

Annex A: Qualitative research into the case transfer process



EQUALITY AND WELFARE

Research into the case transfer process in the context of the devolved disability

benefits

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Responsibility for this report lies with the research team alone. The views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

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This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for Market Research, ISO 20252.

1. Executive summary

Background

The Scotland Act (2016) devolved some social security powers to the Scottish Government for the first time. Most of these relate to disability benefits and carers' benefits. Social Security Scotland, the organisation responsible for the delivery of these benefits, was set up in 2018 and the programme of devolution is expected to be completed by 2025/26. A major element of this programme is the transfer of around 700,000 child and adult disability benefit cases from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to Social Security Scotland.

In November 2022, the Scottish Government commissioned Ipsos Scotland to undertake qualitative research into the experiences and outcomes for clients whose cases are being transferred, and the experiences and perspectives of staff delivering this work. The aim of the research was to help inform improvements to the case transfer process by identifying which elements are working well and what needs to change. Specifically, it explored the experiences of people whose cases are transferring to/from:

- Child Disability Payment (CDP) from Disability Living Allowance for children (DLAC).
- Adult Disability Payment (ADP) from either Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Aims of the research

The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is working well and what needs to be improved with regard to case transfers?
2. What differences in experience can be drawn from clients whose cases are transferring from different benefits?
3. What are the key differences clients are experiencing in the assessment processes compared to that with DWP and how do they feel about these differences?
4. Has the case transfer process been executed in line with policy principles?
5. What short-, medium-, and longer-term impacts did the case transfer experience have on clients?

Methods

The research took a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews and (for some staff) focus groups. The perspectives and experiences of the following groups were explored:

- **Clients whose cases had transferred from DWP to Social Security Scotland.** Clients were asked about their overall experience of the case transfer process as well as details of different elements including: their understanding of what would happen; their interactions with Social Security Scotland and/or DWP staff; their experiences of the review (where applicable); what they thought worked well; and what they thought could be improved.
- **Social Security Scotland staff involved in the case transfer and review processes.** These staff were asked for their perspectives on the client experience as well as the staff experience. They were asked what aspects of the process worked well; what challenges they encountered; and what they thought could be improved. They were also asked about the training, support, and decision-making guidance they have access to.

Main findings

Case transfer key findings

- Letters from Social Security Scotland were generally felt to be clear, although clients' accounts indicated mixed levels of understanding of the transfer process, particularly around change of circumstances.
- Clients reported that their payment was continuous during the transfer process. However, there were reports of impacts on other benefits and support.
- The transfer was seen as "safe and secure" in the sense of the correct payments being made at the correct time, although some clients felt it had taken too long.
- Communication between DWP and Social Security Scotland and clients was not always viewed as clear and consistent.
- Clients described Social Security Scotland staff as friendly and helpful, although there were frustrations about long waits to get through to speak to staff by telephone.
- Clients had a positive or neutral view towards Social Security Scotland by the time the transfer was complete. The level of trust in the agency was generally higher than with the DWP.

Review process key findings

- Clients reported that their payment was continuous during the review process.
- Clients were reassured and relieved that they would not have to undergo a face-to-face assessment.
- Clients' experiences of the review process varied depending on the circumstances of their transfer from the DWP (e.g. those reporting a change of circumstances found the forms more tiresome to complete than those who were due a review).

- Those who received an outcome that met or exceeded their expectations felt the decision was right and that their case had been considered fairly.
- Those who did not receive the outcome they had hoped for felt disappointed. While some acknowledged that the decision was nonetheless fair, others felt that their circumstances had not been fully considered.
- Clients described the review process as easier than they thought it would be, with Social Security Scotland staff widely viewed as helpful, friendly and reassuring.
- However, clients still felt worried about the process and the outcome.
- Where there were issues (e.g. lack of clarity around timescales, uncertainty over backdating payments, communication errors or knock-on impacts on other benefits) this exacerbated feelings of stress and anxiety.

Staff perspectives

- Staff generally felt that the transfer and review policy commitments are being met, with the exception of clear communication with individuals.
- There was a perception that new ADP and CDP applications had been prioritised over transfer cases which had contributed to initial issues around transfer and review processes. Staff experienced challenges using the Social Programme Management System (SPM) to process transfers and reviews. However, issues are being identified and addressed.
- Staff felt improvements to resources in terms of staffing, guidance and support would help them to deliver case transfers and reviews efficiently and effectively, and lead to a better client experience.

Conclusions in relation to the research questions

1. What is working well and what needs to be improved with regard to case transfers?

What is working well:

- Clients generally felt that they had been treated with dignity, fairness and respect.
- Clients continued to receive the correct payments at the correct time.
- Those with cases transferring from DLAC to CDP and from PIP to ADP generally found the case transfer process straightforward. PIP clients also tended to say that the review process was easier than they had expected it to be.
- Clients were very positive about their interactions with Social Security Scotland staff and felt they had been treated with dignity, fairness and respect.
- Clients tended to say that they were happy that their benefit was now being administered by Social Security Scotland.

What needs to be improved:

- The length of time it took to complete the whole process (transfer plus review). Reducing this time would have the biggest impact on clients transferring from DLA.
- More clarity on timescales and progress updates. Clients often reported at least some anxiety about the process and some experienced a great deal. Worries were exacerbated by not knowing how long they were going to have to wait.
- More clarity for clients on aspects of the process. Interviews with clients revealed a lack of understanding about the process where they had reported a change of circumstances. There was also a lack of understanding about how the backdating of payments would work. Staff also noted that clients were confused about these issues.
- For those transferring because they had reported a change in circumstances, the length of the review form was a problem. Clients found it onerous and tiring to fill in and they frequently reported that it took them two or three sittings to complete it.
- Clients felt it would be helpful if the call holding system provided clients with an indication of the queue length and likely wait times.
- Ensuring staff are clear which forms should be used in different circumstances.
- Continuity with other benefits or support, as there were issues reported with the Carer's Allowance, Motability leases and Blue Badges.
- Staff felt that more of the job-specific training should be delivered by Learning and Development and that there was currently too much reliance on 'consolidators' (more experienced staff training newer staff).
- There was a view among staff that calls should be directed to different departments rather than Client Advisors having to answer all calls including calls about other benefits.

2. What differences in experience can be drawn from clients transferring from different benefits?

- CDP clients typically found the case transfer element straightforward, although parents had a few concerns and some anxiety in cases where it took longer than expected.
- The main issue for DLA clients was the length of time the whole process took (transfer and review). Most of the DLA clients we spoke to had transferred because they had reported a change in circumstances. For them, the transfer element was a delay of 13-17 weeks before their review process could start. Among DLA clients who had received a review outcome, the overall timescales for both elements ranged from six months to a year. They tended to experience a considerable amount of stress and anxiety during this time period.

- ADP clients transferring from PIP were happier with their experience of case transfer and review than those transferring from DLA. Their relief about the review process being so much easier than they had expected (based on their experiences or expectations of a DWP review) may have overcome concerns about the waiting time that they might otherwise have had.
- Staff felt that DLA clients needed more reassurance than PIP clients. They put this down to them having been on that benefit for many years and not being used to changes to it.

3. What are the key differences clients are experiencing in the assessment processes compared to that with the DWP and how do they feel about these differences?

- Clients reported key differences in how they were treated by staff and the lack of face-to-face assessments (an aspect that they had found “harrowing” and “daunting”).
- Social Security Scotland staff were widely viewed as helpful, friendly and reassuring. Clients felt that they were listened to and not judged (in contrast to the DWP).
- Overall, there was a perception among clients that Social Security Scotland is an easier agency to deal with, and takes a more person-centred approach, than the DWP.

4. Has the case transfer process been executed in line with policy principles?

- The case transfer process has been executed in line with the policy principles of correct payment made at the correct time, and no re-applications or face-to-face DWP reassessments.
- In relation to the commitment “Complete as soon as possible while maintaining safe and secure, the transfer was seen as “safe and secure” in the sense of the correct payments being made at the correct time. Some clients felt it had taken too long, however, we cannot comment on whether the process could have been completed more quickly without jeopardising the “safe and secure” element.
- Letters from Social Security Scotland were generally felt to be clear, however, there were mixed levels of understanding about the process. Communication between the DWP, Social Security Scotland and clients was not always viewed as clear or consistent. A lack of updates on the progress of reviews increased clients’ worry and stress about the outcome.
- Client perceptions of the review outcome were mixed. Those who received an outcome that met or exceeded their expectations felt the decision was right. Those who did not receive the outcome they hoped for felt disappointed – while some acknowledged that the decision was nonetheless fair, others did not think their circumstances had been fully considered.

- Clients described the review process as easier than expected, with Social Security Scotland considered to be person-centred in its decision-making. However, clients still worried about the process.

5. What short, medium, and longer-term impacts did the case transfer experience have on clients?

Short-term:

- Some clients understood what is happening and when. Others did not think the information provided was clear and this prompted them to contact Social Security Scotland for clarification.
- Clients felt throughout that the transfer was safe and secure (i.e. that the right amount was paid on time).
- Clients knew who to contact for help and support.
- Clients experienced a smoother and easier process than expected, however, for some there were issues which caused stress and anxiety.
- Clients generally had a positive experience of the review process.

Medium-term:

- Clients tended to develop a positive relationship with Social Security Scotland while some remained neutral.
- Clients experienced reduced stress and/or anxiety about the prospect of future reviews or assessments, although some anxiety remained due to a general worry about payments being stopped.
- In most cases, clients felt that decision-making was fair and transparent.
- Clients generally felt treated with dignity, fairness and respect by Social Security Scotland. There were exceptional cases where clients felt their individual circumstances had not been considered in the review process.

Long-term:

- Broadly speaking, clients felt trust in Social Security Scotland – although some will be tentative about this until they have had more experience.
- Some clients were satisfied with the nature of the communication with Social Security Scotland, however, some communication issues were highlighted.
- Clients generally felt that they have been treated better by Social Security Scotland than they had been by the DWP.
- Clients generally said they would know how to report a change in circumstances in future and would feel comfortable doing so (although this was not a universal view).

2. Introduction and methods

Background

The Scotland Act (2016) devolved some social security powers to the Scottish Government for the first time. Most of these relate to disability benefits and carers' benefits. Social Security Scotland, the organisation responsible for the delivery of these benefits, was set up in 2018 and the programme of devolution is expected to be completed by 2025/26. A major element of this programme is the transfer of around 700,000 child and adult disability benefit cases from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to Social Security Scotland.

In November 2022, the Scottish Government commissioned Ipsos Scotland to undertake qualitative research into the experiences and outcomes for people whose cases are being transferred from DWP to Social Security Scotland, and the experiences of staff delivering this work. The aim of the research was to identify which elements are working well and what needs to change, to help inform improvements to the case transfer process. Specifically, it explored the experiences of clients transferring to/from:

- Child Disability Payment (CDP) from the Disability Living Allowance for children (DLAC).
- Adult Disability Payment (ADP) from either the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance¹ (DLA).

This research is part of a wider programme of work evaluating the policy impact of the devolution of disability benefits, with the overarching aim to understand how a benefit is being implemented and what effects it has had, for whom and why. This wider work will provide insight into how benefits contribute to the delivery of wider Social Security principles and government objectives. More detail can be found in the [Devolution of disability benefits: evaluation strategy](#).

Overview of case transfer and review processes

This section provides an overview of the case transfer and review processes. A glossary of terms is provided in Appendix 1.

Disability Living Allowance for Children to Child Disability Payment

Criteria

Cases are subject to transfer where the individual normally lives in Scotland, and they meet one of the agreed selection criteria:

- Age – with the oldest clients being selected first; and

¹ The cohort covered by this research are those who were under 65 when PIP was introduced on 08 April 2013

- SRTI – those who meet the special rules for terminal illness (not covered by this research)

Once a case is selected for transfer the DWP sends the relevant data, forms and evidence in batches to Social Security Scotland.

Client journey

Step 1. Social Security Scotland issues an introduction letter to the individual letting them know that they have been selected for case transfer. This letter also details the process and timescales. The letter also explains that any change of circumstances during the transfer process should be reported directly to the DWP.

Step 2. The case transfer process typically takes 13 to 17 weeks and in this time the information regarding the individual's DLAC is sent from the DWP to Social Security Scotland. During this time the Case Manager can also request further information from the individual, if this information is not available from the DWP.

Step 3. The transfer is made on a like for like basis and therefore no individual will receive less CDP than their current DLA award at the point of transfer. There are exceptions where the individual should receive a higher award:

- Individuals who are in certain types of care homes or legal detention.
- Individuals over 16 who can avail themselves of the “main meal” test as a result.
- Individuals over 16 and no longer need to meet the “substantially in excess” tests as a result.
- Differences in evidentiary requirements for terminal illness or visual impairment.

Step 4. Case Manager makes determination to award CDP (see Appendix 1 for a definition) and sends the individual a letter which includes details of the award, date of commencement of the award and cessation date of the old award. The letter also includes dates of payment and how to request a re-determination of an award. Any accessible vehicle agreements or equipment will also transfer on the same basis and the provider will be notified of the transfer by Social Security Scotland. People will be able to retain the same appointee they had with DWP upon transfer until further checks are carried out by Social Security Scotland.

Step 5. The Case Manager will then set a review date based on when they think the client's needs will change. The review date is typically in line with the review date set by the DWP. Review periods generally range between two and 10 years. For those whose conditions are very unlikely to change their review date will be set between five and 10 years after their award has been made. The review will be light-touch and will be tailored to that individual's needs. Young people reaching the age of 18 will then be invited to apply for Adult Disability Payment.

Personal Independence Payment to Adult Disability Payment

Criteria

The DWP will send the details of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) cases to be transferred in batches to Social Security Scotland. Natural transfer commenced from August 2022 with managed transfer starting in 2023 (see Appendix 1 for definitions). The agreed selection criteria for natural transfers are:

Individuals who normally live in Scotland:

- Who have reached their PIP award review date
- Who have reached 26 weeks before the end of their PIP award
- Who have reported a change in their health condition to DWP
- Who met the special rules for terminal illness (not covered by this research).

For managed transfer, cases are selected based on their review date, with those with review dates furthest in the future being selected for transfer first.

Client journey

Step 1. Case Manager issues an introduction letter to the individual confirming that their award has been selected for case transfer. This letter also details the process and timescales, and explains that any change of circumstances during the transfer process should be reported directly to the DWP.

Step 2. The case transfer process typically takes 13 to 17 weeks and in this time the information regarding the individual's Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is sent from the DWP to Social Security Scotland. In this time, Social Security Scotland can also request further information from the individual if this information is not available from the DWP.

Step 3. The transfer is made on a like for like basis so no individual will receive less ADP than their current PIP award at the point of transfer. An individual who meets the special rules for terminal illness immediately before the date of transfer is entitled to the enhanced rate of both daily living and mobility components of ADP.

Step 4. Case Manager makes determination to award ADP and sends the individual a letter and a factsheet which includes details of the award, date of commencement of award and the cessation date of old award. It also includes dates of payment and how to request re-determination or appeal of the award (see Appendix 1 for a definition of these terms). Any accessible vehicle agreements or equipment will also transfer on the same basis and the provider will be notified of the transfer by Social Security Scotland. People will be able to retain the same appointee they had with DWP upon transfer until further checks are carried out by Social Security Scotland. People are also told to update providers of any passported benefits (i.e. other support they may be eligible for as a result of their disability benefit entitlement).

Step 5. If there has been a change of circumstances reported during the case transfer the Case Manager will then request supporting information from the

individual as soon as their ADP begins and will commence the review process of the award. Individuals should commence collecting supporting information as soon as their change in circumstances occurs. The Case Manager will start the review as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Disability Living Allowance for adults to Adult Disability Payment

Criteria

Individual awards will be selected commencing with the natural transfer cases. The natural case transfer process commenced in August 2022. The agreed selection criteria for natural transfers are:

Individuals who normally live in Scotland:

- Whose DLA award is due to end or be renewed
- Who have reported a change in their health condition
- Who meet the special rules for terminal illness (not covered by this research)
- Who have made a voluntary application to be moved to Adult Disability payment (ADP).

Client journey

Step 1. Case Manager issues an introduction letter to the individual letting them know that they have been selected for case transfer. This letter also details the process and timescales, and explains that any change of circumstances during the transfer process should be reported directly to the DWP.

Step 2. The case transfer process typically takes 13 to 17 weeks and in this time the information regarding the individual's DLA is sent from the DWP to Social Security Scotland.

Step 3. The transfer is made on a like for like basis so no individual will receive less ADP than their current DLA award at the point of transfer. A transitional rate of the daily living component has been introduced to match the low rate of the DLA care component. An individual who meets the special rules for terminal illness immediately before the date of transfer is entitled to the enhanced rate of both daily living and mobility components of ADP.

Step 4. Case Manager makes determination to award ADP and sends the individual a letter which includes details of the award, date of commencement of the award and the cessation date of old award. It also includes dates of payment and how to request re-determination or appeal of the award. It also includes a review form people need to fill in and return, including any supporting information they feel is relevant. Case Managers will also gather supporting information from other sources, if needed, and complete a review of the ADP award under the usual ADP rules. Any accessible vehicle agreements or equipment will also transfer on the same basis and the provider will be notified of the transfer by Social Security Scotland. People will be able to retain the same appointee they had with DWP upon

transfer until further checks are carried out by Social Security Scotland. People are also told to update providers of any passported benefits (i.e. other support they may be eligible for as a result of their disability benefit entitlement).

Policy commitments

The following policy commitments have been made in relation to the case transfer and review processes:

- Correct payment made at the correct time.
- No re-applications.
- No face-to-face DWP-style reassessments.
- Complete as soon as possible while maintaining “safe and secure”.
- Clear communications with individuals.
- Reviews, where required, are right first time.
- Reviews, where required, are undertaken in line with relevant policy commitments².

A logic model setting out how the case transfer and review process is intended to contribute to positive outcomes for individuals is shown at Appendix 2.

Research aims

The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is working well and what needs to be improved with regard to case transfers?
2. What differences in experience can be drawn from clients transferring from different benefits?
3. What are the key differences clients are experiencing in the assessment processes compared to that with DWP and how do they feel about these differences?
4. Has the case transfer process been executed in line with policy principles?
5. What short-, medium-, and longer-term impacts did the case transfer experience have on clients?

Method

The research took a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews. Information sheets, participant invitations, and discussion guides were drafted by Ipsos and sent to the Scottish Government for comment before being finalised. The perspectives and experiences of the following groups were explored:

² Policy commitments regarding the review process more generally can be found in the Disability Assistance Awards and Entitlement [Policy Position Paper](#)

- Clients whose cases had transferred from DWP to Social Security Scotland. Clients were asked about their overall experience of the case transfer process as well as details of different elements including: their understanding of what would happen; their interactions with Social Security Scotland and/or DWP staff; their experiences of the review (where applicable); what they thought worked well; and what they thought could be improved. They were also asked about their interactions with Social Security Scotland, how they felt they had been treated, and the impact their experiences had on their perceptions of Social Security Scotland.
- Social Security Scotland staff involved in the case transfer and review processes. These staff were asked for their perspectives on the client experience as well as the staff experience. They were asked about their role in the case transfer and review elements of the process; what aspects of the process worked well; what challenges they encountered; and what they thought could be improved. They were also asked about the training, support, and decision-making guidance they have access to.

The full discussion guides are provided at Appendix 3.

Client interviews and quotas

We interviewed 48 clients: 14 who had transferred from DLAC to CDP, 19 who had transferred from DLA to ADP, and 15 who had transferred from PIP to ADP. Further demographic details are shown in the table below. Interviews were undertaken remotely by telephone or video call, depending on the client's preference. Interviews lasted around 45 minutes on average. With the participants' permission, interviews were audio recorded for analysis.

Fieldwork with clients was conducted in two phases:

- Phase One focused on clients transferring from DLAC to CDP and from DLA to ADP. Fieldwork for Phase One took place between 3 and 29 March 2023.
- Phase Two focused on clients transferring from PIP to ADP and from DLA to ADP, with a particular focus on those who had been through a review following the transfer of their case. Fieldwork for Phase Two took place between 31 May and 10 July 2023.

The aim of sampling in qualitative research is not to obtain a representative sample of the population of interest, but to obtain a mix of people with a range of different characteristics. This maximises the chance of identifying different issues. In this case, quotas were set on benefit type and circumstances of the case transfer. Minimum age targets were set on DLAC – CDP clients only. Quotas were met on benefit type but not on circumstances of transfer or on DLAC – CDP clients aged over 15.5 at the time of transfer (due to the limitations of the opt-in recruitment approach, see below). However, a range of transfer circumstances were captured within each client group.

The sample reflected a range of different types of health conditions and disabilities including physical and mental health conditions, and people with multiple and complex conditions.

Profile of clients interviewed

| | DLAC – CDP clients interviewed | PIP – ADP clients interviewed | DLA – ADP clients interviewed |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Total interviews per group | 14 | 15 | 19 |
| Circumstances for transfer | | | |
| Award was due to end or due a review | N/A | 10 | 1 |
| Reported a change of circumstances | N/A | 2 | 16 |
| Automatic / client unsure of reason | 14 ³ | 3 | 0 |
| Elected to transfer (DLA only) | N/A | N/A | 2 |
| Age⁴ | | | |
| Aged under 15.5 at time of transfer (CDP clients) | 14 | N/A | N/A |
| Aged 15.5 or over at time of transfer (CDP clients) | 0 | N/A | N/A |
| 16-24 (PIP/DLA clients in Phase Two) | N/A | 1 | 0 |
| 25-34 (PIP/DLA clients in Phase Two) | N/A | 3 | 0 |
| 35-54 (PIP/DLA clients in Phase Two) | N/A | 8 | 8 |

³ Note that several participants reported that the case transfer happened because their child's award was due to be reviewed or because they had reported a change of circumstances, however all these DLAC – CDP transfers were chosen based on age.

⁴ Note that age was collected for CDP clients only in Phase One, and for PIP and DLA clients in Phase Two (age of DLA clients in Phase One was not collected therefore figures will not sum to the total number of interviews among DLA clients).

| | | | |
|---|-----|----|----|
| 55+ (PIP/DLA clients in Phase Two) | N/A | 3 | 3 |
| Unknown | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Rurality | | | |
| Urban | 7 | 13 | 15 |
| Rural | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| Unknown | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Deprivation | | | |
| SIMD 1 or 2 (living in a more deprived area) | 6 | 9 | 7 |
| SIMD 3, 4 or 5 (living in a less deprived area) | 7 | 6 | 12 |
| Unknown | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| Ethnic minority | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Not from an ethnic minority | 12 | 12 | 19 |
| Unknown | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Recruitment of clients

Recruitment was undertaken through Social Security Scotland who emailed invitations and participant information sheets to clients whose transfers had completed. Participants were offered £30 as a 'thank you' for their time. Those who were interested in taking part opted in by emailing or by phoning Ipsos. Ipsos then responded via email or phone. Potential participants were asked a small number of questions to check that they were eligible to take part and whether they fitted the quotas. The questions included:

- A check on the type of benefit they were transferring from/to and the circumstances of the transfer.
- A check that they were now receiving CDP or ADP.
- Whether the transfer was for themselves or for someone else.
- Whether they had undergone a review or not.

