



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba



Our Charter

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

Easy read version

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

Introduction



The Scottish Government has set up a new benefits system for Scotland.



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Some benefits from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) - mostly disability and carer's benefits – have moved to this new system.



The people of Scotland were asked what they thought about social security and benefits. They said that the UK system is stressful, difficult to use and often treats people badly.



Social Security Scotland was set up to run benefits in a more positive and supportive way.

Social Security Scotland's system is run with these ideas in mind:

- benefits are a human right
- benefits are a public service
- treating people with respect should be at the heart of the system
- the system will help to reduce poverty
- the people of Scotland will help to plan the benefits system
- we will look for ways to keep making the system better
- the system will work well and give good value for money



What is Our Charter?

A charter is a document that sets out what the Government is going to do. It is a promise made to the people. Our Charter says what you should expect from the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland. Our Charter was written in 2019 and updated in 2024.





Who made Our Charter?

- People with experience of social security.
- Organisations that help or support people to use the new system.
- Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland staff.



Who is Our Charter for?

Every person in Scotland. Social security is a human right – a way of helping 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 that Our Charter is being followed?



- The Scottish Government must tell the Scottish Parliament what it has done to make sure promises are being kept.
- The Scottish Commission on Social Security (an independent group of experts) will also tell the Scottish Parliament if Our Charter is being followed.
- 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 to make sure Our Charter is being followed:



- We all need to know our rights and what we are supposed to do.
- We need to speak up if things are not being done properly.

What is the difference between the Scottish Government, Social Security Scotland, the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Commission on Social Security?



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

The Scottish Parliament is made up of MSPs elected by the people of Scotland. Its job is to pass laws and to make sure the Scottish Government is doing what the people of Scotland want it to do.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

The Scottish Government is led by the First Minister. Its job is to come up with new plans and decide what should be done in the areas it is in charge of – things like health, education and some social security benefits.



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Social Security Scotland is an organisation set up by the Scottish Government to run benefits in a way that follows Our Charter.



The Scottish Commission on Social Security is an independent group of experts who check on the new social security system and tell the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament if it thinks things could be better.



All four organisations have an important part to play in Scotland's social security system.

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



For feedback, suggestions and complaints, please speak to a member of Social Security Scotland staff - visit **mygov.scot/contact-social-security-scotland** or call freephone **0800 182 2222**.



Staff will try to help you right away. We will listen, learn and make sure we do better next time.



If you are still unhappy, please contact independent Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) – visit **[spsso.org.uk](https://www.spsso.org.uk)** or call freephone **0800 377 7330**.

A people's service

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

Social Security Scotland will:

- be patient, kind and think about how you might feel
- listen to you, trust you, and treat you like a person
- support you and make your contact with us as positive as possible
- treat everyone equally, fairly and without discrimination
- know about Scottish social security and help you get answers if they do not know.



Social Security Scotland will do the things mentioned above by:



- making sure we recruit staff who care about treating people with dignity, fairness and respect
- recruiting a workforce that represents the diversity of Scotland
- making sure our staff are trained to do their job properly
- giving training to all staff so that they understand the needs of different people. This is to help make sure that no-one experiences discrimination because of who they are.
- using people who have lived experience of social security to help train our staff



How we support you



Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government will:

- provide information in different ways and speaking to you in the way that you prefer as much as we can. For example, by providing an interpreter.
- provide services in ways that are convenient and welcoming for you. For example, home visits.

Social Security Scotland will help you get support from other places if you need it:



- we will send you to a free and independent advocacy service if you need one. Advocacy services can help you understand and be more involved in decisions that affect you.
- if you want someone you know, or another organisation, to help you with

your benefit application, we will make that as easy to do as possible.

- we can also send you to other organisations that may be able to help you
- we will also tell you if we think you might be able to get other benefits or help that Social Security Scotland isn't able to give

You can help Social Security Scotland by:



- treating our staff with dignity, fairness and respect
- telling us how we can make things easier for you

Processes that work

We will design services with the people who use them.

If you apply for a Social Security Scotland benefit, we will support you along the way. We will keep you updated and explain what will happen and why.

We'll do this by:

- helping you complete an application in a way that suits you. For example, online, over the phone, or in person.
- letting you know when we have got your application and what should happen next
- helping you get any extra information we need so that your application can be sorted as quickly as possible. We will be clear about the extra information we need and will gather it for you if you ask us to.
- updating you on the progress of your application, as well as letting you know if things might take a bit longer.





- contacting you to check information in your application. We will make decisions based on your application and the information you give us.
- having a team of people who will review your application and any extra information you provide. They will work closely with our qualified Health and Social Care team if they need to.
- only carrying out a more detailed chat about disability benefits with you when we're not able to make a decision based on the information you gave us. We can also have a more detailed chat if you request one.
- making sure that when more detailed chats 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.
- ensuring more detailed chats 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



- providing information to help answer any questions you may have along the way and responding to you as quickly as we can

We will make sure you are treated with dignity, fairness and respect. We will:

- make decisions in a way that is consistent and accurate – and aim to get decisions right first time
- be honest, give clear reasons for decisions and explain what you can do if you disagree with our decision
- pay you the right amount and pay you on time



If you don't agree with a decision we made, we will:



- 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.
- explain how you can appeal if you still do not think the right decision has been made after we have looked at it again.
- 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:

- 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.
- telling us about any problems with getting this information that we might be able to help with
- 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 will encourage feedback and work to give the best service possible.

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

- make communications, processes and systems as simple and clear as possible by testing them with the people who use them
- encourage you to provide feedback, explain how you can complain and do everything we can to make things right
- listen, learn and improve by valuing feedback, complaints and appeal decisions.
- 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.

- 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:

- being open and transparent
- encouraging staff to speak up when they feel we could provide a better service
- working with other organisations to make sure services and policy are working together to provide the best possible help and support
- encouraging other organisations working in social security to adopt the approach described in Our Charter
- measuring each year how we are delivering the commitments in Our





Charter. Taking lessons learned into future improvements to our services.

- telling clients and partner organisations how we're performing on these commitments.
- working with the Scottish Commission on Social Security who provide independent scrutiny of the Scottish social security system

You can help us by:



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

A better future

We are 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:

- embed the social security principles and Our Charter in how we make policy
- involve people with diverse lived experiences of social security in developing policy
- 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 tackle poverty by:

- looking for ways to make benefit eligibility more fair. We will consider creating new benefits to meet people's changing needs.
- increasing the value of disability, employment-injury, carers, funeral expense benefits and the Scottish Child Payment every year in line with inflation
- reviewing the payment amounts of all other Scottish benefits every year.
- making sure as many people as possible get what they are entitled to by meeting the principles that are mentioned in the Benefit Take-up Strategy
- reaching people who are most likely to be excluded by providing information about social security in community places
- working with other public services to help deliver the Scottish Government's



National Outcomes for a fairer, better Scotland.



- putting people first as we deliver a good service and value for money for the people of Scotland

The Scottish Government will use social security to improve human rights by:



- using social security powers make sure people can play a full and active part in society
- giving a positive view of social security as a human right and a public service to be proud of
- publicly challenging myths about social security and stereotypes about the people who use it, focussing on using more positive words to describe both





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Please ask us if you would like copies of this document in audio or visual format, large print, or in a community language. If you have any questions or feedback, please email **communications@socialsecurity.gov.scot**

This document is available on our website: **socialsecurity.gov.scot**

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