

Disability Benefits Policy Position Papers

Paper 3: What extra support can Social Security Scotland give me if I need it?

October 2020



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Disability Benefits Policy Position Papers – October 2020

This is Paper 3 of 5 position papers published in October 2020, which provide an overview of the new Scottish approach to disability benefits. These papers were correct as at the date of publication: please check the Scottish Government's [Social security: policy position papers](#) webpage for any further updates.

Paper 3: What extra support can Social Security Scotland give me if I need it?

Introduction

This paper looks at the options we are offering to clients who may need further support with an application for a disability benefit. While most clients will be able to complete the form online or in hard copy by themselves or with their own support systems and family members, we want to make sure that further support is available for those who would like it, in a way that suits them. The table at the end of the paper sets out the differences and improvements between the current system and the new Scottish system.

Face to face support – the local delivery service

While our aim is to make the application form simple and self-explanatory so that people find it straightforward to fill in, we recognise that some clients will need or want to access additional support. As set out in our position paper "[How do I make an application to Social Security Scotland for a disability benefit?](#)", clients can access this through telephone or webchat as they fill in the application form. In addition, clients who need further assistance or would prefer face-to-face support to apply will be able to access that through our new Social Security Scotland Local Delivery service.

We will have staff in co-located sites across the country from rural to urban to islands settings. These staff will be mobile and flexible, so that they can support clients in places most convenient to them – including their own homes, venues in their local community, hospitals, care homes and prisons. Once Social Security Scotland is fully operational there will be at least 400 local delivery staff across Scotland. This contrasts with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which has fewer than 100 staff across Scotland and only offers home visits on an exceptional basis.

Accessible support in the local community

User research has told us that, overwhelmingly, clients were keen to access social security services within their local community.

With this in mind, 19 Social Security Scotland Local Delivery "Relationship Leads" have been working across the 32 local authorities to identify suitable locations for Social Security Scotland staff to set up a local presence in shared sites. These shared sites will often be within local authority buildings, which already meet legal accessibility standards and are serviced by public transport.

To ensure that services are fully accessible and that clients' needs are met, we have developed an Accessibility toolkit. This will provide our Local Delivery teams with a tool which enables them to assess where they could meet clients, against agreed physical accessibility criteria ranging from colour and light levels to access to public transport, in order to make the experience as comfortable as possible for clients.

Application Support

Social Security Scotland's Local Delivery staff will provide people with one-to-one support and help them understand what devolved benefits they may be entitled to. They can help clients complete their application forms, support them practically with the process, and take forward any follow up actions relating to the application. Local delivery staff do not make decisions on benefit applications: they are there to support the client by explaining the eligibility criteria for Disability Assistance to assist the client in understanding how a decision will be made, and to help identify and gather relevant information for Social Security Scotland Case Managers to allow them to make a decision.

Local Delivery staff will assist people applying for and receiving disability benefits in the following ways:

Supported Applications – Local Delivery staff can input the information into a client's application form either online or on paper, following instructions from the client to complete their application for them. The application will always belong to the client. We will continue to ensure that we respect this, as we consider ways to support clients that are flexible in meeting their needs, and explore where we may be able to use methods like video calling. Making sure that clients get all the support they need to make a claim will also support our aim of promoting benefit take-up.

Assisted Applications – Local Delivery staff can also provide support, guidance and assistance for a client to complete their application form themselves, online, or in a paper format if required.

Further support

As part of our ambition to offer a service that ensures clients have access to the full range of support that they need, Local Delivery staff will be able to signpost to a range of services to support each client, taking account of their individual circumstances. This includes making clients aware of appropriate DWP employment-related benefits as well as other complementary local services – for example, directing them to local third sector organisations who can provide advice on fuel poverty or debt management. There may well be an upsurge in benefit enquiries as communities feel the economic impact of the covid-19 virus, and Social Security Scotland will play its part in Scotland's response to the pandemic. For example, clients may need support to access the full range of benefits, including income-related assistance like the Scottish Child Payment. Where a client wishes to contact Social Security Scotland by phone, they will also be signposted to applicable third sector services should they require this assistance. For clients applying online, the guidance on www.mygov.scot will include information of how and where clients can get further support.

As well as ensuring clients know how to contact other organisations relevant to their individual circumstances, Social Security Scotland staff can also assist clients with other aspects of the system. They will be available at any point where the client may need support, including during re-determinations and appeals, to assist clients proactively with affordable repayments, and to let Social Security Scotland know if a client reports a change of circumstance.

Drop-in “surgeries”

All of these local delivery services will be conducted on a prearranged appointment basis. In addition, once the local delivery service is fully up and running, we will also offer regular drop-in ‘surgery’ sessions in outreach venues in communities to ensure clients are able to access information and support about the Social Security Scotland offer.

Initially clients will access these surgeries by contacting Social Security Scotland, with local delivery staff then directly arranging an appointment, allowing us to measure and understand how this service is being used. This will enable us to ensure that the expanded drop-in surgery service can be put to best use in the future. We will ensure the service is visible in communities by signposting to it across Social Security Scotland materials as an additional option for accessing information and support from the agency.

Advocacy support

People with a disability are entitled to the support of an independent advocacy worker if, because of their disability, they need help claiming benefits under the Scottish social security system.

An interim service has been in place since 30 June. Social Security Scotland staff are able to refer clients via the Scottish Government to a suitable, independent advocacy provider. Requests for support will simply be referred to independent providers and neither Social Security Scotland nor the Scottish Government will have any role in the service provided, ensuring that it is fully independent.

The scheme aims to provide the service quickly enough to an individual to support them with any aspect of their application, including where the individual was seeking support in relation to a re-determination or appeal. The aim is to ensure that the client hears from an advocacy provider within 5 working days of requesting the service, and there will be a requirement on providers of the service to do so in accordance with the Scottish Government’s published [advocacy standards](#).

Next Steps

Social Security Scotland is ensuring that local networks and support services are well integrated to provide local and personalised support for clients. Local delivery will continue to source outreach venues within local communities to ensure clients have support where they most need it.

An overview of the differences between the UK and Scottish approaches to applying for disability benefits

Current UK system	Scottish approach
<i>Making the application</i>	
There is no dedicated assistance for helping clients to fill out benefit applications	We will explain the eligibility criteria for Disability Assistance clearly and transparently, so that clients know how we will make decisions about their case.
Limited staff available within DWP to assist clients and visits by exception only	400 staff across Scotland to assist clients in person, with support including home visits provided as needed, without strict eligibility criteria.
DWP do not promote their visiting service	We will have a full launch of the Local Delivery service, to promote it to clients across Scotland, and continue to include it in Social Security Scotland material so clients know they can access this support if they wish.

Contact: Brenda Russell (brenda.russell@gov.scot)



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Edinburgh
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