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## **Social Security Committee** **Comataidh Tèarainteachd Sòisealta**

# **Annual Report of the Social Security Committee for 2018/19**



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# Contents

<b>Summary infographic</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Membership changes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Inquiries</b>	<b>4</b>
Social Security and In-work Poverty	4
Social Security Support for Housing	4
<b>Quick-focus inquiries</b>	<b>5</b>
Scottish Welfare Fund	5
Passported Benefits	5
Funeral Expense Assistance Regulations	5
Young Carer Grant	5
Poverty and Inequality Commission Appointments	5
Draft Social Security Charter	6
Pension Credit	6
<b>Legislation</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Petitions</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Committee Meetings, Equalities and Engagement</b>	<b>9</b>

# Social Security Committee

To consider and report on matters relating to social security (including the delivery and payment of benefits that help address poverty) falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People.



<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/social-security-committee.aspx>



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# Committee Membership



**Convener**  
**Bob Doris**  
Scottish National Party



**Deputy Convener**  
**Pauline McNeill**  
Scottish Labour



**Alasdair Allan**  
Scottish National Party



**Jeremy Balfour**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Michelle Ballantyne**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Keith Brown**  
Scottish National Party



**Mark Griffin**  
Scottish Labour



**Alison Johnstone**  
Scottish Green Party



**Shona Robison**  
Scottish National Party

# Summary infographic

## Committee Meetings, Equalities & Engagement



## Evidence sessions



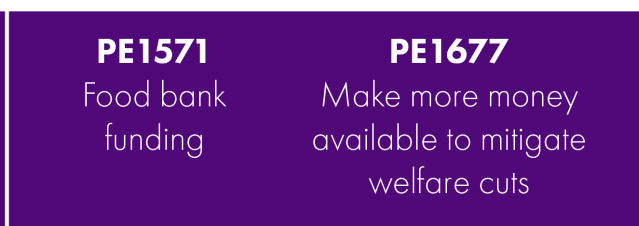
## Inquiries



## Legislation



## Petitions



Source: Scottish Parliament

# Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Social Security Committee during the parliamentary year from 12 May 2018 to 11 May 2019.
2. The Committee undertook two inquiries during this parliamentary year. The first was an inquiry into Social Security and In-Work Poverty which began in June 2018 and reported in February 2019. The second was an inquiry into Social Security Support for Housing which began in February 2019 and is currently ongoing. In addition to these inquiries, the Committee held various quick-focus evidence sessions and considered both Scottish and UK Legislation.

# Membership changes

There were five changes in Committee membership during the reporting year.

- Adam Tomkins left the Committee on 15 May 2018 and was replaced by Michelle Ballantyne;
- Ben Macpherson left the Committee on 6 September 2018 and was replaced by Shona Robison;
- Ruth Maguire left the Committee on 6 September 2018 and was replaced by Alasdair Allan;
- Clare Adamson left the Committee on 6 September 2018 and was replaced by Bob Doris;
- George Adam left the Committee on 13 December 2018 and was replaced by Keith Brown.



# Inquiries

## Social Security and In-work Poverty

3. This inquiry launched on [18 June 2018](#) looking to explore the potential impact of Universal Credit on in-work poverty.
4. The Committee received [37 responses](#) to its call for views and had six evidence sessions between 12 September and 22 November 2018. The Committee also visited Dundee and spoke to people about their lived experience of in-work poverty. As part of this inquiry, the Committee wrote to all Scottish local authorities asking about their preparedness for Universal Credit, [17 responses](#) were received.
5. The Committee published its report on [6 February 2019](#). The Scottish Government responded on [4 April 2019](#), giving further information on the development of its proposals for a new Income Supplement. An additional response was received on [9 May 2019](#).
6. The Committee held a debate on its report in the Chamber on [23 April 2019](#).

## Social Security Support for Housing

7. The Committee launched this ongoing inquiry on [5 February 2019](#). The Committee is considering how devolved and reserved social security policy can address issues arising for tenants and landlords, particularly in the private rented sector.
8. The Committee received [37 responses](#) to its call for views and held an evening event in Leith on 13 March 2019. This event gave attendees an opportunity to share their [lived experience](#). The Committee then commenced its formal oral evidence-taking.
9. The Committee expects to publish its findings and recommendations in June 2019.

