



# Social Security Advisory Committee: Business Plan 2017-18

[This business plan will be reviewed by the Committee following the appointment of its new Chair in August 2018]

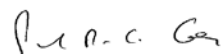
SOCIAL SECURITY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Chair's foreword

This business plan sets out our aims and ambitions for 2017-18. While our role is set out in legislation, the Committee regularly reviews how it discharges its functions, looking for opportunities for working more effectively and efficiently, as well as ensuring that our advice to Ministers is of high-quality, timely and based on sound evidence. That will continue to be a key focus for Committee Members over the coming year.

We also want to help drive improvement across Government. I have previously expressed concern that secondary legislation is occasionally presented to the Committee without meaningful analysis of impact, or of interactions with other parts of the benefit system, on the basis that it hinders our ability to provide high quality advice. I am, therefore, delighted to report that we will, during the course of this year, in partnership with the Institute for Government, be convening a conversation with senior policy makers about good policy-making where these points will be considered by those who can help facilitate improvements to the current process.

As I approach my final year as the Committee's Chair, and reflecting back over the past five years, I take some pride in the fact that both DWP and the Committee have made significant strides forward in the way they engage with each other, achieving better legislative outcomes in many cases as a result. The Committee will continue to champion further strengthening of that relationship.



**Paul Gray**



## 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 DWP and Parliament;
- provide advice and assistance to the Secretary of State, 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 upon any of the advice we offer.

We perform a similar role for the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland.

---

## 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 HMRC.

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.

We are supported by a small Secretariat (currently 3.6 staff in post).<sup>1</sup> This is funded from the Committee's budget of £350,000.

---

<sup>1</sup> As at May 2018



## Our overall aims

Our two main priorities for 2017-18 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 on issues relating to social security and welfare reform.

The exact volume of work flowing from this statutory role is largely outside our control as it is dictated by the level of Government legislative activity and the nature of the proposals brought forward.

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

---


## Our objectives

There are a number of specific activities which we intend to focus on during 2017-18 in order to be more effective in delivering our priorities. In particular, we aim to continue:

- to strengthen our constructive engagement with DWP - at both Ministerial and official level - to ensure that draft regulations, and the appropriate supporting explanatory material, are of high quality and presented to the Committee for consideration in an appropriate and timely manner;
- 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 2017-18;
- to review our past recommendations on a regular basis for continued relevance and to ensure that the impact of our reports is understood as recommended by the most recent triennial review of SSAC;
- to develop more active stakeholder engagement to ensure that our advice to Ministers is well-informed, takes account of a wide range of perspectives and strengthens the policy-making process;

## Our objectives (continued)

- to make a continuing effort to 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;
- our programme of DWP visits to ensure that we understand 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;
- to build our links with HMRC and the 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;
- to scrutinise regulations from an equality perspective through the Department's equality analyses, and ensure that diversity and equality are reflected in the Committee's other activities (including its recruitment exercises and engagement with stakeholders); and
- to utilise our people and financial resources effectively, and in a cost conscious manner.



## Measuring our success

We will report on the degree to which we have achieved these objectives in our 2017-18 Annual Report. Our success criteria will include:

- rigorous scrutiny of draft regulations within agreed deadlines.
- provision of pertinent and well informed advice to the Government, 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.
- continued 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,
- confidentiality where appropriate,
- transparency and
- quality governance in accordance with the [DWP/SSAC Framework Agreement<sup>2</sup>](#) and the [Partnerships between departments and arm's length bodies code of good practice](#)

We will publish an annual report on our website in 2018 showing how we performed against those objectives.

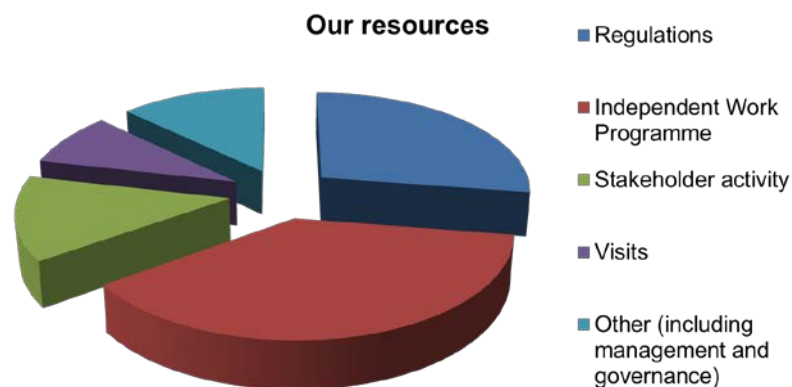
We regularly assess our risks and have mitigating strategies in place to deal with them.

---

<sup>2</sup> Reviewed by DWP/SSAC in Spring 2017

## Our Resources

Our budget for 2017-18 is £350,000.<sup>3</sup> Unlike many independent arm's length bodies, we are a demand-led organisation and much of our core scrutiny function is determined by Government activity. It is, therefore, difficult to forecast our expenditure accurately at the start of the year. We shall therefore keep it under regular review throughout the course of the year so that we are able to respond effectively to emerging priorities. However, based on our activities during 2016-17 and what we already know about our priorities in the coming year, we currently anticipate that our resources are likely to be deployed broadly as follows:



---

<sup>3</sup> Approximately £220,000 of this represents staff costs.

## Our Organisation <sup>4</sup>

### Committee Membership

Paul Gray (Committee Chair)

Bruce Calderwood<sup>5</sup>

David Chrimes

Carl Emmerson

Chris Goulden

Philip Jones

Jim McCormick<sup>6</sup>

Gráinne McKeever<sup>7</sup>

Dominic Morris

Seyi Obakin

Judith Paterson

Charlotte Pickles

Liz Sayce

Victoria Todd<sup>8</sup>

Denise Whitehead (Committee Secretary)

Anna Bird

Ateeqa Khan

Paul Mackrell

---

<sup>4</sup> Updated May 2018

<sup>5</sup> Chair of SSAC's Independent Work Programme sub-committee

<sup>6</sup> Chair of SSAC's Communications and Stakeholder Engagement sub-committee

<sup>7</sup> Chair of SSAC's Postal Regulations sub-committee

<sup>8</sup> Chair of SSAC's HMRC sub-committee

**SOCIAL SECURITY**  
**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Social Security Advisory Committee**  
**5th Floor Caxton House**  
**Tothill Street**  
**London SW1H 9NA**

**Telephone: 0207 829 3354**

**E-mail: [ssac@ssac.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ssac@ssac.gsi.gov.uk)**

**Follow the Committee on Twitter [@The\\_SSAC](https://twitter.com/The_SSAC)**

