



Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS)

Business Plan

April 2022 – March 2023

Chair's foreword

Dr Sally Witcher OBE

Chair, Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS)

This Business Plan comes at a time when Scottish social security starts to shift, from an initial phase of safe and secure transfer of existing benefits and establishment of delivery infrastructure towards a period of reviewing and shaping what is to come next. Notably that includes Adult Disability Payment and the Social Security Charter. Clearly, the Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS) must adapt in tandem. It is therefore a timely moment to reflect on achievements and learning to date, to consider how SCoSS can be best equipped to deliver what is required within the constraints under which we must operate and add maximum value. A review of SCoSS will therefore be a key focus this year.

It also marks a time of reflection for individual SCoSS Board members, and for two of us - myself and Sharon McIntyre - to conclude that, in view of changing personal circumstances, now is the time to move on. This year will thus see new recruits join an expanded Board, as well as secretariat, leaving SCoSS resilient and well-resourced in readiness for the next phase. They will join at an exciting time of new opportunities to help shape the development of devolved social security, as a key investment in the lives of the people of Scotland and a human right essential to the realisation of other human rights.

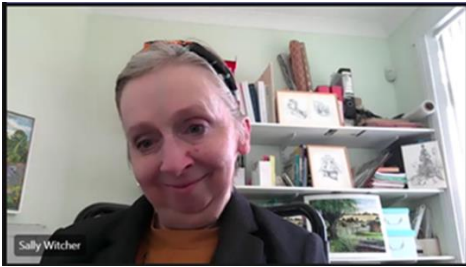
Meanwhile, SCoSS will continue to deliver ongoing essential business, while seeking to resume work unavoidably delayed due to pandemic-related disruption and resourcing challenges. In addition to scrutinising draft regulations, we intend to progress our work monitoring compliance with the Social Security Charter. At the time of writing, we have just seen the long-awaited launch of our own independent web-site, which should significantly increase SCoSS's ability to communicate with external stakeholders, enhancing transparency and accessibility. And, as more capacity comes on stream, it should be possible to review and expand stakeholder engagement in other ways. Crucially, this includes people with lived experience of social security. Their involvement is intrinsic to a devolved social security system based on dignity, fairness and respect. It is the people who use, or who will use, devolved social security that know best what works for them and whether it does. And if the system does not work for the people it is for, its goals will not be achieved.

As always, SCoSS must strike a balance between what we would like to do, what we need to do and what, realistically in the circumstances, we can do: never easy in a rapidly-changing environment. This Business Plan presents the outcome of that calculation. We warmly welcome your feedback and your thoughts on the [review of SCoSS](#).

Finally, on a personal note, to be Chair of SCoSS has been a great privilege, if something of a rollercoaster on occasion! We have come a long way since we first set out, to establish SCoSS as a key feature in the devolved social security landscape, despite the disruption of a major ongoing pandemic. I wish my successor and all concerned every success in continuing to help forge a system based on dignity, fairness and respect, with and for the people of Scotland.

About Us

Our Board



Chair: Dr Sally Witcher OBE:
Independent Consultant



Member: Judith Paterson: Head of
Advice and Rights (Scotland) for Child
Poverty Action Group in Scotland (CPAG)



Member: Sharon McIntyre: Head of
Career Information, Advice and
Guidance at Skills Development
Scotland



Member: Dr Mark Simpson: Lecturer in
Law at Ulster University, researching
social security and human rights

Our Structure

The Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS) was established as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) (body corporate) in 2019 and is funded by the Scottish Government (SG).

Our current board is comprised of a total of 4 people: a Chair and 3 board members. During 2022-23 we will pursue the intention to increase the total to the permitted maximum of 5 people, i.e. a Chair and 4 board members.

The Scottish Government's Deputy Director for Social Security Policy is the nominated Accountable Officer for SCoSS, responsible for the formal Annual Report and Accounts and maintaining the agreement between SG and SCoSS on the Framework Document and Protocol under which SCoSS operates. These set out how Scottish Government and SCoSS relate to each other.

The SCoSS Board is supported by a secretariat of Scottish Government officials.

Email: info@socialsecuritycommission.scot

Website: <https://socialsecuritycommission.scot/>

Twitter: @TheScoSS

Our Purpose

The Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS) was set up in 2019 to provide independent scrutiny of the Scottish social security system.

SCoSS is separate from the Scottish Government and from the Parliament. It carries out its work independently of both, but works closely with both.

