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I am writing to make you aware of recent publication of research with the Social Security Experience Panels.

It is now almost a year since recruitment to the Social Security Experience Panels was launched. Now we have over 2,400 panel members and we have just published the second report from the 'About Your Benefits and You' research on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February.

As part of the 'About You' phase of the research we wanted to learn more about our panel members, their experiences, and their priorities for the Scottish Government to improve in the new social security system. Attached is more information on the research and planned next steps for the Experience Panel work.

The full research findings are available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/02/5449>

A visual summary of the research findings is available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/02/5015>

These reports build on the previous report analysing the tick box survey responses, which can be found here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/7769/downloads>

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The 'About You' research is the second major engagement with experience panel members. Alongside this Experience Panel members are being involved in a range of service design work, including for Best Start Grant, Funeral Expenses Assistance, Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance for children, Young Carer's Grant and Carer's Allowance Supplement.

We are also continuing to work with Experience Panel members on the development of the brand for the agency, and are planning a range of further research including co-design of the Charter for social security and research to inform key aspects of how the new system will interact with and treat users.

This is the first year of this research programme which will continue for at least four years there will therefore be many more publications on our findings. This project, alongside wider work with stakeholders, is at the heart of our work to build a rights based social security system that works for the people of Scotland when they need it.

Kind regards



**JEANE FREEMAN**

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## **About Your Benefits and You Research**

### **What was this research?**

1,144 panel members responded to the 'About Your Benefits and You' survey over the summer and 274 took part in a focus group. The aim of this was to find out more about Experience Panel members, their experiences and their priorities for the Scottish Government to improve in the new social security system. The first report in November reported the responses to the tick box parts of the survey. This report summarises responses to text boxes in the survey and in the focus groups.

### **What did we find out?**

- The majority of respondents (71 per cent) listed 'advice and support about claiming' as a priority for Scottish Government to improve in the new social security system. More than half listed 'applying for a benefit'. The reasons respondents gave for choosing their priority areas primarily related to where their experience of the current benefits system had presented barriers or challenges.
- When asked about what works well, friendly, helpful and knowledgeable staff was key. Respondents also talked about benefits providing support and independence, the importance of simple, clear and timely processes and flexible approaches. Some reported an overall negative experience with the current system.
- Respondents felt that areas for improvement included the inflexibility of the current system, lack of transparency, lack of trust between DWP and service users, and the financial, health and emotional impact on users.

### **What's next?**

We are currently undertaking a range of activities with panel members in relation to the design of specific benefits. And we will be inviting panel members to take part in further activities throughout the year.

As part of this work we are supplementing the main Experience Panels with targeted commissioned research with seldom heard groups to ensure that everyone with the relevant experience is represented in our programme of research and service design.

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