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Dear Colleague

I want to thank you for your support in promoting the Social Security Experience Panels across your networks, and supporting your members to register. As our recruitment drive came to an end last week, I'm delighted to say we have over 2,000 people across Scotland signed up to work with us.

We have now launched our easy read version of the recruitment materials, and will continue to register people via this route until the 9th of June. You can access these at www.gov.scot/socialsecurity. I would appreciate your support in sharing these.

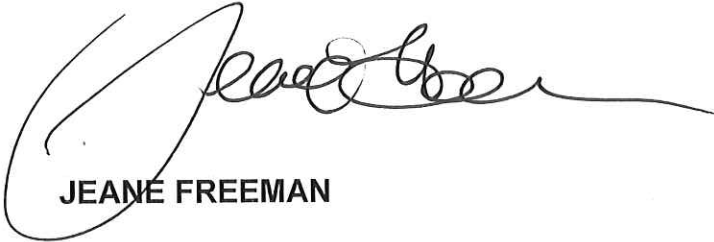
When we set out our guiding principles for social security in Scotland, we said that we would put the user experience first, and that we would design our new system with people who have experience of using the current system. I believe that there is no-one better to guide us and show us what works, and where things need to be different, than the people with direct, personal experience of the current UK benefit system.

We have learned a lot of important lessons in this first part of our Experience Panels journey. We have appreciated the support and guidance that you have given us. We are committed to keep on learning from your experience and expertise, and continuing to improve. Only through this on-going collaboration can we successfully deliver changes that matter. We hope that we can continue to count on your support and will be back in touch with you to arrange a series of events that will facilitate this cooperation.

Recruitment is, of course, only the first step and we will now start working with our panel members. The first thing that we will do is contact each one to carry out our 'About You' research. This will enable us to learn more about our pool of volunteers, and understand in a bit more detail what they think works well in the current system, and where there is room for improvement. We'll then use this information to develop a programme of work with the Experience Panels that reflects what is important to them. Scottish Government researchers will be in contact with panel members at the beginning of June to start the About You research.

Meantime, I hope you will not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries or concerns or ideas to help us all build a rights based social security system for Scotland.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeane Freeman', with a large, sweeping initial 'J' on the left side.

JEANE FREEMAN