



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Our Charter

What you can expect from the Scottish
Government and Social Security Scotland

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Glossary

The **Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018** allowed Scotland to set up a new social security system. This meant that 11 existing UK Government benefits transferred to Scotland to be delivered by Social Security Scotland and allowed us to develop and administer new benefits.

The **Scottish Parliament** is made up of 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) elected by the people of Scotland. It makes laws and decisions specifically for Scotland.

The **Scottish Government** is led by the First Minister and is normally formed by the party with the largest number of MSPs.

Social Security Scotland was created by the Scottish Government to deliver benefits in line with Our Charter. It cannot develop social security policy i.e. decide eligibility rules or payment levels. It administers payments based on dignity, fairness and respect.

The **Scottish Commission on Social Security** is an independent group of experts responsible for checking new social security policy and laws. It advises the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament if it thinks improvements could be made. It also reports to the Scottish Parliament on how it thinks the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland are delivering the commitments in Our Charter.

Human rights are rights that every person has no matter where they come from or who they are. They are universal freedoms and protections that allow us to live equal lives.

Value for money means making sure that taxpayers' money is used efficiently and generates the greatest benefit for society.

We take a **trauma-informed approach** to our work by understanding that experiences of trauma can affect how people think, feel and behave. Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event. We create safe and supportive environments for our people and clients.

Discrimination is treating someone unfairly because of

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

Our **workforce** refers to everyone who works for Social Security Scotland.

Diversity means having a mix of backgrounds, life experiences and perspectives within a group of people.

Lived experience refers to a person's first-hand experience of living through a particular situation. This includes their thoughts, feelings, opinions and attitudes relating to that experience.

Local support we have specially trained advisers based in every local council area across Scotland. They help people apply for Scottish benefits in local community venues, by phone or in their homes.

Advocacy is when someone gets support from another person to express their views and wishes.

The **Independent Advocacy Service** is a free service available to anyone who self identifies as being disabled and may need extra support to access and apply for our benefits.

If a person is **eligible** for a benefit it means they meet the conditions set out to receive the payment.

For some of our benefits we require a client to share **supporting information** with us. This is information that shows us how a health condition affects someone and helps us make the right decision on your applications.

When an application is **processed** we consider information in the application and any supporting information to decide if someone is eligible for a benefit.

Decision makers process applications and decide if someone is eligible for a payment.

Our **Health and Social Care team** is made up of qualified health professionals such as registered nurses, social workers and physiotherapists. They understand different medical conditions and the impact they can have on people. They help to make decisions on benefit applications.

A **consultation** is when you talk to someone from Social Security Scotland to discuss your health. This can be done in person, on the phone or by video call.

Re-determination means that if someone doesn't agree with a decision we have made, another decision maker from Social Security Scotland will look at the application.

People can **appeal** our decision if they still do not think the right decision has been made after we have looked at it again in a re-determination. This will be considered by the '**First-tier Tribunal for 'Scotland'**', which is independent from Social Security Scotland.

Short-term Assistance is a temporary payment people can apply for in certain cases. If we have reduced or stopped someone's Adult Disability Payment or Child Disability Payment, Short-term Assistance tops up their payment while a re-determination happens.

Entitlement refers to the right a person has to receive specific payments.

Policymaking is a process where the government decide what actions to take or not take.

Inflation is the general increase in prices of goods and services over time.

Our **Benefit Take-up Strategy** is a published document that outlines our plan to make sure that everyone who should be receiving our payments are getting them.

The **Scottish Government's National Outcomes** are a set of goals that aim to create a better society in Scotland. These outcomes include money, health and human rights.



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Introduction

The Scottish Government worked with people across the country to create a new social security system for Scotland. It is administered by Social Security Scotland and is based on dignity, fairness and respect.

We are delivering Adult Disability Payment, Child Disability Payment and new benefits unique to Scotland, such as the Scottish Child Payment. We also deliver a number of benefits previously administered by the Department for Work and Pensions. We will soon be delivering more new benefits including for people at pension age and carers.

This approach is more fully described by the eight principles in Section 1 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 – the law that created the new system:

- Social security is an investment in the people of Scotland
- Social security is itself a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights
- The delivery of social security is a public service
- Respect for the dignity of individuals is to be at the heart of the Scottish social security system
- The Scottish social security system is to contribute to reducing poverty in Scotland
- The Scottish social security system is to be designed with the people of Scotland on the basis of evidence
- Opportunities are to be sought to continuously improve the Scottish social security system in ways which put the needs of those who require assistance first and advance equality and non-discrimination
- The Scottish social security system is to be efficient and deliver value for money.

