



Social Security Advisory Committee: Business Plan 2020-21

INDEPENDENT

INFORMED

INSIGHTFUL

INFLUENTIAL

SOCIAL SECURITY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Chair's foreword

I am delighted to present the Social Security Advisory Committee's (SSAC's) business plan for 2020-21 which sets out our strategic objectives for the year ahead, and how we will measure our success against them.

This business plan makes clear the Committee's commitment to deliver against our statutory obligations and to provide advice on vital social security matters that is relevant, well-informed and supported by a clear evidence base.

We look forward to welcoming new colleagues in the coming months - including a permanent Committee Chair. Therefore, as we approach our 40th anniversary in November 2020, there will be a timely opportunity for both:

- **Reflection:** reviewing the Committee's achievements, acknowledging what it does well and consider what lessons can be learned; and
- **New beginnings:** building a new team, which will provide an excellent opportunity to review and further strengthen our performance. We look forward to receiving the conclusions of the independent tailored review of SSAC which will, no doubt, provide invaluable evidence for us to consider as we start that process.

We look forward to responding positively and effectively to the challenges and opportunities that arise in the coming year, and I am confident that we are well placed to do so.

Liz Sayce OBE
Interim Chair



About Us

Established in 1980, we are an independent statutory body that provides advice on social security and related matters.

The Committee has, by statute, a vital role to play in scrutinising detailed and complex draft regulations and expressing its views to Ministers and Parliament. We also have an important role in identifying and commenting on wider related issues through our independent work programme.

Our main responsibilities are to:

- perform a mandatory scrutiny of most of the proposed regulations that underpin the social security system on behalf of the Secretary of State, for the benefit of both the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Parliament;
- provide advice and assistance to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether in response to a specific request or on our own initiative.

Advice offered formally by us in relation to proposals for secondary legislation must be published by the Secretary of State, along with the Government's response to our conclusions and recommendations. There is no obligation upon the Secretary of State to respond to other forms of advice from the Committee, or to act on any of the advice we offer.

We perform a similar role for the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland. We also have a non-statutory role offering advice to Treasury Ministers and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on tax credits, National Insurance, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance.



About us

In addition to the scrutiny of proposals for legislation, we have general advisory functions. For example, where resources permit, we:

- undertake our own detailed studies as part of our independent work programme;
- informally scrutinise regulations that are exempt from our statutory scrutiny;
- respond to public consultation exercises conducted by Government and others where we believe that we can add value;
- respond to specific requests for advice from ministers and officials;
- provide comment on some of the key pieces of draft guidance and communications produced by the DWP and/or HMRC.

We are supported by a small secretariat. This, along with our other operational costs, is funded from the Committee's budget of £350,000.



Our overall aims

Our two main priorities for 2020-21 remain to:

- undertake impartial, effective and timely scrutiny of draft regulations relating to social security benefits; and
- provide impartial, well-informed and constructive advice to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on issues relating to social security and welfare reform.

