



Social Security Scotland  
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

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Dear Dr Witcher,

Thank you for your letter of 23 April 2020 expressing your appreciation of, and support for, the services we are providing for our clients during this difficult time. You asked how we would continue to meet the expectations and commitments in our Charter while we are still affected by Covid-19 and whether we have had to adjust our overall approach.

The commitments in our Charter are embedded in everything we do when we are delivering our services. From recruiting our people, the way we design our processes and our approach to delivering our services to the end-user. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the need to deliver against our Charter remains very much at the forefront of our minds. It might help if I took this opportunity to explain how we are maintaining our standards during this time.

Our main priority is to concentrate on the delivery of existing benefits to our clients. Fortunately, to date, Covid-19 has not had as serious an impact on our operations as it has had on some other organisations, mostly due to our ability to have staff working from home. We acted quickly on this and, apart from a very small number of staff working from our office in Dundee, our staff were able to move to working from home immediately after the lockdown was announced. This allowed us to tailor our approach to ensure that we were looking after our staff while continuing to deliver our benefits. Home working has had its own challenges, which we have met by introducing various measures including:

- We introduced a new method of telephony contact on the 30th March to support homeworking and the impact this had on our ability to handle inbound calls. Clients are able to contact the normal telephone number and leave a message asking for a call back. A client adviser then contacts them within a specified timescale. We have managed to keep to these timescales during lockdown, ensuring our clients are supported at this difficult time.
- We have also introduced a document upload facility and e-learning package, to allow clients to send us electronic versions of documents from home
- On 4 May, we successfully launched a webchat facility, giving clients additional ways to access our services.

**Dignity, fairness, respect.**

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Prior to Covid-19, we carried out an extensive recruitment exercise for the new Scottish Child Payment, which the Cabinet Secretary has said will still be launched before the end of this year. The process of recruitment has been slower than it would have been before Covid-19 but we are still welcoming these new staff into our organisation in groups during this time and, thanks to some smart and innovative work by our Learning and Development Team, we've been able to roll-out training packages that can be accessed remotely by staff working from home and soon we will be able to deploy them to our operational teams to maintain our services. The training that everyone who joins our organisation receives is designed to embed and reinforce the values of dignity, fairness and respect and includes specific sessions on our Charter, as well as the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 and the eight Social Security Principles, human rights, and unconscious bias. None of this has been overlooked or lost even while we're delivering training remotely.

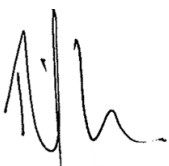
You also asked about the Charter Measurement Framework and how will we measure our performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. We had intended to run a survey of all the clients whose details are currently stored on our system. However, the Covid-19 outbreak has forced the postponement of this survey, which would otherwise have been the main data source for measuring our performance against Charter commitments. We are looking at options for running the survey as soon as practicable, taking into consideration whether it would be better to issue the survey without a full range of accessibility options for its completion, or to wait until it can be run as originally planned. While the delay to the survey will affect the availability of data to include in upcoming reports, it will still be possible to publish an interim analytical report on the Charter Measurement Framework in the Autumn.

We can look to various existing sources of data as an indicator of how we are performing, including regularly collated and published statistics, client and staff insights research. In addition, we will be able to describe in more detail how the insights research programme has been designed and what the all-client survey will entail when it goes ahead. We will also continue to publish our statistics and research data, in most cases, on a quarterly basis. A list of the data currently available can be found on the [Social Security Scotland website](#).

I trust that both you and your fellow Members of the Commission find this information helpful. I would be happy to discuss the above with you or if it would be useful to meet with some of the teams from Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government who have overall responsibility for the Charter and Charter Measurement Framework, please let me know and my office can make the arrangements.

I am sharing this response with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People, for her information and awareness and with relevant colleagues in the Scottish Government.

Yours sincerely,



David Wallace  
Chief Executive  
Social Security Scotland

**Dignity, fairness, respect.**