## Quick-focus inquiries

### Scottish Welfare Fund

10. On [17](#) and [24 May 2018](#) the Committee held two evidence sessions on the Scottish Welfare Fund. The Committee then wrote to the Scottish Government on [22 June 2018](#). The Scottish Government's response was received on [28 August 2018](#).
11. During its scrutiny of the Scottish Government's proposed budget, the Committee wrote to the Scottish Government on [1 November 2018](#) recommending that the funding for the Scottish Welfare Fund be increased. The Cabinet Secretary responded on [13 December 2018](#) advising that, although funding would be kept under review, for now the Scottish Government's view was that funding was sufficient and need was being met.

### Passported Benefits

12. On [14 June 2018](#) the Committee took evidence on social security passported benefits. Following this evidence session, the Committee wrote to COSLA on [27 June 2018](#). A response was received on [6 August 2018](#).

### Funeral Expense Assistance Regulations

13. On [21 June 2018](#) the Committee took evidence on Funeral Expense Assistance regulations. Following this evidence session, the Committee wrote to the Scottish Government on [26 June 2018](#). A response was received on [13 July 2018](#).

### Young Carer Grant

14. On [15 November 2018](#) the Committee held a roundtable evidence session on the Scottish Governments Young Carer Grant. Following this evidence session, the Committee wrote to the Scottish Government on [10 December 2018](#). A response was received on [20 December 2018](#).

### Poverty and Inequality Commission Appointments

15. The Committee discussed its approach to Chair and membership appointments on 31 May 2018, 21 June 2018 and 31 January 2019. On [20 December 2018](#) the Committee took evidence from Bill Scott, Chair nominee, and agreed to recommend his appointment as Chair of the Poverty and Inequality Commission.

## Draft Social Security Charter

16. On [31 January 2019](#) the Committee took evidence on the Scottish Government's Draft Social Security Charter and agreed a motion to recommend approval. The Committee's report to the Parliament was published on [1 February 2019](#).

## Pension Credit

17. On [7 March 2019](#) the Committee held an evidence session on Pension Credit and the changes to the rules for eligibility for mixed-age couples. Following this evidence session, the Committee wrote to the [UK Government](#) and the [Scottish Government](#) on 13 March 2019. A response was received from the Scottish Government on [3 April 2019](#) and the UK Government on [8 April 2019](#). The Committee subsequently agreed to write to the UK Government calling for a delay of six months in implementing this change to improve the level of uptake before the deadline and ensure greater public awareness of the policy change.

# Legislation

18. During the parliamentary year, the Committee considered 21 Scottish Statutory Instruments. 11 of these followed the negative procedure and 10 followed the affirmative procedure.
19. 1 [Statutory Instrument](#) was considered in the parliamentary year.
20. The Committee considered a Legislative Consent Memorandum in respect of The Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill. The Committee reported on [21 March 2019](#).
21. On [17 January 2019](#), the Committee considered a proposal by the Scottish Government to consent to the UK Government legislating using the powers under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 for five UK statutory instruments.

# Petitions

22. No new public petitions were referred to the Committee during this parliamentary year.
23. [PE1571: Food bank funding](#) was carried forward from last year. The Committee considered it again on [25 October 2018](#) and agreed to close the petition. The Committee agreed with the Scottish Government that providing direct support to food banks would effectively bring them into the welfare state, something that is not supported.
24. [PE1677: Make more money available to mitigate welfare cuts](#) was also carried forward from last year. The Committee considered it again on [24 May 2018](#), [1 November 2018](#) and [21 February 2019](#). The Committee agreed to close the petition on 21 February 2019 on the basis that policy and expenditure considerations, such as those raised in the petition, are embedded in the work of the Committee.

# Committee Meetings, Equalities and Engagement

25. The Committee held 29 meetings this year; 24 contained items taken in private and 4 were held entirely in private. The meetings and items taken in private were primarily to consider evidence heard, draft reports and the Committee's work programme.
26. The Committee values inclusivity. A variety of methods are used to gather evidence including online forums, informal external events and formal evidence sessions. This ensures the Committee is able to hear from a wide variety of stakeholders.
27. The Committee held two informal external events in Dundee and Leith. During formal evidence sessions, the Committee took evidence from 127 witnesses; 51 of which were female.
28. The Committee's Twitter account continues to grow and now has 2641 followers, an increase of 289 in the parliamentary year. The work of the Committee is publicised here and 288 tweets were made from the account during the parliamentary year.

