February 2020

[**Draft Equality Outcomes Consultation**](https://consult.gov.scot/social-security/social-security-mainstreaming-equality/user_uploads/mainstreaming-equality-publication-1.pdf)

**Social Security Scotland**

**Outcome 1** – Social Security Scotland will deliver a seamless service that is inclusive and where our clients are able to access the support they need.

1. Do you feel this outcome meets the needs of protected groups? **Yes**

If no, please outline how this outcome could be improved to meet their needs.

1. Do you feel that the supporting activities stated will help achieve the stated outcome? **No**

If you answered No, what types of activity are missing that we could do to make an impact on delivery of this outcome?

**Age Scotland feels it is too prescriptive to state that engagement with equality groups would only inform the physical environment for Social Security Scotland locations. It would be a wasted opportunity to not use the full breadth of expertise that equality groups can provide and would recommend that this activity is broadened from just input to physical environment.**

**There is also no mention of the internal processes needed to enable a ‘seamless delivery’ and would encourage further detail on how internal activity will help to achieve this. It is also essential that Social Security Scotland sets up effective cross-referral protocols specifically with the Department for Work and Pensions, and with all Local Authorities which deliver Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, and the Scottish Welfare fund.**

**It would also be helpful to define what that term means, for example does it mean that staff have all the information that they need at hand so as to not ask clients to repeat their stories, or does it mean that there will only be one primary staff member that clients will deal with.**

Do you feel that the measures of success stated will help Social Security Scotland measure the progress of this outcome? **No**

If you answered No, what are your concerns, and can you identify any further measures we should use?

**We feel it is important that success will be measured not just from representative groups but also from the public and particularly people with lived experience.**

**It is also important to note that feedback should not be a passive action, but that Social Security Scotland should have a duty to proactively seek feedback from those who they interact with, and report this back on a regular basis.**

**Outcome 2** – Social Security Scotland will have a culture built on inclusivity where differences are supported, our people feel valued and they have opportunities to reach their full potential.

1. Do you feel this outcome meets the needs of protected groups? **No**

If you answered no, can you please outline how the outcome could be improved to meet their needs

**We felt that whilst the principle of this outcome will help meet the needs of protected groups it would be more helpful to change the language from ‘different’ which has a negative connotation, to something more positive such as ‘diversity.’**

1. Do you feel that the supporting activities stated will help achieve the stated outcome? **No**

If you answered No, what types of activity are missing that we could do to make an impact on delivery of this outcome?

**Flexible working is an approach that will likely help this outcome and is missing from the list of supporting activities. Many older people take on additional unpaid caring duties, or potentially have health issues that can making rigid working patterns stressful. Having a flexible approach will enable people to stay in their role in a supportive environment.**

**In order to promote transparency and help tackle wage inequalities it would be helpful if Social Security Scotland published their pay grades and advertise jobs with this information on it. This can also help to tackle gender pay gap issues.**

1. Do you feel that the measures of success stated will help Social Security Scotland measure the progress of this outcome? **No**

If you answered no, what are your concerns, and can you identify any further measures we should use?

**Much of these measurements will only provide quantitative data which whilst helpful, should be further complimented with qualitative data which can add a further layer of analysis to determine how well this outcome is progressing.**

**All insights that are gathered as part of this process should be published where possible to promote transparency and accountability as well as promoting learning between different Scottish Government agencies.**

**Outcome 3** – Social Security Scotland will be an employer of choice and through our recruitment process we will look to build a workforce that is representative of the population of Scotland.

1. Do you feel this outcome meets the needs of protected groups? **Yes**

If you answered no, can you please outline how the out come could be improved to meet their needs

1. Do you feel that the supporting activities stated will help achieve the stated outcome? **Yes**

If you answered no, what types of activity are missing that we could do to make an impact on delivery of this outcomes?

1. Do you feel that the measures of success stated will help Social Security Scotland measure the progress of this outcome? **Yes**

If you answered no, what are your concerns, and can you identify any further measures we should use?

**Outcome 4** – Social Security Scotland uses the equality data (evidence) collected from clients, our people and other sources to respond to feedback and continually improve the service provided to all clients.

