 

**CHAIR**

**Social Security Advisory Committee**

**Candidate Information pack**

**May 2020**

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| **Overview** |

The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) is an independent statutory advisory body, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It has the following statutory functions:

to perform, on behalf of both the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Parliament, a **mandatory scrutiny of most of the proposed secondary legislation** that underpins the social welfare system; and

to provide **advice and assistance to the Secretary of State**, whether in response to a specific request from the UK Government or on its own initiative.

**A Message from Baroness Stedman-Scott.**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Lords)**

Thank you for your interest in applying for the role of Social Security Advisory Committee Chair.

This important role requires strong leadership of an independent, influential and high profile Committee which is committed to providing impartial, constructive, evidence-based advice reflecting a wide range of perspectives. It is important that the Committee produces constructively challenging advice in which the Government and other stakeholders – including Parliament - can have confidence.

The Committee has a high quality membership – with a diverse range of expertise, experience and background. This means the Committee has healthy but challenging debates, and its decisions can occasionally be finely balanced. The Chair will therefore have an important leadership role to play in ensuring that the entire Membership has an opportunity to contribute to the Committee’s work and ensuring that Members operate effectively and impartially as part of a diverse team, while respecting the views expressed by others around the table.

This is a challenging but rewarding role in an important area of Government policy. I am committed to promoting greater diversity in all of DWPs public appointments and if you have the experience and skills that we are seeking, I would welcome an application from you.

If you have questions about the appointment process, you can contact

Carmela Keogh, DWP Public Appointments Team, on 020 7449 7181 or alb.publicappointments@dwp.gov.uk.

Alternatively, if you have questions about the role itself, please contact the Committee Secretary, Denise Whitehead, on 0207 829 3354 or Denise.Whitehead@SSAC.gov.uk

The Baroness Stedman-Scott.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Lords)

**Diversity and Equality of Opportunity**

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. DWP is committed to implementing the Act in all recruitment and selection activity.

SSAC is committed to providing services which embrace and value diversity and promote equality of opportunity. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our Values, are embedded in our day-to-day working practices with all our customers, colleagues and partners. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, or (in Northern Ireland) community background, working pattern, employment status, gender identity, caring responsibility, trade union membership.

**A Message from Peter Schofield, DWP Permanent Secretary**

I want DWP and our arm’s-length bodies to be places where everyone, whatever their background, feels supported to achieve their potential. By being an inclusive employer, bringing into the organisation and developing talented people from diverse backgrounds, we will be better able to provide the best possible support to those we serve.

That is why we want to reach the widest possible pool of talent for public appointments and I want to encourage applications from people from all backgrounds.

We know we have a long way to go. As an example, the Lord Holmes Review (December 2018) identified that there are over 6,000 public appointments dealing with all aspects of our lives but just 3% are held by disabled people. The Government is to set an interim target of 11.3% disabled public appointees by 2022. I therefore particularly welcome applications from talented applicants with a disability.

If you are looking for an opportunity to use your talents to make a difference to the lives of millions of your fellow citizens, we look forward to hearing from you.

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| **The Role of the Committee**  |

In addition to the scrutiny of proposals for secondary legislation, the Committee's general advisory functions are deployed to:

inform the Committee’s work, improving members’ ability to scrutinise regulations and provide independent advice to Ministers;

add value to the debate on a topic that is of current interest to Government and stakeholders; and

stimulate debate of a specific topic within the Committee and amongst stakeholders.

Recent examples of the Committee’s reports can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/occasional-papers-ssac>

The Committee responds to the Department's public consultation exercises where appropriate, and Ministers may also seek SSAC’s views on specific issues. The Committee may also select issues itself which it wishes to research and report on as part of its independent work programme. The Chair and Committee members meet regularly with Ministers and senior officials to discuss topical issues and also meet front-line staff and customers in the course of their visits to operational sites.

The Committee is independent of Government, the Department and sectional interests. It has a strong track record in offering informed, expert advice. Members come from a variety of backgrounds, but collectively they have a considerable depth of knowledge and expertise in social security policy, law and the wider social policy agenda.

More information can be obtained from SSAC's website at [www.gov.uk/ssac](http://ssac.independent.gov.uk/)

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| **The Composition of the Committee** |

**Background**

The Chair and Members of SSAC are appointed by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. These posts are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

By statute, SSAC must comprise 10-13 members, excluding the Chair, of whom:

one member is selected after consultation with representatives of employers;

one member is selected after consultation with representatives of employees;

one member is selected after consultation with the Head of the Northern Ireland Department with responsibility for social security; and

one member with experience of chronically sick and disabled people. If possible, this member should have direct experience of illness or disability.

