

Social Security Experience Panels: Legacy report



EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Social Security Experience Panels were established in Scotland in 2017 in anticipation of the devolution of additional social security powers to the Scottish Government in 2018. The aim of the Experience Panels was to design the new social security system with direct input from people with lived experience of the previous UK system.

Over the six years of the programme, more than 2,400 people who had lived experience of the previous UK benefits system joined the panels. They were invited to participate in research relevant to them, which included interviews, focus groups, workshops and surveys. Panel members contributed to the research about specific benefits previously delivered by the UK Government, as well as some new ones. They were also involved in a range of cross cutting projects contributing to the design of Social Security Scotland, policy and processes.

By March 2024, all the devolved benefits were, or shortly would be transferred over to the new social security agency and the original purpose of the panels to help design the devolved benefits was achieved. The Experience Panels formally closed at the end of March 2024.

The aim of this report is to document and understand the impact of research conducted by the Experience Panels, across the different areas of policy, Social Security Scotland, and social research within the Scottish Government.

Background

Why were the Experience Panels started?

When the additional social security powers were devolved to Scotland, the Scottish Government set out some guiding principles for social security in Scotland. These included putting user experience first and following a human rights-based approach. The Experience Panels supported the development of decision making about social security in Scotland and ensured it involved the people who know the system best – those who access and rely on services.

Who was in the Experience Panels?

Most panel members joined the panel in 2017 after being invited through a random sample of existing claimants for the devolved benefits, delivered at that point by the UK-Government Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Other panel members were recruited through an open invitation in the press and on social media.

A second wave of recruitment was undertaken from summer 2019 to spring 2020, to replace inactive members and to target groups that were underrepresented on the panels.

Why did the Experience Panels close?

At the time of writing this report, all the devolved benefits have either been, or shortly will be, transferred over to Social Security Scotland from DWP. As a result, the original objective of the Experience Panels to help design the devolved benefits has been achieved and the panels closed.

Impact from Experience Panels Research

The findings in this report are based on an evidence review of relevant literature and interviews conducted with policy teams, Social Security Scotland staff and Scottish Government social researchers. A feedback survey was also sent to all members of the Experience Panels to understand their experiences overall.

Three areas of impact have been identified, relating to impacts on policy, Social Security Scotland and social research in government.

Policy

The most common way Experience Panels research was used by policy teams was to develop a primary policy position and to provide advice directly to Scottish Ministers, principally to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice. It was also useful when policy teams were considering changes to an already developed position, or the findings from research challenged viewpoints from other sources such as stakeholder organisations or public consultations.

Several policy teams stated that they used existing Experience Panels publications as part of an evidence base to develop future work. Similarly, several teams noted that the Experience Panels work had provided a valuable foundation for further research.

Social Security Scotland

Experience Panels research was a fundamental part of the work to develop Social Security Scotland. By sharing their experiences, views, and priorities, panel members have been crucial partners in helping to design the social security system in Scotland.

Experience Panel members feedback instigated an important change in the language used throughout Social Security Scotland and in interactions with clients. The change in language reflects that social security in Scotland is built on trust with clients and aims to treat clients with dignity, fairness and respect.

It was also integral to the development of the brand and appearance of Social Security Scotland. This included brand guidelines, setting out elements such as the colours, font, and tone of voice to be used. Panel members were also involved in building design and the development of the Local Delivery service, which supports clients to access support.

The Client Panels were launched in 2020 in recognition of the need for engaging people with lived experience for ongoing development and improvement of Social

Security Scotland. Client Panels members are recruited from current clients of Social Security Scotland. The Client Panels are a significant legacy of the Experience Panels and will ensure people with lived experience remain at the heart of the delivery of social security in Scotland.

Research

The Experience Panels created a repository of knowledge and expertise within team members. In interviews with social researchers, many recalled speaking to Experience Panels team members as they were preparing or carrying out other research, some of which also involved panels. This expertise was specialised around planning and conducting panel research with participants who could be vulnerable or have specific accessibility needs. Other researchers said that they had drawn on materials and processes developed by the Experience Panels team to use as a template for their own work.

Impact beyond government

There has also been interest in the Experience Panels' work beyond the Scottish Government from academia and other bodies, and other governments. This demonstrates a broad recognition that including people with lived experience in social security research and service design is important, and that the Scottish Government has taken a leading role in developing this approach.

Feedback Survey

Why people joined the panel

The feedback survey asked panel members what had motivated them to join the Experience Panels. The most common responses were to 'Design Scotland's social security system' and to 'Share my experience', with 80 per cent and 79 per cent respectively. 25 per cent of respondents said that they were motivated to join to 'Meet other people'.

Accessibility of participation

The feedback survey included several questions about accessibility relating to in-person research, phone/video research and surveys.

For interviews, 94 per cent and 93 per cent of in-person and phone/video participants, respectively, reported that they had enough choice about how they took part.

For surveys, 97 per cent of respondents said that they had enough time to complete the survey, 72 per cent said that they were able to access support to complete surveys if they needed it.

Communication with panel members

88 per cent of respondents said that the communications from the Experience Panels team had kept them up to date with the research and 96 per cent said that

the reports and newsletters were in a format that was accessible to them. 93 per cent found both the reports and newsletters clear and easy to understand.

Panel members' impact on decision making

82 per cent of respondents said that it was clear how Experience Panels research was used to inform the design of the new social security system in Scotland. 81 per cent said that they felt being part of the Experience Panels had allowed them to shape the new social security system. 87 per cent said that the Experience Panels were a good way to ensure people with lived experience helped to design the new social security system.

What worked well?

Panel members were asked what was good about the research. Respondents thought it was important that they were involved and felt their lived experience was valued. Sharing experiences was described as cathartic and they felt listened to. They also said that they liked hearing from other people and hearing similar experiences made them feel less alone. Respondents also spoke positively about the researchers and felt that the organisation of the research worked well overall.

What could have been better?

When panel members were asked what could have been better, the survey responses generally related to accessibility of certain research locations, feedback on the research, a desire for more in-person research and improved diversity of the panel. Some respondents noted that they would have liked to have heard more about what happened to their contributions after the research was complete.

Impact on panel members

The survey asked panel members if they felt that their participation had achieved what they had hoped. Most respondents were very positive and expressed hope that they had helped to create a positive social security system for Scotland. A few expressed disappointment that particular topics had not been covered, or that their suggestions were not implemented.

Overall experience of being on the panel

The vast majority (91 per cent) of respondents said that they had enjoyed taking part in the Experience Panels research, with more than half (55 per cent) strongly agreeing. Similarly, more than four-fifths (81 per cent) of respondents said that they had felt listened to. 93 per cent of respondents said that they would take part in research organised by the Scottish Government again.

Reflections and Learnings

Across the evidence review, interviews and feedback survey, several learnings have been identified.

Reflections on sampling of panel members

As the Experience Panels required voluntary input from panel members, it was by necessity a self-selecting group. Some people involved in this legacy research

regarded this as a positive because it meant panel members were taking part because they wanted to voluntarily share their experiences. Others appreciated that having a ready resource of people willing to participate allowed them to shorten the recruitment phase for their research. However, some highlighted that panel members could volunteer repeatedly for different research activities, which could lead to a few individuals having disproportionate input to research and their views being overrepresented.

Importance of building trust

The Experience Panels team felt that it was important to take the time to build trust with panel members, given that they were participating on a voluntary basis and the programme was still new and relatively unknown. Sensitive personal data was collected gradually so that panel members felt comfortable with the researchers. Many panel members reported that they felt comfortable with the researchers and felt they could be open.

Offering multiple ways to participate

Some feedback survey respondents said that being able to participate by phone or video meant they were able to take part more easily, whereas others said that in-person research was important to them.

Managing expectations of panel members

Some panel members expressed disappointment that some of what they had suggested through the research had not been implemented. This was also raised by social researchers who had been involved in other panel research. It is important to carefully manage the expectations of panel members, and to make clear the other factors involved in decision making, alongside research.

Feeding back to panel members

A recurring challenge throughout the research for this report was identifying how the data produced from the Experience Panels had fed into the decision-making process. This was also a factor identified by panel members in the feedback survey. Many respondents commented that they wanted to know more about how the research was used and what the impact had been. For future research, establishing clear steps to document how research findings are being used and their input within decision-making processes would be advisable. This would also allow more transparency when communicating with research participants about how their contributions have been used.

Importance of culture around social security

Findings repeatedly highlighted that one of the biggest impacts of the Experience Panels was the creation of a culture that embodies dignity, fairness and respect, and that the Experience Panels have set a high standard for how participatory research and service development should be done.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Social Security Experience Panels was a programme of longitudinal research which ran from 2017 to 2024. The panels were established in Scotland in 2017 in anticipation of the devolution of additional social security powers to the Scottish Government in 2018. These additional powers represented an opportunity to do things differently and to deliver benefits in a more positive and supportive way, which recognises social security as a human right.

The Scottish Government also recognises that people have the right to be involved in decisions that affect them and that this participation in turn leads to better decisions. Accordingly, the aim of the Experience Panels was to ensure that people with lived experience of the previous UK benefits system had direct input into the design of the new Scottish social security system.

“We are clear that public sector services should be designed with, not for, the people who will use them.” [Programme for Government 2017-18](#)

The Experience Panels sat within the Community Analysis Division of the Tackling Child Poverty and Social Justice Directorate and reported to the Ministers and Cabinet Secretary responsible for social security throughout its duration.