1. Do you feel this outcome meets the needs of protected groups? **No**

If you answered No, can you please outline how the outcome could be improved to meet their needs

**This outcome seems to suggest that equality data will be used as a tool to respond to feedback, instead of being used provide feedback. We support that feedback should be used to continually improve the service provided to people who rely on support and services.**

1. Do you feel that the supporting activities stated will help achieve the stated outcome? **Yes**

If you answered No, what types of activity are missing that we could do to make an impact on delivery of this outcome?

1. Do you feel that the measures of success stated will help Social Security Scotland measure the progress of this outcome? **No**

If you answered No, what are your concerns, and can you identify any further measures we should use?

**We would encourage Social Security Scotland to publish anonymised client feedback responses as well as an outline of their plan to address negative feedback. This will allow public accountability and monitoring which will help to ensure that Scotland’s social security system is based on dignity and respect.**

**Outcome 5** – Social Security Scotland’s service is delivered through having established partnerships with relevant public sector, third sector and community bodies providing clients person centred advice no matter their circumstances.

1. Do you feel this outcome meets the needs of protected groups? **Yes**

If you answered no, can you please outline how the outcome could be improved to meet their needs

1. Do you feel that the supporting activities stated will help achieve the stated outcome? **No**

If you answered no, what types of activity are missing that we could do to make an impact on delivery of this outcome?

**Having a dedicated communications budget will help to ensure that clients will receive person centred advice no matter their circumstances. This is particularly important for BSL people who rely on interpreters, as well as people whose first language is not English.**

1. Do you feel that the measures of success stated will help Social Security Scotland measure the progress of this outcome? **No**

If you answered no, what are your concerns, and can you identify any further measures we should use?

**Age Scotland supports the current measures stated but would also recommend the introduction of the following measures:**

* **Publish the number of service level agreements made with local delivery partners, as well for their usage to be monitored.**
* **The Engagement and Relationship Strategy should be evaluated and updated accordingly to ensure best practice.**

**It is also important to note the power dynamic between the Agency and third sector and community bodies and their ability to provide feedback. Careful consideration should be made as to how feedback can be given in a way that does not make organisations who may be reliant on funding to feel unable to give honest feedback where necessary.**

1. Do the outcomes stated target the areas of most relevance for Social Security Scotland? **No**

If you answered no, what further outcomes would you suggest and why?

**There is tension within these equality outcomes as to if they’re only supposed to be relevant to Social Security Scotland as an employer, or if they’re meant to also cover the Agency’s equality outcomes related to people who will use their services.**

**If they are supposed to cover their actions in relation to people who use support and services than the outcomes are too inward focused and whilst none should be removed, more should be added to ensure that outcomes as a provider are also covered.**

1. Are there any specific inequalities that you would wish to highlight that are relevant to the delivery of social security benefits? Any information or evidence you can provide or signpost us to will be greatly appreciated

**Digital exclusion is an inequality that cuts across both age and poverty characteristics. We know that half a million people over the age of 60 in Scotland do not use the internet. There must the availability of choice in how people can apply and seek information and advice, ideally with the option of face to face communication.**

1. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on our approach to equality?

**A human rights based approach to Social Security Scotland is essential so that those who do not have a protected characteristic, such as unpaid carers, are included within the Agency’s equality outcomes.**

**Want to find out more?**

As Scotland’s national charity supporting people over the age of 50, Age Scotland works to improve older people’s lives and promote their rights and interests. We aim to help people love later life, whatever their circumstances. We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow older.

Our Policy, Communications and Campaigns team research, analyse and comment on a wide range of public policy issues affecting older people in Scotland.

Our work is guided by the views and needs of older people themselves.

**Further information**

Contact the Age Scotland Policy, Communications and Campaigns team:

policycomms@agescotland.org.uk

0333 323 2400

Twitter [@agescotland](http://www.twitter.com/agescotland)

Facebook [/agescotland](http://www.facebook.com/agescotland)

Linkedin [Age-Scotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/age-scotland/)

[www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)