Social Justice and Social Security Committee

36th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Thursday, 22 December

Social Security Scotland

Introduction

The Committee will hear from Social Security Scotland on the administration of Scottish social security.

- **David Wallace,** Chief Executive

- **James Wallace,** Deputy Director for Finance and Corporate Services,

- **Janet Richardson,** Deputy Director for Client Services Delivery

Background

Social Security Scotland is the executive agency established in 2018 to administer Scottish social security. It is responsible for day-to-day operation. Policy and development of new benefits is the responsibility for the Social Security Programme within Scottish Government. The themes below therefore focus on operational issues rather than policy.

The themes are taken from a variety of recent publications related to budget, expenditure and performance:

- [Scottish Budget 2023-24](#)
- [Social Security Scotland Annual report 2021-22](#)
- [Audit Scotland Annual Audit Social Security Scotland 2021-22](#)
- [Audit Scotland Progress in implementing devolved benefits](#) (May 2022)
- [Insights research findings 2021-22](#) (based on management information, research and statistics. It includes information on call waiting times)

- Client Survey 2021-22 based on 7,324 responses. Almost 9 in 10 respondents said their overall experience was 'good' or 'very good'
- Charter Research 2021-22 research with clients, staff and partners from February to June 2022. It involved interviews with 18 clients, 10 partners and 24 staff, a staff survey (426 responses) and a partner survey (74 responses)
- Measuring Our Charter 2021-22 The Charter was published in 2019 with over 60 individual measures organised across four themes. The measures are assessed against data from the above charter research, client survey, statistics and management information.
- Administrative statistics on Social Security Scotland benefits – includes data on applications, payments, processing times, redeterminations and appeals.
- Social Security Scotland feedback statistics to 31 March 2022 – covers complaints, compliments and suggestions.

Previous Committee consideration

The Committee last heard from Social Security Scotland on 2nd December 2021, following a visit by members to their Dundee headquarters. At that meeting, key themes discussed included:

- The impact of COVID
- Levels of redeterminations and appeals
- Local delivery service – and referring people to other agencies
- Approach to dealing with overpayments
- The increase in staffing
- Operational costs as a proportion of benefit spend and journey to 'steady state'

The Committee also discussed Social Security Scotland when they heard from Audit Scotland on 3rd October on progress in implementing devolved social security. Issues discussed included:

- 'inherent uncertainty' about final staffing requirements, and
- the likelihood of 'bedding in' issues in relation to new benefits

The following seven themes are suggested for discussion:

1. **Operational budget and expenditure**
2. **Processing times**
3. **Communications with clients**
4. **Redeterminations and appeals**
5. **Disability benefits: decision making and case transfer**
6. **Error and fraud**
7. **New benefits and technical debt**

THEME 1: Operational expenditure

Social Security Scotland has grown rapidly over the past few years. Its resource budget of £302.5 million for 2023-24 is more than double what it spent in 2020-21 (£129.7 million). The chart below shows the trend since it was established in September 2018.