Over the six years of the programme, more than 2,400 people joined the panels. Panel members were invited to participate in research relevant to them, which included interviews, focus groups, workshops and surveys. Panel members contributed to the research about specific benefits previously delivered by the UK Government, as well as some new ones. They have also been involved in a range of cross cutting projects contributing to the design of Social Security Scotland, policy and processes.

Since the Experience Panels were launched:

- More than 70 surveys have been conducted, gathering over 14,000 responses.
- More than 1000 panel members have taken part in interviews and focus groups.
- More than 100 reports and visual summaries have been published.

Now that all devolved benefits have been or will shortly be transferred over to Social Security Scotland, the original purpose of the panels to help design and deliver the new benefits has been achieved. The end of the panels was marked by an online farewell event, where panel members were thanked for their contributions and panel members shared their recollections of their time on the panel. The Experience Panels closed at the end of March 2024.

1.2 Report aim

This report signifies the end of the Experience Panels. The overarching aim of the report is to document and understand the impact of the Experience Panels across the areas of policy, Social Security Scotland and social research within the Scottish Government.

The report does this through following the journeys that research findings from Experience Panels work have taken, from data collection through to policy and operational decisions. In doing so, it draws on publications, interviews with the users of the research, and a feedback survey with panel members.

The report also aims to support future panels and participatory research within the Scottish Government and further afield through presenting the learnings and reflections gained during the course of this research.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

- Background to the Experience Panels covering organisational aspects such as panel membership and data management.
- The impact of the Experience Panels across the areas of policy, Social Security Scotland and research.
- Findings from a final feedback survey conducted with Experience Panels members on their time on the panels.
- Reflections and learnings from the Experience Panels that emerged during the research for this report.

1.4 Methodology

Between November 2023 and March 2024, the Experience Panels team collected and analysed data on the impact of the programme and this report presents the findings of that work.

The findings are based on an evidence review of relevant literature, including Experience Panels research publications, policy position papers, impact assessments and grey and academic literature. As well as the evidence review, interviews were conducted with social researchers in the Scottish Government, policy teams and Social Security Scotland staff. A feedback survey was also sent to all Experience Panels members to understand their overall experiences and opinions.

The survey data has been analysed by Scottish Government researchers. It is important to note that the results presented in this report only represent the views of panel members who took part in the research. Assumptions cannot be drawn on the wider applicability of these findings to panel members as a whole or for those with experience of the social security system in general. The findings from the survey are presented in Section 4 and a copy of the survey is available at Annex B.

Demographic information for the Experience Panel members who took part in the feedback survey is not available. Demographic information on the Experience Panels can be found in the report [Social Security Experience Panels: who is in the panels](#).

A purposive sampling approach was used for interviews. Researchers, policy and Social Security Scotland colleagues who were anticipated to have some insight into how Experience Panels research was used were contacted and asked to participate. The interviews aimed to gather knowledge of how Experience Panels research was used in decision making. Analysis of the data was conducted by Scottish Government researchers, and the findings are presented in Sections 3 and 5.

In total, 25 interviews were conducted and the feedback survey was completed by 206 Experience Panels members.

Throughout this report, some terms are abbreviated for readability.

- Experience Panel members are referred to as 'panel members'.
- Respondents to the Experience Panels feedback survey are referred to as 'feedback survey respondents' or 'survey respondents'.

2. Background on the Social Security Experience Panels

2.1 Why were the Experience Panels started?

Following the Scottish Independence Referendum, the [Scotland Act 2016](#) was introduced which devolved additional powers to Scotland. The [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act](#) was passed in 2018, which gave powers to the Scottish Government to deliver eleven social security benefits that had previously been delivered by the UK government. At the outset of this process, the Scottish Government set out some [guiding principles for social security](#) in Scotland, which committed to doing things differently in the new Scottish social security system. These included putting user experience first and following a human rights-based approach.

The Experience Panels supported the development of decision making about social security in Scotland and ensured it involved the people who know the system best – those who access and rely on services. This is closely aligned to the principles of public participation that underpin the Scottish approach to government¹. These are:

- that people have the right to contribute to, and to influence, the decisions that affect their lives, choices and life chances.
- that involving the people likely to be affected by the decision in the process results in better decision making.

This approach recognises the key role that people have in contributing knowledge and experience to the challenges faced by government. Increasing participation in decision making leads to services which better meet peoples' needs and that are more effectively implemented. Participation is also one of the three key pillars of the [Open Government movement](#), of which the Scottish Government is a signatory.

2.2 Who was in the Experience Panels?

Recruitment for the Experience Panels began in 2017 and led to 2,400 people joining. A two-strand sampling strategy was adopted. Some panel members joined after being randomly selected from existing claimants for the devolved benefits, delivered at that point by DWP. Invitations to participate in the Experience Panels were mailed out to approximately 20,000 claimants with an anticipated 10 per cent response rate. The sample was drawn by DWP on behalf of the Scottish Government. Other panel members were recruited through an open-recruitment route to reach others who may have wanted to participate in the panels. An open invitation was sent out via the press and was hosted on a dedicated webpage, and recruitment was also advertised on social media.

¹ For more information on the Scottish approach to participation in government, see [the participation handbook](#).

When panel members were first recruited to the Experience Panels the only data collected was the minimum required to confirm eligibility. Subsequently, data on panel members' protected characteristics was collected via the 'About You' survey conducted in early 2018. This survey was run annually and allowed panel members to update their contact details and provide feedback on their experience as participants.

The equalities data obtained from the survey was used to assess if there were any gaps in membership across characteristics, and to report who was participating in Experience Panels research. It became apparent that some panel members were inactive, meaning that they had not participated in research or responded to communications. Subsequently, a second wave of recruitment was undertaken from summer 2019 to spring 2020, which also presented an opportunity to target seldom heard groups that were underrepresented in panel membership. This resulted in approximately 550 additional panel members being recruited.

Case study: Seldom Heard groups

The second wave of recruitment which took place for the Experience Panels from summer 2019 to spring 2020 was intended to replace inactive panel members. However, there was also a growing awareness that some groups and voices were under-represented on the panels. As a result, this second wave of recruitment worked with stakeholder organisations to focus more on seldom heard groups and increase their representation on the panels.

In addition to more targeted recruitment, the "Seldom Heard Voices" research project was set up to address under-representation of some groups on the panels. The Seldom Heard project ensured that groups who need to be treated with particular sensitivity and those who are marginalised or dispersed, also had a voice in designing Scotland's social security services.

There were four strands identified as "Seldom Heard" in the research project. They were: Mobile Populations, Vulnerable Groups, End of Life, and Carers and Care Experienced. For each strand, two waves of fieldwork were undertaken. Additionally, fieldwork with a fifth strand, Survivors of Abuse, was undertaken in a second wave of fieldwork. The fieldwork was commissioned by the Scottish Government to external research companies and organisations. While the participants in this research were recruited externally to the panels, the analysis was carried out by Scottish Government researchers from the Experience Panels' team.

The research explored the experiences and views of participants about the following themes: getting information about benefits, applying for benefits, interacting with government agencies, support and advocacy organisations, and views on the future of the social security system in Scotland.

The reports and summaries detailing the findings of the Seldom Heard Voices project of research are available on the [Experience Panels publications website](#).

2.3 How were the Experience Panels organised?

Research

Over the course of the Experience Panels, panel members participated in over 70 surveys, over 250 interviews and almost 100 focus groups and workshops.

When panel members were recruited to the Experience Panels their details were saved in a database. This database was used to identify eligibility for the different research activities, for example if participants with experience of a particular benefit were needed. If a client was eligible, they would then be contacted and asked to participate.

Depending on the topic of research, clients might have been invited to attend an interview, a focus group, a workshop or to complete a survey. Interviews, focus groups and workshops were primarily delivered in-person before the Covid-19 pandemic, but during lockdown and after restrictions eased, video and phone interviews became more common.

Following the research events, all analysis was completed by Scottish Government researchers. Outputs consisted of reports and visual summaries written by the research team. All published reports are available on the [Social Security Experience Panels publication webpage](#)

The research outputs were shared internally with policy colleagues for use as part of their decision-making processes. They were also sent to panel members who had participated in the research (see 'Communication with panel members', below).

Research with the Experience Panels supported a whole-service design and shaped all aspects of the social security system in Scotland. The research was therefore used by a range of people including policy teams (who design and develop policy and provide advice to the cabinet secretary), Social Security Scotland (which delivers social security services in Scotland), user researchers (who conduct research to inform the design of client-facing processes) and by social researchers in the Scottish Government.

Communication with panel members

After the research had been completed, panel members were sent any reports on the research they had participated in. In addition to the research reports, quarterly newsletters were sent to all panel members, which provided an update on what research had been completed and plans for future research.

As well as these outbound communications, panel members were able to get in touch with the Experience Panels Team by email, telephone (via Helpline) and post.

Data handling

When participants first agreed to be a part of the Experience Panels they consented for their data to be processed, in accordance with the [Data Protection](#)

[Act \(1998\)](#). Following the [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\) 2018 update](#), the Experience Panels' Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) was revised to reflect the new guidance.

Panel members personal data was stored separately from their survey responses. Interview and focus groups notes were also kept separate from all personal data. All data was stored securely and was only accessible by the Experience Panels team and all staff with access to the data were listed in the DPIA.

Following the closure of the panels in March 2024 all personal information and data from the Experience Panels was deleted, in line with the DPIA policy and GDPR guidelines.

