

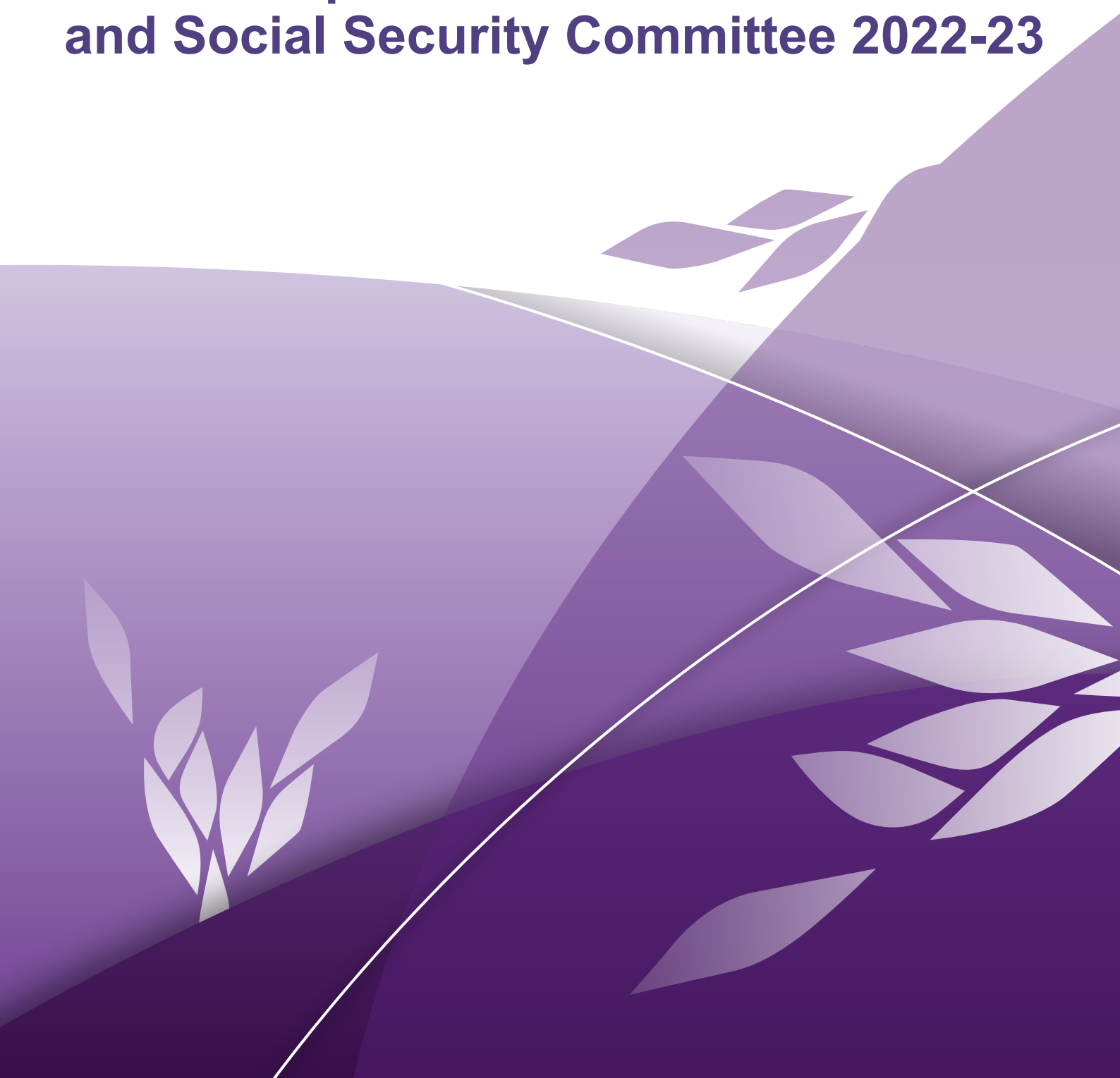


The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Published 25 May 2023  
SP Paper 379  
6th Report, 2023 (Session 6)