Chart 1: Social Security Scotland resource expenditure and budget £m
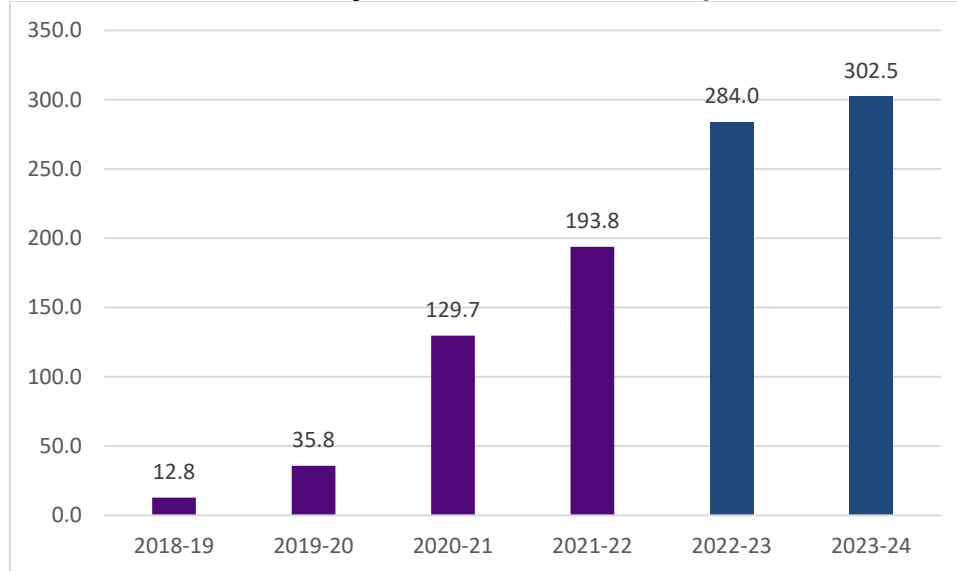
Sources: Social Security Scotland annual reports. Scottish Government Autumn budget revision 22-23, draft budget 23-24. Note: Shows outturn for 2018-19 to 2021-22 and budget for 2022-23 and 2023-24. Shows fiscal resource. Does not include capital or non-cash.

Benefit spend
Increasing operating costs need to be seen in the context of increased activity. The value of benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland in 2022-23 is six times what it was in 2020-21 and is forecast to increase to c£2 billion in 2023-24.

2020-21	£97.3m (outturn)
2021-22	£163.6m (outturn)
2022-23	£612m (forecast)
2023-24	£2,012m (forecast)

Table 1 below sets out further detail on outturn for 2020-21, 2021-22 and initial budget for 2022-23. This level of detail is not yet available for 2023-24.

Table 1: Outturn and budget 2020-21 to 2022-23

£m	2020-21 (outturn)	2021-22 (outturn)	2022-23 (budget)
staff	42.3	91.7	188.2
accommodation	3.8	4.6	9.6
other operating	6.3	13.1	14.4
shared services	2.3	4.0	10.3
IT	0.2	5.0	6.3
agency agreements	75.5	76.5	72.8

Sources; 2022-23 shows budget in Annex A to the June 2022 Finance Report.
2020-21 and 2021-22 from table 6, annual report 2021-22

Staffing Costs

The budget for staffing increased from £42m in 2020-21 to £188m in 2022-23. Staffing numbers have more than doubled over the last year – from 1,478 in September 2021 to 3,664 in September 2022.   Audit Scotland has commented that:

> "Social Security Scotland has managed the significant recruitment exercises well so far." (Annual Audit para 75).

However there are some uncertainties about the final workforce requirements. When Audit Scotland appeared before the Committee on 3 October, Kirsty Ridd (Audit Manager) said:

> "Social Security Scotland is developing its workforce planning, but there are inherent uncertainties about the staffing that will be required, and that situation will need to be managed as the agency introduces new benefits and adapts to how those benefits are processed once they are fully embedded." (Committee Official Report, 3 October 2022, col 4)

Last December, David Wallace discussed the balance between IT and staff costs,

> "We always talked about steady state and, as I said in my opening statement, we are a long way from that. As happens at DWP, staff numbers will peak and spike depending on what is going on and depending on how we launch benefits. The final determiner will be the balance between technology and people; that is where agile design comes in. If things are done technologically, that might push our costs into IT contracts. If those things are done with people, it will push costs into people. That is one of the reasons why we are slightly reluctant to continually push figures out. It is an agile development and our staffing requirements are, in a way, a consequence of what that looks like." (Committee Official Report, 2 December 2021, col 18)

In-year changes

Budgets are adjusted through the year, and this has consistently been the case for Social Security Scotland. The following looks at in-year budget changes for 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Budget and expenditure 2021-22

Expenditure in 2021-22 was £209m, well below the initial budget of £271m. Audit Scotland comment in their annual audit that:

> "As the year progressed, there was a significant projected underspend on both revenue and capital budgets. As part of the Spring Budget revision, £54.5 million was returned to the Scottish Government for reallocation. The main causes of the underspend were:
>
> - lower than anticipated recharges for shared services
> - revised recruitment plans
> - impact of Covid-19 on the fit out of new buildings
> - IT hardware delayed due to global supply issues that were impacted by Covid-19."