2.4 Why did the Experience Panels close?

When the Experience Panels were set up, it was expected that they would run for four years until all the devolved benefits had been taken over by Social Security Scotland. Delays associated with the Covid-19 pandemic led to an extension of the Experience Panels to ensure panel members were involved until all the benefits had been designed. All the devolved benefits have either been, or shortly will be, transferred over to Social Security Scotland from DWP. As a result, the original objective of the Experience Panels to help design the devolved benefits has been achieved. The final research with Experience Panel members was conducted in early 2024 and final research reports and visual summaries published in March 2024. The Experience Panels formally closed at the end of March 2024.

2.5 What happened when the Experience Panels ended?

An online farewell event was held for panel members on Wednesday 13th March 2024. The event gave researchers and officials an opportunity to thank members for their enormous contribution to the development of the new Scottish social security system. Members heard from the Cabinet Secretary, the chief executive of Social Security Scotland, senior analytical and policy leads from the Scottish Government, and the Experience Panels team. During the event, panel members were given the opportunity to share their recollections of their time on the Experience Panels and to ask questions.

This report is the final piece of work on the Experience Panels. The end of the Experience Panels does not mean that lived experience will not be sought to inform decision making around social security. The Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland will continue to engage with people with lived experience through other research. This includes:

- Social Security Scotland Client Survey
- Social Security Scotland Client Panels
- User research to design, test and improve benefits
- Evaluation of benefits

2.6 Timeline of the Experience Panels

A timeline of key milestones and research events in the design and development of the social security system and associated benefits are shown in Table 2.1. A timeline of the benefits launch is shown in Table 2.2. Please note that the benefit launch dates refer to launch only and not to the transfer of all benefit recipients to Social Security Scotland.

Table 2.1 - Timeline of Experience Panels research activity

Year	Events and Project of Activity
2016	Scotland Act (2016) passed – devolving additional powers to the Scottish Government
2017	Experience Panels established – to involve input from those with experience of social security
2018	Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 – officially devolving power to deliver 11 existing benefits and create new ones
	Research on Universal Credit Scottish Choices
	Research on Best Start Grant
	Research on Attendance Allowance
	Research on Severe Disablement Allowance
	Mid-Project peer review
	Research on Funeral Expense Assistance
	Research on Scottish Welfare Fund
	Research on Short-term Assistance
	Research on Carer’s Additional Child Payment
2020	Research on Cold Spell Winter Fuel Payment
	Client Panels established
	Research on Personal Independence Payment Research
	Research on Fair Start Scotland
2021	Social Security operational research
	Covid-19 research on communication preferences – shift to more online or phone interviews

2022	Seldom Heard research
	Research on Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme
	Research on Carer's Assistance
2023	Research on Adult Disability Payment mobility component
	Research on Pension Age Winter Heating Payment
	Research on Employment Injury Assistance
	Research on Carers with English as second language
	Announced the panels will close and final feedback survey with panel members
2024	Experience Panels close (March 2024)

Table 2.2 - Timeline of benefits launch

Year	Benefits Timeline
2018	Carers Allowance Supplement is introduced, marking the formal establishment of Social Security Scotland (Sep)
	Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment opens for applications (Dec)
	Local delivery staff appointed to help with application support in communities (Oct)
2019	Our Charter published (Feb)
	Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment opens for applications (Apr)
	Best Start Grant School Age Payment opens for applications (Jun)
	Best Start Foods opens for applications (Aug)
	Funeral Support Payment launches (Sep)
	Young Carer Grant launches (Oct)
2020	Job Start Payment launches (Aug)
	Child Winter Heating Payment (formerly Assistance) launches (Nov)

	Scottish Child Payment opens for applications (under 6s) ² (Nov)
2021	Child Disability Payment launches (Nov)
2022	Adult Disability Payment launches (Aug)
	Scottish Child Payment (extended to under 16s) (Nov)
2023	Winter Heating Payment launches (Feb)
2024	Carer's Support Payment case transfer begins (Mar)

² Initial SCP payments for under-6s were made in February 2021.

3. Impact from Experience Panels Research

Experience Panels research was used by different teams across government. The following sections outline what impact Experience Panels' research has had within the three areas of policy, Social Security Scotland and social research.

The sections below highlight some of the most significant contributions of the Experience Panels. Throughout conversations with colleagues in these different areas it has also been possible to determine specific impacts from research, such as changes to service design or policy decisions, and some examples are given.

However, it is not possible to list every way in which the panels impacted each area for a variety of reasons, including:

- The scope of the Experience Panels, covering six years and encapsulating dozens of individual pieces of research, which has generated many impacts both small and large.
- The complexity of decision-making processes within policy environments, where decisions are influenced by many intersecting factors and attributing 'weight' to different evidence is not possible.
- The historical nature of some parts of research, where key researchers or policy colleagues may no longer be working within government.

3.1 Policy

During conversations with policy teams, several key findings emerged that demonstrated how Experience Panels research had an impact across different policy areas. These were:

- To develop or support a policy position.
- To promote discussion and consideration of different viewpoints.
- To provide an evidence base upon which further work could be planned.

It is worth noting that these points are not specific to the Experience Panels and reflect the ways in which research is used in many situations within government. However, what was frequently highlighted by policy teams was that having access to the views and knowledge of people with lived experience of the benefits system provided a different and often unique perspective within these uses.

Develop or support a policy position

The most common way in which Experience Panels research was used by policy teams was to develop a primary policy position. This could be either at the initial stages of planning service design or to help inform policy decisions when making changes to an existing one. This was especially relevant when there had not been a corresponding benefit delivered by DWP, or where a policy team had to develop a process relating to the devolution of social security, such as with the case transfer process.

Case study (developing and supporting a position): Case Transfer

Around 700,000 people in Scotland will have had disability and carer benefits transferred from DWP once the new devolved benefits have been fully established. These are the people in Scotland who already received from DWP one or more of the benefits that are being devolved and is clearly a significant portion of Scotland's population. The case transfer process for Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance, which will replace Disability Living Allowance for adults in Scotland, marks the final stage of this process and will begin in Spring 2025.

The Scottish Government recognises that the benefits being transferred are critical for some of the most vulnerable people in society and committed early-on to working with benefit recipients and stakeholder organisations to co-design the transfer process.

In February 2019, the Scottish Government carried out research with Experience Panels members to help co-design the case transfer process. The research consisted of a survey and individual and group interviews, and asked participants for their views on the case transfer process from DWP to Social Security Scotland. Panel members were also asked what Social Security Scotland could do to make the transfer from DWP as stress free as possible. The findings from this work went on to provide the foundation for the [case transfer policy position paper](#), and informed key decisions in the design of the case transfer process.

For example, a priority identified by panel members during research was that there was no disruption during the case transfer process. This became one of the key considerations for the entire case transfer process and is closely linked to the formation of the five case transfer principles that underpin this. These principles are that:

- no one will be required to re-apply for their benefit as part of the transfer process.
- the case transfer process will be completed as soon as possible, while ensuring that it remains safe and secure.
- people will continue to receive the right payment at the right time.
- people's awards will, wherever possible, be transferred before they would be subject to a DWP face-to-face assessment.
- the Scottish Government will clearly communicate with people transferring.

Policy teams working on the case transfer process highlighted that being able to draw on the views and opinions of panel members was invaluable in supporting their approach and demonstrating how this aligned with the priorities of benefit recipients themselves.

For more information on the case transfer work, please see the [Experience Panels publications website](#).

Promote discussion and consideration of different viewpoints

Another area where Experience Panels research had an impact was when feedback from panel members was used to promote discussion and consideration of different viewpoints. This could be where policy teams were considering changes to an already developed position, or the findings from research challenged viewpoints from other sources such as stakeholder organisations or public consultations.

For example, research on panel members' experiences of the DWP-delivered Personal Independence Payment (PIP) revealed that some recipients were in favour of assessments as it validated their need for support with their disability and placed this on an official record. This was an important consideration that tested the assumption that all clients would hold negative opinions of assessments, and challenged viewpoints expressed by some stakeholder organisations. Instead, panel members highlighted that what mattered to them was that they were treated with dignity and respect throughout their interactions with social security. Policy colleagues described this as a valuable insight which led to an increased focus on what mattered to people as they went through the process, such as how they apply and how they are treated. Along with evidence from other research, it also encouraged the development of Dignity, Fairness and Respect as underlying principles for Social Security Scotland's interactions with clients.

Provide an evidence base for further work

Experience Panels research was found to have considerable longevity and relevance over time, with several policy teams stating that they used existing Experience Panels publications as part of an evidence base to develop future work. Several teams noted that the Experience Panels research had enabled them to collect a broad view of a particular benefit, but further research was then needed to develop specific processes. In this context, Experience Panels research was described as providing a valuable foundation that was able to inform the focus for subsequent work. This included the design of public consultations and the content of interview and focus group questions. For example, one team stated that Experience Panels research remained a key component of their contemporary work and research, and one which they utilised continuously even though it is now more than five years old.

Policy teams also mentioned that Experience Panels research was used to provide direct advice to the Cabinet Secretary. They said that because advice based on Experience Panels research was drawing directly from people with lived experience of the social security system, it was held in high esteem.

Case Study: Social Security Scotland Charter

[The Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#) set out the legislative framework and the principles for how the Scottish Government would deliver social security benefits in Scotland. The Act required a charter to be created that reflected these principles, and that it should be designed in consultation with people who have experience of social security and the organisations that represent them.