## **Social Justice and Social Security Committee**

# **Annual Report of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee 2022-23**



**Published in Scotland by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.**

---

All documents are available on the Scottish  
Parliament website at:  
[http://www.parliament.scot/abouttheparliament/  
91279.aspx](http://www.parliament.scot/abouttheparliament/91279.aspx)

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact  
Public Information on:  
Telephone: 0131 348 5000  
Textphone: 0800 092 7100  
Email: [sp.info@parliament.scot](mailto:sp.info@parliament.scot)

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Membership changes	1
<b>Meetings</b>	<b>2</b>
A year in figures - work of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee 2022-23	3
<b>Legislation</b>	<b>4</b>
Primary legislation	4
National Care Service (Scotland) Bill	4
Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill	4
Secondary legislation	5
Legislative Consent Memorandums	5
<b>Inquiries</b>	<b>6</b>
Low income and debt problems	6
Child poverty and parental employment	7
<b>Collaborative working</b>	<b>8</b>
Reducing drug deaths in Scotland and tackling problem drug use	8
Health inequalities	8
<b>Thematic evidence sessions</b>	<b>9</b>
Kinship care	9
Medium-term Financial Strategy and Resource Spending Review Framework	9
Social Security Programme: Audit Scotland report	9
The impact of the cost of living crisis	10
<b>Budget Scrutiny</b>	<b>11</b>
Pre-budget scrutiny	11
Budget Scrutiny	11
<b>Equal opportunities</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Post legislative scrutiny</b>	<b>13</b>
Delivering new benefits - VoiceAbility	13

# **Social Justice and Social Security Committee**

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, excluding matters relating to local government, housing and planning.



[sjss.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:sjss.committee@parliament.scot)

# Committee Membership



**Convener**  
**Collette Stevenson**  
Scottish National Party



**Deputy Convener**  
**Gordon MacDonald**  
Scottish National Party



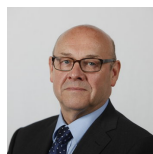
**Jeremy Balfour**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Miles Briggs**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Katy Clark**  
Scottish Labour



**James Dornan**  
Scottish National Party



**Marie McNair**  
Scottish National Party



**Paul O'Kane**  
Scottish Labour

# Introduction

1. This report outlines the work of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee ("the Committee") during the Parliamentary year from 13 May 2022 to 12 May 2023.
2. The Committee looks at subjects such as:
  - the Scottish Government's policies on welfare, poverty and homelessness
  - the social security system in Scotland
  - violence against women and girls and domestic violence
  - social justice (looking at ways to create a fairer Scotland)
  - third sector including social economy and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)

## Membership changes

3. There were several changes to the Committee's membership:
  - Elena Whitham left the Committee on 3 November 2022 and was replaced by James Dornan on 9 November 2022
  - Natalie Don, Paul McLennan and Emma Roddick left the Committee on 11 April 2023 and were replaced by Gordon MacDonald, Marie McNair and Collette Stevenson on 18 April 2023
  - Foysoyl Choudhury and Pam Duncan-Glancy left the Committee on 25 April 2023 and were replaced by Katy Clark and Paul O'Kane on 25 April 2023

# Meetings

4. The Committee held 33 meetings over this period. 1 meeting was held entirely in public and 4 meetings were held entirely in private. There were 28 meetings where some items were taken in private. The reasons for taking business in private were:
  - Consideration of evidence heard
  - Consideration of draft letters and reports
  - Consideration of the Committee's work programme
  - Consideration of correspondence received
  - Consideration of the approach to the Committee's scrutiny, engagement and evidence taking
5. The Committee held two joint meetings with the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and the Criminal Justice Committee on Thursday 24 November 2022 and Wednesday 22 March 2023.
6. The Committee heard from 140 witnesses. These witnesses represented 64 different organisations.