SCoSS's functions are set out within [Section 22 of the Social Security Scotland Act 2018](#). SCoSS's role is made up of three parts:

1. Scrutinising draft regulations and publishing full reports with recommendations to Scottish Government.
2. Reporting to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament on whether the expectations in the [Social Security Charter](#) are being met. The Scottish Government published the Social Security Charter in January 2019. It is called '[Our Charter](#)'.
3. Responding to requests from the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government to report 'on any matter relevant to social security' when asked by either of them.

Our Vision

A robust, effective, efficient Scottish social security system that meets its full potential to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland. To help achieve this vision for Scottish social security by providing independent expert advice that adds demonstrable and significant value.

Our Values

- **We Are Independent**
- **We Are Committed**
- **We provide Assurance and Accountability**
- **We are Outcome Focussed**

Approach to the Business Plan

- **Strategic Context** sets out the wider environment in which we operate.
- **Strategic Objectives** are our long-term priorities highlighting what we aim to achieve as SCoSS.
- **Key Priorities** provide an overview of what we will focus on for the current financial year.
- **Monitoring our Success** provides a process for how we provide accountability for our delivery aligned to key priorities.
- **Our Stakeholder Approach** emphasises the importance of engagement with stakeholders nationally and locally across sectors and across UK.
- **Operating Principles** provide the basis of how we will deliver our priorities including robust governance and finance measures.

Strategic Context

In accordance with our role as an NDPB and embedded within our [Framework document](#) with the Scottish Government, we have a responsibility to align our strategic objectives and priorities with the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework ([NPF](#)) and associated national outcomes.

The year ahead will be a pivotal one for the devolved benefits system – and for SCoSS's role within it.

Government continues to deal with the multiple ongoing challenges caused by the Covid pandemic and these are now being exacerbated by rapidly rising increases in the cost of living. Our work to deliver thorough scrutiny to devolved benefits therefore remains vital.

In the year ahead, Adult Disability Payment (ADP) will be rolled-out nationally, and this will represent a very significant increase in the number of people eligible to receive Scottish benefits in 2022. Additionally, a two-stage review of ADP to be commissioned by the Scottish Government is due to begin its first phase. Meanwhile, Scottish Child Payment will be extended to under-16s, Scottish Carer's Assistance will replace Carer's Allowance in Scotland and a consultation will begin on the 2023 Social Security Bill.

Delivering social security benefits in a more positive and supportive way and aligned to the social security Charter underpins the Scottish Government approach to developing devolved benefits. In the year ahead, work will begin on the Scottish Government's 2024 review of the Social Security Charter. Against this background of devolved benefit roll-out and review we anticipate the continuing cost of living crisis to further underline the importance of benefit uprating to maintain value.

Additionally, the Scottish Government is commissioning a review of SCoSS's remit, role and constitution. Having been established for three years we believe this review will be a valuable opportunity to future-proof SCoSS to ensure continuity for the high quality delivery of our statutory responsibilities.

SCoSS has an essential statutory role to play in all of these interlinked developments while making best use of our limited resources. The key priorities section of our plan therefore sets out in more detail how we will

approach and focus our work in 2022-23, under the broader headings of our Strategic Objectives.

Strategic Objectives

Our strategic objectives set out what we aim to achieve as SCoSS. We aim to:

1. Provide unique expert, independent and evidence-based scrutiny of draft social security regulations that is driven by human rights and the social security principles.
2. Work alongside Scottish Ministers, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament as well as other key stakeholders like people with lived experience to ensure our work constructively supports the development of a devolved social security system based on dignity, fairness and respect.
3. Provide strategic insight and intelligence into whether the aims, values and expectations set out in the Social Security Charter are being met, ensuring that the Charter is realised through the real life experiences of people who rely on the Scottish social security system.
4. Ensure our remit, governance model, operating structure, processes and resource management are fit for purpose and are systematically reviewed to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of SCoSS's contribution to the maintenance and development of the devolved social security system.
5. Continually seek to provide transparency about how we make our decisions and to ensure our information is accessible and inclusive through all channels.

Key Priorities – 2022/2023

Below we set out our key priorities for the operating year 2022-23.

Scrutinising regulations:

- Scrutinise and report on draft regulations referred to SCoSS by Scottish Ministers within agreed timescales, including, for example, on Low Income Winter Heating Assistance.
- Monitor the impact of our legislative scrutiny.