To fulfil this requirement, in 2018 the Experience Panels were involved in the design process for the [Social Security Scotland Charter](#). The Charter was created through a comprehensive co-design process which included a series of workshops with a diverse group of around 30 Experience Panels members from a range of backgrounds and with different conditions and experiences. The co-design process also included input from a range of professionals who offered expertise on relevant topics, partner organisations, sense-checking and design guidance from Social Security Scotland staff, and a debate in the Scottish Parliament. Together with Scottish Government analysts, these participants collectively created the Scottish Social Security Charter, 'Our Charter', which was approved by the Scottish Parliament and published in 2019. You can read full details in the Experience Panels [report on the Charter co-design process](#).

The content of Our Charter is based on a list of statements that represent what the principles in the Act mean in practice to people with lived experience of social security and stakeholders. The drafting of Our Charter turned this list into a set of commitments that focused on delivering a human-rights based social security system centred around the principles of dignity and respect for all. The commitments are short statements which describe the 'what' and 'how' of the delivery of the social security system, and there are around 50 commitments in total within Our Charter.

The full range of activity to deliver the charter commitments is reported each year in the Charter Measurement Framework.

Charter Measurement Framework

To measure and evaluate how successfully the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland are meeting the commitments laid out in Our Charter, the Charter Measurement Framework was developed. This involved a similar approach to creating the Charter, using a co-design process with Experience Panels members, stakeholder organisations, the Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS)³ and Scottish Government staff.

The Charter Measurement Framework focused on how the social security system should look if the commitments in the Charter are being met. It assesses how Social Security Scotland operates and delivers benefits and is designed to

³ SCoSS was established under the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 (provisions 21-22). One of its functions is to report to Scottish Ministers on the extent to which the commitments in the Charter are being fulfilled, and to make recommendations for improvements if necessary. For more information see: [Home - Scottish Commission on Social Security \(socialsecuritycommission.scot\)](https://www.socialsecuritycommission.scot/).

measure: how the agency treats clients, if staff are well supported, how the systems are working and how clients are experiencing the systems. It also covers commitments made by the Scottish Government which relate to policy-making about benefits and what the social security system should do as a whole. These are designed to understand what is being achieved over the longer term.

The Charter Measurement Framework reports on an annual basis, with the main sources being the Client Survey (an annual survey of Social Security Scotland clients), research with clients, staff and stakeholders, official statistics and a range of other monitoring information. To date, four frameworks have been published covering the period 2019-20 to 2022-23.⁴

Review

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 requires the Charter to be reviewed every five years. The first review took place during 2023 and was facilitated by researchers and officials from the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland, including the Experience Panels team.

Since Social Security Scotland began delivering benefits in 2018, Our Charter has shaped how services are designed and delivered, from the recruitment and training of staff to the values that underpin the culture of the agency itself. The involvement of Experience Panel members in the creation of Our Charter and the Charter Measurement Framework stands as a lasting testament to the contribution that panel members have made to the development of social security in Scotland.

3.2 Social Security Scotland

Experience Panels research was a fundamental part of the work to develop Social Security Scotland, representing hundreds of hours of research with panel members. By sharing their experiences, views, and priorities, panel members have been crucial partners in helping to design the social security system in Scotland. Panel members contributed to:

- Language used in Social Security Scotland
- Design of Client-facing processes
- Branding
- Local Delivery

“Using the design principle of “what can we do that will be most useful to the applicant?” is heartwarming, innovative and goes a long way to engendering trust between the user and the system rather than suspicion.” (Feedback survey respondent)

⁴ Links to published frameworks can be found on the Social Security Scotland website: [Social Security Scotland - Our Charter](#)

Language in Social Security Scotland

Experience Panel members feedback instigated an important change in the language used throughout Social Security Scotland and in interactions with clients. Panel members told researchers that the language used by Social Security Scotland should provide them with confidence and trust when interacting with the service. Specific examples of changes to language are given in the section on 'User Research' below.

"I recently had two letters, one from DWP and one from Social Security Scotland, telling me when my PIP will become [Adult Disability Payment]. The tone between the two was quite marked, DWP straight forward, Social Security Scotland much nicer, friendly and personal in tone." (Feedback survey respondent)

User Research

User Research is another research team that has worked closely with the Experience Panels. User Researchers specifically work on designing the user facing elements of the social security system and are attached to service design teams. Over the course of the Experience Panels, they have conducted research with panel members to test and improve aspects such as application forms and processes. User Research don't publish their results, but their findings feed directly into the design process.

"It is clear that the overall design of the system does have the claimant at the centre." (Feedback survey respondent)

For example, User Research with panel members led directly to changes in the language used within the assessment processes for the Adult Disability Payment benefit. Panel members advised they need language that is consistent and will provide them with confidence and trust when interacting with this service. This was particularly important for those with a mental health condition. Panel members also said that the language used should help them understand staff will have the relevant skills, experience and knowledge to understand their condition.

Changes were made to the language used during the assessment process as a result of this feedback. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People, Shirley-Anne Somerville, told the Scottish Parliament about these in April 2020:

"The words I'm using here are important: 'client consultation', not 'assessment', 'practitioner', not 'assessor'. This whole service is built on a relationship of trust with the client, and grounded in the professional ethics and expertise of our health and social care practitioners across Scotland." (Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People)

This change came directly from the Experience Panels and was fed back to panel members in the [Summer 2020 Experience Panels Newsletter](#).

Social Security Scotland brand

Experience Panel members have been an integral part of helping to develop the brand and appearance of Social Security Scotland. This included brand guidelines, setting out elements such as the colours and font to be used, as well as the Social Security Scotland strapline of 'Dignity, Fairness and Respect.' Panel members specifically said that the word 'dignity' was important and marked a change in approach from the DWP system. Experience Panels research was also used to develop the logo, images and words used to describe clients across Social Security Scotland materials.

The brand guidance also includes information on the tone of voice that should be used when speaking to clients. Panel members said that they wanted to feel welcomed and to be treated with respect throughout their interactions with Social Security Scotland. As a result, the tone of voice in the guidance is friendly and welcoming. These small changes all contributed to a larger change in the culture of Social Security Scotland and between clients and staff.

Based on Experience Panels research, Social Security Scotland moved from traditional brown envelopes to white in their correspondence with clients. Panel members told researchers that the brown envelopes typically used for official letters can cause feelings of anxiety.

Panel members were also involved in building design, suggesting ways of making these more accessible and providing input on signage. This ensured that clients' visits to Social Security Scotland buildings would feel more positive and welcoming, helping them to feel supported. The input from panel members also extended to the telephony system, where their feedback suggested the voice and accent which should be used to greet callers and what opening hours would be most helpful for clients.

Local Delivery

Local Delivery is a new element of social security that is being delivered in Scotland. Local Delivery is a service that offers someone person-to-person support to complete applications and identity checks – or just ask questions – at a location that is convenient for them. This could be in their home, at a venue within the local community, over the phone or by video call.

Research with Experience Panels members was a key element of the design and development for Local Delivery. Panel members were asked their views on a wide range of elements for the new service, including the type of buildings it should be available in, accessibility requirements, opening hours, and whether staff should wear a uniform.

Client Panels

Established in 2020, the Social Security Scotland Client Panels continue the successful approach of the Experience Panels in working with people who have experience of social security.

The Client Panels are made up of Social Security Scotland clients. People who make an application to, or receive a payment from, Social Security Scotland have the opportunity to become part of the Client Panels. When the panels started, around 1,000 clients joined. As the number of Social Security Scotland clients has increased so too has the size of the Client Panels. There are currently more than 12,000 members, representing experience of all benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland.

Research with the Client Panels helps Social Security Scotland to understand how clients are experiencing their service. This includes helping to measure performance in delivering the commitments set out in Our Charter. Research also gathers feedback about where things can improve and makes sure clients are involved in developing Social Security Scotland's systems, processes and policies. For some projects, the Client Panels and Experience Panels teams worked closely together to carry out research with both groups.

Research reports and summaries of Client Panels projects can be found online at the [Social Security Scotland social research webpage](#).

Case study: Social Security Scotland Client Panels - learning from Experience Panels success

The success of the Experience Panels was fundamental in establishing the Client Panels. The achievements of the Experience Panels ensured support for a similar approach to meet the ongoing commitment of Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government to work with people who have experience of social security.

The Client Panels incorporated best practice from the Experience Panels and benefited from the experience and learning gathered over the first years of the Experience Panels. This learning and expertise was an essential resource which allowed the Client Panels programme to anticipate and think through the complexities of managing a panel and how to mitigate potential issues. Some examples of this are outlined below.

Managing research

Like the Experience Panels, all research with the Client Panels is managed and delivered in-house by researchers. Processes developed during the Experience Panels were used to develop approaches to maintaining records of panel members, ensuring information is kept up to date and protected in line with GDPR guidelines. Processes relating to communicating with members have also been adopted, such as the publication of a regular Client Panels newsletter, setting up an email mailbox, and supporting members to get in touch and take part in research via phone. Another example is using learning from the relationships built between the

Experience Panels team with other analysts and policy colleagues to develop policies for working with the Client Panels to make sure research is relevant for members, and provides timely and impactful insight that meets organisational needs.

Accessibility

The Client Panels mirror the accessibility adjustments developed by the Experience Panels in fieldwork, reporting, and wider communication. For example, communication with Client Panel members is in their preferred format (e.g. email or letter), and is as clear as possible, using plain English and avoiding jargon. Learning from Experience Panels in-person events has also been used to develop guidance about the accessibility of research venues, paying expenses for travel and subsistence costs, and providing refreshments that take into account dietary requirements.