What is Our Charter?

The commitments in Our Charter explain what you can expect from Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government. Our Charter was written in 2019. It was reviewed with input from people who use the new Scottish social security system and approved by Parliament in 2024.

Who created Our Charter?

People who had experience of the social security system and organisations that help or represent people who may use social security. Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland colleagues also helped create Our Charter.

Who is the 'our' in Our Charter?

Every person in Scotland. Social security is a human right – an investment in ourselves and each other. It is a public service that any of us could need at any time. So Our Charter belongs to all of us.

Who makes sure Our Charter is being delivered?

The Scottish Government must explain to the Scottish Parliament what it has done to make sure the commitments in Our Charter are being delivered. The Scottish Commission on Social Security (an independent group of experts) will also report to the Scottish Parliament on how it thinks the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland are delivering Our Charter.

The Scottish Parliament will use this information to decide if the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland are doing well or if they should do more.

We all have a personal responsibility in making sure Our Charter is delivered in practice. We need to speak up if these commitments are not being delivered.



A People's Service

We're here to help you get everything you're entitled to.



Social Security Scotland colleagues will:

1. Be patient, kind and consider how you might be feeling.
2. Listen to you, trust you and treat you as an individual.
3. Support your wellbeing and make your contact with us as positive and stress-free as possible using a trauma-informed approach.
4. Treat everyone equally, fairly and without discrimination.
5. Be knowledgeable about Scottish social security and help you get answers if they do not know.

We'll achieve this by:

1. Including requirements in our recruitment processes to make sure we recruit people who care about delivering a service based on dignity, fairness and respect.
2. Building a workforce that reflects the diversity of people in Scotland.
3. Making sure colleagues are trained, supported and well-equipped to do their jobs in line with our values.
4. Providing learning to ensure colleagues understand the needs of different people and the barriers they face – so that no-one experiences discrimination because of who they are.
5. Involving people with diverse lived experiences of social security, and the organisations that represent them, in training our colleagues.



How we support you

Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government will meet your individual needs by:

1. Providing information in different formats and languages and communicating with you in ways that meet your needs as much as we can. For example, by providing interpreters.
2. Delivering local services that are convenient, welcoming and accessible for you, and in person if necessary. For example, home visits if appropriate.

We will help you get support from outside organisations if you need it:

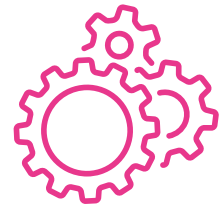
1. If you have a disability and need advocacy, refer you to a free and independent advocacy service. This service can help you to understand and be involved in decisions which affect you. You can also ask someone that you know to support you.
2. If you want someone, or an organisation, to support you with your application or contact with us, we will make this as easy as possible.
3. We will direct you towards other organisations and services that may be able to give advice or guidance.
4. We will tell you if we think you might be entitled to benefits, services or help not delivered by Social Security Scotland and how to find out if you are eligible.

You can help us by:

1. Treating our colleagues with dignity, fairness and respect.
2. Telling us how we can make it easier for you to use our service. For example, if you have communication or other support needs – we'll do our best to meet them.

Processes that work

We'll design services with the people who use them.



If you go through an application process, Social Security Scotland will support you along the way, keeping you updated and explaining what will happen and why. We'll do this by:

1. Supporting you to complete an application in a way that suits you. For example, online, over the phone, or in person if requested.
2. Letting you know that we have received your application and what you can expect to happen next.
3. Working with you to gather any supporting information we need so that your application can be processed as quickly as possible. This includes being clear about the supporting information we need and gathering it for you if you ask us to do so.
4. Introducing ways to update you on the progress of your application and expected timelines, including if things might take a bit longer.
5. Contacting you to help clarify information in your application. Making decisions based on your application and supporting information where required.
6. Having a team of decision makers who will review the information provided in your application and supporting information. They will work closely with our in-house qualified Health and Social Care team as needed.
7. Only carrying out a consultation for disability benefits when we're not able to make a decision based on the information that is already available or if you request one.
8. Making sure that when consultations are needed, they are carried out by our qualified Health and Social Care team who understand your condition and the impact it's having on you.
9. Ensuring consultations are carried out in a way that puts your wellbeing first, including offering a consultation over the phone or in person at a place that suits you.
10. Providing information to help answer any questions you may have along the way and responding to enquiries as quickly as we can.

