

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
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Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP/BPA



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Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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By email: SJSS.committee@parliament.scot

4 August 2025

Dear Convener,

Social Security Independent Advocacy Service Contract

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2025 regarding the contract for the Social Security Independent Advocacy Service.

The Scottish Government has maintained robust oversight of the performance of the service throughout the lifetime of the current contract, including through scrutiny of key performance indicators and quarterly reports, which are also shared with the Social Justice and Social Security Committee. The service continues to grow, with 12,065 disabled people supported with 13,722 benefit cases from when the service began on 31 January 2022 to the end of June 2025. VoiceAbility has continued to meet the contract KPIs throughout the lifetime of the current contract.

The Scottish Government remains committed to ensuring that disabled people who require support to engage effectively with the Scottish social security system have access to the Social Security Independent Advocacy Service.

The current contract with VoiceAbility will end on 30 January 2026. A fair and open procurement exercise for the next contract commenced on 1 July 2025 and will close on 21 August 2025. This contract will run from 31 January 2026 to 30 January 2028, with the option of two one-year extensions, up to 30 January 2030. The Scottish Government anticipate awarding the contract in October 2025, allowing for a three-month implementation period for the successful tenderer. In preparation for the

procurement, officials reviewed qualitative and quantitative information and engaged extensively with stakeholders.

An independent evaluation will be undertaken during the lifetime of the next contract to show to what extent the service is achieving the outcomes required and whether service standards are being fully met. For every year of the new contract, the successful tenderer will be required to produce publicly available annual reports to demonstrate the advocacy service's impact.

I hope that this information is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Shirley-Anne', written in a cursive style.

Shirley-Anne Somerville