# A year in figures - work of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee 2022-23



**33**

Committee meetings



**140**

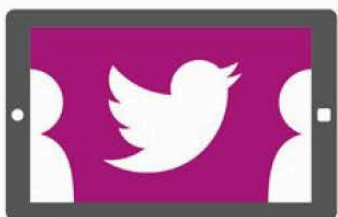
Number of people who gave evidence representing 64 organisations



Bills scrutinised



Reports published



**3628** followers

**137** tweets

\*as of 16 May 2023



SSIs considered



**3** Fact finding visits



# Legislation

7. The Committee has considered two pieces of primary legislation and 14 pieces of secondary legislation during this reporting year.

## Primary legislation

### National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

8. The lead Committee for this Bill is the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee. The National Care Service (Scotland) Bill aims to establish the National Care Service. The Bill allows Scottish Ministers to transfer social care responsibility from local authorities to a new, national service. This could include adult and children's services, as well as areas such as justice social work. Scottish Ministers will also be able to transfer healthcare functions from the NHS to the National Care Service.
9. The Committee took evidence on the Bill at Stage 1 at its meetings on [10 November](#) and [17 November 2022](#).
10. The Committee wrote to the Convener of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on [8 December 2022](#) to provide an overview of the evidence heard at the meetings on 10 and 17 November.

### Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill

11. The Committee considered the Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill. The [Bill](#) was introduced in the Parliament on 15 November 2022. The Bill makes changes to the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. It would:
  - give OSCR wider powers to investigate charities and charity trustees
  - amend the rules on who can be a charity trustee or a senior office-holder in a charity
  - increase the information that OSCR holds about charity trustees
  - update the information which needs to be included on the Scottish Charity Register
  - create a record of charities that have merged
12. The Committee launched a call for views on 8 December 2022 until 3 February 2023. The call for views comprised a short survey and a detailed consultation. The Committee received 55 responses to the short survey and 35 [written submissions](#) to the detailed consultation. Of the 35 written submissions, 30 were from organisations and 3 were from individual members of the public.
13. On 1 March 2023, the Committee met informally with individuals from across the third sector as well as those representing accountancy and law firms in order to

hear their views on the Bill.

14. The Committee published its [Stage 1 report](#) on 28 April 2023, which supported the general principles of the Bill. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice responded to the Stage 1 report on [5 May 2023](#).
15. The Stage 1 debate took place on [11 May 2023](#). The Parliament agreed to the general principles of the Bill, and agreed that it should continue to Stage 2. The Committee will consider the Bill at Stage 2 in the near future.

## Secondary legislation

16. Consideration of draft regulations forms an important part of the Committee's work. The Committee considered 14 Scottish Statutory Instruments during this reporting year (6 affirmative, 8 negative).
17. Draft regulations for each new Scottish social security benefit are subject to a “super-affirmative” procedure – consideration of (and often consultation on) proposed draft regulations, enabling amendments to be made, before draft regulations are laid. The Scottish Commission on Social Security (SCoSS) undertakes this pre-Parliamentary scrutiny and publishes its findings and recommendations in reports to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government must then publish its response to the SCoSS report when laying regulations.

## Legislative Consent Memorandums

18. The legislative consent memorandum (LCM) process enables the Scottish Parliament to signal whether it agrees to the UK Parliament legislating in matters devolved to the Scottish Parliament or altering the executive powers of the Scottish Ministers.
19. The Committee considered one LCM during the reporting year on the following Bill:
  - [The Social Security \(Up-rating of Benefits\) Bill](#)