At year end, in March 2022, operating expenditure was slightly below the final budget, with underspends of £4.8m in operating expenditure and £3.1m in capital spend.

Table 2: 2021-22 outturn compared to budget £m

	Initial budget	Final budget	outturn	(under spend)
Operating budget		198.6	193.8	(4.8)
Capital		17.2	14.1	(3.1)
total	**271.4**	**216.9**	**209.0**	**(7.9)**

Source: Social Security Scotland 2021-22 annual report p.71.

Budget movement 2022-23

Initial budget for 2022-23 was £310.9 resource and no capital. There is an expected underspend of £25.7m. Audit Scotland say:

> "This relates to lower than anticipated staff costs and a reduction in the cost of formal agreements with DWP. The underspend identified is aligned with the level of savings committed as part of the Scottish Government savings exercise. These savings will be removed from the Social Security Scotland budget at the Spring Budget Revision and so a breakeven position is anticipated at the year end." (Audit Scotland, annual audit para 70).

Table 3 below shows how the budget was reduced to £290 million at the autumn budget revision.

Table 3: 2022-23 budget: initial and after autumn budget revision

2022-23	Initial budget	Revised budget (ABR)
Operating budget	310.9	284.0
Capital	0	6.1
total	**310.9**	**290.2**

Source; Scottish Government Budget 2022-23 table 5.10, Autumn Budget revisions, Schedule 3.7

Initial Budget 2023-24
The Scottish Government draft budget published on Thursday 15 December set Social Security Scotland's initial resource budget for 2023-24 at £302.5 million. This does not include capital.

Future spend
The Spending Review, published in May, set out <u>combined</u> spending for Social Security Scotland and the Programme. It did not show Social Security Scotland separately but it showed that total spend on programme and agency is expected to peak at £404m in 2022-23 and fall to £324m by 2026-27. At this point most administrative spending should be on the agency rather than the programme as all the new benefits are expected to have started by then.

Members may wish to discuss:
1.   **Social Security Scotland's operating expenditure has been growing rapidly. Do you expect that the rate of growth will now start to slow?**
2.   **The main area of growth has been staffing costs. Do you expect staffing numbers to stay about the same from now on at around 3,600?**

THEME 2: Processing applications and payments

Trends in processing times – by benefit
One of the measures in the Charter is the percentage of applications processed within 10 working days (measure 31a). In 2021-22 only a minority of benefits were processed within this timeframe. Performance ranged from 20% of Young Carer Grant applications to 36% of applications for Job Start Payment getting processed within 10 days.

The chart below illustrates the trend in the average processing times for each benefit as reported in the most recent administrative statistics.

