



Scottish Commission on Social Security
c/o Secretariat
Area 1C South (Mail Point 6)
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

info@socialsecuritycommission.scot

19 May 2022

Elena Whitham MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee

By email only

Dear Convener,

I am writing to thank you again for such a valuable and productive meeting on 26 April and to say how much I look forward to continuing to work with you and the Committee in the future.

As discussed when we met, to assist further engagement and co-ordination between the Committee and SCoSS, I am sharing with you SCoSS's 2022-23 draft strategic aims and objectives that form the basis for the development of the full plan.

These have been sent to the Minister for Social Security and Local Government seeking his approval as is required per SCoSS's [Framework Document](#), which sets out that Scottish Ministers' responsibilities include agreeing our strategic aims and objectives as part of our yearly Business Plan.

Once the 2022-23 Business Plan is finalised, I will be pleased to send it to you for information. The target date for publication is 25 July.

My Commissioner colleagues and I would very much welcome any feedback you may have on the strategic aims and objectives attached.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sally Witcher OBE
Chair
Scottish Commission on Social Security

AGREED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. We provide unique expert, independent and evidence-based scrutiny of draft social security regulations that is driven by human rights and the social security principles.
2. We work alongside Scottish Ministers, Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament as well as other key stakeholders like people with lived experience to ensure our work constructively supports the development of a devolved social security system based on dignity, fairness and respect.
3. We provide strategic insight and intelligence into whether the aims, values and expectations set out in the social security Charter are being met, ensuring that the Charter is realised through the real life experiences of people who rely on the Scottish social security system.
4. We ensure our remit, governance model, operating structure, processes and resource management is fit for purpose and systematically reviewed to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of SCoSS's contribution to the maintenance of a social security system.
5. We seek to provide transparency about how we make our decisions and to ensure our information is accessible and inclusive through all channels.

Strategic context:

The year ahead will be a pivotal one for the devolved benefits system – and for SCoSS's role within it.

Adult Disability Payment (ADP) will be rolled-out nationally – and a two stage review of ADP to be commissioned by the Scottish Government is due to begin its first phase later this year. Scottish Child Payment will be extended to under-16s and consultation will begin on the 2023 Social Security Bill.

Meanwhile, work will begin on the Scottish Government's 2024 review of the Social Security Charter. Against this background of devolved benefit roll-out and review we anticipate the continuing cost of living crisis to further underline the importance of benefit uprating to maintain value.

Scottish Government will be commissioning a review of SCoSS's remit, role and constitution which will be a valuable opportunity to future proof SCoSS to ensure continuity for the high quality delivery of our statutory responsibilities.

SCoSS has an essential statutory role to play in all of these interlinked developments and the key priorities we list below set out in more detail how we will approach our work in 2022-23.

Key priorities:

Scrutinising regulations:

- Scrutinise and report on draft regulations referred to SCoSS by Scottish Ministers within agreed timescales. Based on what we already know about the year ahead, this will include, for example, regulations for Low Income Winter Heating Assistance.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of our legislative scrutiny.
- Review our scrutiny protocol with Scottish Government policy-making to ensure it remains fit for purpose and includes emergency legislation.

Lived experience/charter

- Develop a Lived Experience framework, to ensure our scrutiny or draft regulations and Charter work is rooted in and shaped by Lived Experience of the devolved benefits system.
- Carry out our first report on the Social Security Charter, focusing on section 4 of the Charter, titled "A Better Future", and make recommendations to the Scottish Government for improvement.

Communications & Engagement

- Develop our stakeholder engagement strategy and an integrated communications plan to enrich, inform and add value to our pre-legislative scrutiny and work on the Charter.
- Work with stakeholders to enhance our lived experience work.
- Focus on building and maintaining strong relationships with Scottish Government Ministers, the Social Justice and Social Security Committee and Social Security Scotland.

- Keep our new website updated and ensure that it provides full access to all our reports and minutes and is accessible for people with communication barriers.
- We will regularly link to the website from social media to promote maximum engagement.

Governance and Assurance

- Engage fully with and respond to the review which the Scottish Government will be commissioning of SCoSS's remit, role and constitution. This review marks three years of SCoSS's operation to date and will be a significant opportunity to set out the important contribution made by SCoSS to the establishment of the new devolved social security system.
- The newly created audit advisor will support the board and secretariat with governance and audit-related work including review of governance documentation, as well as giving advice and support on continuous improvement.
- The recruitment of a 5th commissioner will further strengthen the expertise and capacity of our board – and we will keep the resilience of the board under review.
- We will keep secretariat capability under review – and will ensure that increased capacity within the secretariat is deployed to best support the board to meet its statutory obligations and wider ambitions
- By end of this reporting year our objective is to have resilient Secretariat resourcing in place that is fit for both present and future needs.
- We will develop and deliver our Continuous Improvement Action Plan (CIAP).

ENDS