- Age (particularly whether CDP clients were under or over the age of 15.5 at the time of their transfer).
- Their postcode (to record area deprivation and rurality).
- Their ethnicity.

To remove barriers to participation, clients were provided with information sheets which included easy read versions. Where requested, advance notice of the types of questions that would be asked was provided. Clients were also offered the option for interviews to be split into smaller parts. Several clients opted for this, but once in the interview they chose to keep going and completed the interview in one go. Interviewers checked in regularly to make sure clients were happy to continue in these instances. In all DLAC cases, interviews were conducted with parents or carers of the child. One DLA client was accompanied by a carer and in another DLA case the carer was interviewed on behalf of the client.

Staff interviews and focus groups

Sixteen members of staff were included in the research. Fieldwork was conducted mostly face-to-face in Social Security Scotland offices in Glasgow in March and June 2023, and involved two depth interviews, one paired depth interview, and four focus groups. Due to staff availability, one focus group with Client Advisors was conducted over video call and one was a hybrid discussion involving some Client Advisors attending in-person and some by video call.

Staff working on the case transfer elements of the process were involved in Phase One of fieldwork. This included Client Advisors who process the cases and are client-facing, Team Managers who oversee the work of Client Advisor, and Team Support Officers who oversee the work of Team Managers and approve cases. The Team Support Officers, Team Managers and more experienced Client Advisors had worked on both ADP and CDP cases, while Client Advisors with less than six months experience had worked only on ADP cases.

Staff working on the review elements of the process were involved in Phase Two of fieldwork. This included Case Managers who are responsible for processing information supplied during the transfer, requesting and obtaining supporting information where necessary, and making decisions on entitlement. It also included Decision Team Managers who manage the Case Managers and are responsible, among other things, for quality assuring their work and keeping them up to date with any changes to policy or processes. All staff taking part in Phase Two of the research had worked on ADP case transfer reviews only.

Data analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data took a systematic, thematic approach that was intended to produce findings that are transparent, methodologically robust, and are clearly grounded in participants' accounts. Our analysis included the following stages:

- After fieldwork was complete, the research team held an analysis meeting, during which we discussed the key themes that had emerged.
- We summarised each interview, using notes and transcripts, into a thematic ‘framework matrix’ produced in Excel. This framework showed individual participants along the rows and themes/discussion guide topics down the columns.
- Each theme/topic was then analysed. Researchers looked at the range of issues that had emerged and at any clear differences between participant groups e.g., between ADP and CDP clients, those reporting a change of circumstances and those due a review.

Limitations of the research

The opt-in approach limited our ability to reach certain groups, for example CDP clients who transferred over the age of 15.5 and DLA/PIP clients who had undergone a review and received an outcome at the time of fieldwork. Although Phase Two fieldwork was intended to focus on those who had been through a review and received an outcome, in the end it included those at different stages of the review element of the process, from waiting to receive a review pack, to having submitted their forms and awaiting an outcome, through to receiving an outcome. Of the 27 PIP and DLA clients interviewed in Phase Two, 15 had received an outcome.

The opt-in approach to recruitment is also likely to have biased the sample to those more willing to take part in research and those more able to deal with administrative tasks (including people with higher levels of literacy; those less severely affected by their own or their child’s condition, whether physical or mental; and those with more resource or means to take part).

Our sample contains no case transfer clients who reported receiving a reduction in award or stopping of an award following a review.

A note on the reporting and reading of qualitative findings

The findings are based on qualitative data so the report avoids the use of quantifying language (including terms such as ‘most’ or ‘a few’) as far as possible, since the purpose of qualitative data is to identify the range of views and experiences on an issue, rather than to estimate prevalence.

For clarity, the findings from the case transfer and review elements of the process have been presented in separate chapters in this report. However, it should be noted that clients did not always draw this distinction between the different elements in how they described the process, particularly when their transfer had been triggered by a change in circumstances. It was therefore not always clear whether a client was talking about an event during the transfer process or an event during the review process. This is highlighted at appropriate points in the report, with only findings which were clearly about transfer or the review covered in the respective chapters.

All case transfer clients are Social Security Scotland clients but for the purposes of distinguishing between clients transferring from different benefits, this is often shortened to 'PIP client' or 'DLA client'.

3. Case transfer process

This chapter focuses on clients' experiences of the case transfer process, from initial awareness that their disability benefit would move from the DWP to Social Security Scotland, through to finding out that the transfer was complete. It draws on evidence from discussions with clients transferring from DLAC, PIP and DLA, and from staff who worked on transfers. The findings are presented in chronological order to reflect clients' experiences as they went through the process. The chapter also covers the relevant short- and medium-term outcomes set out in the logic model.

This report discusses experiences of the transfer and first review with Social Security Scotland separately as these are two distinct processes (see Overview of the case transfer and review processes). However, it is important to note that the clients interviewed for this research did not necessarily see a clear distinction between the two processes, particularly when their transfer had been triggered by a change in circumstances. It was therefore not always clear whether a client was talking about an event during the transfer process or an event during the review process. Only findings which were clearly about the transfer process are covered in this chapter.

Key findings

- Letters from Social Security Scotland were generally felt to be clear, although clients' accounts indicated mixed levels of understanding of the transfer process, particularly around change of circumstances.
- Clients reported that their payment was continuous during the transfer process. However, there were reports of impacts on other benefits and support.
- The transfer was seen as "safe and secure" in the sense of the correct payments being made at the correct time, although some clients felt it had taken too long.
- Communication between DWP and Social Security Scotland and clients was not always viewed as clear and consistent.
- Clients described Social Security Scotland staff as friendly and helpful, although there were frustrations about long waits to get through to speak to staff.
- Clients had a positive, or neutral view towards Social Security Scotland when the transfer was complete, and level of trust in the agency was generally higher than with the DWP.

Findings on initial contact about the transfer

The intended outcomes most relevant to this stage in the process include:

- Individuals understand what is happening and when.
- Individuals know who to contact for help and support.
- Individuals understand what they need to do (when appropriate) or are reassured that they don't need to do anything.
- Individuals do not feel undue stress/anxiety about the transfer and review elements of the process.

Understanding the transfer process

Clients should receive an introduction letter from Social Security Scotland confirming that they have been selected for case transfer and detailing the process and timescales (see [Overview of case transfer and review processes](#)). Given the length of time that had passed between the beginning of the case transfer process and their research interview, it was not always possible to establish how clients had first heard about their transfer. However, among those who did recall this, there were two main routes: by letter from Social Security Scotland, or when contacting the DWP by phone about their benefit (this was usually DLA clients reporting a change of circumstances). Some clients who first heard from the DWP felt “surprised” or “taken aback” and wanted more information.

Some DLA clients had contacted the DWP and asked to transfer to Social Security Scotland because they had heard positive things about ADP and Social Security Scotland and felt that it would be a better alternative to PIP (which they thought they might be moved to at some point). One of these clients indicated that they had contacted the DWP in the hope that this would mean they transferred more quickly.

Social Security Scotland staff also reported instances of clients getting in touch about the case transfer before receiving an introduction letter, after learning about the transfer process elsewhere. In these circumstances, staff felt they had to provide a good deal of reassurance as these individuals had not yet received any written communication explaining the process.

Clients who had remembered receiving an introduction letter from Social Security Scotland generally felt this had been clear and informative. However, not everyone could recall the details included. Points that clients tended to remember included: that Social Security Scotland would be taking over payments; when this would be; and that they did not have to do anything. Receiving this letter seemed to reduce worries for some clients who had first heard about the transfer elsewhere.

Clients drew positive comparisons between the introduction letter from Social Security Scotland and correspondence from, in general, the DWP. They noted that the letter was written in plain English and that the pink and purple colours in the logo and in the ‘dignity, fairness, respect’ tagline made Social Security Scotland seem more approachable.

“...their [Social Security Scotland] logos and everything are quite bright and welcoming... the DWP seems very kind of tax like, very money orientated... Whereas this one seems a lot more personal to the fact that you need something to help your family.” (DLAC client)

Staff also felt that the introduction letter from Social Security Scotland was informative, but they recognised that not all clients fully understand the information provided. For example, Social Security Scotland receives queries about issues such as payment dates, which are mentioned in the letter. Staff suggested that the length of the letter makes it difficult for some clients to pick out important information.

A few clients reported they had not received an introduction letter from Social Security Scotland. A staff member indicated that client information held by the DWP (such as an address) can be out of date which means some clients do not get an introduction letter and only become aware of the transfer some time during the process or once it has happened. In these cases, staff suggested that clients were generally content because their payments had continued as normal. However, one client suggested that this had contributed to them feeling “helpless” and “in limbo” about the process because they did not know how long it would take. However, other clients also expressed anxiety about the process despite receiving initial communication.

In terms of improving initial communication, one client suggested it would have been helpful if the DWP had explained what would happen during the transfer as they did not have any experience of Social Security Scotland.

Clients reporting a change of circumstances were annoyed that they had to wait until the transfer was complete before their award could be reviewed. This was because, in most cases, the reason for reporting a change was because their health condition had worsened and they expected their entitlement to increase.

Staff received calls about this and described having to provide reassurance that payments would be backdated (although not all staff were aware of guidance on backdating, or were confident it was understood across the agency. This is discussed further in [Chapter 6. Staff experiences of the case transfer and review processes](#)).

Client frustration around reporting a change of circumstances was exacerbated by what they perceived as miscommunication between the DWP and Social Security Scotland. For example, a DLA client who informed the DWP that their condition had changed was told that they would need to apply for PIP, even though they could not do this as they lived in Scotland. Another DLA client said that they told the DWP in 2021 that their condition had worsened but was advised to wait to until the transfer to Social Security Scotland to report this. However, the transfer did not happen until 2023 and Social Security Scotland would not take the information in the meantime either.

Staff were also aware that the DWP had directed client queries regarding a change of circumstances to Social Security Scotland, despite the latter not being able to

deal with this until the transfer is complete. However, it was suggested that guidance on this point was not clear; one Social Security Scotland staff member said that their colleagues had been taking change of circumstances over the phone which the staff member understood was not in line with policy. Another staff member felt that the client experience could be improved if Social Security Scotland were able to accept a change of circumstances from the DWP, rather than having to process this for the first time during the review.

Where a change of circumstances happens during a transfer, staff suggested that clients generally do not know who they should report this to. Some clients indicated they had reported changes (other than those that had triggered the transfer) to Social Security Scotland, however, it was not clear during interviews whether this occurred during the transfer or review, which was linked to clients not seeing a distinction between the two processes.

Initial feelings about the process

Some clients were more positive than others about the prospect of their benefit being transferred from the DWP to Social Security Scotland. Where clients felt particularly positive, they linked this with negative experiences of dealing with the DWP and a hope or expectation (sometimes grounded in what they had already heard from others) of being treated better by Social Security Scotland.

“...from what I’ve heard about their ethics that they were going to use, I just felt that it would be a better process” (PIP client)

“Hopeful, is probably the word I would use to describe it. Hoping that it wouldn’t be the same as dealing with the DLA [DWP], which was non communicative.” (DLA client)

Where clients reported more negative initial feelings about the prospect of the transfer, this tended to be linked to concerns about what the process would be like, or the about the prospect of change in general, rather than negative views of Social Security Scotland. Clients were worried about how long the process would take, whether they would have to be reassessed and complete paperwork, and about the possibility their benefit would be reduced or stopped entirely.

“I was a bit worried that they [child] might have to be reassessed and that that might be a lengthy process and that he might get a different amount [of benefit]” (DLAC client)

Staff had a perception that DLA clients, in particular, are looking for reassurance about the process because they tend to have been on that benefit for many years and are not used to changes to it.

Awareness of help and support

Clients recalled that the introduction letter from Social Security Scotland included sources of further information and support. However, they had not generally sought this out as they felt the information provided in the introduction letter was enough. One exception was a client who mentioned that they could not find a phone number to speak to anyone directly about the transfer process. Another client, who said that

they had not received an introduction letter, had contacted Citizens Advice Scotland for support.

However, some clients did contact Social Security Scotland or the DWP during the transfer. This is discussed in the next section.

Findings on experiences during the transfer process

The intended outcomes relevant to this stage in the process include:

- Individuals understand what is happening and when.
- Individuals feel throughout that the transfer is safe and secure (i.e. the right amount is paid on time).
- Individuals know who to contact for help and support.
- Individuals understand what they need to do (when appropriate) or are reassured that they don't need to do anything.
- Individuals do not feel undue stress/anxiety about the transfer and review elements of the process.
- Experience of the process is in line with dignity, fairness and respect.

Overview of experiences of communication from Social Security Scotland and the DWP

Staff usually do not have to contact clients during the case transfer process, but this may happen in limited circumstances such as to confirm bank details or an address. Staff did not think clients generally minded this type of contact, as they are keen for their benefit to continue. However, staff felt there were some circumstances in which clients did not appreciate being contacted. For example, when they were asking for information that had not previously been required by the DWP, such as evidence of a child's nationality.

"It's embarrassing having to contact the client about this when they've been with [the] DWP for years and years and years, and we've told them that this will be a seamless process – so they're asking 'why is this an issue now?'" (Staff)

It was therefore uncommon for clients to report being contacted by Social Security Scotland during their transfer. There was a call from clients for regular progress updates from Social Security Scotland and/or a tracking system where clients could check progress themselves. This would help reduce anxiety and uncertainty about whether the transfer was progressing. Where a client reported receiving pro-active updates from Social Security Scotland (which was exceptional), they very much appreciated this.

Some clients had contacted Social Security Scotland themselves to request updates on their transfer or on their change of circumstances (which reflects some confusion about that process, as discussed earlier). Clients who had initiated contact themselves reported long waits to get through to Social Security Scotland by phone or through webchat. Long waits caused particular issues for clients whose

ability to make calls is affected by their condition or treatment (for example, where it is dependent on their medication cycle), and for those who have limited time during the working day. Clients felt it would be helpful if the call holding system provided clients with an indication of the queue length and likely wait times.

“A couple of times I tried to phone, and it was 20 minutes, half an hour and my medication kicked in and I couldn’t wait any longer, I had to go to sleep.” (DLA client)

In spite of frustrations around wait times to speak to staff, clients were very positive about their interactions with Social Security Scotland staff who were described as friendly and helpful. At times this was contrasted with experiences of contacting the DWP.

“The majority of the time when I’ve gotten through to someone at Social Security Scotland they really listen and they are non-judgmental. Sometimes with the Department for Work and Pensions their phone manner is not as great.” (DLAC client)

None of the clients interviewed for this study mentioned being contacted by the DWP in relation to their disability benefit during their transfer. However, some clients reported receiving letters from them in error to say that their Carer’s Allowance had been or would be stopped (the impact of which is discussed later in this chapter).

In addition to the perceived miscommunication between the DWP and Social Security Scotland on change of circumstances (discussed earlier in this chapter), one client reported that there had been a communication error regarding completion of the transfer; the DWP had told them their child’s case had been transferred but they found out this was not the case when they contacted Social Security Scotland. The frustrated client then had to get back in touch with the DWP.

Feelings during the process

Clients experienced the transfer process as “safe and secure” in the sense that those interviewed did not report any issues with their DLA, DLAC or PIP or payment during the transfer. That said, staff were aware of some payment issues, (discussed in [6. Staff experiences of the case transfer and review processes](#)). While clients did not report missing out on any payments, some clients were anxious about a change in their payment day from Tuesdays to Wednesdays, including one client who felt they had lost a day’s payment without explanation.

However, while the transfer process had been experienced as ‘safe and secure’ in terms of the benefits that were transferred, clients did report issues with other benefits or support. For example, there were cases where the DWP had stopped, or said they were going to stop, parents’ Carer’s Allowance because they were no longer in receipt of DLAC.

“I got a letter from the Department of Work and Pensions to tell me that my Carer’s Allowance was due to stop...when I phoned them, they were like, ‘oh no, it is fine, we can see in the background that it

is going to move over to Scotland, we just haven't updated the system yet' but you can imagine, I was like, 'oh my God, they can't stop my Carer's Allowance'. I'm dependent on that money to pay for electricity and things, because I can't work full time." (DLAC client)

Some clients also reported issues with Motability vehicles and Blue Badges relating to their case transfer. Staff were also aware of these issues (discussed in the next chapter). For example, one client noted that, because they did not have a letter confirming the date that Social Security Scotland would begin paying CDP, their Local Authority could not approve an application for a Blue Badge because it looked as if their entitlement had ended when the DWP stopped paying DLAC. Another client described how they were not able to renew their Motability vehicle during the transfer, which in turn had affected their "faith" in Social Security Scotland.

"I applied for a new vehicle and Motability turned round and said that Social Security Scotland had suspended my payment. So, I was on the phone to them, and they were basically saying, 'no, it is fine at our end'. But I went back to Motability and they tried it again, it wasn't going through. So, it took over a week and a half to try and sort out. In that time, I couldn't order a car and I was desperate for a car. So, that part wasn't a success, it was a very stressful time." (DLA client)

Overall, there were two contrasting experiences when it comes to how clients felt during the transfer process. One group of clients did not report any points of concern during the transfer. This tended to be those who did not experience any issues during the transfer and felt that there had been enough communication from Social Security Scotland to inform them of what to expect. On the other hand, clients who felt they had not been kept up to date about the progress of their transfer, or who had experienced issues with other benefit payments, reported feeling anxious and worried.

Findings on completing the transfer

The intended outcomes relevant to this stage in the process include:

- Individuals understand what is happening and when.
- Individuals understand what they need to do (when appropriate) or are reassured that they don't need to do anything.

Understanding the transfer outcomes and next steps

Once the transfer is complete, clients should receive a transfer outcome letter from Social Security Scotland with details of their ADP or CDP award and next steps. Some clients had first found out that their transfer was complete when they noticed the name on payments on their bank statement had changed. It was not always clear whether these clients had received an outcome letter.

Some clients noted that the outcome letter contained information about informing other agencies about the change to ADP or CDP. However, they were not always

clear on the process for doing this. One client commented that they would have preferred to know what they definitely did, or did not, have to do in this regard. Clients who had informed other agencies had not generally experienced issues around this. However, some clients felt that it should not be their responsibility.

“...the council don’t care whether or not I’m getting PIP or Adult Disability Payment, so I found that quite arrogant and quite annoying, because I’m not going to take time trying to get through to all these telling them when it is not even important...they [Social Security Scotland] should be telling the relevant agencies if it is appropriate, don’t be putting it on to disabled people and asking them to do it.” (PIP client)

Feelings once the transfer has concluded

Clients reported feeling positive about completion of the transfer, reflecting general relief that the process was complete, and/or relief that they no longer had to deal with the DWP. Those whose transfer was triggered by a change of circumstances were pleased that completion of the transfer represented a step forward towards their change of circumstances being considered and, they hoped, receiving increased benefit support.

“Relief. Pure relief because I knew everything had been sorted. Nothing to worry about.” (PIP client)

Clients were not always clear how long their transfer had taken: some could not recall whether or when they had received the initial communication about the process, others did not distinguish between the transfer and review elements. Among those who were reasonably clear that it had taken three or four months, there were different views on whether or not this was an acceptable length of time. Some (DLA clients in particular) felt that this was too long, whilst others were content with this, or even felt that it had seemed a quick process. DLA clients’ unhappiness was related to the delay in their change of circumstances being reviewed (which could only happen once the transfer was complete).

Where clients were content with the length of the transfer, the main reasons were: that they felt it had been a smooth process and they had continued to receive their payment throughout; that they understood Social Security Scotland was dealing with a new process so gave them some leeway even if there were problems; or that they were used to waiting a long time for benefit issues to be dealt with and had therefore not expected it to be a particularly quick process. PIP clients tended to be very positive about their experience of the transfer, which seemed to reflect their negative experience of the DWP.

Overall impact of the transfer process on views of Social Security Scotland

The intended outcome relevant to this section is:

- Individuals develop a positive relationship with Social Security Scotland

Before starting the case transfer process, clients generally reported having either a positive or neutral view of Social Security Scotland. Those who were aware of Social Security Scotland before beginning the case transfer process had heard of them via media coverage, through claiming other benefits with them, or from acquaintances who worked there. These clients tended to have a positive initial impression of Social Security Scotland. More generally, clients were positive about the principle of devolving benefits to a Scottish agency: this was a view expressed both by clients who were aware of Social Security Scotland before their transfer and those who were not. Client views on Social Security Scotland generally did not change from positive or neutral over the course of the transfer process. However, one client noted that their level of trust in Social Security Scotland had decreased slightly due to a lack of updates on progress.

All clients who were asked indicated that they were positive or neutral about having moved to ADP or CDP and being with Social Security Scotland. DLA clients tended to use more positive, emotive language in expressing how the transfer had impacted them – as shown in the following quote.

“I feel that I’m less likely to suddenly get a letter through the door saying it is all going to stop...they were really good and treated me like a human being, which is great, and I’ve never had that...a feeling of being a person when I’ve spoken to the DWP.” (DLA client)

Amongst clients who had not yet had a review, there was cautious trust in Social Security Scotland. The reasons mostly relate to a contrast in experiences with the DWP. These included: a sense that the transfer had gone smoothly; that staff are friendly and helpful, and therefore easy to contact; that the Social Security Scotland does what it says it will; support for the devolution of disability benefits in principle; a feeling that benefits are less likely to be stopped; and that there is greater prospect of being awarded further support. Overall, Social Security Scotland was viewed as much more person-centred than the DWP.

“...they [Social Security Scotland] have always been straight up, upfront, forthright, been very, very, helpful and if things are going wrong, they will go out and help you, and tell you what has gone wrong and why it has gone wrong, and they speak plain English...When they say they’re going to do something, they do it.” (DLAC client)

Clients who were more neutral tended to say that they did not feel any different following the transfer, that they felt that their new benefit was ‘just the same thing with a different name’, or that they were happy as long as their benefit payment continued.

Case transfer policy commitments

This chapter concludes with a summary of experiences in relation to the policy commitments outlined in the logic model.

| Policy commitment | Summary of client experiences |
|--|---|
| Correct payment made at the correct time | <p>No clients reported that their disability benefit payment was disrupted during the transfer process.</p> <p>However, there was a report of Carer's Allowance being temporarily stopped by the DWP because the client was no longer in receipt of DLAC (and other cases where clients received notification that it would be stopped although they were able to sort out the issue before this happened).</p> |
| No re-applications | Clients were relieved that this would not be required as part of the transfer to Social Security Scotland. |
| No face-to-face DWP reassessments | No clients reported having a face-to-face DWP reassessment |
| Complete as soon as possible while maintaining "safe and secure" | The transfer was seen as "safe and secure" in the sense of the correct payments being made at the correct time although some clients felt it had taken too long. |
| Clear communications with individuals | <p>Letters from Social Security Scotland were generally felt to be clear, although clients' accounts indicated mixed levels of understanding of the transfer process, particularly around change of circumstances.</p> <p>Communication between the DWP and Social Security Scotland and clients was not always viewed as clear and consistent.</p> |

4. Review process

This chapter focuses on clients' experiences of the review process after case transfer. It draws on evidence from discussions with clients previously in receipt of PIP and DLA who have been through a review following their transfer and staff who have worked on case transfer reviews. The findings are presented in chronological order to reflect clients' experiences as they went through the process. They are also presented in relation to the relevant short- and medium-term outcomes in the logic model; these are highlighted throughout the chapter where relevant.