# Inquiries

## Low income and debt problems

20. The Committee's work on this [inquiry](#) began in the previous reporting period (13 May 2021 to 12 May 2022).
21. On 18 November 2021, the Committee held an informal evidence session with money advisers and people with lived experience of being on low incomes with debt problems. The issues raised as part of this focus group formed the basis of our inquiry and the framework for the Committee's call for views. Following the focus group sessions the Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government on [16 December 2021](#) to provide an overview of the key themes from the sessions.
22. The Committee launched its [call for views](#) on 15 February 2022. The call for views closed on 31 March 2022, and the Committee received 53 submissions during the consultation period.
23. On 25 April 2022, the Committee held a remote, informal meeting with the Shetland Anchor Project. The Aim of the meeting was to hear about the work that is being done in Shetland to empower and support families to tackle problems before they develop into crisis.
24. The Committee took oral evidence on the inquiry at its meetings on:
  - [28 April 2022](#)
  - [12 May 2022](#)
  - [19 May 2022](#)
  - [26 May 2022](#)
  - [23 June 2022](#)
25. Throughout May 2022, the Committee held 3 online sessions with people with lived experience of debt and low incomes. These sessions enabled participants to hear about the inquiry and consider the formal oral evidence the Committee had heard. The group shared their experiences and then considered their own ideas for solutions and improvements that could be made to support people in debt. On Monday 6 June the group met with the Committee in private to share their experience and the series of recommendations they have made.
26. The Committee published its report *Robbing Peter to Pay Paul: low income and the debt trap* on [1 July 2022](#). The Scottish Government responded to the Committee's report on [21 September 2022](#), and the UK Government responded on [26 January 2023](#). A debate on this issue took place in the Chamber on [1 November 2022](#).

## Child poverty and parental employment

27. The Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into child poverty and parental employment. The Committee is looking at how the Scottish Government is working with local authorities, employers and other partners, and wishes to understand how they are supporting parents find suitable jobs or move into better paid work.
28. Over summer 2022, the Committee gathered information from Local Employability Partnerships through a targeted call and received 5 submissions.
29. The Committee has undertaken several visits to inform the inquiry. In order to hear some initial views on the issue of child poverty and parental employment, the Committee took part in a focus group on employability programmes in Rutherglen on 23 August 2022. On 13 January 2023, the Committee visited North Ayrshire to meet with Local Employability Partnership members, delivery organisations, parents and employers. On 19 and 20 January 2023, the Committee visited Benbecula and Uist where it met with local infrastructure organisations and service delivery partners, parents, employers and teachers.
30. The Committee launched a national call for views which ran from 8 February 2023 until 5 April 2023. The Committee received 102 [submissions](#) from individuals and organisations.
31. The Committee will begin taking oral evidence on the themes emerging from the visits and calls for views in May 2023 and will issue a report in the autumn. We are grateful to everyone who has shared their views with the Committee so far.

### Committee Members during the visit to Benbecula and Uist - January 2023



## Collaborative working

### Reducing drug deaths in Scotland and tackling problem drug use

32. During the last reporting period, the Committee attended 2 joint meetings with the Criminal Justice and Health, Social Care and Sport Committees to consider the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce. These meetings took place on [1 February](#) and [2 February 2022](#).
33. A Chamber debate on this issue took place on [31 May 2022](#).
34. The Committee took part in 2 further joint meetings with the Criminal Justice and Health, Social Care and Sport Committees. These meetings were held on [24 November 2022](#) and [22 March 2023](#).

### Health inequalities

35. The Committee contributed to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's debate on its inquiry into health inequalities on 14 December 2022.

# Thematic evidence sessions

## Kinship care

36. During the previous reporting period, the Committee began looking into the challenges faced by [kinship carers](#).
37. The Committee held a formal evidence session on kinship care on [24 February 2022](#). This session focused on the following issues:
  - Challenges faced by kinship carers when accessing support.
  - How support could be improved in this session of Parliament.
  - Progress on taking forward the recommendations of the 2018 National Review of Care Allowances
38. The Committee held an in person focus group for kinship carers on 21 March 2022. This session was held in private to give kinship carers an opportunity to share their lived experience in confidence. An anonymised note of the session was recorded.
39. On [31 March 2022](#), the Committee held a formal evidence session with the Minister for Children and Young People to discuss the issues raised in the previous sessions. At this meeting, the Committee agreed to publish a short report of its findings.
40. The Committee published its [report on Kinship Care](#) on 21 September 2022.

## Medium-term Financial Strategy and Resource Spending Review Framework

41. The Resource Spending Review Framework sets the scene for the development of the Scottish Government's multi-year resource spending plans. In the previous reporting year the Committee responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on the Framework on [25 March 2022](#). In follow up to this, the Committee took evidence from the Scottish Fiscal Commission on the Scottish Government's Medium-term Financial Strategy and the Framework on [9 June 2022](#). The Committee then took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government on [23 June 2022](#) in preparation for work pre-budget work.