Chart 2: Median processing times by benefit. Working days
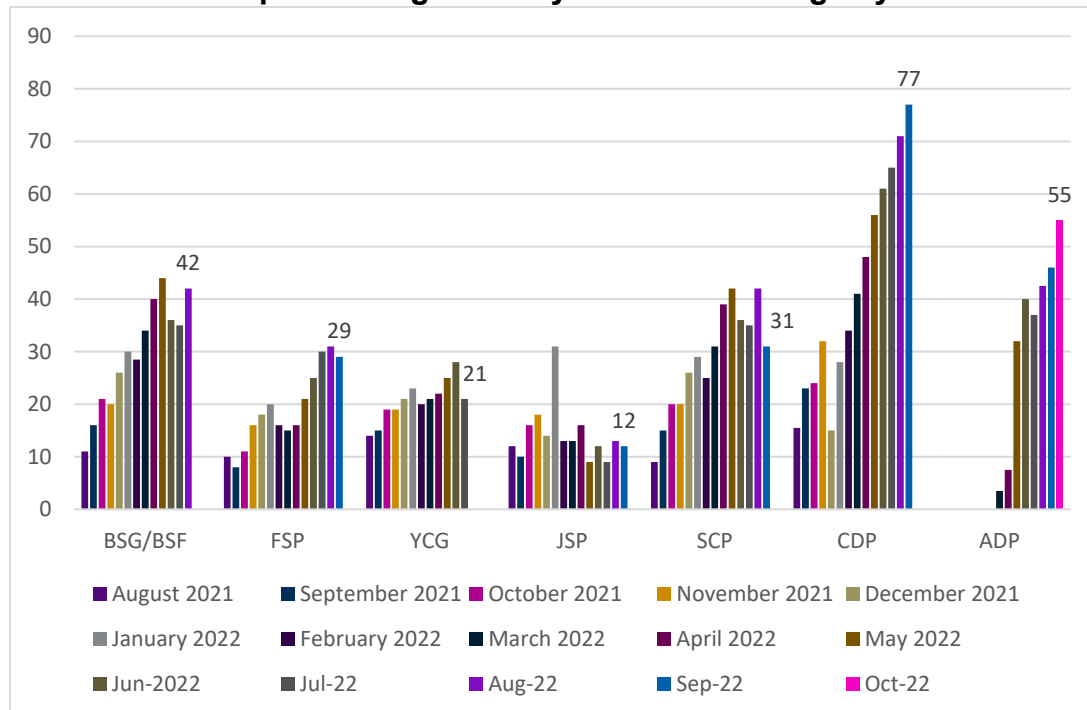
Source: Social Security Scotland statistics. N:B Latest month reported for each benefit varies from August to October 2022

Long processing times have, at times, led to complaints. In the 2021-22 charter research one staff member said:

> "That's the bulk of it – timescales and people being told different things. Also complaints about the lack of call backs and lack of keeping clients updated. A lack of communication on how their application is progressing or how their issue is being resolved." Charter Research p.77

Getting enough updates is another of the indicators in the Charter measurement Framework (measure 10). The charter measurement framework reported that:

> "70% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they got enough updates during the application process"

Staff and clients suggested that an online account would help. The Charter Research reported that:

> "There were many suggestions for an online app or account to allow clients to monitor the status of their applications and review their application history"

Previous Committee consideration
The Committee discussed processing times on 27 October when it looked at the regulations to extend the Scottish Child Payment to children under 16. Janet Richardson (Social Security Scotland) acknowledged that: "we did have some

processing challenges this year." She explained there was increased automation in place to process Scottish Child Payment applications as quickly as possible and that:

> "we have committed to keeping clients updated every two weeks on where we are with their claim. We recognise that, with applications opening so near to Christmas, people will be concerned about getting their money by then." ([Committee Official Report, 27 October col 6](#))

Although a large spike in SCP applications was expected and planned for, the website crashed for a few hours on launch. Initial management information shows that [89,000 applications](#) were received on the first two days. This includes new applications and clients adding additional children to their existing application. To put this in context, [SFC had estimated](#) that around 200,000 children over 6 would receive SCP in 2022-23. There haven't yet been any statistics published showing the SCP processing times for November and December. The next statistics, covering up to end December 2022, are due in February.

The Committee also discussed processing times last week in relation to whether all Winter Heating Payments would be paid during February.