Peer learning

From the beginning, researchers involved in the Client Panels have had the support of the Experience Panels team and have drawn on their expertise developed working with the members of the Experience Panels. This has been especially beneficial for things like developing skills in carrying out research such as focus groups and understanding the impact of disability and health conditions on participants' lives. Some researchers have had the opportunity to work with both panels and have valued that opportunity.

3.3 Research

During conversations with social researchers, it was found that there were two key ways in which the Experience Panels had impacted on social research in the Scottish Government. These were through:

- The creation of specialised research expertise within the Experience Panels team.
- The development of resources and processes that could be used as templates by other researchers.

Team expertise

Over the course of its lifetime the Experience Panels created a repository of knowledge and expertise within past and present Experience Panels team members. This expertise was specialised around planning and conducting panel research with participants who could be vulnerable or have specific accessibility needs. In interviews with social researchers, many recalled speaking to Experience Panels team members as they were preparing or carrying out other research, some of which also involved panels.

This was described as particularly valuable during the early stages of work, where the knowledge and experience of Experience Panels team members was used to inform research design. For example, team members provided support to researchers working with vulnerable groups, advising them on ways to improve accessibility through consulting on the additional needs and access requirements

for participants, and developing communication guidelines. Experience Panels' work and processes were also used as examples of the standards that contractors would need to meet regarding ethical and accessibility considerations. For example, [the Social Security Experience Panels – accessibility adjustments](#).

Some researchers noted that having this experience available to draw on within the Scottish Government was useful as it meant that they were able to speak directly with colleagues to get concrete examples, rather than relying on general guidelines.

Development of research resources and processes

Other researchers interviewed said that they had been able to draw on materials and processes developed by the Experience Panels team to use as a template for their own work. For example, several researchers had adapted Experience Panels consent forms for their own research because they had confidence that they met accessibility requirements.

Other examples included help creating costings for 'Invitations to Tender' that were sent to potential contractors for research work, resourcing considerations for research events where participants had additional accessibility needs, and processes around handling expenses and compensation for participants who are receiving benefits (where entitlement may have been affected by additional payments).

3.4 Impact beyond Scottish Government

Whilst Experience Panels research has been instrumental in developing the new social security system in Scotland, there has been interest in the work outside of the Scottish Government from academia and other bodies, and other governments.

In interviews for this report, several colleagues reported that officials from other devolved administrations have discussed the way the Scottish Government have used their additional social security powers and remarked on the novel approach of centring lived experience in the development of the service. For example, the Scottish Government is cited in a report from the Welsh Parliament which discusses how to improve the delivery of social security benefits in Wales. The report directly cites the creation of the Experience Panels as evidence of good practice for designing and delivering social security benefits in a devolved context, stating that "there is much to be learnt from the excellent work in Scotland [...] where lived experience directly fed into changes into how the system is administered, and the benefits themselves"⁵.

The Experience Panels have also been discussed in academic research. Strokosch & Osborne (2020) described the Experience Panels as having challenged

⁵ National Assembly for Wales (2019). 'Benefits in Wales: Options for better delivery', p.21. The full report is [available online here](#).

conventional notions of “expert” and “professional” in the delivery of public service⁶. Another paper by Simpson, McKeever and Gray (2019) proposed that devolved administrations can function as potential “laboratories of democracy” through allowing exploration of new ways to deliver social security. The authors note that the Scottish Government has focussed on ensuring that individuals who need to access social security are treated with dignity and respect. However, their positive assessment of the Scottish Government’s approach was tempered with questions around how the high standards established can be maintained⁷.

Interviews also highlighted interest in the Experience Panels from public and advisory bodies where lived experience is central to their work, such as the [Poverty and Inequality Commission’s \(PIC\) Experts by Experience Panel](#). During the set-up of the PIC project there was some shared learning between the panels: researchers involved with the PIC panel consulted with Experience Panels team members on expenses and the approach to ‘thank you’ vouchers for participants, and the PIC panel shared their own recruitment approach and policies with the Experience Panels in return. Although this is a limited example, it suggests that government programmes such as the Experience Panels can be part of a wider local or national research landscape that would be mutually beneficial for those involved.

Other sources have highlighted the Experience Panels as an important contribution to social security policy more generally. Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH) has called for the Experience Panels to be retained in recognition of the importance of involving lived experience⁸. Mind Cymru (a third sector organisation in Wales) also cited the Experience Panels as an example of how people who need to access social security can have their voices heard⁹. Finally, the European Social Policies Network has acknowledged the work of the Experience Panels and proposes that it is a good example to follow for others who are looking to reform social security and anti-poverty policies¹⁰.

These examples demonstrate broad recognition that including people with lived experience in social security research and service design is important, and that the Scottish Government has taken a leading role in developing this approach.

⁶ Strokosch, K., and Osborne, S.P. (2020). Co-experience, co-production and co-governance: an ecosystem approach to the analysis of value creation, *Policy & Politics*, vol 48, no 3, 425–442, DOI: 10.1332/030557320X15857337955214

⁷ Simpson, M., McKeever, G., & Gray, A. (2019). From principles to practice: social security in the Scottish laboratory of democracy. *Journal of Social Security Law*, 26(1), 13-31

⁸ SAMH (2021). ‘SAMH’s View: Scottish Social Security’. Available online: [Views document \(samh.org.uk\)](https://www.samh.org.uk)

⁹ Mind Cymru (2018). ‘Inquiry into ‘Benefits in Wales: options for better delivery’: Response from Mind Cymru’. [Available online here](#)

¹⁰ European Social Policies Network (2018): ‘Scotland moves away from the UK in social security policy’. [Available online here](#).

4. Feedback Survey

A survey was sent to all panel members to collect feedback on their experience of being part of the Experience Panels. The survey ran from December 2023 to February 2024, and a total of 206 responses were received.

4.1 Why people joined the panel

Over 2,400 people joined the Experience Panels over the six years they ran and although panel members were not paid to participate many remained engaged throughout.

The feedback survey asked panel members what had motivated them to join the Experience Panels. The most common responses were to 'Design Scotland's social security system' and to 'Share my experience', with 80 per cent and 79 per cent respectively. 25 per cent of respondents said that they were motivated to join to 'Meet other people' (Table 4.1). 'Other' responses could generally be grouped under these same three areas but provided more detail.

Some respondents provided additional detail to their answers. A few stated that they wanted to make sure that the new social security system in Scotland was designed with respect and fairness in mind. This speaks directly to the core values of Social Security Scotland and reflects how the inclusion of people with lived experience was vital to the direction of developing the new benefits system.

"I wanted to help shape a fairer system in Scotland and using my experiences helped." (Feedback survey respondent)

One respondent said that they were someone who was on the 'edge' of eligibility, and they wanted to make sure that people like them were considered during the design of new benefits. This is consistent with the Experience Panels' commitment to inclusivity and ensuring that there was representation of all groups of people who may need to access social security, in the design of the new social security system.

"I wanted to be sure someone like me was considered [in the design of social security in Scotland]" (Feedback survey respondent)

Another respondent said that they wanted to speak for future generations, which aligns with Principle 1 in ['Our Charter'](#), which states that 'social security is an investment in the people of Scotland'.

"I wanted to be a voice for the future generations." (Feedback survey respondent)

Table 4.1 - What motivated you to join? (n=205)

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Design Scotland's social security system	80%
Share my experience	79%
Meet other people	25%

*Figures do not add to 100 per cent due to rounding, and because respondents could select more than one option.

4.2 Accessibility of participation

As a primary objective of the Experience Panels was to gather a wide range of different lived experiences, a key consideration when conducting research was to ensure that this was accessible for all participants, and that nobody who wanted to participate was excluded on the basis of individual accessibility needs.

The feedback survey included several questions about accessibility relating to in-person research, phone/video research and surveys to gauge the extent to which this aim had been achieved.

For in-person research, 94 per cent of respondents said that they had enough choice about when and how they took part. 95 per cent said that the research events were in a venue that was accessible for them, and 85 per cent reported that the location was convenient for them. No respondent disagreed with the statement 'I was able to get support to take part if I needed it'.

However, some respondents raised accessibility concerns related to the availability of disabled parking at in-person research venues and the accessibility of venues for wheelchair users.

"Most of the in-person meetings were at venues without blue badge parking and some had accessibility issues." (Feedback survey respondent)

"Ensure venues for in person events are easily accessible for wheelchair users and have adjacent parking." (Feedback survey respondent)

For phone and video interviews, 93 per cent of respondents said that they had enough choice about how to take part and 80 per cent of respondents said they were able to get support to take part if they needed it (Table 4.2). One respondent strongly disagreed with the statement 'I was able to get support to take part if I needed it,' but no further detail was provided on what could have been improved. 18 per cent said that they 'neither agreed nor disagreed'.

Table 4.2 – Phone/Video Interviews: I was able to get support to take part if I needed it

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Strongly agree	58
Agree	22
Neither agree nor disagree	18
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	1

*Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

For surveys, 97 per cent of respondents said that they had enough time to complete the survey, 72 per cent said that they were able to access support to complete surveys if they needed it. 3 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement 'I was able to access support if I needed it'. 25 per cent said that they neither agreed nor disagreed (Table 4.3). Of those who said they disagreed that they were able to access support if they needed to, none of these respondents provided further insight into that response when asked for any further information.