In addition to these statutory roles it is customary for:

one member to be appointed following consultation with the Scottish Government;

one member following consultation with the Welsh Government; and

one member to be appointed to represent the interests of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) persons.

All members are involved across the whole range of the Committee's business. Those Members that have active roles with other organisations are encouraged to use the experience, insight and expertise gained in those roles, but without representing sectional interests.

The Committee's work involves considering detailed and often complex proposals for social security regulations and producing ad hoc reports on specific areas of interest. Proposals for changes to regulations are normally presented by the Department at the Committee’s regular meetings. The Committee will receive supporting paperwork relating to each set of regulations in advance of the meetings.

Members are expected to keep abreast of operational matters and to make occasional visits to operational units.

Members occasionally see restricted proposals and are expected to consider them in confidence. Members are expected to refer any requests for information or interview by the media to the Secretary or the Chair.

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| **The Role of the Chair** |

In setting the strategic direction for the Committee, the SSAC Chair will be required to demonstrate strong leadership in harnessing the skills, expertise and experience of a diverse Committee membership ensuring that it operates effectively as a team. The successful candidate will have the ability to build constructive relationships at senior levels (both in Government and with external stakeholders) and demonstrate good judgement.

The Chair will ensure the Committee provides an independent view (independent of both Government and other interested parties) which is evidence based and which reflects a wide range of perspectives.

Scrutinising, and where the Committee so decides, reporting on draft regulations entails mastering complex legal and technical detail, as well as understanding the operational context in which legislation will be brought into effect. The Chair will be able to draw on the considerable knowledge and expertise of the Committee membership during the scrutiny process, however they will need to have the capability to pick up on detailed proposals quickly in order that he/she can communicate credibly with Ministers, stakeholders and the media as appropriate.

The Chair also develops and maintains productive and constructive relationships with Ministers, Committee colleagues, senior civil servants,[[1]](#footnote-1) and the Committee’s external stakeholders in the course of SSAC’s work. The Chair does this through a mixture of formal and informal meetings and visits, attendance at events and conferences and through attending the Committee’s own stakeholder events. Due to potential Covid-19 restrictions the Chair will need to be confident in chairing online discussions given the uncertainty over where meetings will take place.

The Chair and Members have access to sensitive proposals from time to time. These are shared with the Committee in confidence.

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| **Essential Criteria** |

Strong, measured and balanced leadership qualities with the ability to set and shape the strategic direction of the Committee, and to harnesses effectively the expertise and experience of a diverse Committee membership ensuring that it operates effectively as a team;

Ability to operate constructively and build positive relationships with Committee colleagues and senior stakeholders (for example in this role you will regularly work with Ministers, senior Whitehall officials, Parliamentarians and other senior stakeholders) - communicating effectively/persuasively and demonstrating sound judgement;

An interest in social security issues and the ability to understand, evaluate and advise objectively on complex issues relating to social security;

Ability to take an impartial view (independent of both Government and other interested parties) which reflects a wide range of perspectives. To be credible, the Chair will need to be able to demonstrate their independence from the Committee’s primary stakeholders;

An understanding of Government policy and the political and financial context in which social security policy operates; and

The capacity to devote around five days per month to the Committee.

**Desirable Criteria**

An understanding of finance and governance issues including managing public money and financial probity

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| **Terms of Appointment** |

The appointment will be made by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions for a fixed term of up to five years.

We would like the successful candidate to take up appointment from September 2020.

The Chair is expected to participate in the ten Committee meetings a year, which will take place in London[[2]](#footnote-2).

The Chair will undertake reviews of Committee members’ performance at least annually, and participation in an annual appraisal process with the Department’s senior sponsor is required.

**Time commitment and remuneration**

The successful candidate must have the capacity to devote an average of five days per month to the Committee. While this can be arranged flexibly, the Committee’s induction arrangements will require more time to be committed to the role initially.

The remuneration for this post is set at £22,000 per annum, based on a time commitment of around five days each month. There is no bonus or pension.

SSAC meets ten times a year (monthly, with a break early in the year and again during peak summer leave) at Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA. There are also occasional opportunities to visit other locations, for example to visit operational sites.

**Location, travel and subsistence**

Location is flexible, although you will be expected to travel to London for SSAC meetings. Reasonable travel expenses and subsistence will be reimbursed in accordance with DWP’s business travel policy.