Members may wish to discuss:

3. **What is the current processing time for Scottish Child Payment applications received since the benefit was extended on 14 November?**

4. **What is Social Security Scotland doing to reduce processing times?**

5. **Some staff and clients suggested having an online app or account to help clients track progress of their application. Would this improve the client experience, and if so do you plan to implement it?**

THEME 3: Communications with clients

Overall the [Charter Research](#) reported very positive findings, with:
- 94% 'agreed or agreed strongly' that they were treated with kindness
- 88% felt trusted by staff
- 92% felt staff listened to them
- 91% said staff made them feel comfortable.

However, although most responses were very positive, there were some issues emerging – particularly around call waiting times, updates with applications and processing times (discussed above).

Call waiting times
Some clients have experienced long call waiting times. In 2021-22:

> "The average time a caller waited before a call was answered was 5 minutes and 51 seconds across all phone line queues" ([Charter Measurement p.42](#))

Average call waiting times ranged from 6 seconds for Best Start Grant/Foods in January 2022 up to 13 minutes for Carer's Allowance Supplement in November 2021. Certain benefits were more likely to have longer waiting times. Benefits with longer wait times are:

- Best Start Grant/Foods – average wait time over 10 minutes in November 2021, February 2022 and March 2022
- Carer's Allowance Supplement – average wait time over 10 minutes from October 2021 to March 2022
- Scottish Child Payment – wait times of around nine minutes October 2021 to February 22 and over 10 minutes in March 2022

(See annex B of Insight Survey)

Views of partner organisations
People in organisations that support benefit clients reported some issues with communication:

> "Partner participants who support clients were asked how easy or difficult they found contacting Social Security Scotland on clients' behalf. Slightly more participants said it was difficult than easy."

[…]

> "Partner participants mentioned problems like a lack of call backs and not being able to speak to an advisor as a third party without the client's presence. They said the service could be more accessible for clients and reported problems with the translation service and the availability of information in languages other than English." (Charter Research 2021-22)

Overall, partners were less likely than clients to rate the service as good.

> "57% of partner survey participants said they rated the overall service as good or very good, while 18% said it was poor or very poor." (annual report p.30)

Informing clients of advice and advocacy
On 24 November, this Committee heard from Voiceability on their progress so far in establishing an independent advocacy services for Social Security Scotland clients. Jonathan Senker, (Chief Executive, Voiceability) told the Committee that there was "some way to go" to get referrals embedded in Social Security Scotland systems:

> "The service is at a relatively early stage in its development. We have been focusing on strengthening the systems with Social Security Scotland, but there is some way to go to ensure that they are fully embedded in the process. We have a shared commitment, with the agency, to the offer of advocacy being well embedded in its systems and process, and in the understanding of its staff. We have taken some positive steps with the agency;

> […].

> It is relatively early days, so unfortunately, at this stage, we would not expect everyone in the redetermination process to have been informed about their

right to advocacy. We would like to get there, and we know that Social Security Scotland is keen to reach that point with us." (SJSS Committee Official Report 24 November 2022, col 10)

This issue also came up in the staff survey:

"One in five (staff) participants said they disagreed or strongly disagreed that they knew how to refer clients to advice and advocacy services. Again, responses indicated that staff knowledge increased with length of service."(Client Survey p.53)

Complaints
Complaint numbers increased from 230 in 2020-21 to 400 in 2021-22, but the number of complaints upheld at stage 1 has not changed much (145 in 20-21 compared to 150 in 21-22) (Table 3, annual report 21-22). Fifty complaints went to 'stage 2' of which 40 were upheld. The previous year 30 out of 40 'stage 2' complaints were upheld.[1]

The Charter Research notes that:

"There was evidence that clients understood that Social Security Scotland wouldn't always get it right and that an open and transparent attitude made the difference when things went wrong." (Charter Research p.74)

Examples of mistakes include errors in processing applications and delays of problems making payments. As noted above, another common reason for complaints were long processing times and lack of updates.

The Annual Report 2021-22 describes how communications have been improved in response to complaints.

