

Person Centred Services: A Delivery Agreement between Scottish Ministers and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) on Local Social Security Services

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Introduction

1. In developing the model for administering devolved social security, Scottish Ministers are committed to working with the people who receive these services and will continue to put people at the centre of devolved social security. Key to this model is consistent local access to national social security entitlements.
2. This agreement between Scottish Ministers and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) has been established to provide a set of guiding characteristics that should be met to ensure that consistency of service is provided to people accessing social security services delivered by the Scottish Government agency in Local Authority facilities.
3. These characteristics are also set to encourage the joining-up of services to support people when accessing assistance from the agency and services provided by Local Authorities. This will be achieved where agency, Local Authority and other relevant organisations work collaboratively to tailor their approach to meet local needs and complement activities already being undertaken. In doing so the activities of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) arrangements should be taken into account.
4. Where the approach taken by a Local Authority meets the characteristics noted the agency will look to complement and utilise its facilities to facilitate a joined-up service. However, the co-location of local agency delivery is not solely limited to Local Authorities. Scottish Ministers are engaging with a range of stakeholders and will be guided by the work of the Experience Panels. As a result they may choose to co-locate with other public or third sector bodies as deemed appropriate locally.

Context

5. The Scotland Act 2016 devolves new social security powers to Scotland. The paper *Creating a Fairer Scotland: A New Future for Social Security in Scotland*¹, which was published in March 2016, sets out the Scottish Government's vision, key principles for the future of social security using these devolved powers and the intention to establish an agency within the Scottish Government family to deliver the devolved benefits.
6. To determine the method of delivery for the devolved social security benefits a detailed and extensive options appraisal exercise was completed and the responses to the social security consultation were taken into consideration, where overwhelmingly respondents felt that the new social security agency should make provision for face to face contact. As a result it was announced, in April 2017 by the Minister for Social

¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00497219.pdf>

Security², that the agency will have strong local presence across Scotland, located wherever possible, in places that people already visit. In providing efficient and fully accessible services the agency will also have centralised functions and provide support through a range of options including online and by phone to give people a choice in how they access services.

7. For the purposes of this agreement, local service provision should be taken to mean the agency having a presence in places that people regularly visit, that is accessible and encourages joined-up delivery with other related support to provide high quality services delivered around the needs of people and the communities in which they live.
8. It should also be noted that this agreement does not cover delivery of Discretionary Housing Payments and the Scottish Welfare Fund where separate arrangements exist.

Required Characteristics for Co-Location

9. In delivering a social security system that is based on dignity, fairness and respect the agency will provide a person centred service tailored to meet people's needs. Therefore when co-locating agency services the following characteristics should be met.
 - **Accessible services** – facilities for face to face provision for the agency should be situated in places that people regularly visit whether for information on social security or related support and services. These locations should be accessible, open to the public and provide a safe environment for people accessing the services.
 - **Person Centred**– to provide a seamless service and ensure people are fully informed of the assistance available both agency and Local Authority staff should closely work together to ensure referrals between services are swift and acted upon and do not lead to delays or duplication of requests. Knowledge of the support each other provides and assistance available from wider organisations in the community should be shared, along with changes being introduced that may affect the delivery of services. For example, this may take the form of agency representation on local networks such as Financial Inclusion Committees and CPPs,

Delivery Agreements

10. To underpin arrangements at a local level the new social security agency will enter into Delivery Agreements (DA) with Local Authorities. In ensuring DAs produce the best outcomes the people accessing services should remain at the heart of each agreement. Local service offerings should therefore be designed and delivered to support people through their journey in seeking assistance from the agency and assist in accessing services provided by local authorities.
11. With this in mind DA will recognise the context of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) in each of the Local Authority areas in Scotland and, where appropriate, inform, reflect and align with priorities they agree with partners for inclusion within CPPs' plans.
12. It is a working assumption that local authorities will recharge the agency under a Memorandum of Understanding, or similar agreement, for costs incurred from any co-location within existing resources and premises in which they operate in providing facilities for the provision of the agency's face-to-face pre-claim and support services.

² <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/social-security-agency-ministerial-statement-apr-2017/>

13. Where agency staff are co-located, COSLA will support individual Authorities in identifying and quantifying any direct costs for recharge to ensure as much consistency as possible, recognising no single model could adequately reflect the different local conditions agreed in any DA.

Continuous Improvement and Review

14. The agreement will be signed and run until the end of this current parliamentary term. With review, update and potential renewal in future parliamentary terms as appropriate.

Signed on behalf of Scottish Government



Jeane Freeman MSP
Minister for Social Security
Scottish Government

Date 19 December 2017

Signed on behalf of COSLA



Alison Evison
President
COSLA

Date 19 December 2017



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