Key findings:

- Clients reported that their payment was continuous during the review process.
- Clients were reassured and relieved that they would not have to undergo a face-to-face assessment.
- Clients' experiences of the review process varied depending on the circumstances of their transfer from the DWP (e.g. those reporting a change of circumstances found the forms more tiresome to complete than those who were due a review).
- Those who received an outcome that met or exceeded their expectations felt the decision was right and that their case had been considered fairly.
- Those who did not receive the outcome they had hoped for felt disappointed. While some acknowledged that the decision was nonetheless fair, others felt that their circumstances had not been fully considered.
- Clients described the review process as easier than they thought it would be, with Social Security Scotland staff widely viewed as helpful, friendly and reassuring.
- However, clients still felt worried about the process and the outcome.
- Where there were issues (e.g. lack of clarity around timescales, uncertainty over backdating payments, communication errors or knock-on impacts on other benefits) this exacerbated feelings of stress and anxiety.

Initial contact about the review

The intended outcomes most relevant to this stage in the process include:

- Individuals understand what happens next.
- Individuals know who to contact for help and support.
- Individuals do not feel undue stress/anxiety about the review element of the process.

Understanding what happens next

Clients typically reported hearing about the review by letter, which they received around the time that the transfer of their case was complete. Their understanding of what the review would involve once they received the initial letter was mixed. In

general, clients felt that the letter contained plenty of information and clearly explained what would happen next. However, this was not a universal view; in other cases clients felt the review process was not explained clearly. Some clients relied on someone else to help them understand the information, such as a carer or welfare rights officer.

“It went through the whole thing saying the review is coming up, what is a review, it tells you how a review works, and what affects other benefits, so there was plenty information on what was going to happen.” (PIP client)

“I wasn’t sure what it would involve [...] Social Security Scotland didn’t explain things very well.” (DLA client)

Staff also noted that the initial letters sent to clients could cause confusion. For instance, they described how clients undergoing a scheduled review (having transferred because they were due a review, see appendix 1 for a definition) would be sent a declaration form and a change of circumstances form. Due to not understanding which form they should complete, some clients would complete both; declaring no change on one form, while also reporting small changes on another. This caused delays while staff processed the slightly conflicting information provided. This was described as a fairly common occurrence.

Such misunderstandings were exacerbated in cases where clients said that they had been sent the wrong forms initially. Among clients interviewed for this research, this affected those transferring from DLA to ADP who said they had submitted the forms sent to them, but were subsequently told that they should have instead completed a change of circumstances form (in one case) or a transfer review form (in another case). These communication issues are explored further in the communication section of this chapter.

A general view among staff was that the initial letter from Social Security Scotland about the review is lengthy and confusing to clients, prompting them to contact them for clarity.

“Clients receive extensive communication, but it can be overwhelming for them so it’s not always clear or fully read.” (Staff)

Knowing who to contact for help and support

Clients did not have much recollection of who to contact for help and support, although they assumed that the letter would have contained some guidance on this. However, it should be noted that for some clients it was difficult to recall details of what the initial communications contained, given the time that had passed between them first hearing about the review and being interviewed for this research.

As mentioned above, some clients relied on existing support networks (such as carers or welfare support officers) for help. However, others noted the offer from Social Security Scotland to have local delivery staff visit their homes to help them complete the forms. Clients who took up this offer spoke very positively about it and

were appreciative of the support, indicating that they would have otherwise struggled to complete the forms.

“There is no way I would have been able to tackle that booklet on my own.” (DLA client)

How clients felt about the review element of the process

Some clients described feeling worried when they received communication about the review, which was underpinned by a general concern that any review held the possibility of a payment being stopped. However, there was also a sense of hope that the review experience would be better with Social Security Scotland than it had been with the DWP.

“[I felt] okay I suppose, obviously a little anxious because with the DWP they were very un-trusting so it always felt like it was an uphill battle. I know [Social Security Scotland] had said it would be done with more fairness and things like that but it was still kind of in the back of your head, ‘oh what if I lose this’.” (PIP client)

Clients generally viewed Social Security Scotland more favourably than the DWP, noting their stated commitment to dignity, fairness and respect in the letters. They were also reassured that their payments would be continuous throughout the review process, which they picked up from the letter or after getting in touch with Social Security Scotland to check details about their review. This would otherwise have been a source of anxiety for them.

“I was reassured from [Social Security Scotland], that I wouldn’t lose any payments while this was all [happening] ... They just went through everything that I got and they told me basically you will not lose payments, we will get this reviewed and we will get it sorted ASAP, and I just felt at ease then.” (PIP client)

Clients who were transferring from DLA to ADP tended to express greater uncertainty about the review process and what to expect, as many had been on indefinite awards and had not had a review for a long time (or ever). Related to this, there was a sense of surprise and apprehension about the size of the change of circumstances form; one client described feeling “gobsmacked” by the length of it.

“When I got the form, I was a bit apprehensive about it as it was so thick. And I wasn’t sure what was relevant.” (DLA client)

Going through the review process

The intended outcomes most relevant to this stage in the process include:

- Individuals have a positive experience of the review process.
- Clients know what is happening and when.

Experiences of the review process

Clients' experiences of going through the review varied depending on the circumstances of their transfer from the DWP (i.e. whether they transferred because they were due a review or because they reported a change of circumstance).

Completing the forms

Clients who had transferred because they were due a review appreciated the fact that Social Security Scotland had a good deal of information about their award already, meaning they only had to confirm that the information was correct or notify them of any changes. While this was viewed as a positive aspect of the review by clients, staff identified this as a key factor in the time it takes to process case transfer reviews. Reviews for PIP clients were felt to take longer than DLA reviews, due to the time needed to process existing information attached to the case file that had been transferred over from the DWP. However, PIP clients did not raise the processing time as an issue from their perspective.

"I ticked the boxes saying nothing had changed [...] I thought there might have been a phone call. [It was] obviously a lot easier than the first [review with the DWP]." (PIP client)

"The review of information is really hefty work." (Staff)

Clients whose case had transferred because they reported a change of circumstances had a different perspective on the form they received, which was commonly described as "lengthy", "stressful" and "tiresome" to complete. One client felt that the same questions were being asked in different ways to try and catch them out or "trick" them in order to stop the payment. This worry was based on past experiences with the DWP where they had been scared to say the "wrong thing".

For those with conditions that affect their mobility, a particular challenge was getting copies of medical records as they would have to travel to their GP surgery to collect them. It was also mentioned that an online option for the form would have made the process more accessible for those with certain disabilities who find writing by hand difficult.

"The form is very clear, easy to read, and there is plenty of room for writing things in. But I found the lack of an online version quite a problem for me with my particular disability." (DLA client)

Timescales

As highlighted above, among PIP clients (including those who were due a scheduled review and those who had reported a change of circumstances) the timescales for the review appeared to be either in line with expectations or quicker than expected.

"I was very surprised at how short it was, then I didn't think too much about it. (PIP client)

DLA clients who had reported a change of circumstances viewed the timescales differently. Rather than starting from the time they were first contacted about a review, they saw the review process as starting from the time they first notified the DWP of the change and ending with the outcome given by Social Security Scotland. The timescales for this ranged from six months to a year for some clients and, as such, were viewed more negatively. The wait caused these clients to feel anxious and stressed; for one client who was awaiting an outcome at the time of interview, the wait was so difficult that they had considered withdrawing their case altogether.

Client: “I don’t [have confidence in the process] because I’ve spoken to other autistic people who have said it’s been over a year, and they have not heard anything.”

Client’s Carer: “She’s come very close to saying she can’t cope with it and just withdrawing.” (DLA client, interviewed with carer)

PIP clients who had reported a change in circumstances seemed less concerned about the overall time taken to process the transfer and review. Their relief about the review process being so much easier than they had expected (based on their experiences or expectations of a DWP review) may have overcome concerns about the waiting time that they might otherwise have had.

Timescale issues were echoed in discussions with staff; they highlighted the backlog of cases as a challenge which was causing them frustration as well as clients. The time needed to work through the backlog was affected by the need, in some cases, to collect supporting information from professionals. Staff reported seeing an increase in the number of unscheduled review calls from clients seeking an update on their case (see Appendix 1 for a definition of unscheduled review). They perceived this to be a result of clients not distinguishing between the case transfer and review elements of the process.

“[Clients] are not fully aware of the process and just see it as ‘well I started transferring in November and it’s now May’. They don’t see transfer and review as two separate entities.” (Staff)

Where clients had a Motability lease or other benefits/support to manage, the wait for their review to be completed caused further frustration and worry as they experienced knock-on impacts to these other benefits. Clients mentioned delays in getting access to cars, bus passes and housing benefit while they waited for an outcome of their review. One client, whose Motability lease renewal was overdue, described being constantly contacted by the garage to resolve the issue which caused ongoing stress.

“[It] was really frustrating as I just needed to phone the garage. It was really stressful [as] the car is a massive part of my life”. (PIP client)

Staff had experience of this too, noting that Social Security Scotland transfer letters were not being accepted by Local Authorities or Motability providers as evidence of

someone being in receipt of disability benefits. In some of these cases, staff said they would bring reviews forward to prevent clients from missing out on other support. However, as outlined above, evidence from client interviews suggests that in other cases clients experienced delays or missed out on other support.

Communication with Social Security Scotland

Clients typically reported having at least some direct communication with Social Security Scotland during the review process, either due to the client contacting them for an update or clarification on their case, or (less commonly mentioned) due to Social Security Scotland contacting them for more information.

The most common reasons that clients cited for getting in touch with Social Security Scotland were to find out what was happening with their case or to seek clarity on the review process (for example, to check whether or not there would be a face-to-face assessment). The perspective of staff was that clients do not understand the review process and so they receive a lot of ad hoc queries as a result of that. This was not felt to be limited to a particular client group. Social Security Scotland staff were consistently described as “friendly”, “helpful”, “polite” and “easy to deal with”. Clients also highlighted the reassurance they felt after querying their case with staff.

“When I received the [review] letter, I called [Social Security Scotland] up, and I asked them about it, and they were saying, ‘right, it is nothing to worry about, we are going to do this, we are going to do that. We will go through your claim [sic] and we will look at everything that is on it [and] if anything needs added’, she goes, ‘but you will not be left out’, as in there is nothing that they are going to be doing that I will not know about. So, that was a relief.” (PIP client)

In one case, a client recalled Social Security Staff not being able to resolve their query immediately but calling back at an agreed time. This was reassuring to the client and made them feel that staff were reliable, even if they were not able to answer their query right away.

“The man said he’d call me back and he did. Gave a date and time and did call back then. I found that really helpful – at least I knew that I would be contacted and knew that my benefit wasn’t going to get messed up.” (PIP client)

A more exceptional experience with Social Security Scotland was described by a client who had several interactions with staff over the course of their review. They felt that information was not being recorded during these interactions as they were having to repeat the same things on different calls. As a result, the client did not feel listened to by Social Security Scotland.

While clients generally reported positive interactions with Social Security Scotland staff, some broader communication issues were highlighted. As mentioned above, where clients received the wrong forms from Social Security Scotland initially this caused some confusion which was further exacerbated when staff did not know

which form they should complete or when they provided contradictory answers. Clients also said they felt worried when they subsequently received letters saying that their payment was going to stop due to their forms not being submitted. These letters were sent despite Social Security Scotland being aware that clients had received the wrong forms or had not been able to submit their forms yet (e.g. because they were waiting for an appointment with local delivery staff).

“I got a letter saying ‘suspending payments’ in bold which was a bit scary and I was a bit cross about it.” (DLA client)

Clients who had experienced this contacted Social Security Scotland to check what was happening. While they reported that staff were helpful and reassured them that they could ignore the letters which had been sent automatically in error, it nevertheless caused additional stress and worry; prompting one client to wonder whether payments could be automatically stopped in error too.

“[My Aunt] was sitting in her wee house worrying [about her payment being suspended] and it’s not fair.” (DLA client, interviewed with carer)

Another issue raised was a lack of communication from Social Security Scotland on the progress of reviews, which made clients feel like they had to chase for updates or wait anxiously. In the absence of updates, clients commonly reported ongoing stress, frustration and worry. These feelings were heightened among those who experienced difficulties with Motability or other benefits while awaiting an outcome (as highlighted above), which impacted negatively on their view of Social Security Scotland.

Staff also felt there was a general lack of updates from Social Security Scotland during the review process, which they perceived to be causing clients stress and anxiety.

“[Clients] do get stressed and anxious about the transfer process because of the lack of communication.” (Staff)

Consultations

Clients were asked if they had had a consultation as part of their review. These would involve a pre-scheduled discussion with a practitioner from Social Security Scotland about their needs.

Most clients interviewed said they had not had a consultation as part of their review. On the prospect of having one, feelings were mixed; one view was that it would not be anything to worry about, while another was that it might cause added stress.

“[Having a consultation] would have stressed me out more I think because everything I was going through anyway just the thought and just having to like having to explain yourself over and over and over again.” (DLA client)

A client who did have a consultation indicated that it was not a long conversation, and that the person they spoke to was “nice”. She felt that she was “given the opportunity to say things” and “didn’t feel hassled”.

Knowing what is happening and when

For those not reporting a change of circumstances, the review process was generally considered to be clear. Clients transferring from PIP to ADP were, in general, more likely to view the process positively, describing it as “easy”, “uncomplicated” and “streamlined”. One PIP client, upon realising that the review would be conducted by Social Security Scotland rather than the DWP, stated that they expected a more “streamlined [and] respectful process”.

However, even among those who felt the process was straightforward, there were comments about a lack of clarity around timescales. Clients said they felt uncertain about how long it would take to receive an outcome after completing the forms, which in turn contributed to anxiety about the outcome.

“Not knowing how long it would take [there was] just that little bit of anxiety that I might not fit their criteria.” (PIP client)

Staff agreed that there was a lack of clarity for clients around the timescales for reviews. In their view, clients who had reported a change of circumstances expected their cases to be dealt with straight away. They thought that these expectations were not effectively managed due to a lack of understanding among staff about how long the case transfer and review elements might take.

“These clients are waiting quite a length of time, and I don’t think the communication is particularly clear to them, and I think when they are getting on the phone to us, Client Advisors are not clear on the case transfer either. That’s not good because [clients] are getting different answers, and that is making them more upset and can make them stressed, and we are obviously trying to avoid [that].” (Staff)

In particular, clients were unclear about the backdating of payments where a change of circumstances had been reported to the DWP. Some said they had waited between six months to a year since first reporting the change, so they felt it was unfair that the payments were not backdated to when they had initially contacted the DWP about the change.

“Because I’ve transferred over to the Scottish Adult [ADP], they can only backdate my money that I’m due [from] the start of my review, which I found quite unfair. I have been waiting for this to take place and I have waited and I’ve waited and I’ve waited.” (DLA client)

Staff also highlighted that the backdating of payments was a common client query and one which they did not feel adequately equipped to answer due to it being a difficult thing to explain and due to a lack of guidance around it.

“[Clients] think it will go back to the date when they reported their change to the DWP and aren’t aware of this kind of eligibility checking.⁵ Letters are sent to them, but it is obviously not very clear, so we are getting a lot of phone calls and complaints about that, because the client is expecting backdated payments from then.” (Staff)

“It is quite a hard thing for us to explain, and I think the staff struggle with it as well.” (Staff)

Receiving the outcome

The intended outcomes relevant to this stage in the process include:

- Individuals feel that decision-making is fair and transparent.
- The right decision is made first time by Social Security Scotland.
- Individuals feel treated with dignity, fairness and respect by Social Security Scotland.

Fair, transparent, and correct decision-making

Clients’ views on the outcome were primarily determined by whether or not the decision met or exceeded their expectations. It should be noted that no clients interviewed for this research reported receiving a reduction or loss of award following their review.

Where nothing changed with a clients’ award (and they were expecting this) or where an award was increased, feelings about the outcome were generally positive. There was a broad perception that Social Security Scotland had considered their needs, conducted the review fairly and made the right decision first time.

“It made me reassured and not doubting what’s happening. I have 100% confidence in Social Security Scotland to make the right decision. As soon as I told them, they took it all on board. Nothing was left out and it happened quickly.” (PIP client)

There was also a clear sense of relief among this group, who felt able to move on with their lives, secure in the knowledge that their payments would continue and that their situation had been “recognised” by Social Security Scotland. One client said the outcome had boosted their spirits and enabled them to move forward with their plans, as the process had not taken as much energy as they thought it might have.

“It actually spurred me on to apply for University [...] that I would say is thanks to the review actually [and] me having enough energy,

⁵ Refers to the backward test, which is the amount of time an individual must have met the conditions of entitlement for a particular rate of a component of ADP. See [information on the backwards and forwards tests for ADP](#).

because I wasn't put through a meat grinder over the course of the process." (PIP client)

Where nothing changed with an award but they had hoped for an increase, clients expressed feelings of disappointment. They were less likely to feel that Social Security Scotland had considered their circumstances or that the decision was fair. Where other forms of support or communication about other benefits had been impacted during the review process, this added further to their sense of frustration.

"I need more help now. I put down everything on the form but I felt like they didn't care." (DLA client)

In one case, a client did not feel that the right decision had been made or that Social Security Scotland had considered their circumstances fairly. They said that the outcome letter did not reflect what they had told staff during the review about the changes in their condition. They planned to appeal the decision.

Those who had submitted their review forms but had not yet received an outcome reported a mix of feelings, including worry that their award might be reduced or taken away but also hope that Social Security Scotland would consider their needs and take decisions appropriately. This hope was grounded in their positive interactions with staff throughout the review process.

However, problems arising during the review processes tended to reduce the level of trust clients had in Social Security Scotland to make the right decision. These issues, as highlighted above, included:

- A lack of clarity around timescales for the review.
- Uncertainty over whether the payment would be backdated.
- Communication errors (e.g. having been sent the wrong form initially).
- Other benefit payments/support being held up while awaiting an outcome.

Dignity, fairness and respect

As outlined earlier, clients noted Social Security Scotland's stated commitment to the principles of dignity, fairness and respect. Although they identified some issues with the review process, discussed above, they did feel that they had been treated better than they had been previously by the DWP.

PIP clients considered the process to be easier and more coordinated than they had expected it to be, given negative perceptions or experiences of the DWP reviews.

"I was always nervous because the DWP just has a very bad reputation for handling people's claims [sic] and how they treat people, and I haven't received it personally, but I have felt different about Social Security Scotland, because I definitely felt a greater sense, I suppose, of respect and fairness about it." (PIP client)

In particular, there was a strong sense of relief among clients that face-to-face assessments would not be required. This was an aspect of the DWP reviews that they described as "harrowing" and "daunting".

Overall, there was a perception among PIP and DLA clients that Social Security Scotland is an easier agency to deal with than the DWP and that they take a more person-centred approach.

“I feel that someone’s looking after me.” (DLA client)

Policy commitments in relation to the review process

This chapter concludes with a summary of clients’ experiences of the review process in relation to the policy commitments outlined in the logic model.

| Policy commitment | Summary of client experiences in relation to reviews |
|---|--|
| Correct payment made at the correct time | No clients said that their payment was disrupted during the review process. |
| No face-to-face DWP reassessments | Clients were reassured and relieved that this would not be required as part of reviews with Social Security Scotland. No-one reported having a face-to-face DWP reassessment since the start of their case transfer. |
| Clear communications with individuals | There were mixed views about the initial review letter: some felt it clearly explained what was going to happen while others felt it did not. Clients were generally positive about their interactions with Social Security Scotland staff. However, a lack of updates on the progress of their review increased clients’ worry and stress about the outcome. |
| Reviews, where required, are right first time | It was not within the remit of this research to comment on whether decisions were right first time or not. The research can only comment on client perceptions of the decision. |

Those who received an outcome that met or exceeded their expectations felt the decision was right. Those who did not receive an outcome they had hoped for felt disappointed; while some acknowledged that the decision was fair, others did not think that their circumstances had not been fully considered.

Reviews, where required, are undertaken in line with relevant policy commitments (e.g. decisions will be person-centred, reviews will be light-touch and, as far as possible, minimise stress)⁶

Clients described the review process as easier than they thought it would be. Social Security Scotland staff were widely viewed as helpful, friendly and reassuring. However, clients still felt worried about the process and, where there were issues (e.g. lack of clarity around timescales, uncertainty over backdating payments, communication errors or knock-on impacts on other benefits/support), this exacerbated feelings of stress and anxiety.

⁶ Policy commitments regarding the review process more generally can be found in the [Disability Assistance Awards and Entitlement Policy Position Paper](#)

5. Case transfer and longer term impacts

This chapter focuses on the longer-term impacts of the case transfer and review processes for clients previously in receipt of DLAC, PIP and DLA. Specifically, it summarises clients' views of Social Security Scotland and how – if at all – the transfer and review processes impacted on those views. It also explores trust in Social Security Scotland and how clients felt about transferring to a benefit delivered by them rather than the DWP.

Note that two of the six long-term outcomes in the logic model were outwith the remit of the research. “There is reduced stigma around illness and disability” was not explored as this is a longer-term outcome better explored through or in combination with other aspects of policy change. “The right decision is made first time by Social Security Scotland” was not explored as this is an issue better evidenced by quality assurance data and outcomes of appeals and re-determinations.

Findings on the four long-term outcomes that we explored are discussed below.

Key findings

- Positive experiences of dealing with staff, including their perceived reliability led to client trust in Social Security Scotland.
- Clients were positive overall about the tone, style and content of communications they received from Social Security Scotland compared with the DWP. However, some felt there was insufficient communication particularly in relation to progress/likely timescales. This meant they had to chase for updates on their case transfer and/or review.
- Clients generally felt that they had been treated with dignity, fairness and respect and by Social Security Scotland and had been treated better than they had been by the DWP.
- Although clients reported feeling more hopeful moving forward with Social Security Scotland, some anxiety remained around reporting a change of circumstances and this leading to benefits being taken away.

Individuals trust in Social Security Scotland

As highlighted in the case transfer chapter clients' views towards Social Security Scotland were positive (if they had heard something about them before) or neutral (if they had not heard much about them before). See [Initial feelings about the process](#).

Positive experiences of dealing with staff during the case transfer and review process, including their perceived reliability, led to client trust in Social Security Scotland.

“[Social Security Scotland] I trust 100% because they said they would call me back and they did, they took away the stress.” (PIP client)

Those who had received a review outcome that they were happy with tended to say they trusted Social Security Scotland.

