

***Briefing***

***Building a Social Security System Together***

**October 2018**

**Introduction**

Age Scotland welcomes the opportunity to brief MSPs ahead of the Scottish Government debate on the new Social Security Charter. We welcome the Scottish Government’s approach to setting out the principles of the new social security system in a publically available Charter.

**Key Recommendations**

* The Charter should be co-produced with people with lived experience, including older people to ensure it is as accessible as possible
* It’s vital that people with dementia, their unpaid carers, and family are consulted with to ensure the Charter is dementia friendly
* The Charter, and indeed Social Security Scotland’s wider approach to communication, must not be digital by default; the Scottish Household Survey found 67% of those aged 75 do not use the internet
* The Scottish Government should work with the third sector who have experience of providing information and advice on social security when co-designing the Charter.

**Scottish Government Debate: Building a Social Security System Together: Co-designing the Social Security Charter**

Age Scotland believes the voice of lived experience must be at the heart of the design process in order to co-produce Scotland’s Social Security Charter. This must include the experience of older people to ensure that the Charter takes into account their needs, and makes the application process as stress free as possible. This should include engaging with people with dementia, their unpaid carers, and family to ensure the Charter is fully accessible.

We also believe the Charter should be available in a variety of formats, for example easy read, audio, British Sign Language, and Braille. It is also essential that the wider approach taken by Social Security Scotland is not digital by default, in order to be accessible to older people. The Scottish Household Survey found that there is a clear relationship between age and internet use, with only one per cent of adults aged 16 to 24 reporting not using the internet, compared to 67% of those aged 75 and over.[[1]](#footnote-1)

As well as working with people with lived experience, Age Scotland also believe it is important for the Scottish Government to work with relevant stakeholders in the third sector who have experience in supporting and providing advice to people who claim social security.

We expect that the Social Security Charter will clearly set out claimant’s rights and what they should expect going through the application process, including information about the principles that the social security system will be based on.

During our engagement with older people’s groups throughout Scotland about the Social Security (Scotland) Bill we found a clear theme that the right to access information and advice on the application process should be included within the Charter. We believe the Charter is also an invaluable opportunity to act as a signpost to organisations who can provide further support and advice, such as Age Scotland’s Freephone Helpline which provides information, friendship, and advice to people over 50, their family and carers whose number is **0800 12 44 222.**

**About Age Scotland**

Age Scotland is the leading charity supporting older people and promoting their rights and interests. We aim to help Scotland’s people enjoy a better later life. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to make the most of later life, whatever their circumstances, wants and needs.

That’s why we work to make later life the best it can be. We think Scotland can and should inspire, engage, enable and support older people to change their later lives for the better and ensure that there is support for those who are struggling as they live longer to achieve better, happier and healthier lives.

We work in partnership with other charities within the Age Network – Age UK, Age Cymru and Age NI – to pursue these aims across the UK.

**For more information:**

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1. <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2016-scottish-household-survey/pages/7/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)