

# Agenda – Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 2 – Senedd

Meeting date: 3 October 2019

Meeting time: 09.00

For further information contact:

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## Private pre-meeting (08:55–09:00)

### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09:00)

### 2 Scrutiny of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19

(09:00–10:15)

(Pages 1 – 17)

Nick Bennett, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Chris Vinestock, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Improvement

Katrin Shaw, Chief Legal Advisor and Director of Investigations.

[Public Services Ombudsman for Wales: annual report and accounts 2018/19](#)

### 3 Paper(s) to note

(10:15–10:20)

(Page 18)

#### 3.1 Correspondence from the Scottish Government regarding Benefits in Wales: options for better delivery

(Pages 19 – 20)



- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting and items 1 and 2 of the meeting on 17 October 2019**
  
- 5 Scrutiny of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19 – consideration of evidence received**  
(10:20–10:30)
  
- 6 Consideration of the Welsh Government's response to the report on the Inquiry into the Blue Badge Scheme in Wales: Eligibility and Implementation**  
(10:30–10:40)
  
- 7 Benefits in Wales: options for better delivery – consideration of draft report**  
(10:40–12:40)

(Pages 21 – 86)

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# Agenda Item 3

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

3 October 2019 – papers to note cover sheet

Paper no.	Issue	From	Action point
ELGC(5)-26-19 Paper 1	Benefits in Wales: options for a better delivery	Scottish Government	To note

**Scottish Government response to questions arising during the meeting between Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People and members of the Welsh Assembly Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, 13 June 2019**

*Q: Provide background around high volume of BSG (Pregnancy and Baby Payment) applications received on first day live, in relation to overall number of applications received and forecast steady state numbers*

Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment

- Since opening for applications on Monday 10 December, Social Security Scotland has authorised 15,840 Pregnancy and Baby Payments, 17,235 Early Learning Payments and 10,185 School Age Payments to low income households, as of 30 June 2019. This support provided to families across Scotland, totals £12.9 million.
- In the run up to the launch of the Pregnancy and Baby Payment, we undertook a co-ordinated communications campaign, working with third sector organisations who support low income families and Local Authorities to get the message out about this new benefit and maximise uptake. This approach worked exceptionally well for the Pregnancy and Baby Payment.
- In December 2018 the Scottish Fiscal Commission forecast for 2019/20 indicated an estimated 12,500 Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment payments (at a cost of £5.4 million). This forecast was revised up in May 2019 to 14,500 Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment payments (at a cost of £5.9 million) to reflect the high number of applications and successful awards paid for the Pregnancy and Baby Payment in the first few months.
- Social Security Scotland authorised 2,310 payments for first births alone in the first three month period (December 2018 to February 2019), in comparison to the 4,000 Sure Start Maternity Grants made in Scotland by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) during the whole of 2017/18.
- During the first three months four in five applications were processed within 15 working days. By 30 June 2019 nearly nine out of ten applications were processed within 15 days (55,985, 88%). This includes the processing of Early Learning and School Age applications. Nearly nine out of ten applications were processed within 15 days (55,985, 88%). This includes the processing of Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment applications.

Feedback and Lessons Learned

- In response to lessons learned activity on Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment, we are improving our understanding of anticipated client volumes based on client behaviour using Management Information. This approach has been used for subsequent Best Start Grant launches, and to support staff capacity planning.
- Client responses to the application process for the new benefits have been overwhelmingly positive. From September 2018 to March 2019, over 1,000 clients left ratings following online and telephony applications for the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby payment. Of online applicants who responded, 97% rated the service as good or very good. For telephony applicants, 100% of those who left a rating rated the service as good or very good.

*Q: Social Security Scotland to provide more detail on client satisfaction rates with Agency*

- Provided in subsequent meeting with officials (13/06/2019)

*Q: Provide feedback from Experience Panel members on their experience and role of co-design*

- The [Experience panels: annual report 2018](#) summarises experience panels research work done in 2018 and looks forward to 2019, and provides a good overview of the work we are undertaking in this space. In particular, the 'Impact' section looks at the experiences of charter core group members (who helped develop '[Our Charter](#)' which explains how people engaging with Social Security Scotland will be treated with dignity and respect), and the 'How We Work' section looks at feedback more broadly.
- Demographic information about the make-up of the Experience Panels and their feedback on participating in the research so far can be found in the report [Social Security Experience Panels: who is in the panels](#).

*Q: In context of agency costs compared to DWP's for delivery of like benefits, provide information on DWP's delivery/administration costs for the benefits being devolved to Scotland (while delivered by DWP, proportional to the relevant benefits and the Scottish caseload)*

- As part of the [Social security agency in Scotland: outline business case](#), SG estimated that the DWP's annual costs on an equivalent basis for Scottish delivery were £155m.

*Q: Provide data for Scottish caseload on percentage of refused PIP applications reaching appeal and of those, the percentage successful on appeal*

- Based on statistics published by the Ministry of Justice, at GB level there were 104,564 appeals related to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) received in 2018/19. There were subsequently 84,452 PIP appeals cleared at a hearing, with the original decision revised in favour of the customer in 73% of those cases.
- The PIP cases cleared at appeal will consist of a range of cases, including:
  - New PIP applications that were originally unsuccessful
  - DLA to PIP reassessments where an individual was initially not awarded PIP
  - New claims and reassessments where an award was made but the individual made an appeal over the level of the award
- The tribunal statistics are published [here](#). The Ministry of Justice does not publish information below GB level; however, requests can be made for such analysis.

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