“I fully trust them. They are just better at explaining and letting you know what to expect from them, what to expect from the services.” (DLA client)

On the other hand, those who were still awaiting a review or an outcome tended to be more tentative or conditional when asked how much they trusted them. They indicated that they could trust Social Security Scotland ‘thus far’, or that they would withhold judgement until they had more experience with them.

“I think so far I trust them, [I have] no reason not to.” (DLAC client)

There are open and effective communications between individuals and Social Security Scotland

The nature of communications clients received from Social Security Scotland are explored in detail in the case transfer and review chapters – findings were mixed. This section therefore focuses on clients’ overall reflections on the amount of communication from Social Security Scotland.

Those who felt the amount of communication was about right tended to feel that the letter they received at the start of the case transfer process contained all the information they needed and reassured them that they did not need to do anything. Clients who were satisfied with the amount of contact they had with Social Security Scotland also felt the staff were available and approachable when they had queries.

“The actual communication with [Social Security Scotland] has been brilliant. They went out their way to call back and let you know how things were going. When you get your review done with the DWP you do your face-to-face and you just have to wait. The communication with [Social Security Scotland] has been second to none.” (PIP client)

Clients who felt they had too little communication from Social Security Scotland tended to be those who felt the case transfer and/or review processes had taken a long time and were having to chase to receive updates on their case. These clients wanted indicative timings for the case transfer and review processes and updates on the progress of their case.

“It’s me having to do the chasing. It should be the other way around, them contacting me if they want anything.” (DLA client)

Overall, clients were more positive about the communications they received from Social Security Scotland compared with the DWP, with tone, more modern style and content all highlighted as key differences. The letters were perceived to be

more personalised and modern-looking compared to the DWP's which were seen as more traditional-looking and typewritten. The letters were also thought to be more accessible because of the larger font, use of more direct language, and inclusion of clearer signposting to information and support.

Clients also reported feeling more hopeful and less anxious when dealing with Social Security Scotland.

"I felt I'd moved on to a better system, so don't have same anxiety now. I previously thought about the DWP, 'do I dare ring them up or just try to avoid them?'" (DLA client)

Public services treat people with dignity and respect

While it was recognised that the DWP and Social Security Scotland processes shared some similarities in terms of the types of questions that are asked, clients tended to feel that they had been treated better by Social Security Scotland during the transfer of their case and (where applicable) the review of their case than they would have been by the DWP. Clients noted the commitment to the principles of dignity, fairness and respect and this underpinned a perception that dealings with Social Security Scotland would be more "open" and less "intrusive".

"The words dignity, fairness and respect on the letter are good to see. It's not good to have to claim benefits and [it's] reassuring having that on there. It's a good message." (DLAC client)

The other main differences highlighted were the shorter waiting times to get through to Social Security Scotland on the phone and the quality of their interactions with staff. Staff were consistently described as friendly, helpful, respectful, compassionate, and reliable. Clients felt that they were listened to and not judged. As a result, they did not feel as anxious having to call Social Security Scotland as they had when dealing with the DWP.

"The Social Security Scotland people are chalk and cheese compared to the DWP people. Really helpful, always prepared to listen, without exception. They went above and beyond to help, I never felt I was troubling them [...] [It] gives you a bit of respect when people talk to you like an equal adult." (DLA client)

Perceptions of negative treatment by Social Security Scotland were more exceptional. Where clients did feel this way, their opinion tended to be shaped by problems that had arisen, such as delays to other benefits or the review process taking too long, rather than the way they were treated by staff.

"You want to feel confident with the people that are taking [the case] over [...] and if it seems like the process is going to take longer to answer direct questions, then that doesn't fill you with confidence for kind of the way ahead." (DLAC client)

There was another group of clients who felt that moving from the DWP to Social Security Scotland, or from one benefit to another, would make no difference. These

clients felt that they would be treated in a similar way no matter what the payment is called or who administered it.

“ADP instead of PIP? No difference. Social Security Scotland instead of [the] DWP? It doesn’t make much difference to me.” (PIP client)

Individuals understand their responsibilities and feel more comfortable about reporting a change in circumstances

Clients generally said that they would know what to do if they had to report a change of circumstances to Social Security Scotland in future. Even when not sure, clients were confident that they would be able to find out by searching online or calling Social Security Scotland, and would feel “relaxed” about the prospect.

Those who had been through the review process said they would feel comfortable reporting a change of circumstances. Some of those who had found the review forms onerous and/or the whole process too lengthy assumed that it would be easier the next time around. Others who had not yet had a review felt comfortable about the prospect because of their positive interactions with staff.

“I would feel very comfortable. They’re human, professional and they’re not patronising. [They] explain things in a way that’s understandable.” (DLAC client)

However, there were others who said they would not feel comfortable reporting a change of circumstances. There were a number of reasons for this:

- A worry that reporting it would lead to a change in award.

“I’d feel nervous because in back of mind you have that niggle that it might result in a change.” (DLAC client)

- Concerns about the length of time a review of their change in circumstances would take, particularly among those who had experienced a review with Social Security Scotland and felt it had taken a long time.
- A broader discomfort based on past experiences completing reviews (regardless of the agency conducting them) where they were considered to be lengthy and emotionally exhausting processes.

“I wouldn’t feel comfortable because I don’t like change. To do the form again would be very stressful. Anything related to benefits stresses me out. But Social Security Scotland I know I won’t lose it [the award] where with [the] DWP I think I would.” (DLA client)

Nevertheless, clients mentioned feeling more comfortable dealing with a devolved agency over a UK-wide one going forward, because they felt more respected and trusted by Social Security Scotland than they had done by the DWP, who they felt “interrogated” by. With the prospect of reporting a change of circumstances in

future, there was also sense of security with Social Security Scotland and less of a worry about payments stopping suddenly.

“[I feel] safer, less likely to get [payments] withdrawn. [There is] less ulterior motive to cut payments.” (DLAC client)

6. Staff experiences of the case transfer and review processes

Previous chapters have included staff views on how clients experienced a case transfer and review. This chapter focuses on staff experiences of the operational aspects of these processes and how they impact the intended client outcomes and the policy commitments.

Staff were asked about aspects of the transfer and review that were working well and less well and to suggest any improvements. Discussions naturally focused on areas that they felt could be improved. However, it was clear that staff generally enjoyed their roles and try to embody the values of dignity, fairness and respect throughout their work.

Key findings:

- Staff generally felt that the transfer and review policy commitments are being met, with the exception of clear communication with individuals.
- There was an overarching perception that new ADP and CDP applications had been prioritised which had contributed to initial issues around transfer and review processes. Staff experience challenges using SPM to process transfers and reviews. Issues are being identified and addressed.
- Staff felt improvements to resources in terms of staffing, guidance and support would help them to deliver case transfers and reviews efficiently and effectively, and lead to a better client experience.

Overarching views of the transfer and review process

In terms operational effectiveness, there was an overarching perception among staff that new ADP and CDP applications had been prioritised over transfers, which they felt had contributed to initial issues around the transfer and review processes.

“I think the point with the transfer process appears to be that – this is making huge assumptions – but the whole focus is on the new applications and that seems to [have been] prepared before it went live, whereas I think the transfer process doesn’t appear to have had that same preparation done for it.” (Staff)

There was a perception that learning from the existing processes had not informed new processes as effectively as it might have. Specifically, while staff acknowledged there had been some learning from CDP transfers (which came first) to improve processes for ADP transfers, there were also some missed opportunities, perhaps because different teams were involved. This was believed to have resulted in mistakes being repeated, such as issues with documents not uploading properly to Social Security Scotland systems, which in turn had impacted on the time taken to process cases.

“...one thing we’ve all found a bit surprising and a bit of a handicap actually is a lot of the good stuff that we learned from the CDP process, it was then done differently for ADP or it wasn’t carried forward into ADP, you know a learned way of ‘this is great if we communicate this through this channel’ or ‘we need to know x, y and x’...I think the reasoning behind it is it’s two different programme teams” (Staff)

Staff views of the transfer process

Most transfers are approved automatically within SPM, and do not require client contact. Where a transfer is not approved automatically, a Client Advisor addresses any issues preventing that from happening. These are known as “drop-out tasks”. Drop-out tasks include: verifying a date of birth; verifying an address, or correcting a mistake in address formatting; and verifying nationality. Staff reported that processing a drop-out task is generally straightforward. Payment issues are therefore rare, and the transfer process can be seen as “safe and secure”. When a Client Advisor processes a drop-out task, this is sent to a Team Support Officer or Team Manager for approval. If any feedback is required, this was usually felt to be clear so the Client Advisor knows what to do next time.

Drop-out tasks are processed using the Social Programme Management system (SPM). Staff reported some challenges using SPM, which they felt slowed their work down. These challenges included: documents from the DWP not uploading properly; difficulties updating family relationship records associated with children; wage slips being required in error for children; and client contact preferences not being captured. SPM was generally described as not user friendly, with staff at times not being able to access the system or being timed out of cases. There was a perception that SPM could have been more thoroughly tested before full launch. There was also concern among staff that SPM challenges will have a greater impact on the staff experience as the volume of transfers increase.

Client Advisors also have a role in responding to client queries and staff highlighted communication issues in this area. As highlighted in the case transfer chapter, clients experience long waiting times to get through to Social Security Scotland over the phone. Staff were also frustrated by waiting times for clients to get through to them. They suggested that client waiting time could be improved if there were separate phone numbers for specific departments rather than everyone having to use the general enquiries line, and if there was more support to help Client Advisors to answer queries, in the form of enhanced guidance and training (see below).

When they do get through, Client Advisors are not always able to answer their questions, particularly around: change of circumstances; how, or whether, payments will be backdated; and what a review involves. Despite clients describing staff as helpful (see case transfer chapter), there was a sense amongst staff that Client Advisors could be more confident in handling client queries on the transfer process, with multiple advisors asking the same questions (such as on change of circumstances and backdating, as discussed earlier). This meant that these

questions were being directed to Case Managers, which takes their time away from processing reviews.

Client Advisors said they struggle to answer questions due to perceived inadequacies in training, and challenges with information sharing (both discussed in more detail later in this chapter). It was suggested that an FAQ sheet may be in development to help Client Advisors answer client queries. This would be welcomed and would also avoid other staff members having to spend time fielding questions.

Client Advisors felt that a lack of initial training also applied to the DWP staff and that the agencies were 'not on the same page' when it comes to the transfer process. Clients have been directed by the DWP to Social Security Scotland despite Social Security Scotland not being able to do anything with a case until it is transferred. Staff were concerned about clients having a poor first impression of Social Security Scotland when they are passed between agencies and told different things. However, clients interviewed tended to blame the DWP for issues rather than Social Security Scotland.

Staff views of the review process

The general process for an unscheduled review (usually where a transfer has been triggered by a change of circumstances) is that the Case Manager will review information provided by the client about their change in circumstances and any information provided by the DWP. Then, if necessary, the Case Manager will contact the client for clarifications and/or reach out to a professional for supporting information. Staff felt that the amount and quality of information that Social Security Scotland receives from the DWP varies and, depending on this, it can be difficult for a Case Manager to understand why a decision was made and if it had been reasonable.

The main difference in process for a scheduled review (usually where a transfer has been triggered because the award was due to be reviewed) is that the client is sent a declaration form and a change of circumstances form. If the client declares there has not been a change of circumstances, this can be dealt with very quickly, depending on the situation. However, in some instances clients have declared "no change" but gone on to report changes on the change of circumstances form, perhaps because they think they need to write something on both forms. These inconsistencies can be difficult for staff to interpret.

Staff indicated that making a decision on a review is not dissimilar to making a decision on a new application, the main difference being the amount of historic information to take account of, which is usually greater for a PIP case, and the time required to do so. Like a new application, the length of time needed to reach a decision depends partly on whether supporting information is needed or has already been provided. For instance, if a Case Manager needs to write to a GP to request information regarding a client, they could be waiting two months for a reply, and they cannot do anything else on that case in the meantime.

Decisions are then sent to a Decision Team Manager for approval. At the time of fieldwork, all decisions were being quality assured for consistency. This had reportedly become a quicker process for Decision Team Managers as Case Managers gain experience and fewer corrections are needed. Staff said they found mental health conditions, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism more challenging than physical conditions to deal with and so these are usually allocated to more experienced staff. Where there are difficult cases, Case Managers and Decision Team Managers will have conversations before they reach a decision and collaborative working is encouraged.

It was widely felt by staff that clients did not understand the review process, and this was not thought to be limited to a particular client group. As a result, staff felt they received a lot of ad hoc queries from clients but did not feel equipped to answer or resolve them, particularly in relation to the backdating of payments, due to a lack of guidance.

“I just don’t think [clients] are getting the right answers from us and it is causing some undue stress and anxiety. I don’t think anybody really had any training so that is the issue.” (Staff)

Where a client has been awarded further support as a result of a change of circumstances, payments may be backdated to when that change was reported, provided the change has occurred for at least 13 weeks. Staff indicated that this 13 weeks “backward test” is not mentioned in initial letters from Social Security Scotland and felt there would be pros and cons to doing so. Lack of staff understanding was linked to training and guidance, which is discussed in the next section.

At the point of data collection, there had not been enough experience of case transfer reviews to allow staff to comment on whether there are differences in client experiences in relation to the policy commitments. However, it was generally felt that the review process would be light touch and cause minimum stress for clients if they were not impacted by the backlog in cases caused by early process issues and delays associated with supporting information. This may help reduce client calls asking for updates on their review.

Staff working on reviews also faced challenges related to SPM, such as understanding how to navigate the system, having to manually generate and correct letters, and having to locate information provided by a client about their condition that has not been attached to their case. While SPM issues have been solved or are being addressed, staff again felt that systems were not tested properly initially.

“The fact that that [award letter] just didn’t work, it fed down duff information, fields weren’t being populated correctly, this kind of thing... you would expect when a process is going to go live that you would stress test it from front to back...” (Staff)

Overall, staff felt that senior management recognised the importance of improving the review process given this will continue to be a significant aspect of the ADP and

CDP workload. For example, a Project Lead had recently been assigned to help fix some SPM issues which has taken some pressure off Case Managers and Decision Team Managers.

Resources and support to deliver case transfers and reviews

Staff raised a number of broader points about the resources and support in place to enable them to deliver case transfer and reviews efficiently and effectively. They thought improvements to these would lead to a better experience for clients – but had mixed views on how receptive managers were to feedback on these issues.

Staffing

Staff in certain roles highlighted their large caseloads and felt this was impacting their ability to deliver case transfers and reviews in a timely manner without there being undue pressure on them.

“... [the] review process is very light touch and it should be minimum stress for them [clients]. I think just with the backlog and time delays on supporting information and just different things like that, that is what is making the stress, our actual review process if it all worked would be great for them” (Staff)

A related issue mentioned by staff is that Client Advisors are fielding client calls about other Social Security Scotland benefits because they are the only team with capacity to deal with these. They are not trained to answer queries on other issues and this was impacting staff morale. There was some concern that could affect client satisfaction in the long run.

Training

The need for improved training on transfers and reviews was a strong theme in discussions across staff groups.

Staff valued the focus on dignity, fairness and respect in initial training. They were taught to put themselves in a client’s shoes and think about how they might be feeling when interacting with Social Security Scotland. However, for staff working on transfers, the general view was that initial training was too generic and did not cover specifics of their role in relation to transfers. Some Client Advisors did not realise that they were expected to work on transfers until they received a “brief overview” of the process in the last week of their six-week initial training. They felt that more comprehensive training on the transfer process would help them to better answer client queries and concerns.

“[Client Advisors] almost invariably come out of training all gung ho and ready to tackle their first case and they go into consolidation with one of our more experienced advisors and they realise they don’t know anything. It knocks them for six. They’re buzzing, spent all this time in training and they’re ready to go, and then they don’t know anything” (Staff)

Staff working on reviews said there was no initial training on case transfer reviews specifically. They felt that they had to develop processes themselves and then train newer team members. This was described as “overwhelming” and “scary” at times. Whilst staff are happy to train new colleagues, there was a view that it should not be their responsibility to do so. A reliance on more experienced staff (known as “consolidators”) was mentioned by transfer staff too. There was concern that an overreliance on consolidators leads to inconsistencies in ways of working and so there was a preference for training to be delivered by Learning and Development.

Staff recognised that some improvements have been made to training following feedback. However, there were still aspects of training that they felt could be improved. These included: a greater understanding across roles of what a transfer is and how cases move to Social Security Scotland; clarifying the role of a Client Advisor; addressing a culture where Client Advisors feel pressured to answer client queries immediately even if they are not sure of the correct response; more telephony training for Client Advisors; more training on using SPM for all roles; and more resources to cater for different learning styles which could include making content more visual instead of “walls of text”, producing easy read documents, and having physical resources.

Written guidance

Staff appreciated the challenges of migrating benefits to a new agency and recognised that there will inevitably be changes to processes that mean it is difficult for guidance to be kept absolutely up to date. The team responsible for guidance were seen as approachable and receptive to feedback on points that need clarification. However, at the same time, there was an evident appetite among staff working on case transfers and reviews for more consistent and timely guidance.

It was perceived by staff that an initial lack of centralised guidance on how to process cases had led to some teams developing their own internal processes and guidance, which may lead to inconsistencies and impact on clients where processes are followed differently. Staff therefore did reflect on the importance of formal guidance:

“...we have to have that golden source in terms of the guidelines, so that everyone knows exactly what they are doing, and we all know that we are doing the same thing, because these slight things can make big differences in terms of how decisions get made and the impact that has on things like getting payments on what date...people use different dates, like transfer date, ADP start date, entitlement date, these kind of things may seem very straightforward but there is no definition...” (Staff)

However, staff did report that this formal guidance was difficult to locate, navigate through, interpret and they did not trust that it was always up to date – so they generally rely on colleagues for support. It was felt that updates to policies and procedures are not communicated clearly, with staff relying on information sharing within informal networks, such as online chat groups, to find out the latest advice. There was particular concern amongst Client Advisors that they were not being

informed of policy and procedure updates, which impacts their ability to answer client queries.

Staff views on policy commitments

During interviews for this research, staff were presented with a logic model outlining policy commitments in relation to the case transfer and review processes. Staff had mixed levels of awareness of these policy commitments and there were differing views on whether certain commitments are being achieved. However, there was an overall sense from staff that, while they feel that they are meeting policy commitments, clients may not share this view. Staff views on each of the case transfer and review policy commitments are set out below. Commitments where there was less discussion are presented in a summary table.

Correct payment made at the correct time

Staff agreed that this was happening in the vast majority of cases. They noted that, if there are technical issues that could affect a payment, these are usually dealt with before the client is affected. However, one staff member was aware of an SPM issue with “payability codes” which they understood meant that some CDP clients had been overpaid.

However, staff hypothesised that clients would not agree that this commitment is being met. They said that clients were frustrated at the length of time it takes for them to receive increased entitlement following a change of circumstances.

“...it probably is being done [from a staff perspective], because as we’re processing the case and as we are getting it through then we have managed to iron out a lot of niggles that we had before...but of course from a clients perspective that is a very different, they might have put in their change of circumstances back in October and they are expecting something, not instantaneously, but they are not seeing it for six, eight months afterwards.” (Staff)

No face-to-face DWP reassessments

Staff agreed that this policy commitment is being met. However, one staff member indicated that some face-to-face consultations may be helpful during the review process in order to determine a client’s support needs. That being said, there was awareness amongst staff about the negative impact of the DWP reassessments on clients and the reasons these are not used by Social Security Scotland.

“...within our team we have discussed the fact that although there is this move away from the DWP approaches to review the case applications sort of thing, the face-to-face assessments, I think probably do serve quite important purpose in making things flow a bit quicker.” (Staff)

Complete as soon as possible while maintaining “safe and secure”

Staff felt that this policy commitment is being met, in the sense that they are processing transfers and reviews as quickly as possible given current resources. However, for the reasons outlined earlier, clients would not always agree with this.

Clear communications with individuals

There was general agreement that this policy commitment is not being met. While letters from Social Security Scotland were felt to be comprehensive, not all clients understand aspects of the transfer process, particularly the process for handling a change of circumstances, and what to expect during the review. Staff also highlighted that some clients are passed between the DWP and Social Security Scotland because there is a lack of staff understanding about the transfer process.

“...it seems to be quite often that when they [clients] call [the] DWP and they hear Scotland, they [DWP] instantly just say, ‘no, Social Security Scotland, you have to contact’, and it’s just like, ‘no, it’s not the case’, and they are not really getting helped by [the] DWP, they seem to have kind of washed their hands of them to be honest.”
(Staff)

“Reviews are probably one of the most common biggest anxiety factors for a lot of clients because historically the DWP have been renowned for being very almost interrogatory...because we can’t necessarily provide the reassurance that we’re not [like the DWP] because we don’t fully know the review process, that makes it awkward for us” (Staff)

Disability Assistance should not stop whilst an award review is being undertaken

Staff indicated that that there is a risk that this policy commitment is not always being met. Staff are expediting reviews for some clients who were in receipt of Motability support. These clients need to show that they have at least a year left on their award in order to renew a mobility vehicle lease, but this may be impacted by the length of time it takes for their award to be reviewed.

“If they are within a year of document review, they are not getting their disability vehicle renewed or anything like that, they are getting threatened it’s getting taken off them...obviously these clients need their vehicles, and work is ongoing on that at higher levels to sort this out, but that is obviously a big issue at the moment because we are having to try and fire through those applications first...” (Staff)

Reviews will be light-touch and, as far as possible, minimise stress

One staff member described ‘light-touch reviews’ as a “grey area”. In their view, the only circumstances in which a review could be considered “light-touch” would be where a client has declared that their condition had not changed during a scheduled review.

Moving into work will not be regarded as a change of circumstances

Staff indicated that this policy commitment is being met because moving into work is not in and of itself being regarded as a change of circumstances. However, they did give a hypothetical example where it might prompt them to seek further information. For instance, if a client tells Social Security Scotland that they cannot walk but then they go on to take a job as a waitress.

In cases where there is no likelihood of improvement there will be at least five years between Light-Touch reviews

Staff were not aware of this policy commitment or guidance in relation to it. However, it was suggested that staff confidence in their own decision-making would be a factor in achieving this commitment and that staff confidence will increase over time. It was also noted that there have been discussions with medical practitioners employed by Social Security Scotland to understand which conditions are unlikely to change.