**Outside interests**

Permission must be obtained from the Secretary of State to undertake any other work, accept any other appointments, or engage in any activity which might create a conflict of interest with the role.

**Disqualifications**

Members of Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd Cymru and Welsh Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly are disqualified from applying for these positions.

**Standards in public life, political activity, eligibility and conflicts of interest**

**Standards in public life**

Candidates must confirm that they understand the standards of probity required of public appointees outlined in the ‘Seven Principles of Public Life’ drawn up by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (see **Annex 1**).

**Conflicts of interest**

Applicants, in their supporting letter, must disclose information on personal connections, which if they were appointed, could lead to a conflict of interest or be perceived as such.

It is very important therefore that all applicants provide appropriate details in their supporting letter of any interests, which might be construed as being in conflict with this role. If it appears, from the information provided on the form, that a possible conflict might exist, or arise in the future, this will be fully explored with the applicant with a view to establishing whether it is sufficiently significant to prevent the individual from carrying out the duties of the post. The panel will do this at interview stage.

**Annex 2** provides information on conflicts to help applicants evaluate whether or not they have a potential conflict.

**How to apply**

In order for us to progress your application please submit the following completed documentation:

A CV (**maximum 2-3 pages**) with your education and professional qualifications and full employment history.

An accompanying **Supporting Statement** (**maximum 2 pages, font 12**) – this is your opportunity to demonstrate how you meet each of the criteria set out in this information pack. You should aim to provide specific examples that demonstrate how your knowledge and experience matches each of the criteria, and which describe what your role was in achieving a specific result.

**Please ensure your** **full name and the post for which you are applying are** **clearly noted at the top of your CV and Supporting Statement**.

**Personal Information Form** Most of the information requested is not seen by the panel assessing your application (though the panel may consider your declaration of interests).

**Diversity Monitoring Form.** Collecting and analysing candidate data will help us improve our diversity strategy. It will allow us to run more successful recruitment exercises in the future and ensure that competitions are fair for all. **This form is not part of the selection process and will be treated in strictest confidence**. It will be kept separate from your application and not be seen by the selection panel.

**Disability Confident Scheme**

The Disability Confident scheme has replaced the Guaranteed Interview scheme. The Department for Work & Pensions, and its Arms-Length Bodies, are accredited users of the Disability Confident symbol, which signifies organisations which have a positive attitude towards disabled applicants.

All Disability Confident Employers will offer interviews to disabled candidates who meet the minimum requirements for a job or role. If you wish to apply for consideration under this scheme, please complete declaration in the Diversity Monitoring Form provided. It is not necessary to state the nature of your disability.

Whether you choose to apply under the Disability Confident scheme or not, you can still ask us to make particular adjustments for you when attending an interview. You can also contact us if you want to discuss the criteria for the role or have questions regarding your application.

**Please note that the Department for Work and Pensions is required to carry out due diligence checks on all candidates shortlisted for interview. This will include:**

Google search – publically available information

Social Media search – Twitter, Facebook

Individual insolvency search

Removed trustee register search

Financial Services Prohibited Individuals Register

Disqualified Director Register

Personal Information Form declarations

References

Please email your application to: alb.publicappointments@dwp.gov.uk

If you have any difficulty in sending your application or need the application pack in an alternative format (e.g. Braille, large print, audio CD, tape or e-text), please contact the ALB Public Appointments Team on 0207 7449 7181 or 020 7449 7437

**The Selection and Recruitment Process**

This role is being competed in accordance with the Government’s Governance Code on Public Appointments[[3]](#footnote-3), which sets out the regulatory framework for public appointments processes. The Code is based on three core principles – merit, openness and fairness.

All appointments follow a recruitment process regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA).

**Selection panel Members**

The panel will consist of four members:

**Chair** – Pete Searle, DWP Strategy Director for Private Pensions and ALB Partnership

**Member** – Tammy Fevrier, DWP Partnership Division

**SSAC Representative** – Dr Jim McCormick, SSAC Member

**Senior Independent Panel Member** – Rosie Varley, former OCPA appointed Public Appointments Assessor.

The panel will ensure that appointments are made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. The DWP Public Appointments Team will keep you updated on the progress of your application.

At the short-list meeting the selection panel will assess each application against the ***essential criteria*** using the information provided in your CV and supporting statement.

Panel interviews will take place in Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA. Following interviews, the details of appointable candidates will be put forward to the DWP Secretary of State. Appointable candidates will be asked to meet with DWP Ministers before a decision is made (after interview by the selection panel). The final decision rests with the Prime Minister. This post is also subject to Work and Pensions Select Committee scrutiny.