"As a result of complaints from clients, we have improved our external communications. We have used social media to manage expectations around processing times and any arising issues with our service to keep our clients updated in real time. As a direct result of complaints relating to clients being given conflicting messages, we have issued standardised lines for our client advisers to use to ensure consistent messaging."

Members may wish to discuss:
6.   **Although the Charter research was very positive overall, what are the main areas for improvement that Social Security Scotland will be focusing on in response to the issues raised?**
7.   **What is Social Security Scotland doing to ensure that all disabled clients are informed of the Voiceability advocacy service?**

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[1] There is a two stage complaints process. Stage 1 allows five days to resolve an issue. Stage 2 is a full investigation, with response after 20 working days.

THEME 4: Redeterminations and appeals

The table below shows overall rates of redeterminations, and of those the percentage that are allowed or partially allowed. The highest rate for requesting a redetermination is Child Disability Payment (CDP), at 4%. Of those 85% result in a different decision.

Table 4: Redeterminations and appeals

Benefit	Redeterminations		Appeals	
	redeterminations as a % decisions processed	% of completed redeterminations allowed or partially allowed	appeals decided	original decision upheld
CDP	4%	85%	<5	not reported
ADP	3%	75%	0	n/a
FSP	2.8%	41%	30	10
YCG	1.9%	55%	5	not reported
BSG	0.9%	23%	95	90
SCP	0.4%	41%	15	10
CWHA	0.1%	0	0	0

Source: Social Security Scotland statistics Shows rate since start of each benefit to latest statistics reported: Best Start Grant to Aug-22, Funeral Support Payment to Sept 22, Young Carer Grant to July 22, Scottish Child Payment to Sept 22, Child Disability Payment (new cases only) to September 22, Child Winter Heating Assistance for winter 20-21 and 21-22. Adult Disability Payment to Oct 22.

In 2021-22 some of the reasons that staff said that clients requested redeterminations included:

- Considering they were entitled to a higher amount of benefit
- Not all available evidence was considered
- Evidence becoming available after the application stage
- For benefits related to children, a decision that the applicant is not responsible for the child. In particular for Best Start Grant - applying outwith the application window
- For Funeral Support Payment – lack of evidence of residence of deceased
- Problems with verification and identity.

The same survey asked about appeals. One example of a successful appeal was where Funeral Support Payment guidance didn't match the legislation. The guidance was amended and 900 cases checked under the new interpretation leading to 30 new payments.

For further detail see Charter Research p.44-5.

Members may wish to discuss:
8.	**Four percent of new CDP clients requested a redetermination. Of those, the vast majority (85%) of decisions were changed. What are the**

main reasons for CDP redeterminations? Have you changed systems or processes as a result?

9.   **Sometimes redeterminations succeed because new information is available. What more can be done to ensure that all relevant information is available to the initial decision maker?**

THEME 5: Disability caseload transfer and decision making

Caseload transfer

By end September 33,940 clients had transferred from child DLA to Child Disability Payment out of a total of 52,000 due to transfer. Transfer is due to complete in Spring 2023.

By end October, 335 clients had transferred from the DWP to Adult Disability Payment. There are around 300,000 PIP clients to be transferred to ADP by the end of summer 2024.

ADP new clients

The awards for new ADP clients are set out below. It shows that 52% of new claimants (1,845 out of 3,545) get the enhanced mobility award and 65% get the enhanced daily living component (2,315 out of 3,545).

It is difficult to compare with PIP decision making as the people applying could have different needs. However it may also reflect, to some extent, a different approach to decision making. In October 2022, 40% of recent PIP clients in England and Wales were awarded the enhanced mobility component, and 42% were awarded enhanced daily living. (StatXplore, PIP claims of up to three months duration). This may suggest that PIP clients are less likely to get enhanced rates than ADP clients.

Table 5: ADP new clients by level of award

	Mobility enhanced	Mobility standard	No mobility	total
Daily living enhanced	1,525	465	325	2,315
Daily living standard	245	315	425	985
No daily living award	75	170	0	245
Total	1,845	950	750	3,545

Source: *ADP statistics to end October 2022*.

