

Report

Report to:	Finance and Corporate Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	4 March 2020
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Scottish Social Security Update
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to: -

- ♦ update Committee on progress made to date by the Scottish Government in implementing its social security programme

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted; and
- (2) that a further report will be provided to the Committee to update on the delivery of phase 2 of the benefits roll out and the support services being provided locally.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Scotland Act 2016 devolved 11 social security benefits and gave the Scottish Government the power to create new benefits and top up existing benefits. Once fully implemented, it is estimated that £3.5 billion of social security assistance payments will be made to 1.4 million people.
- 3.2. The Scottish Government has established a new social security agency, 'Social Security Scotland', to deliver the devolved benefits commitments, with the agency becoming operational on 1 September 2018.
- 3.3. Audit Scotland published a report 'Social Security – Implementing the Devolved Powers' in May 2019. This second report from Audit Scotland focuses on what the Scottish Government has delivered to date, how well it has been delivered and the extent to which the Scottish Government is well placed to deliver the remaining devolved benefits. A previous report from Audit Scotland published in March 2018 entitled 'Managing the Implementation of the Scotland Acts' examined the early progress of Scottish Government in planning for the implementation of the social security powers.

4. Delivery and Implementation

- 4.1. The Scottish Government has made several commitments on how Social Security is to be delivered in Scotland including having a strong focus on active promotion to encourage uptake and a strong local presence of agency staff within the community. Once fully operational, this will involve around 400 officers across Scotland

supported by centralised administrative functions with 1,500 staff to be employed across the organisation. As well as face to face, other methods of service delivery will be on-line and telephony.

- 4.2. The Scottish Government has taken a phased approach to the implementation and delivery of the new benefits with the safe and secure delivery a clear priority.
- 4.3. The focus has been on first implementing the benefits that have smaller caseloads, involve one-off payments and do not need medical or physical assessments. The first wave of benefits introduced by mid-2019 included the Carer's Allowance Supplement (CAS), Best Start Grant (BSG) and Funeral Expense Assistance (FEA).
- 4.4. Delivery of the second wave of benefits including disability benefits is scheduled to commence in April 2020 and complete by the end of 2021. An up to date timeline for the delivery of the devolved benefits is provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.5. Implementing the second wave of benefits will be challenging as the complexity and amount of work increases further. In particular, the Scottish Government faces significant challenges, ensuring it has the policies, processes, systems, people and skills it needs to scale up and deliver the more complex and high risk benefits which will account for around 98% of the expected annual expenditure of the agency once all benefits are implemented.

5. Progress To Date

- 5.1. Social Security Scotland have had a presence in the Council Office at Brandon Gate, Hamilton from October 2019 and this will form their base for South Lanarkshire.
- 5.2. Across Scotland the agency has recruited 19 Local Delivery Relationship Leads covering the 32 local authority areas, supported by 32 Team Leaders and 68 Client Support Advisers. In South Lanarkshire, 1 Local Delivery Relationship Lead, 1 Team Leader and 2 Client Support Advisers are now in post. There is currently a recruitment exercise for additional Client Support Advisers in all areas, including South Lanarkshire. The face to face service is scheduled to commence in Summer 2020 and is initially expected to take the form of an outreach and visiting service. The service will be in place for the Disability Assistance coming on stream, offering claim and pre-claim support.
- 5.3. Engagement with council services continues to take place to ensure sufficient levels of awareness exist. For example, a briefing session on the operation of the Scottish Welfare Fund was provided to local agency staff in February 2020.
- 5.4. A further update report will be provided to the Committee as the Scottish Government's plans develop. It is expected that this report will advise on the roll out of further benefits, the level of service being provided locally and the engagement with other council services.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1 None.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. None.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. There are no Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications arising from the information presented in this report.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. There is a risk that the roll out of services by the new agency is performed without knowledge and awareness of council services. To mitigate this risk, the local service delivery manager is a member of the Council's Welfare Reform Group and has regular engagement with service managers outwith the group.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1 This report does not introduce any new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy; therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 10.2. There is no requirement to undertake any consultation in relation to the content of this report.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

12 February 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent

Previous References

- ◆ Finance and Corporate Resources Committee - 28 November 2018

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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Scottish Social Security Devolved Benefits

Devolved Benefit	Timescale	Expenditure (£m)	Recipients
Phase 1			
Carer's Allowance Supplement (existing reserved benefit)	Implemented	33	77,620
Best Start Grant (BSG): Pregnancy and Baby Payment	Implemented	2.7	7,000
BSG Early Learning Payment	Implemented	3.7	15,000
BSG school-age payment	Implemented	3.2	13,000
Funeral Expense Assistance	Implemented	6.2	4,400
Best Start Foods	Implemented	4.5	No forecast
Young Carer Grant	Implemented	<£0.5m	1,700
Phase 2			
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	April 2020	87	30,000
Severe Disablement Benefit Allowance	April 2020	10	3,000
Disability Assistance for Children & Young People	Summer 2020	183	40,000
Disability Assistance for Older People	End of 2020	869	198,000
Disability Assistance for Working Age People	Early 2021	1,575	281,000
Carer's Assistance	From 2021	283	82,000
Winter Heating Assistance – Older People	Winter 2021	172	996,000
Cold Spell Heating Assistance	Winter 2021	14	548,000