



Advice

The right advice can have a huge effect on services. It can point people in need to the right support at the right times, help them through making claims and appeals and mean that more people get the benefits they deserve.

The Scottish Government wants to make sure that people can get the service they need.

The Scottish Government intends to work closely with advice organisations to find out what work they do. We will find out how much work they can take on. This will help us to:

- Understand the main things affecting advice services now and in the future
- Find out how organisations and people will manage the changes to the social security in Scotland
- Find out if we can make the most of the changes to improve advice services

We want to use this consultation to ask for peoples' views on the advice that is currently given. We would like you to think about how advice organisations should help in the development of a new Scottish social security system. Could changes be used to improve the advice that is given?

Complaints, reviews and appeals



We want to give the best services and information to everyone who uses Scotland's social security system. But sometimes people are not happy with the service they got. This is why we need a good system in place to deal with complaints.

We would like your views on the best way to handle people's comments, concerns and complaints. We believe that internal checks would help us to make better decisions.

We would like your ideas on how a Scottish internal checking process should work.

It is important that people are able to challenge decisions they do not agree with. There must be a good appeals process that anyone can use. We will make an appeals process for these benefits which is fair and easy to use. There will be a set timescale for decisions.

We think that appeals should be decided by a tribunal hearing. We would like you tell us what you think about this.

Where you live and benefits issues



When Scotland starts delivering these benefits there is a possibility that some issues about where a person lives may come up. There will be borders between the different social security systems in Scotland and England.

The Scottish Government will need to set out who can get the benefits it will offer depending on where someone normally lives.

The Scottish Government expects that a test will be based on where a person is living. This will be looked at when deciding if a person can get

a benefit they have applied for. We would like you to tell us what you think about this.

Managing overpayments and debt

Mistakes which cause overpayments mean that there is less public money to spend on those who need it. To stop this, we need to spot mistakes and put them right.

At the moment, a claimant is asked to pay back an overpayment even if it is not their fault. We want to know if you think this is the best way to deal with overpayments.

Fraud

The Scottish Government will make sure the money it spends on social security is spent properly. We will not accept any fraud. People who have committed fraud should be punished.

We suggest the Scottish Government should investigate fraud the same way as DWP. We would like your views on how the DWP investigate fraud and any ways you think it could be done better.

Protecting your information

The Scottish Government believes that every person has the right to privacy and that personal information should be protected.

We will keep all information safe and private.

We will protect the privacy of people by only taking the information we need for benefits applications.

We will only share information that would help services run better.

We would like your views on whether you agree with sharing information to help services run better. We would only do this when the person has said we can.

Raising benefits yearly

We will raise disability benefits to keep them in line with the rise in general prices.

We would like your views on whether there should be a rise in these benefits. How could we make the system simpler and easier to understand.

Treating everyone equally



The Scottish Government has to think about how it can make sure that everyone is treated equally.

People shouldn't be treated any differently because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, gender including pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation.

This helps us make sure we are doing our best to meet people's different needs as well as possible.

Questions

We have told you our ideas on:

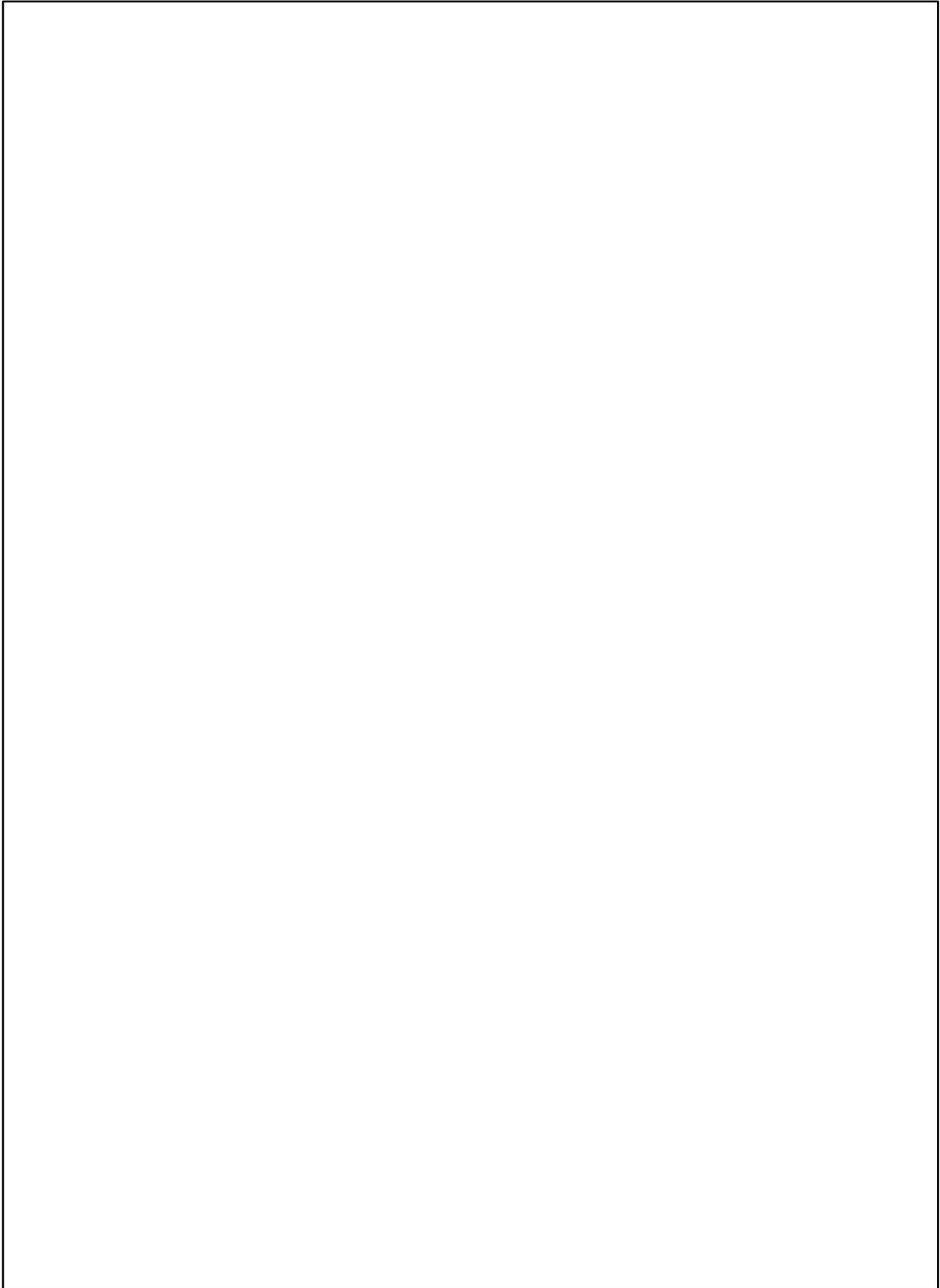
- Advice, representation and advocacy
- Complaints, reviews and appeals
- Where you live and benefit issues
- Managing overpayments
- Fraud
- Protecting your information
- Raising benefits yearly



You may want to give us answers on all of these or just some of them. Please tell us what you are giving answers on when you answer the two key questions below:

What do you think about the ideas in this section?

Is there anything else you would like to say about this section?

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Respondent Information Form

CONSULTATION ON SOCIAL SECURITY IN SCOTLAND

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organization?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Department & Division

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (anonymous)
- Do not publish response

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
- No

We would like your written answers by **Friday 28 October 2016**

Please send your answers to the questionnaire with the completed Respondent Information Form, which you will find at the back of this document to:

socialsecurityconsultation@gov.scot

or

Social Security Consultation

5th Floor

5 Atlantic Quay

150 Broomielaw

Glasgow

G2 8LU

We need to know if you are happy for us to print your answers. Please complete and return the Respondent Information Form. If you don't want your response published we will keep it private.

By law we have to consider sharing this information if we are asked to.

What next?

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us.

Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so.



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www.gov.scot

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