Only 15 new ADP clients had an 'accessible vehicles and equipment payment (similar to motability). In contrast, 60 of the 295 transferred clients who had a mobility component also had a 'motability' payment. (Table 12 ADP statistics).

CDP new clients

The awards for new CDP clients are set out below. It shows that 6% of new claimants (610 out of 10,085) get the enhanced mobility award and 39% get the higher care component (3,915 out of 10,085).

As with PIP/ADP comparisons may reflect differences in caseload but could indicate differences in decision making. In May 2022, 2% of recent child DLA clients in England and Wales were awarded the higher mobility component, and 33% were awarded the higher care component. (StatXplore, child DLA claims of up to three months duration).

Table 6: CDP new clients by level of award

	mobility higher	mobility lower	no mobility	total
care high	445	1,915	1,555	**3,915**
care middle	120	2,020	2,020	**4,160**
care lower	30	635	1,280	**1,945**
no care	15	50	0	**65**
total	**610**	**4,620**	**4,855**	*10,085*

Source: CDP statistics to end September 2022.

Members may wish to discuss:
10. **Around half of ADP new clients get enhanced mobility component and around two thirds get enhanced daily living. Is this the pattern you were expecting? To what extent does it reflect a different approach to decision making at Social Security Scotland compared to DWP?**
11. **Despite the high number of awards of enhanced mobility, only 15 new ADP clients had an Accessible Vehicle payment compared to 60 clients who have transferred from DWP. Why is that?**

THEME 6: Estimating levels of fraud and error

Social Security Scotland is working towards developing estimates of fraud and error. Audit Scotland consider that the current financial risk is very low, but it will increase as the amount spent on benefits increases over the next few years. In their 2021-22 audit they say:

> "the urgency of this work cannot be overstated as the value of benefits administered by Social Security Scotland increases rapidly over the coming years." (Annual Audit para 44)

They therefore recommend;

> "Social Security Scotland must develop its understanding of the associated risks of fraud and error within the range of benefits being delivered."

Social Security Scotland's annual report describes how this work was affected by Covid-19:

> "The ongoing work to progress these specialist, analytical provisions began at the end of 2019-20. However, as a result of the pandemic response, support

from the Cabinet Office Centre of Excellence for Counter Fraud to explore methodologies was postponed indefinitely. In addition, some of our own analysts and statisticians were redeployed to the Scottish Government COVID-19 Response Unit. We are now in a position to dedicate resource to examine the monetary value of fraud and error on an ongoing basis to enhance detection and mitigation and provide estimates for public accountability purposes." (Annual Report p.76).

Papers for Social Security Scotland's Audit and Assurance Committee on 13 September 2022 show estimated error rates for quarter 1 of 2022-23. With the exception of Best Start Foods and the school age Best Start Grant, all benefits error rates under 1% of the total value of benefits paid.

- Best Start Foods – 1% underpayment, 1.1% overpayment
- Best Start Grant School age – 0.5% under payment, 1.0% overpayment (for further detail see p.3 Audit and Assurance Committee)

Members may wish to discuss:
12.   **What progress is being made in understanding levels of fraud and error? Is this work back on track following the delays caused by Covid-19?**
13.   **Why is Best Start Foods more prone to error than other benefits?**

THEME 7: New benefits and improving systems

New benefits in 2023-24
There are two new benefits starting over the next year:

- Winter Heating Payment is due to make payments from February 2023. The Committee discussed the regulations for this last week.

- Scottish Carer's Assistance is due to start as a pilot in late 2023 with national roll-out in spring 2024. A public consultation has concluded and an analysis of responses has been published.

Improving systems
In their annual audit, Audit Scotland commented that:

"The timetable to deliver the new benefit streams remains challenging and there is little opportunity to review the processes and perform updates to the current payment streams." (Annual Audit para 52).