Table 4.3 – Surveys: I was able to get support to take part if I needed it

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Strongly agree	43
Agree	29
Neither agree nor disagree	25
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

*Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

These figures suggest that for the majority of respondents, participation in the research was accessible. A later question asked panel members to provide further comment on what research methods should be continued or improved on in future research. Some respondents provided more information here that related to the accessibility of research, including that surveys and online video interviews were easy to access, and that more dates should be provided for research events.

"More surveys would be good, they are easy to complete." (Feedback survey respondent)

“Keep it all but add more dates for in person panels.” (Feedback survey respondent)

“Please keep the video research studies with interviewers.” (Feedback survey respondent)

4.3 Communication with panel members

During the course of the Experience Panels, all panel members were contacted at least four times a year via the quarterly newsletters. These newsletters provided an update on research over the preceding quarter and often a ‘spotlight article’, for example an interview with somebody involved in using Experience Panels research. Panel members who participated in research were also sent a copy of any relevant research outputs related to this, such as a report or visual summary.

The feedback survey asked panel members for their thoughts on these communications and how accessible they were. 88 per cent of respondents said that the communications from the Experience Panels team had kept them up to date with the research and 96 per cent said that the reports and newsletters were in a format that was accessible to them.

For reports, which were sent to panel members who had specifically engaged in that piece of research, 93 per cent of respondents said that they were clear and easy to understand and 90 per cent said they found it useful to receive the reports.

For the quarterly newsletters, 93 per cent of respondents said that they were clear and easy to understand and 91 per cent said that they were useful to receive.

Respondents were also asked if there was anything else it would have been useful to have included in the reports or newsletters. Suggestions included: featuring more views and experiences from Social Security Scotland clients, a reduced length and/or increased frequency of newsletters, using different forms of media to communicate with panel members such as online platforms, and more detail on how the research findings had fed into changes within benefits and Social Security Scotland itself.

“Personal experiences of new Social Security Scotland.” (Feedback survey respondent)

“I may have liked a more frequent short newsletter to feel more connected to the project all the time.” (Feedback survey respondent)

“Better use of Zoom, YouTube and other online platforms.” (Feedback survey respondent)

“More of the intensely practical stuff like how the agreed ideas translate into forms, helplines, policy, complaints procedures etc.” (Feedback survey respondent)

This suggests that communicating with panel members via reports and newsletters was a valuable way to keep panel members up to date, but that the newsletters and reports could have been further developed as the Experience Panels progressed, to provide more information on how the research was connected to concrete changes within policy areas and Social Security Scotland.

4.4 Panel members' impact on decision making

The feedback survey also asked panel members about how they thought their contributions during research had been used.

82 per cent of respondents said that it was clear how Experience Panels research was used to inform the design of the new social security system in Scotland (Table 4.4), 81 per cent said that they felt being part of the Experience Panels had allowed them to shape the new social security system (Table 4.5) and 87 per cent said that the Experience Panels were a good way to ensure people with lived experience helped to design the new social security system (Table 4.6).

Table 4.4 - It was clear how Experience Panels research was used to inform the design of the social security system in Scotland (n=200)

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Strongly agree	47
Agree	36
Neither agree nor disagree	12
Disagree	5
Strongly disagree	1

* Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Table 4.5: Taking part in the Experience Panels let me shape the design of the social security system in Scotland (n=200)

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Strongly agree	42
Agree	39
Neither agree nor disagree	14
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	3

* Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Table 4.6 - The Experience Panels were a good way to make sure the views of people with lived experience helped design and develop the social security system in Scotland (n=199)

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Strongly agree	57
Agree	31
Neither agree nor disagree	8
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	1

* Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

4.5 Reflections on Experience Panels research from the feedback survey

Panel members were also asked for their views on what worked well during the Experience Panels and what could have been better.

What worked well?

When asked what was good about the research activities, panel members responses largely focussed on five areas: the value of using lived experience in research, opportunities to share, hearing from others, the Experience Panels team, and the accessibility of research.

Many respondents commented on the importance of involving people with lived experience in the design and delivery of social security. Many said that they were pleased to be able to use their experiences constructively and that it made them feel part of the process of developing Social Security Scotland, with several respondents stating that they felt their experiences were valued.

“I felt as if I was part of the design for devolved benefits in Scotland.” (Feedback survey respondent)

Many participants talked about being able to share their experiences as being a positive part of contributing to the research. Participating was described as being “cathartic” and they said it helped them to feel listened to.

“For me it was a cathartic exercise being able to put my experience to good use.” (Feedback survey respondent)

Respondents also said that hearing from other people and hearing their similar experiences was a valuable part of the research. A few respondents said that hearing from other people made them feel less alone.

“I enjoyed meeting other people and hearing their experiences and points of view.”
(Feedback survey respondent)

Many of the respondents spoke very positively about the researchers in the team and the organisation of the research overall. Respondents made various comments, including that the researchers were friendly, put them at ease, made them feel valued and that throughout the research activities they felt able to speak openly.

“In person groups were the right size, and allowed people time to tell their experiences or answer questions. The interviewers were very good at putting us at ease, and making sure everyone was ok throughout the session.” (Feedback survey respondent)

When reflecting on accessibility, panel members commented on survey and interviews questions being clear and easy to understand, the visual display of surveys, the range of modes for research participation, the range of times available to participate and being able to take breaks.

“I found it all easy to do and take part in and I felt supported throughout the time.”
(Feedback survey respondent)

“...appreciate the yellow backgrounds for text. This is good for dyslexia.” (Feedback survey respondent)

“Video conference meant I could take part.” (Feedback survey respondent)

What could have been better?

When panel members were asked what could have been better, the responses generally related to accessibility of research locations (parking was reported as an issue for wheelchair users), feedback on the research and a desire for more in-person research. These responses related specifically to the research activities, but a later question in the survey asked panel members what should be kept, stopped and improved for any potential future research. The responses for that question were broadly consistent with these themes, but also included the suggestion to improve the diversity (age and ethnicity) of the panel.

Survey respondents noted that they would have liked to have heard more about what happened to their contributions after the research was complete. Some respondents said that they had been able to see the impact of what they had said, but others said they would like to know what had been implemented as a result of the research they had participated in.

“More thorough explanations of how panel members’ ideas were applied in the actual processes of using the new Scottish system would have been better.”
(Feedback survey respondent)

4.6 Impact for panel members

Being part of the Experience Panels represented a long-term commitment for many panel members, and their consistent engagement represented a personal investment of time and energy into the panels.

The feedback survey asked panel members if they felt that they had achieved what they hoped through their participation. Many responded with a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No,’ while others provided more detail on how they felt about their time on the panel. Many panel members expressed hope that they were part of something that had created a positive change for Scotland’s social security system. Some said that being involved in the panel had helped them feel active and involved in something, indicating that there was value for some participants beyond research outcomes.

“I loved being a part of the panel, I hope that this has helped to create a fairer system for all.” (Feedback survey respondent)

“I also achieved a sense of worth which I have not felt for a long time. I now actively look for ways to become involved, to make a difference, which I have not done before.” (Feedback survey respondent)

Other panel members expressed disappointment. A few felt that their time on the Experience Panels had not covered topics important to them. For example, some panel members wanted more opportunities to talk about mental health. Others were disappointed as they felt that their contributions and suggestions had not been implemented.

“I don't feel I had enough opportunity to talk about mental health.” (Feedback survey respondent)

“No, I am extremely disappointed that what information was given by myself and others was not heard when I came to deal with the system.” (Feedback survey respondent)

However, other respondents felt they had made a difference and enjoyed being able to talk to others and help with the area they had most experience in.

“I feel we made significant progress in Carer's Allowance.” (Feedback survey respondent)

Many panel members were undecided about whether they had achieved what they had hoped to, as they did not yet have experience of the new social security system. Others wondered about how much of their contributions would be implemented.

“It remains to be seen. I hope what we have said will be taken on board and it will be clear when benefits are up and running.” (Feedback survey respondent)

4.7 Overall experience of being on the panel

Panel members were asked some questions around their general experiences when taking part in the panels. The vast majority (91 per cent) of respondents said that they had enjoyed taking part in the Experience Panels research, with more than half (55 per cent) strongly agreeing (Table 4.7). Similarly, more than four-fifths (81 per cent) of respondents said that they had felt listened to, with almost half (48 per cent) strongly agreeing (Table 4.8).

Although only a few panel members stated that they did not enjoy taking part, their comments referenced various issues. These included feeling that contributions to research had not been implemented in service design, that there had been no improvement in service delivery from Social Security Scotland compared to DWP, or that the panel member had not been invited to take part in enough research.

Table 4.7 - I have enjoyed participating in the Experience Panels (n=203)

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Strongly agree	55
Agree	36
Neither agree nor disagree	6
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	3

*Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Table 4.8 - I have felt listened to by the Experience Panels team (n=197)

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Strongly agree	48
Agree	32
Neither agree nor disagree	14
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	3

*Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Drawing on the aspirations of Social Security Scotland, panel members were also asked if they agreed or disagreed that they had been treated with dignity, fairness and respect while participating in the Experience Panels. Almost all (95 per cent) respondents agreed with this, with almost three quarters (72 per cent) strongly agreeing (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 - I feel I was treated with dignity, fairness and respect throughout my participation on the Experience Panel (n=202)

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Strongly agree	72
Agree	23
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	2

*Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Finally, panel members were asked if they would take part in research organised by the Scottish Government again. Almost all (93 per cent) respondents said that they would, with only 2 per cent responding 'No' (Table 4.10)

"I wanted to make sure others didn't have to experience the same. The panel made me feel listened to and our experiences and suggestions to make things better were heard. I would, without hesitation, volunteer for anything similar." (Feedback survey respondent)

Table 4.10 - Would you take part in research organised by the Scottish Government again? (n=201)

	Percentage (%) of respondents*
Yes	93
No	2
I don't know	4

* Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

5. Reflections and Learnings

Across the evidence review, interviews and feedback survey in this research, several learnings and reflections have been identified. These have related to all aspects of conducting the Experience Panels including setting up the panels, conducting the panels and using panel research data. Specifically:

- Reflections on sampling of panel members
- Importance of building trust
- Managing expectations of panel members
- Offering multiple ways to participate
- Feeding back to panel members
- Importance of culture around social security

5.1 Running the Experience Panels

Reflections on sampling of panel members

Various positive and negative opinions regarding the demographic make-up of the panels were shared during the research for this legacy report.