Awards will have a maximum period of 10 years between Light-Touch reviews

Staff were not aware of this policy commitment or guidance in relation to it. However, it was suggested that staff confidence in their own decision-making would be a factor in achieving this commitment and that staff confidence will increase over time.

| Policy commitment | Summary of staff experiences |
|--|---|
| No re-applications | No issues were reported in relation to this policy commitment |
| Reviews, where required, are right first time | Staff were not aware of there being many re-determinations. |
| All awards should be made on a rolling basis, with no set date for an award ending | Staff indicated that this commitment is being achieved. |
| There will be no auto-entitlement and all decisions will be person-centred | Staff indicated that this commitment is being achieved. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Review dates will be set at a date that takes account of the likelihood of that person's needs changing | Staff indicated that this policy commitment is being achieved. |
| Social Security Scotland will give a reason to individuals where their award is reviewed earlier than the date set | Staff did not have experience of this situation but suggested that it would happen. |
| Social Security Scotland will publish the numbers of cases where awards are reviewed earlier than the date set at initial decision | Staff were not aware of this commitment and whether it was being achieved. |

7. Conclusions

This final chapter summarises the findings, including areas for consideration and/or improvement, in relation to the five research questions:

- What is working well and what needs to be improved with regard to case transfers?
- What differences in experience can be drawn from clients transferring from different benefits?
- What are the key differences clients are experiencing in the assessment processes compared to that with the DWP and how do they feel about these differences?
- Has the case transfer process been executed in line with policy principles?
- What short, medium, and longer-term impacts did the case transfer experience have on clients?

There is considerable overlap between the findings on the first research question and the last two questions. To minimise repetition, the section on the first question – what is working well and what needs to be improved – is more detailed, while the sections on the last two questions are set out in tabular summary form.

Question 1: What is working well and what needs to be improved with regard to case transfers?

What is working well?

There is a great deal that is working well with the case transfer and review process. In particular, the more person-centred aspects are working well and clients generally felt that they had been treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

Crucially, the most important case transfer principle – that clients continue to receive the correct payments at the correct time – was upheld among those interviewed for this research.

Those transferring from DLAC to CDP and from PIP to ADP generally found the case transfer process straightforward. PIP clients also tended to say that the review process was easier than they had expected it to be (discussed further at [Question 2: What differences in experience can be drawn from clients transferring from different benefits?](#) below). PIP and DLA clients who had been through the review process were relieved at not having to have a face-to-face DWP reassessment (note that no DLAC clients had gone through a review at the time of interview).

Clients were very positive about their interactions with Social Security Scotland staff who were consistently described as “friendly”, “helpful”, “respectful” and “compassionate”. Those who had sought assistance with review forms from Case Managers or Local Delivery Staff had found them very helpful. Overall, clients felt

they had been treated with dignity, fairness and respect – and better than they had been treated by the DWP.

These positive experiences generally led to a feeling of trust in Social Security Scotland and, in turn, a willingness to report a change of circumstances in the future. However, there were clients who would still be wary of reporting a change. This was because of anxiety that it may lead to a reduction or a loss of the award and/or because they had found the review process lengthy and emotionally exhausting (whether conducted by Social Security Scotland or the DWP).

Clients tended to say that they were happy that their benefit was now being administered by Social Security Scotland. Those who weren't actively positive about it were neutral rather than negative.

What needs to be improved?

The biggest issue related to the length of time it took to complete the whole process (transfer plus review). This largely affected DLA clients who had reported a change of circumstances and is discussed at [Question 2: What differences in experience can be drawn from clients transferring from different benefits?](#) below. Reducing this time would have the biggest impact on clients transferring from DLA. It should be noted that the timescale for PIP-ADP case transfer, where a change of circumstances was reported, was reduced to 4-8 weeks from September 2023 (shortly after this research took place).

Other problems mostly related to specific issues with the processes or with communications.

Processes

For those transferring because they had reported a change in circumstances, the length of the review form (88 pages for those transferring from DLA) was a problem. Clients found it onerous and tiring to fill in and they frequently reported that it took them two or three sittings to complete it. This was a particular issue for those whose condition/disability or medication made it difficult to concentrate for long periods. The fact that the form was not available to complete online and had to be completed on paper was a problem for those whose condition/disability made writing by hand difficult.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given to shortening the form where at all possible and making it available to complete online.

Although clients indicated that it was easier to get through to Social Security Scotland on the phone than the DWP, they typically reported call waiting times of at least 20-40 minutes get through. Long call waiting times caused particular issues for clients whose ability to make calls/wait on the line is affected by their condition or treatment (for example, where it is dependent on their medication cycle), and for those who have limited time during the working day. Clients felt it would be helpful if the call holding system provided clients with an indication of the queue length and likely wait times. Staff suggested that client waiting time could be improved if there

were separate phone numbers for specific departments rather than everyone having to use the general enquiries line. Long waits were also reported for the webchat option.

Recommendation: Consider separate phone numbers for different departments and give an indication of the likely wait times/place in the queue.

There were reports of clients being sent the wrong review forms to complete. Similarly, confusion was caused for staff (and time wasted for clients) with the forms sent out for scheduled reviews. Clients were sent a declaration form on which they could tick a box to say there was 'no change' to their condition and, at the same time, a review form to complete if there had been a change. Some clients ticked the box to say 'no change' on the declaration form but also completed the review form. This was an issue raised by staff. We did not explore it with clients but can speculate that they did this because they thought they should complete all forms that they were sent.

Recommendations: Ensure staff are clear which forms should be used in different circumstances. For scheduled reviews, consider only sending a review form after the client has indicated on the declaration form there has been a change in their circumstances. Alternatively, make it clear next to the 'no change' box that there is no need to complete the review form if that box is ticked.

There were cases where clients experienced problems with other benefits or support. They reported receiving letters from the DWP saying that their Carer's Allowance had stopped, or was going to stop, because they were no longer in receipt of DLAC. The clients we spoke to were able to sort out the issue by contacting the DWP but the issue caused them unnecessary stress.

Recommendation: Contact the DWP to check that they are aware of this issue and have something in place to avoid these letters being sent to people who have transferred to CDP.

Other clients reported issues with Motability leases and Blue Badges. The issue with Motability leases was a requirement that an individual had more than a year remaining on their award before they could renew their lease or take out a new one. This caused problems where the client was waiting to hear the outcome of their review (and exacerbated by any delays in this). The Blue Badge issue was that a Local Authority did not approve an application because it looked as if the client's entitlement had ended when the DWP stopped paying DLAC.

Staff also talked about Social Security Scotland transfer letters not being accepted by Motability providers or Local Authorities as evidence of someone being in receipt of disability benefits.

Recommendation: Raise this issue with Motability providers and local authorities.

Some operational issues were raised by staff. Staff acknowledged that the Case Transfer exercise was a very sizeable undertaking and that some teething problems were inevitable. They also acknowledged that some early problems had

been solved and others were being addressed. However, they identified a number of areas for improvement which they felt would, ultimately, improve the client experience. The most important related to:

- The backlog of cases. Staff said that early process issues and delays in obtaining supporting information had contributed to the backlog.
- Initial training. Staff agreed that their initial training was too generic and did not focus enough on the case transfer aspects of the role. They felt that more training should be delivered by Learning and Development and that there was currently too much reliance on 'consolidators' (more experienced staff training newer staff).
- The Client Advisor role. Staff felt that Client Advisors had insufficient training and guidance on how to answer queries relating to case transfers and reviews. There was also a view that calls should be directed to different departments rather than Client Advisors having to answer all calls including calls about other benefits.

Recommendations: There is clearly not one simple solution to the backlog of cases and overall processing times. Improvements to training and guidance and support for Client Advisors to enable them to answer more queries (thus avoiding Case Managers having to deal with them) and improvements to the training and guidance for Case Managers themselves, should help.

We also recommend that the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland work with GPs, the NHS, and Local Authorities to find ways to ensure that supporting information requests are responded to more quickly. We recognise that these organisations face considerable pressures and making progress on this will not be straightforward.

Communications

While some aspects of communication were working well (for example, the introduction letter at the start of the case transfer process and telephone interactions with staff), the following aspects could be improved:

- More clarity on timescales and progress updates. Clients often reported at least some anxiety about the process and some experienced a great deal. This was particularly the case with the review element which always held the possibility of a reduction in the award or loss of the award. Worries were exacerbated by not knowing how long they were going to have wait.

Recommendations: During the transfer element, clients suggested that a letter part-way through, confirming that the transfer was in hand and that they did not need to do anything, would have been reassuring.

- Providing an indication of likely timescales at the start of the review process and providing regular progress updates would help ease concerns – at least for some. Clients suggested an online tracker (akin to those provided by delivery companies) to let individuals see the progress of their applications.

Given that calls to check progress and/or ask when they could expect the outcome were the main reasons given for contacting Social Security Scotland, proactive updates should considerably reduce the number of calls.

- More clarity for clients on aspects of the process. Interviews with clients revealed a lack of understanding about the process where they had reported a change of circumstances. In particular, DLA clients did not always understand from the outset that their case needed to be transferred before the review process could begin. There was also a lack of understanding about how the backdating of payments would work. Staff also noted that clients were confused about these issues.

Recommendation: Provide clearer guidance for clients on the process for dealing with unscheduled reviews. This could be done in a letter and on the Social Security Scotland website. Consideration should also be given to whether providing guidance for clients on how back payments will be calculated would be helpful – or whether this might cause more confusion.

Question 2: What differences in experience can be drawn from clients transferring from different benefits?

Clients transferring from DLAC

The case transfer element was typically straightforward for clients transferring from DLAC although parents had a few concerns and some anxiety in cases where it took longer than expected. None of the DLAC clients we spoke to had undergone a review following their case transfer.

As discussed above, there were cases where clients received letters from the DWP saying that their Carer's Allowance had stopped, or was going to stop, because they were no longer in receipt of DLAC.

Clients transferring from PIP and DLA

The PIP clients we spoke to were happier with their experience of case transfer and review than the DLA clients. This seemed largely related to fact that they had more experiences of the DWP review process than DLA clients – rather than anything about the processes.

The main issue for DLA clients was the length of time the whole process took (transfer and review). Most of the DLA clients we spoke to had transferred because they had reported a change in circumstances. They had generally done this because their condition had worsened and they thought that they should get a higher award. They saw the process as starting from the time they first notified the DWP of the change and ending with the outcome given by Social Security Scotland. For them, the transfer element was a delay of 13-17 weeks before their review process could start. Among DLA clients who had received a review outcome, the overall timescales for both elements ranged from six months to a year. They tended to experience a considerable amount of stress and anxiety during this time period. This was, in part, because they had been on indefinite awards or had not had a review in many years (if ever). There was a sense of them

feeling forgotten about by the DWP and that they had previously kept their heads down to avoid being transferred to PIP.

Staff felt that DLA clients needed more reassurance than PIP clients. They put this down to them having been on that benefit for many years and not being used to changes to it.

For PIP clients (including those who were due a review and those who had reported a change of circumstances) the timescales for the review appeared to be either in line with their expectations or quicker than expected. Their relief about the review process being so much easier than they had expected (based on their experiences or expectations of a DWP review) may have overcome concerns about the waiting time that they might otherwise have had.

Question 3: What are the key differences clients are experiencing in the assessment processes compared to that with the DWP and how do they feel about these differences?

Although some clients were apprehensive in advance of the review process, there was also a sense of hope that the experience would be better with Social Security Scotland than it had been with the DWP. This was borne out. The key differences were the way they were treated by staff and the lack of face-to-face assessments.

Clients said the review process was easier than they thought it would be, with Social Security Scotland staff widely viewed as helpful, friendly and reassuring. They felt that they were listened to and not judged. All this was in contrast to their experiences with the DWP.

There was a strong sense of relief among clients that face-to-face assessments would rarely be required. This was an aspect of the DWP reviews that they described as “harrowing” and “daunting”.

Overall, there was a perception among that Social Security Scotland is an easier agency to deal with than the DWP and that they take a more person-centred approach.

Question 4: Has the case transfer process been executed in line with policy principles?

Broadly speaking, the case transfer process has been executed in line with policy principles. This includes the most important principle: correct payment made at the correct time. However, there are some commitments which have only partially been met and where there is scope for improvement.

| Policy commitment | Has this been met? |
|--|---|
| Correct payment made at the correct time | <p>Yes.</p> <p>No clients reported that their disability benefit payment was disrupted during the transfer or the review process.</p> <p>However, there were reports of impacts on other benefits and support, including Carer's Allowance, being stopped or threatened to be stopped by the DWP.</p> |
| No re-applications | <p>Yes.</p> <p>Clients were relieved that this would not be required as part of the transfer to Social Security Scotland.</p> |
| No face-to-face DWP reassessments | <p>Yes.</p> <p>No clients reported having a face-to-face DWP reassessment.</p> |
| Complete as soon as possible while maintaining "safe and secure" | <p>At least partially.</p> <p>The transfer was seen as "safe and secure" in the sense of the correct payments being made at the correct time. Some clients felt it had taken too long, however, we cannot comment on whether the process could have been completed more quickly without jeopardising the "safe and secure" element.</p> |
| Clear communications with individuals | <p>Partially.</p> <p>Letters from Social Security Scotland were generally felt to be clear, although clients' accounts indicated mixed</p> |

levels of understanding of the transfer process, particularly around change of circumstances.

Clients were positive about their telephone or face-to-face interactions with staff.

Communication between the DWP and Social Security Scotland and clients was not always viewed as clear and consistent.

A lack of updates on the progress of their review increased clients' worry and stress about the outcome.

Reviews, where required, are right first time

It was not within the remit of this research to comment on whether decisions were right first time or not.

However, we can comment on client perceptions of the decision. Those who received an outcome that met or exceeded their expectations felt the decision was right. Those who did not receive an outcome they had hoped for felt disappointed; while some acknowledged that the decision was fair, others did not think that their circumstances had not been fully considered.

Reviews, where required, are undertaken in line with relevant policy commitments (e.g. decisions will be person-centred, reviews will be light-touch and, as far as possible, minimise stress)⁷

Partially.

Clients described the review process as easier than they thought it would be and, in particular, were relieved about the lack of a face-to-face assessment.

Social Security Scotland staff were widely viewed as helpful, friendly and reassuring. Social Security Scotland was overall considered to be person-centred in its decision-making, as clients generally felt their individual circumstances had been taken into account.

However, clients still felt worried about the process and this was heightened where there were issues (e.g. lack of clarity around timescales, uncertainty over backdating payments, and communication). In some cases, clients experienced issues with other benefits and support during the review process. This further exacerbated feelings of stress and anxiety.

⁷ Policy commitments regarding the review process more generally can be found in the [Disability Assistance Awards and Entitlement Policy Position Paper](#)

The following review process policy commitments were not covered as part of this research:

- All awards should be made on a rolling basis, with no set date for an award ending.
- Review dates will be set at a date that takes account of the likelihood of that person's needs changing.
- Moving into work will not be regarded as a change of circumstance.
- Social Security Scotland will give a reason to individuals where their award is reviewed earlier than the date set.
- Social Security Scotland will publish the numbers of cases where awards are reviewed earlier than the date set at initial decision.
- In cases where there is no likelihood of improvement there will be at least five years between Light-Touch reviews.
- Awards will have a maximum period of 10 years between Light-Touch Reviews.

Question 5: What short, medium, and longer-term impacts did the case transfer experience have on clients?

Positively, most of the intended outcomes set out in the logic model have been achieved. Where they have not been fully achieved, they have at least been partially achieved.

| Impacts | Achieved? |
|---|--|
| Short-term | |
| <p>Individuals understand what is happening and when</p> <p>Individuals understand what they need to do (when appropriate) or are reassured that they don't need to do anything</p> | <p>Partially – while some clients felt the information provided was clear in setting out the steps for case transfer and reviews, others did not think it was clear. This prompted them to contact Social Security Scotland to clarify next steps and what they would (or would not) need to do.</p> |
| <p>Individuals feel throughout that the transfer is safe and secure (i.e. the right amount is paid on time)</p> | <p>Yes – no clients experienced a disruption to their payment.</p> |
| <p>Individuals know who to contact for help and support</p> | <p>Yes – clients reported that they got in touch with Social Security Scotland or relied on existing support networks (e.g. carers or welfare support officers).</p> |
| <p>Individuals do not feel undue stress/anxiety about the transfer and review elements of the process</p> | <p>Partially – while the experience was smoother and easier than some expected, for others there were issues which caused stress and anxiety.</p> |
| <p>Experience of the process is in line with</p> | <p>Generally yes, but with some exceptions.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| dignity, fairness, and respect | |
| Individuals have a positive experience of the review process | Generally yes, although some clients encountered issues. |
| Medium-term | |
| Individuals develop a positive relationship with Social Security Scotland | Yes – although some remained neutral about Social Security Scotland following the transfer/review processes. |
| Individuals understand what happens next Individuals experience reduced stress and/or anxiety about the prospect of future reviews or assessments | Yes. Although some anxiety about future assessments remained, this was due to a general worry about payments being stopped after a review and not because of the transfer of benefit payments to Social Security Scotland. |
| Individuals feel that decision-making is fair and transparent | In most cases, yes. |
| Individuals feel treated with dignity, fairness and respect by Social Security Scotland | Generally yes (except for exceptional cases where clients who were disappointed with the review outcome felt their individual circumstances had not been considered). |
| Long-term | |
| Individuals trust in Social Security Scotland | Yes, broadly, although some clients were tentative about this until they had more experience. |

| | |
|---|---|
| There are open and effective communications between individuals and Social Security Scotland | Partially – although some clients were satisfied with the nature of the communication with Social Security Scotland, some communication issues were highlighted. |
| Public services treat people with dignity and respect | Yes – clients generally felt that they have so far been treated better by Social Security Scotland than they had been by the DWP previously. |
| Individuals understand their responsibilities and feel more comfortable about reporting a change in circumstances | Yes – clients generally said they would know how to report a change in circumstances in future and would feel comfortable doing so. However this was not universal. |
| There is reduced stigma around illness and disability | Not covered by this research. |
| The right decision is made first time by Social Security Scotland | Not covered by this research. |

Appendices

Appendix one: Glossary of terms

Appeal – If a client does not agree with Social Security Scotland’s re-determination, or if Social Security Scotland is not able to make a re-determination within the required timescales, they can appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal for Scotland

Change of circumstances – Where a client reports a change in their care or mobility needs or other circumstances which might affect their award/level of their award. This leads to a review.

Determination of entitlement – A decision on application or review of benefit

Managed transfer – Cases are selected for transfer based on a set of prioritisation criteria

Natural transfer – A specific circumstance triggers the selection for transfer (e.g. the client reports a change a change in circumstance, the client’s award is due to end or be reviewed or, for DLA recipients only - if the client asks to be transferred).

Re-determination – If a client does not agree with the decision on their benefit, they can ask Social Security Scotland to look at it again.

Scheduled review – A review scheduled in advance based on a case manager’s assessment of when the person’s needs are likely to change.

Unscheduled review – Unscheduled reviews are reviews that take place ahead of the time originally set out. These mainly occur as a result of clients reporting a change of circumstances.

Appendix two: Logic model

| Inputs | Policy commitments | Outcomes | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| | | Short-term | Medium-term | Long-term |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government funding • Scottish Government staff time (policy and programme teams) • Social Security Scotland staff time • DWP staff time • Data sharing and other process agreements between Scottish Government and DWP • Case transfer technical systems • Communications with individuals – letters explaining the transfer process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct payment made at the correct time • No re-applications • No face-to-face DWP reassessments • Complete as soon as possible while maintaining “safe and secure” • Clear communications with individuals • Reviews are right first time, where required • Reviews, where required, are undertaken in line with relevant policy commitments* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals understand what is happening and when • Individuals feel throughout that the transfer is safe and secure (i.e. the right amount is paid on time) • Individuals know who to contact for help and support • Individuals understand what they need to do (when appropriate) <u>or</u> are reassured that they don’t need to do anything • Individuals do not feel undue stress/ anxiety about the transfer and review elements of the process • Experience of the process is in line with dignity, fairness, and respect • Individuals have a positive experience of the review process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals develop a positive relationship with Social Security Scotland • Individuals understand what happens next • Individuals experience reduced stress and/or anxiety about the prospect of future reviews or assessments • Individuals feel that decision-making is fair and transparent • Individuals feel treated with dignity, fairness and respect by Social Security Scotland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals trust in Social Security Scotland • There are open and effective communications between Individuals and Social Security Scotland • Public services treat people with dignity and respect • There is reduced stigma around illness and disability • Individuals understand their responsibilities and feel more comfortable about reporting a change in circumstances • The right decision is made first time by Social Security Scotland |

Risk factors/external factors: communications not clear, errors in communications, transfers taking longer than intended, missed or delayed payments, incorrect payments, reviews not right first time

Appendix three: Discussion guides

Phase 1: DLAC – CDP client guide

| Time | Questions/probes |
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| | Introduction / warm-up |
| 5 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewer to introduce self & thank participant for taking part. Explain the purpose of the session/research. <p>We (Ipsos Scotland, an independent research organisation) are carrying out some research about your experiences of the transfer process which moved your benefit from DWP to Social Security Scotland.</p> <p>The research is being conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government</p> <p>The purpose of this study is to understand how the transfer process is working, what's going well and what could be improved. We are also talking to some Social Security Scotland staff who work on the transfers.</p> <p>The discussion will last for around 45 minutes and, as you know, you will receive £30 as a thank you for your time. We can sort that out at the end.</p> <p>Conversation will be relaxed and informal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No right or wrong answers, just keen to hear what you think. • Explain independence of Ipsos and that everything shared will be treated anonymously. No identifying information will be included in report. • Taking part completely voluntary, don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. • Explain audio-recording and ask for consent to use. • Confirm consent with parent and child individually if both present. <p>Warm-up questions:</p> <p>To start us off, can you tell me a bit about where you live and who you live with...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you live? How long have you lived there? • Who do you live with? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How old is/are your child/children? • And what's a typical day for you – if there's such a thing? |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you tell me just a little bit about your child’s condition or disability? <p>Remind participant that they do not have to go into detail if they do not want to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We’ll go into more detail about the different aspects of the case transfer process in a minute, but could you just tell me how you found it overall? • Probe: What aspects worked well or went smoothly? • And were there any problems or anything you didn’t think worked well? |
| | <p>Section 1 – First contact about case transfer</p> |
| <p>10 minutes</p> | <p>I want to start by asking you about when you were first contacted about the transfer of your child’s disability benefit from DWP to Social Security Scotland. This might be going back a while now, but I’d be interested to know what the earliest part of the transfer process was like for you, from what you remember.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did you first hear about your child’s disability benefit being transferred from Social Security Scotland to DWP – just roughly? • And how old would [name of child] have been at that point? What month is their birthday? • When you first heard about the transfer, can you remember what your immediate reaction was? • How did you hear about the transfer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you receive a letter? ○ If not mentioned: Can you remember who the letter came from? ○ What do you remember about what the letter said? ○ Had you heard anything previously about benefits being transferred? ○ If yes, where from? did you realise it would affect you? • How did you feel about the transfer when you first heard about it? • Had you heard of Social Security Scotland before hearing about the transfer of your child’s disability benefit to them? |

- If yes – what was your impression/experience of Social Security Scotland?
- [if not mentioned] You might remember receiving a goodbye letter from DWP?
- If yes: What was your initial reaction to that letter from DWP? How did it make you feel?
- What can you remember about what the letter said?
 - Was there anything about the letter that particularly stood out?
 - Was there anything in the letter that was unclear to you?
 - Did you know where you could go if you needed further information or support?
 - And did you look for further information or support?
 - Where from? [Probe on how they knew about this source of info/support]
 - Did you find/get what you needed?
- How did the letter make you feel about the transfer process, overall?
- Did you have confidence in the process? if needed: Did you feel clear about what was going to happen next from the details in the letter?