They noted that:

- The transfer of the Chief Digital Office to Social Security Scotland on 1 April 2021 has allowed for better investment in digital work.
- Key controls over the administration of benefits were found to be operating effectively but a structured approach to technical debt is still required.

Under the 'agile approach', the focus is on delivering core 'must have' functionality to be able to launch a benefit. Technical debt is the work that is left outstanding and the work to resolve arising issues. An internal audit report describes it as follows:

Technical Debt is the consequences of decisions and actions;
- Consequences include operational inefficiencies, financial risks, the impact of defects and efforts of defect management and resolution, opportunity costs of implementing capability backlogs;
- Technical debt arising from decisions tends to be planned and macro in nature. It can be created at any stage of the delivery lifecycle include scoping, design, development, testing and delivery activities;
- Technical debt created from actions tends to be unplanned and micro in nature and include defects and defect backlogs. Defects have a significant impact with consequences when considered in aggregate.

(Internal Audit report dated February 2022)

In their annual audit, Audit Scotland noted that there is no agreed definition of technical debt between Social Security Scotland and the programme, saying that:

"Internal audit concluded that if the current and future technical debt is not dealt with effectively this could result in significant issues for Social Security Scotland." (Audit Scotland, annual audit 2021-22)

Audit Scotland recommended:

"Social Security Scotland should continue to work with the programme to develop systems that are fit for purpose with a focus on the more complex benefits. This should include a structured approach to dealing with technical debt and system development." (recommendation 3)

There is further discussion on technical debt in the report to the audit and assurance committee in September 2022. This noted action by March 2023 to understand the full cost of technical debt.

Data needs
One area of improvement that has been raised with this Committee is the Scottish Fiscal Commission's data needs. This Committee wrote to the Minister for Social Security, Local Government on 3 November noting correspondence from the SFC and the Finance and Public Administration Committee, and concluding:

"we would urge the Scottish Government to ensure that the data required by the Scottish Fiscal Commission is prioritised by Social Security Scotland and ask the Government to provide the requisite resources and financial support to make this happen as a priority."

In his response on 21 November, the Minister agreed with the importance of a robust evidence base and noted:

"the assurance already provided to the committee on this issue from the Chief Statistician and the Chief Executive of Social Security Scotland and welcome

the closer working with the Scottish Fiscal Commission which is already taking place and which you reference in your letter."

The response from David Wallace to the Finance and Public Administration Committee stated:

"We are currently developing a new Data Strategy, in collaboration with key stakeholders, which will take into account the Scottish Fiscal Commission's requirements."

[…]

"While we continue to work to improve the content of our statistical publications, this will need to be balanced with a continuing programme of benefits delivery."

The Scottish Fiscal Commission has since written to the Committee setting out that they have not had the detailed data they need to refine their forecasts for CDP. However, work is in progress to allow the necessary data to be published by next March.

Guidance and training for disability and carer benefits
An internal audit report prepared in July discussed risks in preparation for disability and carer benefits. It was completed prior to the launch of ADP. The main risk identified was that:

"Guidance is not always available in sufficient time and when provided is sometimes incomplete or inaccurate"

A number of actions were noted, including (in summary):
- Work with Programme, Policy and Legal to establish gaps in guidance and agree dates for when guidance products are required
- Provide on the job support for ADP
- Learning and development provide to regular progress updates
- Managers to monitor training progress and support gaps in individual learning

Members may wish to discuss:
14.   What is the scale of 'technical debt' and what progress is being made in developing a structured approach to addressing it?
15.   The SFC have told the Committee that work is in progress to allow enhanced data on Child Disability Payments to be published. How much work does this require for Social Security Scotland to adjust their systems?
16.   How have guidance and training been improved since the Internal Audit report in July? Is this still a high-level risk?

Camilla Kidner
SPICe
19 December 2022