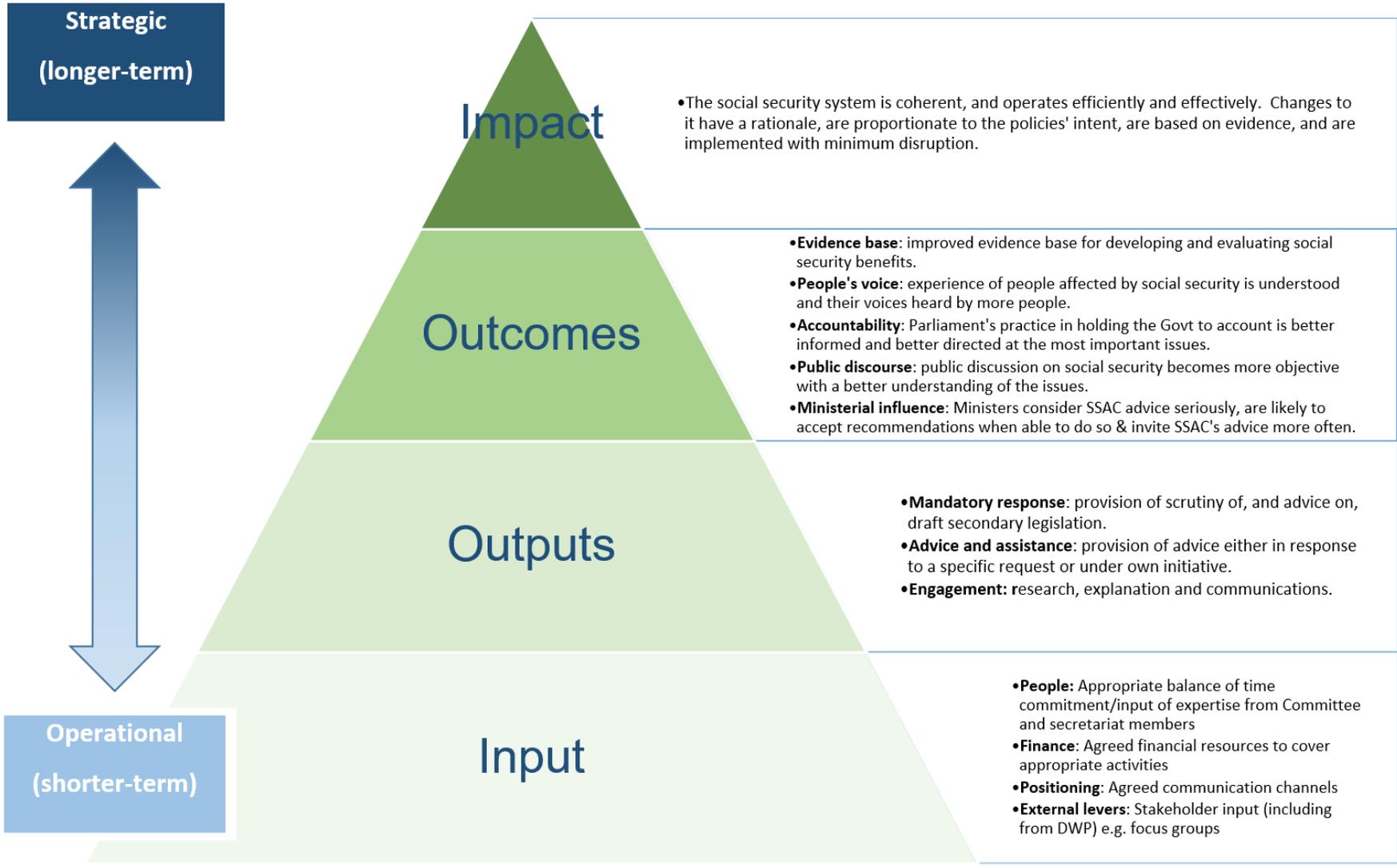
Our statutory role takes priority over any other activity undertaken by the Committee.

All of the activities we will undertake during 2020-21 will be in line with the Committee's Results Framework.



Our Results Framework

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Our objectives

There are a number of specific activities on which we intend to focus during 2020-21 in order to be more effective in delivering our priorities. In particular, we aim to:

Provision of advice

- continue to work constructively and effectively with DWP to ensure that our respective roles in the delivery of high quality draft regulations are delivered well and in a timely manner;
- continue our rolling annual programme of appropriate and timely research projects for the Committee's independent work programme, with a minimum of two projects to be completed within 2020-21;
- provide effective broader support to the Secretary of State through proactive and timely advice on priority areas, initially focusing on the roll-out of Universal Credit, the impact on social security of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, the implications of the Government's response to COVID 19 on the benefit system;
- embed our results framework, including reviewing our past recommendations on a regular basis for continued relevance and to ensure that the impact of our advice is understood;



Our objectives (continued)