Throughout, we will make sure you are treated with dignity, fairness and respect. We'll:

1. Make decisions in a way that is consistent and accurate – and aim to get them right first time.
2. Be honest, give clear reasons for decisions and explain what to do if you disagree with our decision.
3. Pay you the right amount, on time.

If you do not agree with a decision made, we'll:

1. Look at your application again. This is usually called a re-determination. When we do this, someone different will look at your application as if it was a completely new application.
2. Explain how you can appeal if you still do not think the right decision has been made after we have looked at it again.
3. Continue to pay you the same amount if you challenge a decision to reduce or stop certain benefits you receive. This is called "Short-term Assistance" and you do not need to pay this back.

You can help us by:

1. Giving us the information we need to help you. This includes working with us to gather any supporting information needed to help us come to the right decision on your application.
2. Telling us about any problems with getting this information that we might be able to help with.
3. Telling us if something changes that might affect your entitlement, so that we can make sure you're getting the right payments.



A learning system

We'll encourage feedback and work to deliver the best service possible.



Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government will improve our services by listening to the people who use them. We'll:

1. Make communications, processes and systems as simple and clear as possible by testing them with the people who use them.
2. Encourage you to provide feedback, explain how you can complain and do everything we can to make things right.
3. Listen, learn and improve by valuing feedback, complaints and appeal decisions.
4. Carry out regular research with clients to hear about their experiences and work with them to make improvements to our services. This includes a survey that goes to all clients.
5. Involve people using the service in measuring how well it works – including the commitments in Our Charter.



Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government will be held to account by:

1. Being open and transparent.
2. Encouraging colleagues to speak up when they feel we could provide a better service.
3. Working with other organisations to make sure services and policy are joined up to provide the best possible help and support.
4. Encouraging other organisations working in social security to adopt the approach described in Our Charter.
5. Measuring each year how we are delivering the commitments in Our Charter. Taking lessons learnt into future improvements to our services.
6. Communicating how we're performing on these commitments to clients and partner organisations.
7. Working with the Scottish Commission on Social Security who provide independent scrutiny of the Scottish social security system.

You can help us by:

1. Telling us how you feel about the service. We want to improve and your ideas can help us do that. Details of how to share your feedback are on the back page of Our Charter.

A better future

We're investing in the people of Scotland – making a positive difference to all our lives.



When making decisions that affect social security in Scotland, the Scottish Government will:

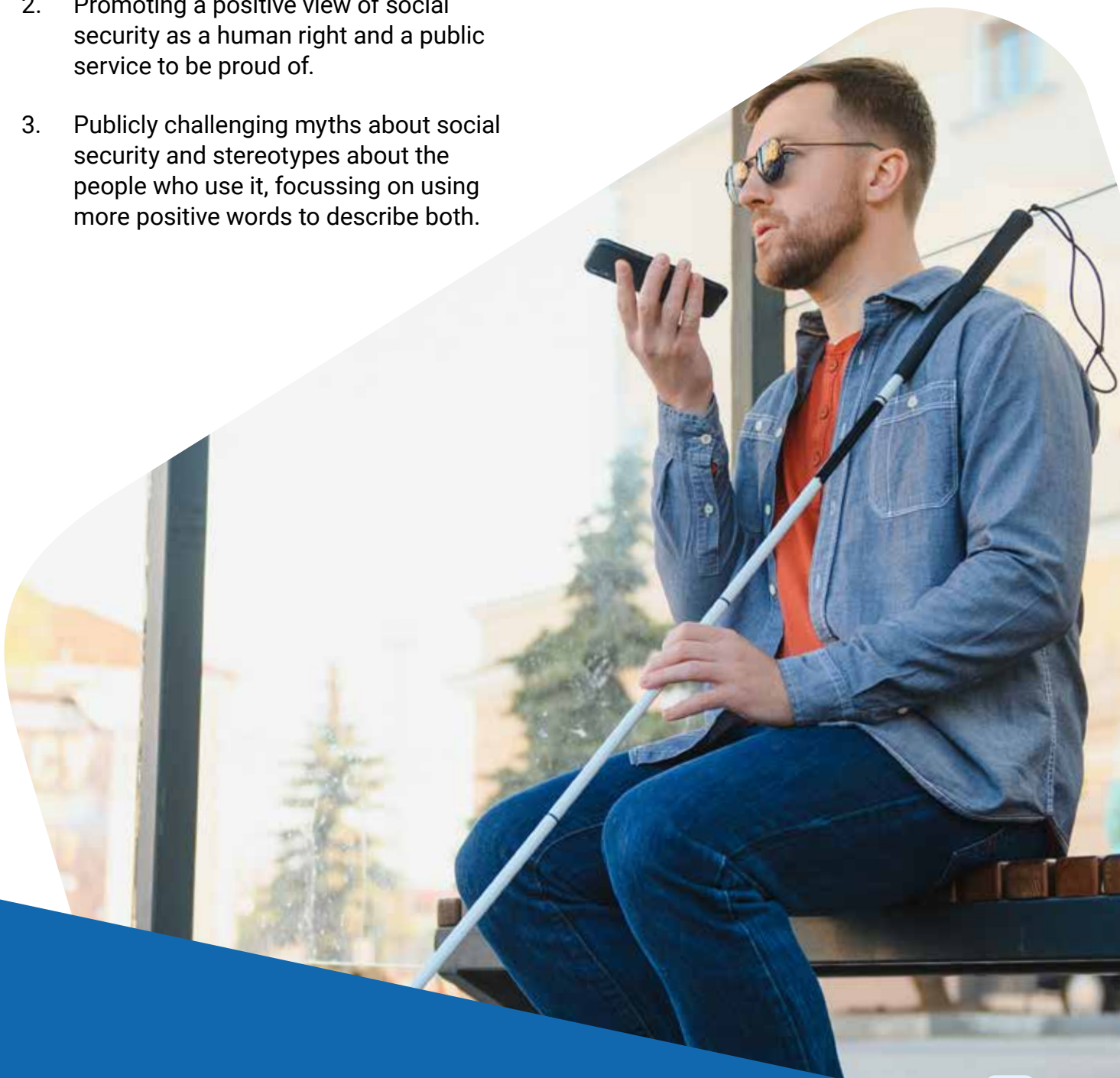
1. Embed the social security principles and Our Charter in how we make policy.
2. Involve people with diverse lived experiences of social security in developing policy.
3. Develop policy that supports equality, non-discrimination and the human right to social security as defined in laws, treaties and guidance.

The Scottish Government will use social security powers to contribute towards tackling poverty by:

1. Looking for ways to make eligibility rules fairer, consider creating new benefits to meet people's changing needs.
2. Increasing the value of disability, employment-injury, carers, funeral expense benefits and the Scottish Child Payment every year in line with inflation.
3. Reviewing the payment levels of all other Scottish benefits every year.
4. Making sure as many people as possible get what they are entitled to by delivering on the principles set out in the Benefit Take-up Strategy.
5. Reaching people who are most likely to be excluded including by providing information about social security in community locations.
6. Working with other public services to support delivery of the Scottish Government's National Outcomes for a fairer, more prosperous Scotland.
7. Putting people first as we deliver an efficient service and value for money for the people of Scotland.

The Scottish Government will use social security to advance equality and human rights by:

1. Using social security powers to help make sure people can play a full and active part in society.
2. Promoting a positive view of social security as a human right and a public service to be proud of.
3. Publicly challenging myths about social security and stereotypes about the people who use it, focussing on using more positive words to describe both.





Social Security Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

How to contact us



Call us free on: 0800 182 2222



Text Relay Service: 18001 +0300 244 4000 (for the hard of hearing)



British Sign Language users:
contactscotland-bsl.org



Webchat: chat.socialsecurity.gov.scot

For a BSL and Easy Read version of Our Charter visit socialsecurity.gov.scot.

If you would like a copy of Our Charter in audio, Braille, large print or alternative languages call us on 0800 182 2222.



socialsecurity.gov.scot

Who can you tell if you do not think Our Charter is being met?

For feedback, suggestions and complaints, please visit mygov.scot/socialsecurity-feedback or call freephone 0800 182 2222.

Colleagues will try to help you right away. We will listen, learn and improve.

If you are still unhappy please contact independent Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

Visit spsa.org.uk or call freephone 0800 377 7330.

You can also complain about matters relating to policy decisions (eg. levels of payment or eligibility rules) direct to Scottish Ministers. Please contact sgcomplaints@gov.scot.

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