[if not mentioned] You might remember receiving a hello letter from Social Security Scotland.

- What was your initial reaction to the letter you received from Social Security Scotland? How did it make you feel?
- What can you remember about what the letter said?
 - Was there anything about the letter that particularly stood out?
 - Was there anything in the letter that was unclear to you?
 - Did you know where you could go if you needed further information or support?
 - And did you look for further information or support?
 - Where from? Probe on how they knew about this source of info/support.
 - Did you find/get what you needed?
- How did the letter make you feel about the transfer process, overall?

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you have confidence in the process? if needed: Did you feel clear about what was going to happen next from the details in the letter? |
| | Section 2 – Actual transfer process |
| 15-20 minutes | <p>I'd now like to talk about the transfer process itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After you received the first letters from DWP and Social Security Scotland about your transfer, can you talk me through what happened next? Allow participant to speak freely first before going through probes. • How did you feel about it all? Probe: Were there points where you felt anxious or worried about it? Did you feel confused at any point or unsure what was happening? Did you feel confident that everything would go smoothly? • How did you feel about Social Security Scotland throughout the process? • Did your attitude towards them change at all? • Were you contacted by Social Security Scotland or DWP at any point during the transfer process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes – Who contacted you? ○ Why did they contact you? ○ How did they contact you? ○ Was any action required by you? ○ If yes, probe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Was it clear what they needed from you? ○ How easy or difficult was it to provide what they needed? ○ Did you feel that their requests were reasonable? ○ How long did it take to resolve? Was this timescale acceptable for you? ○ Was there any contact after that? ○ How did you feel about your contact with the person dealing with your case? Why is that? ○ Do you feel that you were treated well by the person dealing with your case? Why/why not? ○ Probe fully for of all contacts made by SSS/DWP, but with a focus on how this made the client feel • Did you contact Social Security Scotland or DWP at any point during the transfer process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes – Which? Why did you contact them? |

- How did that go?
 - How did you contact them? (webchat, telephone, letter)
 - How long did they take to respond? How did you feel about that?
 - How was the person you spoke to? Were they helpful?
 - How long did it take to resolve your query? How did you feel about that?
 - Was there any contact after that?
 - How did you feel about your contact (or lack of contact) with them?
 - Do you feel that you were treated well by the person dealing with your case? Why/why not?
 - Probe fully for of all contacts made to SSS/ DWP, but with a focus on how this made the client feel.
- Were you aware of any issues with your child's transfer?
 - If yes – how were these dealt with?
 - Were you satisfied with the support or assistance you received? Why/why not?
 - How did you this issue/these issues make you feel?
- How long did it take for the transfer process to be completed? How did you feel about that?
- Did you report a change in your child's circumstances or a change in their condition during the transfer process?
 - If yes – how did you go about that?
 - When did you report the change?
 - Did you report this to DWP or to Social Security Scotland? Why was that?
 - What happened then?
 - Did you have to provide further details about the change?
 - Did that change the amount of benefit you receive?
 - Did the amount change at the same time as your child's transfer was completed or was it after that?
 - How did you feel about the process for reporting the change in circumstances during the transfer?
- If no contact with SSS/DWP during transfer
 - How did you feel about not hearing from Social Security Scotland during that time?
 - And how did you feel about not hearing from DWP during that time?
- Were you informed when the transfer was complete?
 - How were you informed about this?
 - Was it clear what the next steps would be?
 - Was there anything that was unclear to you?

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you know where to go for further information or support? ● How did you feel once the transfer was complete? |
| | Section 3 – Review process |
| 10 minutes | <p>I'd now like to talk about what has happened now that the transfer of your child's benefit to Social Security Scotland has completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Were there any issues with your payment at any point? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes – what issues did you experience? ○ Was this resolved? What happened to resolve it? ○ How did this issue make you feel? ○ If no – so just to check, did you receive payments on time? And was the amount correct? ● Was there anything that you had to do after the transfer process had ended? Prompt if necessary: Did you have to tell any other benefit providers/agencies? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who did you tell? |

- How did that go?
- How did you feel about that?
- Ask if necessary: After the DWP award was transferred to the new Scottish child disability benefit award, did you experience any issues with your other benefit awards?
 - Were payment amounts for other awards impacted?
 - If so:
 - Which benefits?
 - By how much?
 - How did this make you feel?
- Have you been contacted about a review of your child's award?
 - If yes –And have you actually had the review yet?
 - When did you first hear that there was going to be a review?
 - How were you informed about it?
 - Did you receive any information or guidance about the review?
 - What is/was your understanding of how the review would be/will be conducted?
 - Do you/Did you think it will/would be the same or different to any reviews your child had under DWP?
 - Was there anything you didn't understand or were unsure of?
 - Did you contact anyone about that or look for any more information anywhere?
 - What were your initial feelings about the review?
 - Probe fully on all aspects of pre-review contact, but with a focus on how this made the client feel.

Ask those who had a review:

- And how did the review go?
 - Was it what you expected?
 - Can you talk me through what happened?
 - What did you think of the review pack?
 - Were there any bits that were unclear?
 - How easy or difficult was it to complete?
 - How did you feel throughout the process?
 - Do you feel the review was conducted fairly?
 - Have you received an outcome?
 - If yes – how were you informed about this?
 - How did you feel about the outcome?

- How much confidence do you have that Social Security Scotland made the right decision with your award?
 - If no – do you know when it will be?
 - How are you feeling about it? Do you think your case will be considered fairly?
 - How much confidence do you have that Social Security Scotland will make the right decision with your award?
- Probe fully on all aspects of review/outcome, but with a focus on how this made the client feel.
- How does your experience of the review process with Social Security Scotland compare with previous ones you've had with DWP?
- Did you have a consultation as part of your review? That's a discussion with someone from Social Security Scotland about your needs which can take place on the phone, by video call or face-to-face.
- If yes – how did that go?
- Was it what you expected?
- How did you feel about it in advance? During it?
- How did it compare with any assessments you had with DWP?

Ask only those who have not had a review yet:

- Have you had any information about a review?
 - If not: What information would you like at this point?
 - Have you tried to find out about it or been able to speak to anyone about it?
- Do you know what to expect with the review?
- How do you feel now about the review? Why is that?
 - Do you think you'd feel differently about your review if it was still with DWP? Why is that?
- Most people will not need to have a consultation as part of the review. If they do, that can take place by phone, video or in person. If your child did have a consultation how would with

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| | <p>Social Security Scotland, how do you think you would you feel about that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would you feel the same or different if it was DWP? ○ Why/why not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, if anything, do you know about Social Security Scotland’s consultations? What would you like to know more about? |
| | <p>Section 4 – Experiences with Social Security Scotland</p> |
| <p>10-15 minutes</p> | <p>We’re coming towards the end of the interview now. The last few questions are about your overall thoughts on the transfer processes, and your views of Social Security Scotland based on your experiences so far.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, how would you describe your experience of the transfer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you could summarise it in one word, what would it be? • One of the aims of the transfer process is to ensure that it is “safe and secure” – to what extent would you agree that this was the case for you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why/why not? ○ What does a “safe and secure” transfer mean to you? • What, if anything, do you think worked well with the transfer process? Probe: and what difference did that make to you/your child? • And what, if anything, do you think could be improved with the transfer process? Probe: and what difference would that have made to you/your child? • Has your experience with the transfer of your child’s benefit affected your views on Social Security Scotland? How so? [could refer back to earlier discussion around awareness of SSS before transfer] • In what ways, if any, has your experience with Social Security Scotland been different to your experience with DWP? • And in what ways, if any, has your experience with Social Security Scotland been similar to your experience with DWP? |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think of the communication you have had with Social Security Scotland so far – has it been too much, too little or about right? Why do you say that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How has the amount of communication made you feel about the transfer process, and about Social Security Scotland? ○ How does that compare with the communication you had with DWP? Better, worse, or no different? [If better/worse] Why do you say that? • Would you know how to report a change in your child’s circumstances to Social Security Scotland in the future? • How comfortable or uncomfortable would you feel about reporting a change in your child’s circumstances to Social Security Scotland in the future? Why is that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How does that compare with the communication you had with DWP? Would you say you feel more or less comfortable, or no different? • To what extent would you say you trust or distrust Social Security Scotland? Why do you say that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has your trust in Social Security Scotland been impacted by your experience with the transfer process? If yes – how so? ○ How does your level of trust in Social Security Scotland compare to your level of trust in DWP? • Overall, how do you feel about the fact that your child is now on CDP instead of DLAC? • And how do you feel about the fact that CDP is delivered by Social Security Scotland rather than DWP? • What would you say to someone else who was about to go through the transfer process? |
| | Section 5 – Wrap up |
| 2-5 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any other parts of the process or experiences that we've not asked about that you'd like to share? • Or anything else you'd like to say? <p>Thank participant for their time and input.</p> |

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| | <p>Explain next steps and gather incentive details.</p> |
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| | <p>End on a light note by asking what they have planned for the rest of the day.</p> |
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Phase 1: DLA – ADP client guide

| Time | Questions/probes |
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| | Introduction / warm-up |
| 5 minutes | <p>[Interviewer to introduce self & thank participant for taking part. Explain the purpose of the session/research.]</p> <p>We (Ipsos Scotland, an independent research organisation) are carrying out some research about your experiences of the transfer process which moved your benefit from DWP to Social Security Scotland.</p> <p>The research is being conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government</p> <p>The purpose of this study is to understand how the transfer process is working, what's going well and what could be improved. We are particularly interested in the review element, if you've had one. We are also talking to some Social Security Scotland staff who work on the transfers.</p> <p>The discussion will last for around 45 minutes and, as you know, you will receive £30 as a thank you for your time. We can sort that out at the end.</p> <p>Conversation will be relaxed and informal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No right or wrong answers, just keen to hear what you think. • Explain independence of Ipsos and that everything shared will be treated anonymously. No identifying information will be included in report. • Taking part completely voluntary, don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. • Explain audio-recording and ask for consent to use. <p>Warm-up questions:</p> <p>To start us off, can you tell me a bit about where you live and who you live with...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you live? How long have you lived there? • Who do you live with? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If have children: How old are they? • And what's a typical day for you – if there's such a thing? • Could you tell me just a little bit about your condition or disability? |

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| | <p>Remind participant that they do not have to go into detail if they do not want to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And could you tell me a bit about the disability benefit you receive? Sense check which disability benefit client was receiving – PIP or WADLA • We'll go into more detail about the different aspects of the transfer process and review in a minute, but could you just tell me how you found it overall? • Probe: What aspects worked well or went smoothly? • And were there any problems or anything you didn't think worked well? |
| | <p>Section 1 – Review Process</p> |
| <p>10 minutes</p> | <p>I'd like to start off by talking about what has happened now that the transfer of your benefit to Social Security Scotland has been completed -- specifically focussing on the review aspect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before the transfer took place, do you know when you would have been due a review of your PIP/DLA award? • Have you been contacted about a review of your award? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes –And have you had the review yet? ○ When did you first hear that there was going to be a review? ○ How were you informed about it? ○ Did you receive any information or guidance about the review? ○ What is/was your understanding of how the review would be/will be conducted? ○ Do you/Did you think it will/would be the same or different to any reviews you had under DWP? ○ Was there anything you didn't understand or were unsure of? ○ Did you contact anyone about that or look for any more information anywhere? ○ What were your initial feelings about the review? ○ Probe fully on all aspects of pre-review contact, but with a focus on how this made the client feel. <p>Ask those who had a review:</p> |

- And how did the review go?
 - Was it what you expected?
 - Can you talk me through what happened?
 - What did you think of the review pack?
 - Were there any bits that were unclear?
 - How easy or difficult was it to complete?
 - How did you feel throughout the process?
 - Do you feel the review was conducted fairly?
 - Have you received an outcome?
 - If yes – how were you informed about this?
 - How did you feel about the outcome?
 - How much confidence do you have that Social Security Scotland made the right decision with your award?
 - If no – do you know when it will be?
 - How are you feeling about it?
Do you think your case will be considered fairly?
 - How much confidence do you have that Social Security Scotland will make the right decision with your award?
 - Probe fully on all aspects of review/outcome, but with a focus on how this made the client feel.

- How does your experience of the review process with Social Security Scotland compare with previous ones you've had with DWP?

- Did you have a consultation as part of your review? That's a discussion with someone from Social Security Scotland about your needs which can take place on the phone, by video call or face-to-face.
 - If yes – how did that go?
 - Was it what you expected?
 - How did you feel about it in advance? During it?
 - How did it compare with any assessments you had with DWP?

Ask only those who have not been contacted about a review:

- Have you had any information about a review?
 - If not: What information would you like at this point?
 - Have you tried to find out about it or been able to speak to anyone about it?

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know what to expect with the review? • How do you feel now about the review? Why is that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you think you'd feel differently about your review if it was still with DWP? Why is that? • Most people will not need to have a consultation as part of the review. If they do, that can take place by phone, video or in person. If you did have a consultation with Social Security Scotland, how do you think you would you feel about that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would you feel the same or different if it was DWP? Why/why not? • What, if anything, do you know about Social Security Scotland's consultations? What would you like to know more about? |
| | Section 2 – First contact about case transfer |
| 10 minutes | <p>Okay, now I want to wind back to the very start of the process. This might be going back a while now, but I'd be interested to know what the earliest part of the transfer process was like for you, from what you remember.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roughly when did you first hear about your benefit being transferred from Social Security Scotland to DWP? • Had you reported a change in your circumstances or condition to DWP before you heard about about the transfer? • When you first heard about the transfer, can you remember what your immediate reaction was? • How did you hear about the transfer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you receive a letter? ○ If not mentioned: Can you remember who the letter came from? ○ What do you remember about what the letter said? ○ Had you heard anything previously about benefits being transferred? ○ If yes, where from? Did you realise it would affect you? • How did you feel about the transfer when you first heard about it? |

- Had you heard of Social Security Scotland before hearing about the transfer of disability benefits to them?
 - If yes – what was your impression/experience of Social Security Scotland?

- [if not mentioned] You might remember receiving a goodbye letter from DWP?

- If yes: What was your initial reaction to that letter from DWP? How did it make you feel?

- What can you remember about what the letter said?
 - Was there anything about the letter that particularly stood out?
 - Was there anything in the letter that was unclear to you?
 - Did you know where you could go if you needed further information or support?
 - And did you look for further information or support?
 - Where from? Probe on how they knew about this source of info/support
 - Did you find/get what you needed?

- How did the letter make you feel about the transfer process, overall?

- Did you have confidence in the process? If needed: Did you feel clear about what was going to happen next from the details in the letter?

- [if not mentioned] You might remember receiving a hello letter from Social Security Scotland.

- What was your initial reaction to the letter you received from Social Security Scotland? How did it make you feel?

- What can you remember about what the letter said?
 - Was there anything about the letter that particularly stood out?
 - Was there anything in the letter that was unclear to you?
 - Did you know where you could go if you needed further information or support?
 - And did you look for further information or support?
 - Where from? Probe on how they knew about this source of info/support

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you find/get what you needed? ● How did the letter make you feel about the transfer process, overall? ● Did you have confidence in the process? If needed: Did you feel clear about what was going to happen next from the details in the letter? ● Were you offered the option to move your benefit before you received the letter about the transfer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If no – had you had this option, would you have taken it? Why/Why not? ○ If yes – did you take this option? Why/Why not? |
| | Section 3 – Actual transfer process |
| 15-20 minutes | <p>I'd now like to talk about the transfer process itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● After you received the first letters from DWP and Social Security Scotland about your transfer, can you talk me through what happened next? Allow participant to speak freely first before going through probes ● How did you feel about it all? Probe: Were there points where you felt anxious or worried about it? Did you feel confused at any point or unsure what was happening? Did you feel confident that everything would go smoothly? ● How did you feel about Social Security Scotland throughout the process? ● Did your attitude towards them change at all? ● Were you contacted by Social Security Scotland or DWP at any point during the transfer process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes – Who contacted you? ○ Why did they contact you? ○ How did they contact you? ○ Was any action required by you? ○ If yes, probe: ○ Was it clear what they needed from you? ○ How easy or difficult was it to provide what they needed? |

- Did you feel that their requests were reasonable?
 - Ask all:
 - How long did it take to resolve? Was this timescale acceptable for you?
 - Was there any contact after that?
 - How did you feel about your contact with the person dealing with your case? Why is that?
 - Do you feel that you were treated well by the person dealing with your case? Why/why not?
 - Probe fully for of all contacts made by SSS/DWP, but with a focus on how this made the client feel.
- Did you contact Social Security Scotland or DWP at any point during the transfer process?
 - If yes – Which? Why did you contact them?
 - How did that go?
 - How did you contact them?
 - How long did they take to respond? How did you feel about that?
 - How was the person you spoke to? Were they helpful?
 - How long did it take to resolve your query? How did you feel about that?
 - Was there any contact after that?
 - How did you feel about your contact (or lack of contact) with them?
 - Do you feel that you were treated well by the person dealing with your case? Why/why not?
 - Probe fully for of all contacts made to SSS/ DWP, but with a focus on how this made the client feel.
 - Were you aware of any issues with your transfer?
 - If yes – how were these dealt with?
 - Were you satisfied with the support or assistance you received? Why/why not?
 - How did this issue/these issues make you feel?
 - How long did it take for the transfer process to be completed? How did you feel about that?

If reporting a change of circumstances wasn't the reason for the transfer, ask:

- Did you report a change in circumstances or a change in your condition during the transfer process?
 - If yes – how did you go about that?
 - When did you report the change?
 - Did you report this to DWP or to Social Security Scotland?
 - What happened then?
 - Did you have to provide further details about the change?

- Did that change the amount of benefit you receive?
 - Did the amount change at the same time as your transfer was completed or was it after that?
 - How did you feel about the process for reporting your change in circumstances during the transfer?
- If no contact with SSS/DWP during transfer
 - How did you feel about not hearing from Social Security Scotland during that time?
 - And how did you feel about not hearing from DWP during that time?
- Were you informed when the transfer was complete?
 - How were you informed about this?
 - Was it clear what the next steps would be?
 - Was there anything that was unclear to you?
 - Did you know where to go for further information or support?
- How did you feel once the transfer was complete?
- Were there any issues with your payment at any point?
 - If yes – what issues did you experience?
 - Was this resolved? What happened to resolve it?
 - How did this issue make you feel?
 - If no – so just to check, did you receive payments on time? And was the amount correct?
- Was there anything that you had to do after the transfer process had ended?

Prompt if necessary: Did you have to tell any other benefit providers/agencies?

 - Who did you tell?
 - How did that go?
 - How did you feel about that?
- Ask if necessary: After your DWP award was transferred to the new Scottish disability benefit award, did you experience any issues with your other benefit awards?
 - Were payment amounts for other awards impacted?
 - If so:
 - Which benefits?
 - By how much?
 - How did this make you feel?

| | |
|---------------|--|
| | Section 4 – Experiences with Social Security Scotland |
| 10-15 minutes | <p>We're coming to the end of the interview now. The last few questions are about your overall thoughts on the transfer processes, and your views of Social Security Scotland based on your experiences so far.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, how would you describe your experience of the transfer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you could summarise it in one word, what would it be? • One of the aims of the transfer process is to ensure that it is “safe and secure” – to what extent would you agree that this was the case for you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why/why not? ○ What does a “safe and secure” transfer mean to you? • What, if anything, do you think worked well with the transfer process? Probe: and what difference did that make to you? • And what, if anything, do you think could be improved with the transfer process? Probe: and what difference would that have made to you? • Has your experience with the transfer of your benefit affected your views on Social Security Scotland? In what way? Could refer back to earlier discussion around awareness of SSS before transfer • In what ways, if any, has your experience with Social Security Scotland been different to your experience with DWP? • And in what ways, if any, has your experience with Social Security Scotland been similar to your experience with DWP? • What do you think of the communication you have had with Social Security Scotland so far – has it been too much, too little or about right? Why do you say that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How has the amount of communication made you feel about the transfer process, and about Social Security Scotland? ○ How does that compare with the communication you had with DWP? Better, worse, or no different? [If better/worse] Why do you say that? |

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you know how to report a change in circumstances to Social Security Scotland in the future? • How comfortable or uncomfortable would you feel about reporting a change in circumstances to Social Security Scotland in the future? Why is that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How does that compare with DWP? Would you say you feel more or less comfortable, or no different? • To what extent would you say you trust or distrust Social Security Scotland? Why do you say that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has your trust in Social Security Scotland been impacted by your experience with the transfer process? If yes – how so? ○ How does your level of trust in Social Security Scotland compare to your level of trust in DWP? • Overall, how do you feel about the fact that you're now on ADP instead of PIP/DLA? • And how do you feel about the fact that ADP is delivered by Social Security Scotland rather than DWP? • What would you say to someone else who was about to go through the transfer process? |
| | <p>Section 5 – Wrap up</p> |
| <p>2-5 minutes</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any other parts of the process or experiences that we've not asked about that you'd like to share? • Or anything else you'd like to say? <p>Thank participant for their time and input.</p> <p>Explain next steps and gather incentive details.</p> <p>You might remember that we mentioned the possibility of the Scottish Government doing further research on this topic in the future. They are interested in understanding longer term impacts that having your case transferred to Social Security Scotland has had on you, including your review, for example. You would therefore be invited to an interview similar to this. This research is likely to take place in the first part of next year, so 2024. If you are interested and would like to contribute to this further research for the Scottish Government, then I will record your full name and the best way to reach out to you. These details will be passed on securely to the Scottish Government from us at Ipsos. Please be reassured that your details will not be used for any other purposes other than for the research in question.</p> |

Would you like the website address so you can access the Scottish Government's Privacy Notice which will explain that your data will only be used for the purposes of this research, including a bit more detail about how it will be handled and stored securely?

If yes – Do you have a pen and paper to hand? The address is <https://www.gov.scot/publications/disability-benefits-evaluation-research-privacy-notice/>
(check that they have written this down correctly)

If not possible – I understand. If you are interested in taking part in further research and you would like further reassurance on how your data will be used, the Scottish Government can send out a copy of the Privacy Notice to you by your preferred method of contact. They will be very happy to do this.

Are you happy for us to pass your contact details to Scottish Government so that they can invite you to take part in this further research? (If needed, provide reassurance that their contact details won't be connected with any answers they've given in this interview).

If yes – Can I check that your full name is? (write full name)

If yes – check preferred method of contact (phone, email or post) and confirm relevant details (check for postal address if needed for Privacy Notice)

- End on a light note by asking what they have planned for the rest of the day.