Ensuring our work is evidence based

- develop more active and targeted stakeholder engagement to ensure that our advice to Ministers is well-informed, takes account of a wide range of perspectives and provides constructive support to the policy-making process. It will:
 - be inclusive of stakeholders in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to ensure that their voice is heard in the advice we provide to Ministers and that the impact of greater devolution - including city devolution and localisation - of social security provision is understood;
 - ensure that we develop an understanding of the operational issues that are likely to flow from new policy initiatives, and are able to review the progress of the implementation of Universal Credit, through a programme of visits to DWP sites and other stakeholders;

Ways of working

- further strengthen our links, both at ministerial and official level, with:
 - the Department for Work and Pensions, further developing our trusted relationship to maximise our ability to provide high quality, well-informed and timely advice on a range of social security matters;



- the Department for Communities to ensure the effective delivery of our statutory duties in Northern Ireland; and
- HMRC and HM Treasury under our [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to ensure that due account is taken of their role in relation to benefit matters, particularly in the transition of tax credits to Universal Credit; and
- make the best use of our people and financial resources, in a cost conscious manner and reflecting our commitment to diversity and inclusion. The effective induction of incoming Committee members and a new Chair will be a priority for us. We will continue to benchmark ourselves against other organisations of a similar size and/or remit, and identifying areas of best practice.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

All of our work – including our scrutiny of draft regulations, our research projects, our recruitment exercises and our engagement of stakeholders - will reflect equality, diversity and inclusion.



Measuring our success

We will report on the degree to which we have achieved these objectives in our 2020-21 Annual Report. Our performance will be informed by:

- Our Results Framework;
- Feedback from our stakeholders on the usefulness of our work (both scrutiny of regulations and our independent work programme) and advice to Ministers; and an
- In-year effectiveness review of the Committee.

Success criteria will consider the degree to which we have delivered:

- Rigorous scrutiny of draft regulations within agreed deadlines.
- Provision of pertinent, well informed and influential advice to Ministers, informed by our stakeholders' experience, expertise and other evidence.
- Strong engagement and collaboration with the DWP, HM Revenue and Customs, Department for Communities Northern Ireland and other appropriate Government and devolved bodies.
- Transparency about the Committee's operation and expenditure, including publication of our minutes and reports, the fees and expenses for each Committee member, and the costs of our secretariat.



Our operating principles

Whilst undertaking our activities we will be conscious of our responsibilities for:

- prudent management;
- cost conscious management of our budget of £350,000;¹
- confidentiality where appropriate;
- transparency;
- quality governance in accordance with the [DWP/SSAC Framework Agreement](#) and the [Partnerships between departments and arm's length bodies code of good practice](#);
- regular assessment of risks, and ensuring plans are in place for managing them.

¹ Approx £225,000 of which relates to staffing costs.



Our Organisation²

Committee Membership

Liz Sayce (Committee Chair)³

Bruce Calderwood⁴

David Chrimes⁵

Carl Emmerson⁶

Phil Jones⁷

Chris Goulden

Jim McCormick⁸

Gráinne McKeever⁹

Dominic Morris

Seyi Obakin¹⁰

Charlotte Pickles

Victoria Todd¹¹

Committee Secretariat

Denise Whitehead (Committee Secretary)

Nishan Jeyasingam

Jaishree Patel

George Watley

² As at 1 April 2020

³ Chair and represents the interests of disabled and chronically ill people

⁴ Chair of SSAC's Independent Work Programme sub-committee

⁵ Represents the interest of workers

⁶ Vice Chair

⁷ Represents the interests of Wales and business, and is the Chair of SSAC's Communications and Stakeholder Engagement sub-committee

⁸ Represents the interests of Scotland

⁹ Chair of SSAC's Postal Regulations sub-committee, and represents the interests of Northern Ireland

¹⁰ Represents the interests of BAME communities

¹¹ Chair of SSAC's Universal Credit sub-committee



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