Lived experience/charter

- Carry out our first report on the Social Security Charter, focusing on section 4 of the Charter, titled “A Better Future”, paying particular attention to the views of those with lived experience of the devolved benefits system, and make recommendations to the Scottish Government for improvement. Meanwhile, we will begin consideration of SCoSS’s role in the Scottish Government’s 2024 review of the Charter.

Communications & Engagement

- Begin work on reviewing and developing our stakeholder engagement strategy to enrich, inform and add value to our pre-legislative scrutiny and work on the Charter.
- Engage with stakeholders to enhance our lived experience work.
- Focus on building and maintaining strong relationships with Scottish Government Ministers, the Social Justice and Social Security Committee and Social Security Scotland.
- Launch our new website and ensure that it provides full access to all our reports and minutes and is accessible for people with communication barriers.
- We will regularly link to the website from social media to promote engagement and awareness of our work.

Governance and Assurance

- Engage fully with and respond to the review which the Scottish Government is commissioning of SCoSS’s remit, role and

constitution. This review marks three years of SCoSS's operation to date. It will be a significant opportunity to draw on learning to build on the important contribution made by SCoSS to date towards the establishment of the new devolved social security system.

- The newly created audit advisor role will support and advise the SCoSS board and secretariat with governance and audit-related work including a review of governance documentation and continuous improvement.
- Board recruitment will further strengthen the expertise and capacity of SCoSS. We will keep the resilience of the Board under review.
- We will keep secretariat capability under review – and will ensure that increased capacity within the secretariat is deployed to best support the Board to meet its statutory obligations and wider ambitions.
- By the end of this reporting year our objective is to have resilient Secretariat resourcing in place that is fit for both present and future needs.

Monitoring our Success

- Our performance, delivery and processes are informed by information, research, lived experience, feedback and continuous improvement.
- Monitor and analyse how the Scottish Government and the Social Justice and Social Security Committee take account of our reports, to ensure we are being effective and influential.
- Conduct discussions as opportunities arise with the Social Justice and Social Security Committee and the Scottish Government to make sure we are adding value, while maintaining our independence.
- Adopt a lessons learned culture, where we systematically review the effectiveness of our work to identify where improvements could be made.
- Developing our potential ensuring all board members – including any new members - are supported, motivated, skilled and our working practices are flexible and progressive.

Our Stakeholder Approach

We will continue to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders nationally and locally across sectors and across the UK to work closely with a wide range of participants to help us deliver our priorities as efficiently and effectively.

Our collaboration with others informs and enriches our work, its quality and impact. The value of engagement with stakeholders also provides an opportunity to increase understanding of what we do and raise awareness of our functions and the positive impact our work has on the Scottish social security system. Similarly it provides a platform for interested parties to influence and add value to the shape and design of Scottish benefits.

We are aware of the value of seeking views from a wide and diverse audience, capturing different perspectives, expertise and experience to ensure the best results. We aim to achieve this by;

- Exploring different avenues of accessing stakeholder input in ways which are timely, accessible efficient and add value to the work being delivered by SCoSS.
- Seeking opportunities to engage with key stakeholders and those with lived experience to promote wider understanding, opportunities for input and generate feedback that will contribute to our continuous improvement.
- Developing and maintaining a regular programme of positive engagement with existing stakeholders which support and inform delivery of our ongoing work.

Operating Principles

Finance

Our current budget provides funding to cover all expenditure associated with operating SCoSS within the guidance of an NDPB.

We are supported by a small secretariat. This, along with our operational costs and members' fees, is funded from a Commission budget. To accommodate an additional Board member, and secretariat staffing resource agreed with the Minister for Social Security and Local Government, we anticipate an increase over and above our 2021-22 budget which was £340,000.

Governance

Our governance, assurance and risk management approaches should be robust, proportionate and accord with relevant principles and legislation. To ensure that this is the case, we will:

- Deliver on our corporate responsibilities, ensure that we create a sound governance framework and demonstrate value for money through our audited accounts.
- Deploy our audit adviser to provide independent scrutiny and advice on governance, risk management, the control environment and the integrity of financial statements and our annual report.
- Review our corporate documents in accordance with agreed review period.
- Ensure professional development plans are in place for Board members as part of annual appraisals and where possible provide training opportunities for members to support them in their role as a NDPB board member.
- Identify new areas of learning and development as well as any work practice efficiencies collectively as a Board.
- Ensure SCoSS core values are embedded in our working practice.
- Deliver our agreed workplan efficiently and effectively in a timely manner and with adequate resource to do so.

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