

Fairer Scotland Duty Summary

**Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018
Benefit Take-up Strategy
October 2019**


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FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY SUMMARY

<p>Title of Policy, Strategy, Programme etc</p>	<p>SOCIAL SECURITY (SCOTLAND) ACT 2019 – BENEFIT TAKE-UP STRATEGY</p>
<p>Summary of aims and expected outcomes of strategy, proposal, programme or policy</p>	<p>The aim of the Strategy is to promote take-up of assistance available under the Scottish Social Security system.</p> <p>This Strategy will set the direction of travel for the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland in relation to maximising take-up over the two years (ahead of publication of the next Strategy). This will affect anyone eligible to claim benefits under the Scottish Social Security system.</p> <p>Much of this Strategy necessarily relates to those benefits that are being paid at the point of publication – Best Start Grant and the Funeral Support Payment.</p> <p>However, this document also sets out our direction of travel; committing to a number of substantive activities to maximise take-up. These activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new £500,000 fund available for 2020 to assist organisations who are preparing their services and staff to support people who will be applying for Scottish benefits. • A new £100,000 take-up accessibility fund available for 2020 to assist organisations who support people to increase their household incomes, with an emphasis on ensuring people are aware of the financial support available to them. • A stakeholder take-up reference group will be established to provide advice and support in the implementation of this strategy, as well as feeding into the development of the next strategy. • Two roundtable events on access to social security – co-designed with key organisations – will bring together people with experience of the system, and organisations that support them, to explore solutions to issues such as stigma, barriers to access, and the human rights-based approach. • We will continue to forge relationships with a wide range of national and local stakeholders to enable us to

	<p>continue making progress with Social Security Scotland’s stakeholder engagement strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications and marketing will continue to draw on strategic insights to deliver co-ordinated and consistent activities to best promote Scottish benefits. • In the interests of continuous improvement, we will continue to work with the Experience Panels, conduct targeted research with seldom-heard groups, and develop the work of Social Security Scotland’s Client Insights. <p>At this stage the detail of these proposals are yet to be fully developed, this will be done following the publication of the Strategy through engagement with our stakeholders - those with experience of the Scottish Social Security system, and organisations who represent them.</p>
<p>Summary of evidence</p>	<p>As part of the duty to prepare this Strategy, Scottish Ministers consulted with two key groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. individuals who have received assistance through the Scottish social security system, and 2. persons who work with or represent individuals living in households whose income is adversely affected, or whose expenditure is increased, because a member of the household has one or more protected characteristics within the meaning of Section 4 of the Equality Act 2010. <p>In order to ensure that this Strategy is based on the experience of Scotland’s diverse population, we have worked with key stakeholders to engage with a range of individuals with experience of the Scottish social security system, and individuals and organisations representing groups historically underrepresented in terms of take-up.</p> <p>Both the benefits paid at the time of publication – Best Start Grant and Funeral Support Payment – are specifically paid to those on low incomes, working to improve equality of outcomes. In addition, the Strategy also sets out the ongoing work around upcoming benefits Young Carer Grant, Scottish Child Payment, and Disability Assistance which are also have a focus on reducing inequalities of outcome.</p> <p>Individual Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessments have been undertaken and published for Best Start Grant and Funeral Support Payment.</p> <p>At present we do not have figures related to take-up rates for the benefits being delivered by Social Security Scotland, and very little robust data on take up of DWP</p>

	<p>benefits to provide a baseline. This coupled with the need to fully develop the details of the proposed interventions, makes it difficult to quantify the impact of the Strategy. However, through stakeholder engagement and a review of relevant literature we have identified the following as the main barriers preventing the take-up of benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of information: unawareness or misperceptions about the benefit, entitlement or application procedures; • costly or complex access: inhibiting complexity of the application procedure or lack of resources including time, limited competences to find one's way through the system, and travel to the welfare or employment office; • social barriers: (perceived) stigma, subjective lack of need, pride or lack of trust in institutions. <p>Where data is available, it is clear that some UK benefits are poorly taken up. However, our research found that there was a dearth of robust evaluative evidence on interventions and campaigns aimed at increasing take-up, in particular when it comes to benefits. Much of available evidence is anecdotal.</p> <p>Data on take up of Scottish benefits as it becomes available, together with continued engagement with key stakeholders, will shape the development of the targeted social security take-up activities. In addition, interventions such as the roundtable events on access to social security are specifically designed to identify where evidence gaps lie and how they can be addressed.</p>
<p>Summary of assessment findings</p>	<p>All of the proposed interventions have drawn on the expertise stakeholders to reduce inequalities of outcome. For example, through consultation the focus of the Benefit Take-Up Funds shifted to support existing funding and the vital role the third sector play in benefit take-up.</p> <p>However, in order to develop the proposals contained within the Strategy and fully understand the options available to us for strengthening the policy, we will continue our ongoing process of stakeholder engagement and communication.</p> <p>Throughout this ongoing process, we will continue to engage with communities of interest in the development of the targeted social security take-up activities.</p> <p>The individual proposals within the Strategy must be further developed through ongoing consultation before we</p>

	<p>can elaborate on the pros and cons of individual options. This will be covered in further, more detailed iterations of the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.</p> <p>We have developed a programme of research with sensitive, marginalised and dispersed groups, with an emphasis on uptake, to ensure that these voices are also informing the design of Social Security in Scotland.</p> <p>This qualitative research will run over two years, and as with the wider Experience Panels work, will allow people's direct lived experience to inform the detail of the design of social security in Scotland, to ensure these groups can access the system and will be treated with dignity, fairness and respect.</p>
Sign off	<p>Name: Audrey MacDougall</p>  <p>Job title: Deputy Director Communities Analysis Division and Chief Social Researcher</p>



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