

Deputy R Kovacs

Lead Member States Annual Report and Accounts 2023 Review

BY EMAIL

13 June 2024

Dear Raluca,

States Annual Report and Accounts 2023

Further to your letter dated 3rd June 2024, please find below the answers for Customer and Local Services to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) questions as part of its review into the States Annual Report and Accounts for 2023.

Communication of Social Security contributions and benefit

1. What steps have been taken to review and enhance the communication of Social Security contributions and benefits with the public?

We reviewed our high-volume, auto-generated system letters across social security contributions and benefits areas. We looked at those that are automatically generated from our system (i.e. those where an advisor does not have opportunity to amend content prior to being sent to customers). We developed a communications framework and standardised letter template to create a consistent approach to the improvements.

Alongside this, we developed a training course to support understanding and implementation of the framework. We provided training to colleagues which included the framework standards, alongside practical tools and tips to develop effective communications. The training also served to influence change to be made to advisor-led communication channels; email, ad-hoc letters and general correspondence.

2. What was included in the new communications framework implemented in 2023?

Adoption of a '7 c's communication framework' which aims to ensure that communications are; Concise, Clear, Courteous, Considerate, Complete, Concrete and Correct.

3. What new processes and focuses were introduced as part of the new communications framework?

A new communications quality assessment tool and process were introduced as well as a new standard template for CLS-letter based correspondence.

4. Which specific areas had their standard letters and guidance notes updated in 2023?
 - Income Support
 - Individual Contributions
 - Health Benefits
 - Pensions and Care

5. What stages have been completed for the replacement of the main Social Security benefits management IT system?

At the time of writing, the programme is moving towards completion of Stage 1 (Define the Programme) of the Corporate Portfolio Management Office programme management framework. Following an open tendering process, we have received 'best and final offers' from bidders and are close to selecting a preferred supplier subject to Ministerial approval. Contract negotiations and completion of the Full Business Case will follow before moving to Stage 2 (Implementation).

6. How does the new quality assurance process aim to improve communication regarding Social Security contributions and benefits?

The process aims to identify specific areas for improvement against each of the elements of the '7 c's framework'.

7. What role does the new guide for CLS people play in the communications framework?

The guide was created to reaffirm the training content and as an aid for colleagues to use at their desks. It also covers tools and tips related to accessible communications and explains how we conduct quality assurance.

8. Why were an accessibility needs focus included in the new communications framework?

Customer feedback suggested that correspondence around complex services was difficult for some customers to interpret. The new communications framework was designed to encourage simplification of language and highlights readily available tools and tips for increasing the accessibility of our correspondence.

9. What activities were involved in the specification, requirements-gathering, and initial supplier tendering for the IT system replacement?

Our Transform programme team undertook a detailed analysis of CLS's systems and services along with customer and business engagement activities to full define the challenges and risks faced in the current state. The team then worked with subject matter experts within CLS and M&D to design concepts for the future state of services, document business rules and logic and create a set of detailed set of capability requirements, functional requirements and non-functional requirements.

We used the capability requirements to run a 'Request For Information' market exercise to test whether there were solutions available that could meet Jersey's unique requirements. Following that, a Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire was issued to the market to identify suppliers who could demonstrate understanding and experience of delivering similar work. The responses were evaluated and qualified suppliers shortlisted.

Following completion of the Outline Business Case, the shortlisted suppliers were invited to tender for the work based on a detailed set of requirements. Since then, a multi-stage evaluation process has taken place to ensure that suppliers can meet requirements and provide a competitive 'best and final offer'. This stage of the programme is due to be completed shortly.

10. What new initiatives are you considering implementing to further improve overall performance of the Social Security system for Jersey residents?

From an IT perspective, the Transform programme will move all existing CLS services off our legacy benefits management systems and onto a new fit-for-purpose platform. This will enable us to significantly improve customer experience as well as being able to respond much more quickly and flexibly to new demands.

Our future service and process designs will include the ability for islanders to apply for, change and track their social benefits online, set communication preferences if they wish to receive digital notifications and correspondence, as well as accessing more of their own data via a secure digital portal. That said, telephone and face to face access will remain in place for any customers who prefer to access our services in this way.

C&AG and PAC recommendations

1. What percentage of Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Public Accounts Committee (PAC), and scrutiny recommendations for CLS were successfully completed by the end of the year?

At the start of 2023 CLS had 14 open audit recommendations on the tracker. By mid-November 2023, 8 of these had been closed (57%). During November 2023, a further 8 recommendations were added. At the end of 2023 a total of 14 recommendations remained open.

2. What was the target percentage for the completion of these recommendations?

The target for 2023 was closure of 50% of the recommendations which were open at the start of 2023.

3. How does the actual completion percentage compare to the target set for the year?

The target was exceeded as it only related to recommendations which were open at the start of the year.

4. What types of recommendations were included in the 57% completion rate?

7 were C&AG and 1 was PAC.

5. How many recommendations were open at the start of the year for CLS?

14 recommendations open at the beginning of 2023

6. What strategies or actions contributed to exceeding the target for completing recommendations?

The department is focussed on completing recommendations, and they are assigned owners who are responsible for delivery. Outstanding actions are a standing agenda item at the SLT Risk meeting.

7. How do you track and respond to actual performance improvements associated with implementing these recommendations?

This varies depending on the nature of the recommendation and associated improvement, but can include project tracking, customer experience insight reporting or performance management information reporting.

Additional questions

1. Can you please confirm whether you are providing quarterly reports to Ministers in relation to performance/budgets, and in what format do these briefings take place?

Quarterly reports are being provided by the Accountable Officer and Finance Business Partner to the Social Security Minister in relation to Government Plan, budgets and performance. These reports cover the Departmental and Funds' net revenue expenditure, balance sheets and cash/near cash positions. Particular focus is given to benefit payments and contributions income.

2. Which departments gave briefings to their respective Minister in relation to their performance across 2023? Can the PAC also be provided with links to these briefings in confidence for its own awareness/information?

During 2023, the Minister for Social Security was advised on quarterly basis of the departments performance against the published KPI's for CLS. These are published on the Government website and can be found here: [Service Performance Measures \(gov.je\)](https://www.government.je/service-performance-measures)

3. Are there any areas where performance has been affected since the re-prioritisation of the Government Plan?

The Minister for Social Security has asked that the work on Jersey Pension Saver be paused.

I trust this provides you with all the information you need, but let me know if there is anything additional you require.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Burns
Chief Officer