Social Security Scotland
Agnes Husband House
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27 October 2025

Dear Deputy Convenor,

Following the session on 25 September 2025, I am pleased to respond to your invitation for further reflections on how Social Security Scotland seeks to drive efficiencies across its operations.

Social Security Scotland continues to pursue efficiencies wherever possible. Our approach is shaped by the use of a single case management system to deliver all existing benefits. Our priorities are guided by our Business Plan 2025 - 2026 which outlines our commitment to implementing new benefits through to the end of the Social Security Programme in March 2026.

As a result, improvements, development, testing, deployment, and release activities are generally prioritised to support the launch of new benefits. This currently limits the scope for broader system improvements at this time. However, staff are actively encouraged to identify and implement small-scale improvements in their day-to-day work. These incremental changes contribute to wider efficiency gains across the organisation.

Alongside this, we are also preparing for the simultaneous implementation of the Pension Age Winter Heating Payment for over one million clients and the new Two Child Limit Payment in March 2025. The case transfer programme, transferring over 700,000 people's disability and carer benefits from the UK system, is also scheduled to complete by the end of the year.

Social Security Scotland continues to improve efficiency and client experience through a range of digital, automated, and collaborative approaches. For example:

- Adult Disability Payment notification of uprating: In 2025, switching to email notifications, where clients had provided an email address, avoided over £246,000 in postal costs.
- Improving digital communication: A trial recently began in October 2025 to use text (SMS) messaging to request supporting information for Child Disability Payment applications. This will be monitored closely and is expected to reduce printing and postage costs while streamlining the application process.

- Automation of application handling: ongoing automation of systems have significantly reduced the need for manual processing by Agency staff. In recent months, automation has supported staff to handle:
    - 16,000 Carer's Support Payment applications
    - 11,000 Five Family Payments applications
    - 13,000 re-determination request forms

  This has saved over 1,000 colleague hours, allowing us to enhance efficiency in our operations and improve the service to clients.

- Improved data sharing: Collaboration with local authorities and stakeholders is helping identify opportunities for safe data sharing. For example, sharing Scottish Child Payment data has helped flag families eligible for free school meals who had not yet applied.

- Text (SMS) pilot for Best Start Foods: A targeted campaign using text messages encouraging clients to use unspent funds on their Best Start Foods cards has led to increased client usage.

- Winter Heating Payment email notifications: we e-mailed clients directly, saving approximately £200,000 in printing and postage costs.

The scale and pace of the work is significant, and, against this demanding backdrop, our focus will remain on delivering value for money and a quality service for our clients.

We would be happy to provide further detail on any of these initiatives should the Committee find that helpful.

Yours sincerely,

David Wallace

Chief Executive, Social Security Scotland