**Work and Pensions Select Committee - Pre Appointment Hearing**

This appointment is subject to a pre-appointment hearing by the Work and Pensions Select Committee. Ministers’ preferred candidate will be invited to give evidence to the Committee at a public hearing. The Committee will publish a report of the hearing setting out its view of the candidate’s suitability.

**Indicative Timetable**

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| Advert Closing Date | **01 June 2020** |
| Short List Meeting | **08 June 2020** |
| Final Panel Interviews  | **w/c 20 July 2020 or w/c 27 July 2020 (TBC)** |
| Meeting with Ministers  | **w/c 3 August 2020 (TBC)** |
| Pre-Appointment Hearing with WPSC | **w/c 31 August 2020 (TBC)** |

**Please note that these dates are only indicative at this stage and could be subject to change.**

During the period following appointment the successful candidate will be required to undertake familiarisation and orientation activities. Subject to obtaining all necessary approvals in time, the successful candidate will take up post from September 2020.

**Expenses**

Reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed to candidates who attend for interview. Applications for reimbursement should be made in writing to: alb.publicappointments@dwp.gsi.gov.uk in the first instance.

**Complaints Process**

The Commissioner for Public Appointments is the independent regulator of public appointments. The Commissioner’s primary role is to provide independent assurance that public appointments are made in accordance with the [Governance Code on Public Appointments.](http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/the-code-of-practice/)

The Commissioner also investigates complaints and may conduct an inquiry into the policies and practices followed in relation to appointments processes which he regulates. The Commissioner will not investigate complaints relating to non-selection unless it appears that the appointments process has breached the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

If you feel you have reason to complain you should direct your concerns in the first instance to Izzie Pragnell**,** Head of Public Appointments at DWP, who will make every effort to deal with these and respond to you. Email:alb.publicappointments@dwp.gov.uk.

If after receiving a comprehensive response you are still concerned, you can contact the Commissioner at:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments
Room G/8, 1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

Email: publicappointments@csc.gov.uk.

Further information on the role of the Commissioner or the appointments process is available at: [publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk](http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/).

**Annex 1: The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life**

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

**Selflessness**

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

**Integrity**

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

**Objectivity**

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

**Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

**Openness**

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

**Honesty**

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

**Leadership**

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

**Annex 2: Conflicts of Interest**

**What is a conflict of interest?**

Public Appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

**Surely a perceived conflict is not a problem, as long as I act impartially at all times?**

The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual and the board that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a board member can be extremely damaging to the body’s reputation and it is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be. The fact that a member acted impartially may be no defence against accusations of potential bias.

**What should I do if I think I have a conflict of interest?**

You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have a real, or perceived, conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this section, in order to give the Selection Panel as much information as possible.

**If I declare a conflict, does this mean I will not be considered for appointment?**

No - each case is considered individually. If you are short listed for interview, the Panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially on the Board and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed. For example, it may be possible to arrange for you to step out of meetings where an issue is discussed, in which you have an interest. However, if, following the discussion with you, the Panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the Board or the appointment; they can withdraw your application from the competition.

**What happens if I do not declare a known conflict, which is then discovered by the Department after my appointment?**

Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but the Department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life and may terminate your appointment.

**What happens if I do not realise a potential conflict exists?**

This situation may arise where the applicant is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realize that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the Panel, with their wider knowledge of the body, might deduce that there is a potential conflict issue, based on the information on employment and experience provided by the candidate in the application form. They will then explore this at interview with the candidate.

**What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?**

This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the member’s circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work on the board becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.

In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Chair of the board and the Chief Executive of the body concerned, in consultation with the Sponsoring Department, to decide whether or not the member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner and each case is considered individually.

It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to continue on the board, if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the body’s routine business. In such, cases, the member may be asked to stand down from the body.

**Areas where a conflict could arise**

There are five main issues, which could lead to real, or apparent, conflicts of interest. These are:

Relevant pecuniary or other interests outside the organisation;

Relationships with other parties/organisations which could lead to perceived or real split loyalties;

Pending Government Policy could give unfair personal advantage to people with allied business interests – for example access to privileged information – trade secrets;

Perception of rewards for past contributions or favours;

Membership of some societies or organisations.

1. From DWP, the Department for Communities (NI), HM Treasury (HMT) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). SSAC has a Memorandum of Understanding with HMT and HMRC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Due to Covid-19 restrictions meetings may be held remotely via telephone/skype. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/578498/governance\_code\_on\_public\_appointments\_16\_12\_2016.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)