Phase 1: staff (Client Advisors)

- Introduce self and Ipsos
- Introduce the research: The Scottish Government has commissioned Ipsos Scotland to help them understand the experiences of clients and staff involved in the case transfer of disability benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to Social Security Scotland. The aim of the research is to understand what is working well about the process and what could be improved.
- Explain that the group will last around an hour and a half.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be passed on to anyone outwith the Ipsos research team, so it will not be possible for the Scottish Government, colleagues at Social Security Scotland or anyone else to identify individuals in any reports that Ipsos produce. Notes and audio files will be securely stored and securely deleted one year after the research finishes.

Similarly, can I ask that you don't share outside the group what anyone else said, as I want you to feel you can be really honest.

- Remind participants that they don't have to answer any questions they don't want to answer, and that they are welcome to leave the group at any time.
- Request permission to record interview. Explain that this is for transcription and analysis purposes and that recordings will not be shared outside the research team at Ipsos.

Introductions/Warm up:

Can I ask you each to introduce yourself and tell me your name, what your role is and how long you've been in that role?

And tell me what you enjoy most and least about your job at the moment.

What did you do before that? Have you been in a similar role before?

If not mentioned ask: Have you worked for DWP before? What was that like?

Are you currently working on ADP or CDP case transfers or both? Have you worked on CDP transfers in the past?

Note to interviewer – throughout discussion, where prompted and/or appropriate, focus on perceived impact of the case transfer process on clients.

Overall views on the case transfer process:

Before we get into the case transfer process in detail, can you tell me briefly how you've found the process overall?

What aspects, if any, are working well?

What aspects, if any, are not working so well?

Ask if working/worked on different kinds of transfers: are there any differences in how well the process works depending on which benefit is being transferred?

If yes, probe fully on all benefits: PIP, WADLA, DLAC and which works better/worse

Exercise:

Introduce logic model:

This logic model is a way of offsetting out clearly what the case transfer process is meant to do. We use the logic model as part of this research to help us identify the ways in which the case transfer process is and isn't working as it should. It has been developed in line with Social Security Scotland's policy commitments and principles.

Explain each column in diagram:

- What resources and elements go into it (inputs)
- What are the policy commitments and activities that support this
- What is it meant to achieve (outcomes)
- What are the potential risks to achieving the aims

Before today were you aware of these policy commitments?

Ask them to mark in green the policy commitments and outcomes they think are happening/likely to happen and mark in red those that are not always/not likely to happen. Also to note if there is anything they feel is missing.

Discuss.

I'd like now to go through some different aspects of the process in a bit more detail and get your views on them.

Client communications:

Are you aware of any common concerns that clients have about the case transfer process?

If yes: What about? How do you become aware of these? Do you feel you can respond to or deal with these?

Are you aware of any common misunderstandings or problems that clients have?

If yes: What about? What happens when clients have problems? What communications do clients receive about the case transfer process?

If not mentioned: Are you aware of any clients who have not received communications about the transfer process? How did you become aware of this? How was it resolved? What impact, if any, do you think this had on the client?

How clear do you think the communication with clients about the transfer process is?

How do you think clients feel about the communication they receive from Social Security Scotland?

Are there particular client groups who find communications less clear? Prompt if necessary: people with different types of conditions, type of benefit, people with lower literacy, people with English as an additional language etc.

Are there any times when clients would get in touch you?

If yes: What are the main reasons for this? How are these handled?

What, if anything, would improve client communications? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients and b) you and your colleagues?

For any improvements mentioned: Have you been able to give this feedback to your manager? Did/would you feel comfortable doing so?

For other issues mentioned, if applicable: is this something you have been able to give feedback on to your manager? Did/would you feel comfortable doing so?

Case transfer systems:

I understand the case transfer process is designed to be fully automated, with some exceptions (drop-out tasks).

First, thinking about when the case transfer process is automatic, do you hear much from clients during this time? What are the main reasons for hearing from them?

If yes – And how do clients seem when they get in touch?

If there are exceptions (drop-out tasks) can you talk me through what happens with those cases?

What are the main reasons for cases having to be dealt with manually?

And how much contact do you have with clients while dealing with these drop-out tasks? Are they aware of this happening? How do clients respond in these situations? (probe if necessary: do they seem anxious? Annoyed? Upset? Not bothered?)

Are there any types of cases that are trickier to deal with? Probe on: type of benefit, condition, client group, missing information

What impact do you think this has on clients? Does it vary depending on the case?

Is it clear what you are supposed to do? Are there any grey areas? What, if anything, would you like more guidance on?

If you need support with a drop-out task, what do you do? How is that for you?

Is there anything that could be done to improve this aspect of the process? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients and b) you and your colleagues?

Requesting information from clients:

How often do you have to request further information from clients to help with the case transfer? What are the circumstances in which you would need to request information from clients?

Can you briefly talk me through how this works? Probe: Do you write to clients or try to speak to them over the phone?

What kind of information do you tend to have to request? How do clients respond to this?

How do you feel about contacting clients? How would you describe the relationship or the tone of the conversations/emails? Prompt if necessary: friendly or more formal? How are clients with you?

How do clients feel about you getting in touch? What impact – if any – do you think the request for further information has on the client's experience of the transfer process?

When it comes to case transfers for people on Working Age Disability Living Allowance (WADLA), I understand that some information held by DWP on these cases is very old so cannot be used without an individual's permission. Do you have any experience of these cases?

If yes: how does the process of collecting consent work? How does this affect clients?

If participants mentioned that they have worked for DWP before): How does the process of requesting information from clients by Social Security Scotland compare with DWP?

Is there anything that could be done to improve this part of the process? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients and b) you and your colleagues?

Case approval:

When cases are sent for approval to Team Support Officers or Team Managers, how does that work?

What works well or less well about the approval process? How – if at all – does this affect clients?

Do you get any feedback on the case from them? Is this feedback useful? What happens to it?

Now moving on to another topic.

Training, guidance and support:

Thinking back to when you first started working on case transfers, what initial training did you get on the process?

If not mentioned: were you trained on ADP and CDP together or at different times? Check differences between ADP/CDP training throughout if applicable.

To what extent – if at all – do you think the training covers the policy commitments for case transfer? Show logic model again and probe fully on:

- Completing as fast as possible while maintaining a “safe and secure” transfer
- Clear communications with individuals
- Correct payment at the right time
- For each ask: does the training help you to deliver this in your job?

If not mentioned: To what extent, if at all, has the training focussed on managing the client’s experience? What do you think about that? If not a focus – do you think it should be?

How useful did you find the initial training? How much do you feel you use the training in practice? Is there anything you use more or less of? Where appropriate, refer back to aspects of training/policy commitments mentioned.

Can you remember if there were aspects of the process that you were still unsure of after the training?

Knowing what you know now, how could the initial training be improved?

Have you had any more training on case transfer since then?

If yes: what did that cover? How useful was it?

What other guidance or support have you received?

Probe on:

- Written/online guidance?
- Advice from supervisors/senior staff?
- Advice from peers?
- For each: How helpful did you find this? Whether they sought it out or were given it.

Have you ever provided advice or guidance to colleagues?

How, if at all, does the guidance and support to deliver the case transfer process affect staff wellbeing at your level? What about other levels? What further guidance or support would be helpful? If lots of things mentioned: Which would you prioritise?

What aspects of the case transfer process do you think are least likely to be understood or followed correctly by staff? Refer back to any challenges/difficulties/policy commitments raised during earlier discussion.

What could be done to improve this? And what impact do you think this would have on a) clients, and b) you and your colleagues?

We’re coming up to the end of the discussion now.

Ways in which the process could be improved:

What would make the case transfer process more efficient and enable cases to be transferred more quickly? Probe on: client communications, systems, guidance.

Apart from things you've already mentioned, are there any other ways that you think the case transfer process could be improved?

Probe on:

- Ways to improve the case transfer process?
- Ways to improve the client experience?
- Ways to improve the staff experience?
- As you know, the values of dignity, fairness and respect are meant to be embedded into Social Security Scotland systems. Is there anything that could be done in relation to the case transfer process that would increase dignity, fairness or respect?

And finally, is there anything else you want to say?

Explain next steps, thank and close.

Phase 1: staff (Team Managers and Team Support Officers)

- Introduce self and Ipsos
- Introduce the research: The Scottish Government has commissioned Ipsos Scotland to help them understand the experiences of clients and staff involved in the case transfer of disability benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to Social Security Scotland. The aim of the research is to understand what is working well about the process and what could be improved.
- Explain that the discussion will last around an hour.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be passed on to anyone outwith the Ipsos research team, so it will not be possible for the Scottish Government, colleagues at Social Security Scotland or anyone else to identify individuals in any reports that Ipsos produce. Notes and audio files will be securely stored and securely deleted one year after the research finishes. Similarly, can I ask that you don't share what we discuss outside the room as I want you to feel you can be really honest.
- Remind participants that they don't have to answer any questions they don't want to answer, and that they are welcome to leave the interview at any time.
- Request permission to record interview. Explain that this is for transcription and analysis purposes and that recordings will not be shared outside the research team at Ipsos.

Introductions/Warm up:

Can I ask you each to introduce yourself and tell me your name, what your role is and how long you've been in that role?

And tell me what you enjoy most and least about your job at the moment.

What did you do before that? Have you been in a similar role before?

Are you currently working on ADP or CDP case transfers or both? Have you worked on CDP transfers in the past?

If not mentioned ask: Have you worked for DWP before? What was that like?

Interviewer take note of previous DWP experience and refer back to this at appropriate points for any similarities/differences.

Note to interviewer – throughout discussion, where prompted and/or appropriate, focus on perceived impact of the case transfer process on clients.

Overall views on the case transfer process:

Before we get into the case transfer process in detail, can you tell me briefly how you've found the process overall?

What aspects, if any, are working well?

What aspects, if any, are not working so well?

Ask if working/worked on different kinds of transfers: are there any differences in how well the process works depending on which benefit is being transferred?

If yes, probe fully on all benefits: PIP, WADLA, DLAC

Ask if worked for DWP before: From your perspective, what are the key differences or similarities between DWP and Social Security Scotland systems?

Exercise:

Introduce logic model.

This logic model is a way of setting out clearly what the case transfer process is meant to do. We use the logic model as part of this research to help us identify the ways in which the case transfer process is and isn't working as it should. It has been developed in line with Social Security Scotland's policy commitments and principles.

Explain each column in diagram:

- What resources and elements go into it (inputs)
- What are the policy commitments and activities that support this
- What is it meant to achieve (outcomes)
- What are the potential risks to achieving the aims

Before today were you aware of these policy commitments?

Ask them to mark in green the policy commitments and outcomes they think are happening/ likely to happen and mark in red those that are not always/not likely to happen. Also to note if there is anything they feel is missing.

Discuss.

Do you think [client advisors/team support officers] are familiar with these policy commitments? If not covered: Can you think of examples where the policy commitments are demonstrated in their work?

I'd like now to go through different aspects of the process in more detail and get your views on them.

Client communications:

Are you aware of any common concerns that clients have about the case transfer process?

If yes: What about? How do you become aware of these? How are these responded to or dealt with? How easy or difficult is it to manage these?

Are you aware of any common misunderstandings or problems that clients have?

If yes: What about? What happens when clients have problems?

What communications do clients receive about the case transfer process?

If not mentioned: Are you aware of any clients who have not received communications about the transfer process? How did you become aware of this? How was it resolved? What impact, if any, do you think this had on the client?

How clear do you think the communication with clients about the transfer process is?

How do you think clients feel about the communication they receive from Social Security Scotland?

Are you aware of particular client groups who find communications less clear? Prompt if necessary: people with different types of conditions, type of benefit, people with lower literacy, people with English as an additional language etc.

What, if anything, would improve client communications? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients, and b) staff?

Case transfer systems:

I understand the case transfer process is designed to be fully automated, with some exceptions (drop-out tasks).

First, thinking about when the case transfer process is automatic, do you hear much from clients during this time? What are the main reasons for hearing from them?

If yes – And how do clients seem when they get in touch?

If there are exceptions (drop-out tasks) can you talk me through what happens with those cases?

What are the main reasons for cases having to be dealt with manually?

And how much contact do client advisors have with clients while dealing with drop-out tasks? To what extent are clients aware of this happening? How do clients respond in these situations (probe if necessary: do they seem anxious? Annoyed? Upset? Not bothered?)

Are client advisors clear on how they are supposed to deal with these issues?

Are there any types of cases that client advisors find trickier to deal with? Probe on: type of benefit, condition, client group, missing information

What impact do you think this has on clients? Does it vary depending on the case?

If participants have worked on case transfer for DWP before: how does the DWP automated system compare with the Social Security Scotland one? Probe on any differences and whether these are better/worse.

Is there anything that could be done to improve this aspect of the process? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients and b) you and your colleagues?

Case approval:

When cases are sent to you for approval, how does that work? Can you talk me through what you do?

What aspects, if any, are working well? How – if at all – does this affect clients?

What aspects, if any, are not working so well? How – if at all – does this affect clients?

Is there anything that could be done to improve this aspect of the process? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients and b) you and your colleagues?

Are there any common mistakes or misunderstandings you see from [client advisors/team support officers]?

- What do you think is at the root of these?
- What impact - if any - does this have on clients?
- What do you think could be done to resolve or improve things?

Now moving on to another topic.

Questions from staff:

What are the most common questions you've had from staff about the case transfer process?

On what aspects have they asked for advice or support?

If not covered already: Are there particular types of case that staff find more difficult?

Probe for all examples and for each ask:

- How easy or difficult have you found it to answer questions/advise?
- Is it mainly the newer staff who ask questions or ask for support?
- Is there anything that would make it easier for you to advise staff?
- What do you do if you have questions or want some support yourself?
- How – if at all – do you think these types of cases affect the client's experience of the transfer process?

On what aspects, or types of case, have you had questions/wanted support?

How easy or difficult is it to seek support from policy or programme colleagues?

Do you feed back to anyone else like Policy or Learning and Development?

Is there any guidance or support that you would find helpful? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients and b) you and your colleagues?

Training, Guidance and Support

Thinking back to when you first started working on case transfers, what initial training did you get on the process?

To what extent – if at all – do you think the training covers the policy commitments for case transfer? Show logic model again and probe on:

- Completing as fast as possible while maintaining a "safe and secure" transfer
- Clear communications with individuals
- Correct payment at the right time
- For each ask: does the training help you to deliver this in your job?

If not mentioned: To what extent, if at all, has the training focussed on managing the client's experience? What do you think about that? If not a focus – do you think it should be?

How useful did you find the initial training?

Can you remember if there were aspects of the process that you were still unsure of after the training?

Knowing what you know now, how could the initial training be improved?

Have you had any more training on case transfer since then?

If yes: what did that cover? How useful was it?

What further training do you think would be helpful?

If more than one thing mentioned ask: which would you prioritise?

What other guidance or support have you received?

Probe on:

- Written/online guidance?
- Advice from senior staff?
- Advice from peers?
- For each: How helpful did you find this? Whether they sought it out or were given it.

If not covered already: Have you ever provided advice or guidance to colleagues?

How, if at all, does the guidance and support to deliver the case transfer process affect staff wellbeing at your level? What about other levels?

What further guidance or support would be helpful? If lots of things mentioned: Which would you prioritise?

If not covered already: What aspects of the case transfer process do you think are least likely to be understood or followed correctly by staff?

What could be done to improve this? And what impact do you think this would have on a)clients , and b) you and your colleagues?

We're coming up to the end of the discussion now.

Ways in which the process could be improved:

What would make the case transfer process more efficient and enable cases to be transferred more quickly? Probe on: client communications, systems, guidance.

Apart from things you've already mentioned, are there any other ways that you think the case transfer process could be improved?

Probe on:

- Ways to improve the client experience?
- Ways to improve the staff experience?
- If applicable: Is there anything that Social Security Scotland could learn from the way things were done at DWP in terms of the case transfer process? Or is there anything that's better about the way things are done at Social Security Scotland?

As you know, the values of dignity, fairness and respect are meant to be embedded into Social Security Scotland systems. Is there anything that could be done in relation to the case transfer process that would increase dignity, fairness or respect?

And finally, is there anything else you want to say?

Explain next steps, thank and close.

Phase 2: DLA/PIP – ADP client guide

| Time | Questions/probes |
|---|--|
| | Introduction and warm-up |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 minutes | <p>Interviewer to introduce self & thank participant for taking part. Explain the purpose of the session/research.</p> <p>We (Ipsos Scotland, an independent research organisation) are carrying out some research about your experiences of the transfer process which moved your benefit from DWP to Social Security Scotland.</p> <p>The research is being conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government</p> <p>The purpose of this study is to understand how the transfer process is working, what's going well and what could be improved. We are particularly interested in the review element, if you've had one. We are also talking to some Social Security Scotland staff who work on the transfers.</p> <p>The discussion will last for around 45 minutes and, as you know, you will receive £30 as a thank you for your time. We can sort that out at the end.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation will be relaxed and informal • No right or wrong answers, just keen to hear what you think. • Explain independence of Ipsos and that everything shared will be treated anonymously. No identifying information will be included in report. • Taking part completely voluntary, don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. • Explain audio-recording and ask for consent to use. <p>Warm-up questions:</p> <p>To start us off, can you tell me a bit about where you live and who you live with...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you live? How long have you lived there? • Who do you live with? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If have children: How old are they? • And what's a typical day for you – if there's such a thing? • Could you tell me just a little bit about your condition or disability? |

| | |
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| | <p>Remind participant that they do not have to go into detail if they do not want to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And could you tell me a bit about the disability benefit you receive? Sense check which disability benefit client was receiving – PIP or WADLA • We'll go into more detail about the different aspects of the transfer process and review in a minute, but could you just tell me how you found it overall? • Probe: What aspects worked well or went smoothly? • And were there any problems or anything you didn't think worked well? |
| | <p>Section 1 – Review Process</p> |
| <p>10 minutes</p> | <p>I'd like to start off by talking about what has happened now that the transfer of your benefit to Social Security Scotland has been completed -- specifically focussing on the review aspect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before the transfer took place, do you know when you would have been due a review of your PIP/DLA award? • Have you been contacted about a review of your award? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes –And have you had the review yet? ○ When did you first hear that there was going to be a review? ○ How were you informed about it? ○ Did you receive any information or guidance about the review? ○ What is/was your understanding of how the review would be/will be conducted? ○ Do you/Did you think it will/would be the same or different to any reviews you had under DWP? ○ Was there anything you didn't understand or were unsure of? ○ Did you contact anyone about that or look for any more information anywhere? ○ What were your initial feelings about the review? ○ Probe fully on all aspects of pre-review contact, but with a focus on how this made the client feel. <p>Ask those who had a review:</p> |

Did you expect there to be a review around this time?
Probe so clear on: Whether they expected a review at all?
If so, whether the timing of it was what they expected?

- And how did the review go?
 - Was it what you expected?
 - Can you talk me through what happened?
 - What did you think of the review pack?
 - Were there any bits that were unclear?
 - How easy or difficult was it to complete?
 - How did you feel throughout the process?
 - Do you feel the review was conducted fairly?
 - Have you received an outcome?
 - If yes – how were you informed about this?
 - How did you feel about the outcome?
 - What impact has the outcome had on you?
 - How much confidence do you have that Social Security Scotland made the right decision with your award?
 - Do you feel that they considered your individual situation and needs?
 - Has the outcome affected your views on Social Security Scotland?
 - If no – do you know when it will be?
 - How are you feeling about it?
Do you think your case will be considered fairly?
 - How much confidence do you have that Social Security Scotland will make the right decision with your award?
 - If not already mentioned: What contact, if any, did you have with Social Security Scotland staff while your case was being reviewed?

Probe on: Did they contact you or the other way around? reason for contact(s)?

How did you feel about that?

- Did you continue to receive your ADP payment throughout the review process?
- Probe fully on all aspects of review/outcome, but with a focus on how this made the client feel.

- How does your experience of the review process with Social Security Scotland compare with previous ones you've had with DWP?
- Did you have a consultation as part of your review? That's a pre-scheduled discussion with a practitioner from Social Security Scotland about your needs which can take place on the phone, by video call or face-to-face [if ness, can say 'a health and social care practitioner'].

Note that client survey responses suggest that some clients confuse 'consultation' with a simple discussion with a CM.

- If yes – how did that go?
- What did they ask about? [probe further if doesn't sound like a consultation]
- Was it what you expected?
- How did you feel about it in advance? During it?
- How did it compare with any assessments you had with DWP?

Ask only those who have not been contacted about a review:

- Have you had any information about a review?
 - If not: What information would you like at this point?
 - Have you tried to find out about it or been able to speak to anyone about it?
- Do you know what to expect with the review?
- How do you feel now about the review? Why is that?
 - Do you think you'd feel differently about your review if it was still with DWP? Why is that?
- Most people will not need to have a consultation as part of the review. If they do, that can take place by phone, video or in person. If you did have a consultation with Social Security Scotland, how do you think you would you feel about that?
 - Would you feel the same or different if it was DWP? Why/why not?
- What, if anything, do you know about Social Security Scotland's consultations? What would you like to know more about?

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| | <p>Check time – if interview has already taken 40 mins or more, skip straight to section 4. If participant is flagging or it's taken 55 mins or more, skip straight to section 5.</p> <p>If short of time, key parts of sections 2 and 3 are highlighted.</p> |
| | <p>Section 2 – First contact about case transfer</p> |
| <p>10 minutes</p> | <p>Okay, now I want to wind back to the very start of the process. This might be going back a while now, but I'd be interested to know what the earliest part of the transfer process was like for you, from what you remember.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roughly when did you first hear about your benefit being transferred from DWP to Social Security Scotland? • Had you reported a change in your circumstances or condition to DWP before you heard about the transfer? • When you first heard about the transfer, can you remember what your immediate reaction was? • How did you hear about the transfer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did you receive a letter? ○ If not mentioned: Can you remember who the letter came from? ○ What do you remember about what the letter said? ○ Had you heard anything previously about benefits being transferred? ○ If yes, where from? Did you realise it would affect you? • How did you feel about the transfer when you first heard about it? • Had you heard of Social Security Scotland before hearing about the transfer of disability benefits to them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes – what was your impression/experience of Social Security Scotland? • [If not mentioned] You might remember receiving a goodbye letter from DWP? • If yes: What was your initial reaction to that letter from DWP? How did it make you feel? • What can you remember about what the letter said? |

- Was there anything about the letter that particularly stood out?
 - Was there anything in the letter that was unclear to you?
 - Did you know where you could go if you needed further information or support?
 - And did you look for further information or support?
 - Where from? Probe on how they knew about this source of info/support
 - Did you find/get what you needed?
- How did the letter make you feel about the transfer process, overall?
- Did you have confidence in the process? If needed: Did you feel clear about what was going to happen next from the details in the letter?
- [if not mentioned] You might remember receiving a hello letter from Social Security Scotland.
- What was your initial reaction to the letter you received from Social Security Scotland? How did it make you feel?
- What can you remember about what the letter said?
 - Was there anything about the letter that particularly stood out?
 - Was there anything in the letter that was unclear to you?
 - Did you know where you could go if you needed further information or support?
 - And did you look for further information or support?
 - Where from? Probe on how they knew about this source of info/support
 - Did you find/get what you needed?
- How did the letter make you feel about the transfer process, overall?
- Did you have confidence in the process? If needed: Did you feel clear about what was going to happen next from the details in the letter?
- Were you offered the option to move your benefit before you received the letter about the transfer?
 - If no – had you had this option, would you have taken it? Why/Why not?
 - If yes – did you take this option? Why/Why not?

