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Graeme Roy
Sent via e-mail.

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Response to Scottish Fiscal Commission Statement of Data Needs

Dear Graeme,

Can I firstly welcome you to your post. Also, thank you for acknowledging the close collaboration between the statistics team in Social Security Scotland and SFC. I look forward to us continuing to work in a constructive manner in the future.

We welcome your report titled "Statement of Data Needs". The statistics team remain committed to improving data from Social Security Scotland (SSS) for all their users.

We are facing challenges in recruiting statisticians similar to experiences across the labour market at this time. My team are closely working with the statisticians in SSS to fill vacancies and we recently helped to appoint an additional Senior Statistician. We continue to actively monitor the demands and resources and will continue to provide SSS with support.

In addition to the collaboration you note with SFC, SSS has held discussions with a range of stakeholders, including academics, SPICe, Scottish Government, Improvement Service and Local Authorities to get feedback on their statistical products. They are now moving towards setting up a user group to gather formal feedback on their statistics from stakeholders.

SSS are also developing a new Data Strategy which will set the direction for the management. This will help guide the development of their data systems and your report will help shape the tools, processes, teams and systems brought forward. This work-stream is called Data Strategy and Intelligence with ambitions to develop an online reporting tool.

Access to data from SSS must remain a priority. Online reporting must be trusted, timely and useful to users but this will require a highly mature data infrastructure to support.

I will discuss this matter with the Chief Data Officer of SSS however given the relative infancy of the agency and the highly complex nature of the data, the current methods of supplying data may need to be in place for some time yet.

I hope this helpfully sets the landscape and I am copying this letter to Mick Wilson (Deputy Director – Communities Analysis Division) and Chris Kinnear (Chief Data Officer – SSS).

Yours sincerely



Alastair McAlpine
Chief Statistician