As the Experience Panels required ongoing input from panel members, it was by necessity a self-selecting group of people. Some people involved in this legacy research regarded this as a positive because it meant panel members were taking part because they voluntarily wanted to share their experiences. Others appreciated that having a ready resource of people willing to participate in research allowed them to circumvent the recruitment phase. One member of staff also highlighted that people can experience participation-fatigue within smaller panels, so having a large group of people who could be invited was valuable.

However, a few members of staff discussed the self-selecting nature of the panel as a challenge because it could mean that the same people were volunteering repeatedly, which could lead to some individuals having disproportionate input to research.

Another concern was if the opinions of these participants, who were often very experienced and knowledgeable of the benefits system, could be regarded as 'typical' of others. However, some policy colleagues also said that because panel members represented a sample of people with lived experience of the benefits system, they were less likely to express prejudiced or politicised views regarding benefits (as was reportedly a challenge with some public consultation responses).

The demographical representativeness of the Experience Panels was also considered by some staff. One colleague mentioned that the early Experience Panels events had greater representation of people of a certain age, gender and ethnicity. As noted earlier, this was recognised and addressed through a second

wave of recruitment to the panels, together with a more targeted approach to seldom heard groups through the Seldom Heard Voices project of research.

While the aims and objectives of each research project may dictate how recruitment and sampling are done, these reflections emphasise the need for researchers to be mindful of ensuring that participants are representative of those who may be affected by the research subject. For panel research in particular, this might be useful to consider for both recruitment to the panel and for targeted recruitment to individual research activities, to ensure that a diverse range of voices are represented. This would need to be balanced against the risk of over-sampling some participants and causing research fatigue. Depending on the size of the panel, it might also be useful to maintain a record of participation in research events to ensure that views from a range of panel members are captured.

Importance of building trust

At the outset, the Experience Panels team felt that it was important to take the time to build trust with panel members, given that they were participating on a voluntary basis and the programme was still new and relatively unknown. Several steps were taken by the Experience Panels team to build trust with participants.

In the registration form for the Experience Panels that was sent to potential members, only information that was required to confirm eligibility and contact details were collected. There were two reasons for this. First, to keep personal information separate from sensitive personal information or any other research findings. And second, to keep registration as simple as possible for panel members.

After recruitment had closed in 2017, a survey was conducted with panel members called 'About Your Benefits and You'. A draft of this survey was tested with a group of panel members, which were selected to include people with a range of characteristics and experiences. Findings were published in the [Experience Panels survey testing session report](#).

During that session, participants stated that they felt that time should be taken to build trust with panel members before all equality questions were asked. This added to existing awareness in the research team that many panel members were still suspicious of government research. For example, people registering over the phone often asked if the Experience Panels would share their information with the DWP.

The decision was taken not to ask all questions in the first About Your Benefits and You survey in 2017. Instead, a working relationship was built with panel members through undertaking research activities across the country and running surveys, and publishing reports which raised the profile of the Experience Panels. The full set of equalities questions were only asked once the Experience Panels were better established and trusted by participants. The researchers involved in Experience Panels events were also careful to build trust and rapport with participants during events.

“The experience panel team were very at ease and welcoming, I didn’t feel so nervous after meeting them. It was good to hear other participants expressing their views and opinions in their words. That then helped me make statements and contribute.” (Feedback survey respondent)

Offering multiple ways to participate

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 disrupted the Experience Panels and led to a shift in the way research was undertaken. During the pandemic, surveys and phone/video interviews were used to keep panel members and staff safe and to ensure the research could continue. Separate research on the [impact of Covid-19 on communication preferences](#) was conducted with members of the Experience and Client Panels. This highlighted that more people considered video calls to be a helpful way to communicate. Following the pandemic, in-person events did return, but there was a shift towards greater inclusion of phone, video and survey methods during research.

The feedback survey for this research reflects the findings from this previous research, with some respondents stating that participating via video call made it easier for them to access research events. However, many respondents said they thought in-person research should continue to be used and that they felt it could not be replaced.

This has emphasised the importance of future research participants being offered a choice in how they take part in research. This broadens not only the appeal of research, in that people can participate in their preferred way, but accessible options for taking part. This is particularly relevant where participants may have conditions which make in-person events more difficult, such as limited mobility or anxiety.

Managing expectations of panel members

A challenge raised by some of the social researchers interviewed (many of whom worked on other panels) was that managing the expectations of their research participants was difficult. They explained that some of their participants expected that by taking part in the research, their specific views would go on to directly influence policy decisions. However, the development of policy is complex and while research participants’ views do feed into the process, it is likely that other factors will also be involved in final decisions. This was a challenge that was also evident in the Experience Panels research and which some panel members commented on through the feedback survey. For example, one survey respondent expressed disappointment that something their focus group had agreed on had not been implemented.

“We almost 100 per cent agreed...what should and shouldn’t happen...that did not happen...shocking and am so disappointed.” (Feedback survey respondent)

It is understandable that panel members might feel disappointed when their specific individual contributions are not taken forward. It is therefore important to manage these expectations at the outset of participatory research, particularly where it may

be used to inform decision making within a policy or service design context. Common understanding should be established between the research team and participants to ensure that participants are aware of the context surrounding decision making, and the extent to which their contributions may influence that process.

5.2 Use of Experience Panels research

Feeding back to panel members

A recurring challenge throughout the research for this report was identifying how the data produced from the Experience Panels had fed into the decision-making process. As noted above, there are many different factors that can feed into decisions that are made within policy contexts, so it is understandable that there would not be in every case a clear 'line' that could be traced from Experience Panels' research through to outcomes within policy or Social Security Scotland.

Staff who had been involved in research conducted during the early stages of the Experience Panels explained that the process for doing research with panel members was initially needs-based, responding to the requirements of colleagues as they began to design the new social security agency and develop the benefits. This meant that sometimes there was little supporting information that could be drawn on to understand the research journey from inception to use, such as clearly stated research aims or documented next steps from the end users of research findings.

This could also mean that colleagues who had joined their teams in the years after Experience Panels research had been conducted were sometimes unable to disentangle how the research findings had been used compared to other forms of evidence. Again, this is partly due to the decision-making process being complex and involving different intersecting forms of information. However, in other cases staff were recollecting second-hand information from what they had been told by previous colleagues. In these cases, it seemed that some knowledge about decision-making processes was held within individuals, rather than documented.

Related to this, a common theme identified in the feedback survey responses was the desire for more transparency around how research contributions were used in decision making. During interviews with social researchers who were running other panels, several colleagues noted that feeding back how research participants' contributions had been used was part of their agreement with their participants. For Experience Panels research this was done to an extent through reports and newsletters, but in many cases this feedback was not explicit.

For future research, establishing clear steps to document how research findings are being used and their input within decision-making processes would be advisable. This would also allow more transparency when communicating with research participants about how their contributions have been used, particularly within areas

such as service design where participants may be directly affected by the decisions reached.

Relatedly, the Experience Panels did not have a clearly defined set of objectives outwith the core aim of ensuring that people with lived experience of the previous UK benefits system had direct input into the design of the new Scottish social security system. The varied nature of the research projects that were run by the Experience Panels perhaps precluded specific research objectives, but a more defined set of goals for the panels overall could have aided in assessing their outcomes and achievements once they had reached their conclusion. This could have also been used to provide more specific feedback to panel members as to how their contributions helped to achieve these goals, and potentially addressing some of the concerns outlined above.

5.3 Outcome of the Experience Panels research

Importance of culture around social security

A repeated finding throughout the legacy research was that one of the biggest impacts of the Experience Panels was the creation of a culture that embodies dignity, fairness and respect. Through the development of 'Our Charter', the language used in benefit names, Social Security Scotland staff training materials, a commitment to inclusive communications and accessible research, and the development of needs-based localised support, the Experience Panels have set a high standard for how participatory research and service development should be done. A panel member in the feedback survey remarked on this shift.

"The fact that [the Scottish Government] are treating people with respect and taking a human-rights based approach when dealing with people, makes a tremendous difference." (Feedback survey respondent)

Some policy team members interviewed for this report noted that when they were developing policies many of the changes to benefits were often minor. However, the way clients were treated through benefit names or language used in the policies made an importance difference to clients because this was often an area where social security services were able to demonstrate respect for clients, or increase clients' feelings of being treated with dignity. For example, panel members explained that benefit names that include the word 'allowance', or 'low-income' are patronising and stigmatising. Choosing new benefit names with input from Experience Panels members was a simple but effective step to reduce feelings of stigma, and promote Social Security Scotland aims of treating clients with dignity and respect.