## Social Security Programme: Audit Scotland report

42. The Committee held an evidence session on the Social Security Programme, where it heard from Audit Scotland on [3 October 2022](#). This was an opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise progress of the delivery of devolved benefits, in advance of taking evidence from Social Security Scotland and the Cabinet Secretary for Social

Justice, Housing and Local Government as part of its budget evidence.

## **The impact of the cost of living crisis**

43. In November 2022, the Committee agreed to to hear the views of stakeholder organisations on the impact of the cost of living crisis on disabled people and unpaid carers and on lone parents. These sessions followed on from the Committee's inquiry into low income and debt problems, which highlighted that the cost of living crisis has had a significant impact on people's lives, exacerbating existing inequalities, particularly those in low income households, and impacting on the effectiveness of some of the Scottish Government's social justice policies.
44. The Committee agreed to hold two round table evidence sessions with stakeholder organisations. The first of these evidence sessions took place on [27 April 2023](#), and focussed on the impact of the cost of living crisis on disabled people and unpaid carers. The second evidence session took place on [4 May 2023](#), and focussed on the impact of the cost of living crisis on lone parents.

# Budget Scrutiny

## Pre-budget scrutiny

45. The focus of the Committee's 2023-24 budget scrutiny was:
- whether the spending increases proposed in the Resource Spending Review will meet the challenges facing social justice and social security
  - how the Government can use its resources to tackle and prevent poverty
  - what analysis the Equalities and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement could provide to show the impact of the Government's policies
  - how the Government can use the budget to “tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally”
46. The Committee took pre-budget scrutiny evidence at its meetings on [22 September](#) and [29 September 2022](#). Following the evidence session on 29 September, the Committee received a letter from the Deputy First Minister on [13 October 2022](#) providing further information on issues raised at the meeting.
47. The Committee published its [pre-budget report](#) on 8 November 2022. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government responded to the report on [10 January 2023](#).

## Budget Scrutiny

48. The Committee took evidence on the 2023-24 Budget from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government on [19 January 2023](#).
49. On 26 January 2023, the Convener spoke on behalf of the Committee during the Finance and Public Administration Debate: [Scottish Budget 2023-24](#).



## Equal opportunities

50. The Committee is keen to ensure it hears from a diverse range of people when taking evidence. It therefore asks organisations to consider this when identifying representatives to speak to the Committee.
51. As part of its focus on equalities issues, the Committee has prioritised the issues surrounding poverty, childcare, disabled people and carers, and low income households.
52. Public engagement remains an important element of the Committee's work. When looking into the challenges faced by kinship carers, the Committee met privately and informally with a group of kinship carers, who were able to share their views and experiences in confidence. Furthermore, prior to beginning its inquiry into child poverty and parental employment, the Committee met with parents and teachers during its visits to Rutherglen, North Ayrshire, and Benbecula and Uist.
53. These sessions have proved immensely valuable in enabling the Committee to better understand the issues from those with lived experiences. We are grateful to all who took part in these sessions.

# Post legislative scrutiny

## Delivering new benefits - VoiceAbility

54. In April 2020, the Scottish Government took over responsibility for social security payments. As part of this transition, the Minister for Social Security and Local Government advised the Committee on 30 September 2021 that VoiceAbility had been awarded a four year contract to run an independent advocacy service. The service aims to support disabled people so that they can understand and access Social Security Scotland benefits.
55. On Thursday [24 November 2022](#), the Committee met with representatives from VoiceAbility to scrutinise the progress of their service. Following the evidence session on, VoiceAbility wrote to the Committee to provide further information.
56. On [27 April 2023](#), the Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice to request further information about how the the decision to award the contract to VoiceAbility was made, and to request clarification regarding the arrangements in place for the renewal of this contract, the reporting requirements in place, and the monitoring and assessment of the service's performance.