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| | Section 3 – Actual transfer process |
| 15-20 minutes | <p>I'd now like to talk about the transfer process itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After you received the first letters from DWP and Social Security Scotland about your transfer, can you talk me through what happened next? Allow participant to speak freely first before going through probes • How did you feel about it all? Probe: Were there points where you felt anxious or worried about it? Did you feel confused at any point or unsure what was happening? Did you feel confident that everything would go smoothly? • How did you feel about Social Security Scotland throughout the process? • Did your attitude towards them change at all? • Were you contacted by Social Security Scotland or DWP at any point during the transfer process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes – Who contacted you? ○ Why did they contact you? ○ How did they contact you? ○ Was any action required by you? ○ If yes, probe: ○ Was it clear what they needed from you? ○ How easy or difficult was it to provide what they needed? ○ Did you feel that their requests were reasonable? ○ Ask all: ○ How long did it take to resolve? Was this timescale acceptable for you? ○ Was there any contact after that? ○ How did you feel about your contact with the person dealing with your case? Why is that? ○ Do you feel that you were treated well by the person dealing with your case? Why/why not? ○ Probe fully for of all contacts made by SSS/DWP, but with a focus on how this made the client feel. • Did you contact Social Security Scotland or DWP at any point during the transfer process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes – Which? Why did you contact them? ○ How did that go? |

- How did you contact them?
- How long did they take to respond? How did you feel about that?
- How was the person you spoke to? Were they helpful?
- How long did it take to resolve your query? How did you feel about that?
- Was there any contact after that?
- How did you feel about your contact (or lack of contact) with them?
- Do you feel that you were treated well by the person dealing with your case? Why/why not?
- Probe fully for of all contacts made to SSS/ DWP, but with a focus on how this made the client feel.

- Were you aware of any issues with your transfer?

- If yes – how were these dealt with?
- Were you satisfied with the support or assistance you received? Why/why not?
- How did this issue/these issues make you feel?

- How long did it take for the transfer process to be completed? How did you feel about that?

If reporting a change of circumstances wasn't the reason for the transfer, ask:

- Did you report a change in circumstances or a change in your condition during the transfer process?
 - If yes – how did you go about that?
 - When did you report the change?
 - Did you report this to DWP or to Social Security Scotland?
 - What happened then?
 - Did you have to provide further details about the change?
 - Did that change the amount of benefit you receive?
 - Did the amount change at the same time as your transfer was completed or was it after that?
 - How did you feel about the process for reporting your change in circumstances during the transfer?
- If no contact with SSS/DWP during transfer
 - How did you feel about not hearing from Social Security Scotland during that time?
 - And how did you feel about not hearing from DWP during that time?
- Were you informed when the transfer was complete?
 - How were you informed about this?
 - Was it clear what the next steps would be?

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Was there anything that was unclear to you? ○ Did you know where to go for further information or support? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did you feel once the transfer was complete? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Were there any issues with your payment at any point? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes – what issues did you experience? ○ Was this resolved? What happened to resolve it? ○ How did this issue make you feel? ○ If no – so just to check, did you receive payments on time? And was the amount correct? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Was there anything that you had to do after the transfer process had ended? <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Prompt if necessary: Did you have to tell any other benefit providers/agencies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who did you tell? ○ How did that go? ○ How did you feel about that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask if necessary: After your DWP award was transferred to the new Scottish disability benefit award, did you experience any issues with your other benefit awards? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Were payment amounts for other awards impacted? ○ If so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which benefits? ▪ By how much? ▪ How did this make you feel? |
| | Section 4 – Experiences with Social Security Scotland |
| 10-15 minutes | <p>We're coming to the end of the interview now. The last few questions are about your overall thoughts on the transfer processes, and your views of Social Security Scotland based on your experiences so far.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overall, how would you describe your experience of the transfer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you could summarise it in one word, what would it be? ● One of the aims of the transfer process is to ensure that it is “safe and secure” – to what extent would you agree that this was the case for you? |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why/why not? ○ What does a “safe and secure” transfer mean to you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, if anything, do you think worked well with the transfer process? Probe: and what difference did that make to you? • And what, if anything, do you think could be improved with the transfer process? Probe: and what difference would that have made to you? • Has your experience with the transfer of your benefit affected your views on Social Security Scotland? In what way? Could refer back to earlier discussion around awareness of SSS before transfer • In what ways, if any, has your experience with Social Security Scotland been different to your experience with DWP? • And in what ways, if any, has your experience with Social Security Scotland been similar to your experience with DWP? • What do you think of the communication you have had with Social Security Scotland so far – has it been too much, too little or about right? Why do you say that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How has the amount of communication made you feel about the transfer process, and about Social Security Scotland? ○ How does that compare with the communication you had with DWP? Better, worse, or no different? [If better/worse] Why do you say that? • Would you know how to report a change in circumstances to Social Security Scotland in the future? • How comfortable or uncomfortable would you feel about reporting a change in circumstances to Social Security Scotland in the future? Why is that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How does that compare with DWP? Would you say you feel more or less comfortable, or no different? • To what extent would you say you trust or distrust Social Security Scotland? Why do you say that? |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has your trust in Social Security Scotland been impacted by your experience with the transfer process? If yes – how so? ○ How does your level of trust in Social Security Scotland compare to your level of trust in DWP? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overall, how do you feel about the fact that you're now on ADP instead of PIP/DLA? ● And how do you feel about the fact that ADP is delivered by Social Security Scotland rather than DWP? ● What would you say to someone else who was about to go through the transfer process? |
| | Section 5 – Wrap up |
| 2-5 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are there any other parts of the process or experiences that we've not asked about that you'd like to share? ● Or anything else you'd like to say? <p>Thank participant for their time and input.</p> <p>Explain next steps and gather incentive details.</p> <p>Ask WADLA clients only: You might remember that we mentioned the possibility of the Scottish Government doing further research on this topic in the future. They are interested in understanding longer term impacts that having your case transferred to Social Security Scotland has had on you, including your review, for example. You would therefore be invited to an interview similar to this. This research is likely to take place in the first part of next year, so 2024. If you are interested and would like to contribute to this further research for the Scottish Government, then I will record your full name and the best way to reach out to you. These details will be passed on securely to the Scottish Government from us at Ipsos. Please be reassured that your details will not be used for any other purposes other than for the research in question.</p> <p>Would you like the website address so you can access the Scottish Government's Privacy Notice which will explain that your data will only be used for the purposes of this research, including a bit more detail about how it will be handled and stored securely?</p> <p>If yes – Do you have a pen and paper to hand? The address is https://www.gov.scot/publications/disability-benefits-evaluation-research-privacy-notice/ (check that they have written this down correctly)</p> |

If not possible – I understand. If you are interested in taking part in further research and you would like further reassurance on how your data will be used, the Scottish Government can send out a copy of the Privacy Notice to you by your preferred method of contact. They will be very happy to do this.

Are you happy for us to pass your contact details to Scottish Government so that they can invite you to take part in this further research? (If needed, provide reassurance that their contact details won't be connected with any answers they've given in this interview).

If yes – Can I check that your full name is? (write full name)

If yes – check preferred method of contact (phone, email or post) and confirm relevant details (check for postal address if needed for Privacy Notice)

- End on a light note by asking what they have planned for the rest of the day.

Phase 2: staff (Case Managers)

- Introduce self and Ipsos
- Introduce the research: Briefly explain the purpose of this group session, which is to gather staff's views on reviewing PIP and WADLA/DLAC cases that have been transferred from DWP.
 - The Scottish Government has commissioned Ipsos Scotland to help them understand the experiences of clients and staff involved in the case transfer of disability benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to Social Security Scotland. One of the aims of the research is to understand what is working well about the process and what could be improved from the perspective of staff, including what staff think would improve the client experience.
 - Clarify that the feedback will be used to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the system is working efficiently and effectively for both clients and staff.
- Explain that the group will last around an hour and a half.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be passed on to anyone outwith the Ipsos research team, so it will not be possible for the Scottish Government, colleagues at Social Security Scotland or anyone else to identify individuals in any reports that Ipsos produce. In reporting information from you, we will refer to you as 'CDP/ADP Case Managers'. Notes and audio files will be securely stored and securely deleted one year after the research finishes.

Similarly, can I ask that you don't share outside the group what anyone else said, as I want you to feel you can be really honest.

- Remind participants that they don't have to answer any questions they don't want to answer, and that they are welcome to leave the group at any time.
- Request permission to record interview. Explain that this is for transcription and analysis purposes and that recordings will not be shared outside the research team at Ipsos.

Introductions/Warm up:

Can I ask you each to introduce yourself and tell me your name, what your role is and how long you've been in that role?

Once everyone has introduced themselves...

And tell me what you enjoy most and least about your job at the moment.

What did you do before that? Have you been in a similar role before?

If not mentioned ask: Have you worked for DWP before? What was that like?

Are you currently working on ADP or CDP reviews or both? Have you worked on CDP reviews in the past?

And what exactly is your current role in relation to case transfers?

At what point do you first get involved in a case?

And when does your involvement end?

And are you also currently working on reviews for people who have not transferred, but been with SSS since they started receiving ADP/CDP? Have you worked on those cases in the past?

If they are working/have worked on these cases: I might ask you about how these cases compare a bit later on, but assume we're just talking about case transfer reviews for now.

Note to interviewer – throughout discussion, where prompted and/or appropriate, focus on perceived impact of the process on clients.

Overall views on the case transfer review process:

Before we get into the case transfer review process in detail, can you tell me briefly how you've found the process overall?

What aspects, if any, are working well?

What aspects, if any, are not working so well?

Exercise:

Introduce logic model:

This logic model is a way of setting out clearly what the case transfer process is meant to do. We use the logic model as part of this research to help us identify the ways in which the case transfer process is and isn't working as it should. It has been developed in line with Social Security Scotland's policy commitments and principles.

Explain each column in diagram:

- What resources and elements go into it (inputs)
- What are the policy commitments and activities that support this

- What is it meant to achieve (outcomes)
- What are the potential risks to achieving the aims

Before today were you aware of these policy commitments?

Ask them to mark in green the policy commitments and outcomes they think are happening/ likely to happen and mark in red those that are not always/not likely to happen. Also to note if there is anything they feel is missing.

Discuss.

I'd like now to go through some different aspects of the process in a bit more detail and get your views on them.

Review process:

Can you talk me through the different elements of the review process that you're involved in, starting from when a case first lands on your desk, as it were. Note each main stage.

Go through each stage in turn and ask:

How well is this stage of the process working?

- From your point of view?
- From a client's point of view?

What are the problems or challenges you encounter at this stage?

What impact does that have?

- On you?
- On clients?

How do you think that could be improved/that problem could be resolved?

If not already mentioned probe on:

- Their (staff) communications, if any, with DWP
- Communications from a client's point of view – Do clients have any misunderstandings? What are they? How do you think that affects their views of Social Security Scotland?
- CDP only: I understand there has been an issue with you not being able to conduct reviews at the moment. Can you tell me about that? How has this affected you? What has the impact been on clients?

for those that have worked on both: Are there differences between reviews for cases that have been transferred from DWP and cases that have always been with SSS? In terms of the process? In terms of clients' expectations? In terms of clients' concerns?

How do you think clients feel at the end of the process, once they have heard the outcome of their review?

How do you know that?

Differences between client groups:

Ask ADP case managers: What are the differences between dealing with a case that's been transferred from WADLA compared with a case that's been transferred from PIP?

Are there aspects that are better or worse with former WADLA cases?

Are there aspects that are better or worse with former PIP cases?

Are there differences between the two client groups in terms of their understanding of the process?

How worried or concerned they are?

The impact the process has on them? In what ways?

Ask ADP case managers: What are the differences between dealing with a case that's arisen because the client reported a change in circumstances, compared to end of award/review?

Are there differences between the two client groups in terms of their understanding of the process?

How worried or concerned they are?

The impact the process has on them? In what ways?

Are there any other client groups where there are particular issues or difficulties? Probe on impact on client in each case.

Probe on:

- different types of conditions?
- mental health conditions?
- people with lower literacy?
- people with English as an additional language?
- Any other groups?

Training, guidance and support:

Thinking back to when you first started working on case transfer reviews, what initial training did you get on the process?

To what extent – if at all – did the training covers the policy commitments for case transfer and reviews? Show logic model again and probe fully on:

- Clear communications with individuals
- Reviews are right first time, where required
- Reviews, where required, are undertaken in line with relevant policy commitments
- Reviews will be light-touch and, as far as possible, minimise stress.

If not mentioned: To what extent, if at all, has the training focussed on managing the client's experience? What do you think about that? If not a focus – do you think it should be?

Can you remember if there were aspects of the process that you were still unsure of after the training?

How well do you think the initial training prepared you for working on the case transfer and the review process? What could be improved in the training?

- Probe: Were there any gaps in the training content that you feel should be addressed?
- If yes: do you think these gaps impacted on clients in any way?

Knowing what you know now, how could the initial training be improved?

Have you had any more training on case transfer reviews since then?

If yes: what did that cover? How useful was it?

What other guidance or support have you received?

Probe on:

- Written/online guidance?
- Advice from supervisors/senior staff?
- Advice from peers?
- For each: How helpful did you find this? Whether they sought it out or were given it.

Have you ever provided advice or guidance to colleagues?

What further guidance or support would be helpful?

If lots of things mentioned: Which would you prioritise?

What aspects of the case transfer review process do you think are least likely to be understood or followed correctly by staff? Refer back to any challenges/difficulties/policy commitments raised during earlier discussion.

What impact, if any, does this have on clients?

What could be done to improve this? And what impact do you think this would have on a) clients, and b) you and your colleagues?

Feedback:

The various issues and challenges you mentioned, is this something you have been able to give feedback on to your managers? Did/would you feel comfortable doing so?

Have you been able to give feedback on the potential improvements you mentioned to your managers? Did/would you feel comfortable doing so?

Final thoughts:

As you know, the values of dignity, fairness and respect are meant to be embedded into Social Security Scotland systems. Is there anything that could be done in relation to the case transfer review process that would increase dignity, fairness or respect?

If feel discussion has focused very much on problems: We've naturally focused more on the problems with the process and the things that could be improved. Is there anything more you want to say about the aspects that are working well?

And finally, is there anything else you want to say?

Explain next steps, thank and close.

Phase 2: staff (Decision Team Managers)

- Introduce self and Ipsos
- Introduce the research: Briefly explain the purpose of the interview, which is to gather staff's views on reviewing PIP and WADLA/DLAC cases that have been transferred from DWP.
 - The Scottish Government has commissioned Ipsos Scotland to help them understand the experiences of clients and staff involved in the case transfer of disability benefits from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to Social Security Scotland. One of the aims of the research is to understand what is working well about the process and what could be improved from the perspective of staff, including what staff think would improve the client experience.
 - Clarify that the feedback will be used to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the system is working efficiently and effectively for both clients and staff.
- Explain that the group will last around an hour.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be passed on to anyone outwith the Ipsos research team, so it will not be possible for the Scottish Government, colleagues at Social Security Scotland or anyone else to identify individuals in any reports that Ipsos produce. In reporting information from you, we will refer to you as 'CDP/ADP Decision Team Managers'. Notes and audio files will be securely stored and securely deleted one year after the research finishes.

Similarly, can I ask that you don't share outside the discussion what the other person said, as I want you both to feel you can be really honest.

- Remind participants that they don't have to answer any questions they don't want to answer, and that they are welcome to leave the group at any time.
- Request permission to record interview. Explain that this is for transcription and analysis purposes and that recordings will not be shared outside the research team at Ipsos.

Introductions/Warm up:

Can I ask you each to introduce yourself and tell me your name, what your role is and how long you've been in that role?

And tell me what you enjoy most and least about your job at the moment.

What did you do before that? Have you been in a similar role before?

If not mentioned ask: Have you worked for DWP before? What was that like?

Check: I understand you are currently a Decision Team Manager for ADP/CDP case transfer reviews. Have you worked on [ADP/CDP – whichever they are not currently working on] reviews in the past?

And what exactly is your current role in relation to case transfer?

And are you also currently working on reviews for people who have not transferred, but been with SSS since they started receiving ADP/CDP? Have you worked on those cases in the past?

If they are working/have worked on these cases: I might ask you about how these cases compare a bit later on, but assume we're just talking about case transfer reviews for now.

Note to interviewer – throughout discussion, where prompted and/or appropriate, focus on perceived impact of the process on clients.

Overall views on the case transfer review process:

Before we get into the case transfer review process in detail, can you tell me briefly how you've found the process overall?

What aspects, if any, are working well?

What aspects, if any, are not working so well?

Exercise: introduce logic model

This logic model is a way of setting out clearly what the case transfer process is meant to do. We use the logic model as part of this research to help us identify the ways in which the case transfer process is and isn't working as it should. It has been developed in line with Social Security Scotland's policy commitments and principles.

Explain each column in diagram:

- What resources and elements go into it (inputs)
- What are the policy commitments and activities that support this
- What is it meant to achieve (outcomes)
- What are the potential risks to achieving the aims

Before today were you aware of these policy commitments?

Ask them to mark in green the policy commitments and outcomes they think are happening/ likely to happen and mark in red those that are not always/not likely to happen. Also to note if there is anything they feel is missing.

Discuss.

I'd like now to go through some different aspects of the process in a bit more detail and get your views on them.

Review process:

Can you talk me through the different elements of the review process that you're involved in, starting from when a case first lands on your desk, as it were. Note each main stage.

Go through each stage in turn and ask:

How well is this stage of the process working?

- From a staff point of view?
- From a client's point of view?

What are the problems or challenges staff encounter at this stage?

What impact does that have?

- On staff?
- On clients?

How do you think that could be improved/that problem could be resolved?

If not already mentioned probe on:

- Their (staff) communications, if any, with DWP
- Communications from a client's point of view – Do clients have any misunderstandings? What are they? How do you think that affects their views of Social Security Scotland?
- CDP only: I understand there has been an issue with you not being able to conduct scheduled reviews at the moment. Can you tell me about that? How has this affected staff? What has the impact been on clients?

For those that have worked on both: Are there differences between reviews for cases that have been transferred from DWP and cases that have always been with SSS? In terms of the process? In terms of clients' expectations? In terms of clients' concerns?

How do you think clients feel at the end of the process, once they have heard the outcome of their review?

How do you know that?

Differences between client groups:

Ask ADP DTMs: What are the differences between dealing with a case that's been transferred from WADLA compared with a case that's been transferred from PIP?

Are there aspects that are better or worse with former WADLA cases?

Are there aspects that are better or worse with former PIP cases?

Are there differences between the two client groups in terms of their understanding of the process?

How worried or concerned they are?

The impact the process has on them? In what ways?

Ask ADP DTMs: What are the differences between dealing with a case that's arisen because the client reported a change in circumstances, compared to end of award/review?

Are there differences between the two client groups in terms of their understanding of the process?

How worried or concerned they are?

The impact the process has on them? In what ways?

Are there any other client groups where there are particular issues or difficulties? Probe on impact on client in each case.

Probe on:

- different types of conditions?
- mental health conditions?
- people with lower literacy?
- people with English as an additional language?
- Any other groups?

Case approval:

When cases are sent to you for approval, how does that work? Can you talk me through what you do?

What aspects, if any, are working well? How – if at all – does this affect clients?

What aspects, if any, are not working so well? How – if at all – does this affect clients?

Is there anything that could be done to improve this aspect of the process? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients and b) you and your colleagues?

Are there any common mistakes or misunderstandings you see from Case Managers?

- What do you think is at the root of these?
- What impact - if any - does this have on clients?
- What do you think could be done to resolve or improve things?

Questions from staff:

What are the most common questions you've had from staff about the case transfer review process?

On what aspects have they asked for advice or support?

If not covered already: Are there particular types of case that staff find more difficult?

Probe for all examples and for each ask:

- How easy or difficult have you found it to answer questions/advise?
- Is it mainly the newer staff who ask questions or ask for support?
- Is there anything that would make it easier for you to advise staff?
- What do you do if you have questions or want some support yourself?
- How – if at all – do you think these types of cases affect the client's experience of the review process?

On what aspects, or types of case, have you had questions/wanted support?
How easy or difficult is it to seek support from policy or programme colleagues?

Do you feed back to anyone else like Policy or Learning and Development?

Is there any guidance or support that you would find helpful? What impact do you think this would have on a) clients and b) you and your colleagues?

Training, guidance and support:

Thinking back to when you first started working on case transfer reviews, what initial training did you get on the process?

To what extent – if at all – do you think the training covers the policy commitments for case transfer reviews? Show logic model again and probe on:

- Clear communications with individuals
- Reviews are right first time, where required
- Reviews, where required, are undertaken in line with relevant policy commitments
- Reviews will be light-touch and, as far as possible, minimise stress.

If not mentioned: To what extent, if at all, has the training focussed on managing the client's experience? What do you think about that? If not a focus – do you think it should be?

How well do you think the initial training prepared you for working on the case transfer and the review process? What could be improved in the training?

- Probe: Were there any gaps in the training content that you feel should be addressed?
- If yes: do you think these gaps impacted on clients in any way?

Knowing what you know now, how could the initial training be improved?

Have you had any more training on case transfer reviews since then?

If yes: what did that cover? How useful was it

What further training do you think would be helpful?

If more than one thing mentioned ask: which would you prioritise?

What other guidance or support have you received?

Probe on:

- Written/online guidance?
- Advice from senior staff?
- Advice from peers?
- For each: How helpful did you find this? Whether they sought it out or were given it.

How, if at all, does the guidance and support to deliver the case transfer review process affect staff wellbeing at your level? What about other levels?

What further guidance or support would be helpful? If lots of things mentioned: Which would you prioritise?

If not covered already: What aspects of the case transfer review process do you think are least likely to be understood or followed correctly by staff? Refer back to any challenges/difficulties/policy commitments raised during earlier discussion

What could be done to improve this? And what impact do you think this would have on a) clients, and b) you and your colleagues?

We're coming up to the end of the discussion now.

Feedback:

The various issues and challenges you mentioned, is this something you have been able to give feedback on to your managers? Did/would you feel comfortable doing so?

Have you been able to give feedback on the potential improvements you mentioned to your managers? Did/would you feel comfortable doing so?

Final thoughts:

As you know, the values of dignity, fairness and respect are meant to be embedded into Social Security Scotland systems. Is there anything that could be done in relation to the case transfer review process that would increase dignity, fairness or respect?

If feel discussion has focused very much on problems: We've naturally focused more on the problems with the process and the things that could be improved. Is there anything more you want to say about the aspects that are working well?

And finally, is there anything else you want to say?

Explain next steps, thank and close.



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