A significant learning from the Experience Panels research was therefore the importance of culture for clients and the ways in which small changes within client-staff interactions, language and communication can significantly improve clients' experiences of social security services.

6. Conclusion and Next Steps

This report has documented the legacy of the Social Security Experience Panels through examining their impact across the areas of policy, Social Security Scotland, and Scottish Government research. While there was not a clearly defined set of project goals for the Experience Panels, this report is also interested in determining if the panels were able to fulfil their original aim of involving people with lived experience of the benefits system in the design and development of the new Scottish social security system.

This report has found that the contributions made by Experience Panels members through research have had a meaningful impact across the different areas of policy, Social Security Scotland, and Scottish Government research. This includes in key areas of policy design and service delivery. Most importantly, the Experience Panels successfully demonstrated that participatory research has an important role to play in government research overall, and service design specifically.

In policy, Experience Panels research had been used extensively in the design of new benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland. Policy colleagues were able to demonstrate that there had been significant use of research findings when developing or supporting policy positions and considering changes to benefits. Importantly, it was felt that having access to the views of people with lived experience of the social security system could provide new and different viewpoints to those gathered from other sources, and allowed policy teams to challenge existing viewpoints and test assumptions. This clearly demonstrated the value of using participatory research in this way, ensuring that the perspectives and opinions of service users were built into service design.

Experience Panels reports and research findings have also established a broad evidence base that policy teams are able to draw on for contemporary work, demonstrating a longevity to Experience Panels work that ensures their impact will last beyond the closure of the panels themselves.

Looking at the impact of the Experience Panels for the design and development of Social Security Scotland, the impact of the panels was again found to be significant. Panel members were closely involved in key aspects of designing the social security system, not least the significant contributions to the culture and ethos of service delivery in Social Security Scotland, most notably the creation of Our Charter, which underpins all the work of the agency.

The impact of the panels across research was also found to be considerable. The creation of specialised research expertise, resources and processes was found to have been utilised by other researchers across Scottish Government, demonstrating the value of running research projects such as this in-house rather than through external contractors. There was also limited but encouraging evidence that the approach to service design used by the Scottish Government has been of interest within other devolved administration contexts.

In addition, the panels were clearly valued by colleagues across government, as demonstrated in the positive feedback that was gathered throughout this research. Policy teams, researchers, Social Security Scotland staff, and most importantly panel members themselves all felt that including people with lived experience of the benefits system had been a valuable aspect of designing the new Scottish system.

Collectively, these findings indicate that the panels have successfully fulfilled their original aim.

An additional benefit of surveying the impact of the Experience Panels was the identification of some learnings. Although the research for this report specifically focussed on panel research, many of these learnings will also be applicable to other participatory research. These learnings span the entire lifetime of the Experience Panels, from inception to closure. These related to sampling of panel members, the importance of building trust, offering multiple ways to participate, the need to manage expectations, the importance of feeding back to panel members and finally, the significance of culture in the delivery of social security.

The future of lived experience in social security

Following the closure of the Experience Panels, the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland will continue to improve the social security system by listening to and working with thousands of people who have experience of it. Social Security Scotland's Client Survey, Client Panels and User Research are key ways that this will be achieved.

While Experience Panels' research informed the design of Scotland's social security system, the Client Panels will ensure lived experience is embedded in ongoing improvement. The Client Panels are a significant legacy of the Experience Panels and will ensure people with lived experience remain at the heart of the delivery of social security in Scotland.

Evaluation is continually being carried out by Scottish Government researchers to explore the impact of the benefit system in achieving the government's objectives: that social security is an investment in people, reduces poverty, and delivers value for money. User Research is also ongoing, being carried out to test and develop processes and materials for Social Security Scotland and the benefits that it delivers. Social Security Scotland clients are also invited to take part in evaluation and User Research based on their experience.

The findings of this report indicate that an ongoing engagement with people who have lived experience of the benefits system should continue to be an important element of service design and delivery in Scotland and can be of significant value to the people of Scotland.

Annex A: Acronyms

DPIA – Data Protection Impact Assessment

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

PIC – Poverty and Inequality Commission

PIP – Personal Independence Payment

SAMH – Scottish Action for Mental Health

SCoSS – Scottish Commission on Social Security

Annex B: Feedback Survey

Experience Panels Feedback Survey

We are extremely grateful for your time over the last six years as part of the Experience Panels.

As we bring the Experience Panels to a close, we are looking back at all we have achieved and want to apply what we have learnt through this programme to other projects. We'd like to hear from you about your experience of being part of the panel. We're keen to find out what you've enjoyed and what could've gone better. This will help us to understand what we might change and how to better support participants in any future panels run by the Scottish Government.

The survey results will be analysed by researchers in the Experience Panels team. We will include findings in a final report, which will cover the impacts and achievements of the Experience Panels over the last six years. The report will be published at the [Social Security Experience Panels publications page](#).

Completing the survey

This survey should take around 10 minutes to complete, but it might take longer if you want to think about your answers a little more. If you do not want to answer a question, then please leave it blank.

If you would like to receive a copy of this survey in larger print, please contact us and we will arrange this.

By completing and returning this survey to us, you are consenting to be part of this research.

Section 1: Personal experience of participating in the Experience Panels

Question 1a) Reflecting on your participation in the Experience Panels, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (please tick one box in each row).

I have enjoyed participating in the Experience Panels:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I have felt listened to by the Experience Panels team:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 1b) Thinking back to when you first joined the Experience Panels, what motivated you to join? (Please tick all that apply)

- I wanted to help design the social security system for Scotland.
- I wanted to share my experiences of what has not worked in the past.
- I wanted to meet other people who have experience of using the social security system in Scotland and the UK.
- Other (open text response option)

Question 1c) Did you achieve what you hoped to achieve by being a member of the Experience Panels? (open text response option)

Section 2: Communication

Question 2a) Thinking about the communication you have had from the Experience Panels team, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (please tick one box in each row).

The communications from the Experience Panels team kept me up to date with the research:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

It was easy to contact the Experience Panels team when I needed to:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The reports and newsletters I received were in a format that was accessible for me:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The reports were clear and easy to understand:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The newsletters were clear and easy to understand:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 2b) Did you find it useful to receive the reports about the research you participated in?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Question 2c) Did you find it useful to receive newsletters?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Question 2d) Is there anything else you would like to have seen included in the reports and/or newsletters? (open text response option)

Section 3: Taking part in research

The following questions relate to different ways you might have taken part in Experience Panels research. Please answer all sections that apply to you.

Question 3a) In-person events: Thinking about the events you attended in person for example focus groups, please say how much you agree or disagree overall with the following statements:

I had enough choice about when I took part:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The event(s) were in a venue that was accessible to me:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The event(s) were at a location that was convenient for me:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The interviewer made me feel at ease:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I was able to get support to take part if I needed it (e.g., an interpreter, taking breaks, receiving questions in advance):

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 3b) Phone or video interviews: Thinking about interviews you have taken part in via phone or video call, please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I had enough choice about when and how I took part:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The interviewer made me feel at ease:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I was able to get support to take part if I needed it (e.g., an interpreter, taking breaks, receiving questions in advance):

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 3c) Surveys: Thinking about the surveys you have taken part in, please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I was given enough time to complete surveys:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I was able to access support for completing surveys if I needed to:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The surveys were an appropriate length:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The surveys covered the topics in enough detail:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The surveys were clear and easy to understand:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 3d) Thinking about the research activities you took part in, please tell us: what was good? (Open text response option)

Question 3e) What could have been better? (Open text response option)

Section 4: Impact of the Experience Panels

Question 4a) The following questions ask about the impact you feel that the panels, and your participation in these, has had on the development of social security in Scotland.

It was clear how Experience Panels research was used to inform the design of the social security system in Scotland:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Taking part in the Experience Panels let me shape the design of the social security system in Scotland:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The Experience Panels were a good way to make sure the views of people with lived experience helped design and develop the social security system in Scotland:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Section 5: Your overall thoughts on the Experience Panels and the future of social security in Scotland.

Thinking about your experience overall...

Question 5a) Do you have any particular memories of participating in the Experience Panels that you would like to share? (Open text response option)

Question 5b) Please describe your participation in the Experience Panels in three words. (Open text response option)

Question 5c) If we did a panel again in the future, what should we keep/improve/stop? (Open text response option)

Question 5d) How do you feel about the future of the Scottish social security system? (Open text response option)

Question 5e) Please answer to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement.

I feel I was treated with dignity, fairness and respect throughout my participation on the Experience Panel:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 5f) Would you take part in research organised by the Scottish Government again?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Section 6: Saying farewell to the Experience Panels

Question 6a) If a farewell event for panel members was held, would you be interested in attending?

- Yes, an in-person event
- Yes, an online event
- Yes, either in-person or online
- No, I would not be interested in attending

Question 6b) If a farewell event was held, please let us know any thoughts you have on what format this could take. For example, you might prefer an in-person get-together to reminisce, or an online event to hear from researchers about the impact of the research - we are open to all suggestions! (Open text response option)

Question 6c) Is there anything else you'd like to tell us? (Open text response option)

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact socialresearch@gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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This document is also available from our website at www.gov.scot.
ISBN: 978-1-83601-705-9

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Produced for
the Scottish Government
by APS Group Scotland
PPDAS1498538 (09/24)
Published by
the Scottish Government,
September 2024



Social Research series
ISSN 2045-6964
ISBN 978-1-83601-705-9

Web Publication
www.gov.scot/socialresearch

PPDAS1498538 (09/24)