The impact of the Welfare Reform Bill on Scotland’s people and services

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A briefing from Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS)

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Foreword

Citizens Advice Scotland welcomes the Scotland Bill Committee looking into the areas of welfare and benefits and recognising that there are many proposed legislative changes at Westminster which will impinge on people, services, communities, legislation and financial arrangements in Scotland.

This briefing paper is in four parts:

1. The impact that the reforms being proposed will have on the people of Scotland
2. The impact that the reforms being proposed will have on services provided by both the public and voluntary sector in Scotland
3. The impact that the devolving of various benefits to the Scottish Government will have on both people and services
4. The impact the proposals in the bill will have on devolved areas that have not been considered or taken into account.

It is clear from these four areas that the UK Government’s Welfare Reform Bill will have a lasting impact that goes far beyond changes to the benefits system alone.

CAS firmly believes that although this is a Westminster bill covering a reserved area, its impact on the people, services and economy of Scotland as well as the current devolution settlement, means the Scottish Parliament must scrutinise its proposals and assess its probable impact; we go into this further in our conclusion.

Whether you agree or disagree with the principles of the Welfare Reform Bill, or the assessment of the many organisations that have pointed out the flaws and the damaging impact the bill could have, the fact must be recognised that the proposals as they stand, merit much more scrutiny, investigation, and understanding.
Summary

Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) is the umbrella organisation for Scotland’s network of over 80 Citizens Advice Bureau offices. These bureaux deliver frontline advice services throughout more than 200 service points across the country, from the city centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh to the Highlands, Islands and rural Borders communities.

During 2009/10, citizens advice bureaux in Scotland helped clients with almost 190,000 new benefits issues – over 500 issues for every day of the year. This frontline experience enables the service to offer valuable insight into the problems inherent in the welfare system and to comment on the impact of proposed changes to benefits. Our main points in this briefing are:

- The Welfare Reform Bill will have a huge impact on people and services in Scotland. For many people, particularly families, those with disabilities, and jobseekers, the impact will be very damaging.

- An estimated £2 billion will be taken out of the local economy in Scotland during the lifetime of this parliament, with an estimated £1 billion taken from disabled people and their families.

- People with disabilities face the biggest impact from the proposed reforms. National reassessments for sickness and disability benefits, alongside cuts in public services, will inevitably mean that many people will not receive the support to deal with their disabilities that they currently rely upon.

- Public and voluntary services will need to pick up the pieces, in terms of homelessness, worsening health, and cuts in support. However, these services are experiencing cuts themselves, so many people will face a double blow of cuts in benefits and services.

- The Welfare Reform Bill will devolve aspects of the welfare system to Scotland, including Council Tax Benefit and parts of the Social Fund. This will have a significant impact on the way that public services operate.

- There is an increasing divergence between devolved policy and UK welfare reform. Proposals in the Bill may run contrary to the aims of devolved policy, particularly in social care and housing policy.
1) Impact on people in Scotland

This briefing concentrates on the impact of the Welfare Reform Bill on people and services in Scotland. The impact will be significant and detrimental for many groups in society, particularly disabled people and families, and will place additional demand on local government services and voluntary services as their budgets and resources diminish.

Various estimates of the loss to the economy as a result of the changes have helped to quantify the impact. The Local Government Forum Against Poverty estimated that £600m could be lost from the Scottish economy, which equates to around £100 for every man, woman and child. The loss to the economy could jeopardise up to 14,000 additional jobs. However, this estimate was published prior to the most recent announcements on welfare reform and focuses solely on reductions in benefit payments. A more accurate estimate may therefore come from Inclusion Scotland who estimate that £2bn is being taken out of the Scottish economy over the lifetime of this Parliament, with half of the benefit cuts falling on disabled people and their families.

While these estimates help to quantify the overall impact of welfare reform, it is only by looking at individuals – their circumstances, their needs, and the loss of support that proposed changes will entail – that we can see the true impact of the Welfare Reform Bill. This briefing looks at the impact of the reforms on the groups in society that stand to lose the most, including people with disabilities, families, jobseekers and Housing Benefit claimants.

People with disabilities

Disabled people in Scotland face a loss of £1 billion in welfare support

Demos estimate that 3.5 million disabled people in the UK will lose £9 billion in welfare support in the next five years. Inclusion Scotland estimate that £1 billion of this loss in support will be suffered by disabled people in Scotland. Demos have since stated that newly proposed reforms have made their initial analysis an underestimate. Disabled people stand to lose the most in these welfare reform proposals.

190,000 sickness benefit claimants in Scotland are being reassessed at a rate of 200 per working day

The UK Government is pressing ahead with the roll out of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to existing Incapacity Benefit claimants. This means that nearly 190,000 existing sickness benefit claimants – those that were already deemed unfit for work – will be reassessed over the next four years at a rate of nearly 200 per weekday. Around three out of ten claimants (around 57,000 people) are expected to be found fit for work. Some of this group will be eligible for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), but at a rate that is £30 a week lower than they were previously paid. Some will no longer be entitled to income related benefits altogether. Around half of those reassessed will be placed in the Work Related Activity Group with those claiming contributory ESA facing a 12 month time limit on their claim. This will affect 280,000 people across the UK, who stand to lose more than £50 a week in income.
An estimated 75,000 DLA claimants in Scotland face losing their entitlement to disability benefits

The Government is proposing a similar approach to disability benefits by replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with the new Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The first thing to note is that the Government has already determined that they will cut the budget for disability benefits by 20%. To that end, the Government is proposing a new assessment for disability benefits. In Scotland, this means that up to 225,000 working age DLA claimants will be required to attend the new assessment with Inclusion Scotland estimating that 75,000 (one in three working age claimants) will lose their entitlement.  

Housing Benefit cuts will have a disproportionate impact on disabled people

Changes in Housing Benefit payments will have a disproportionate impact on households containing a disabled person. The major change affecting disabled people will be the Government’s intention to reduce payments to tenants considered to be underoccupying homes by an average of £13 a week. Two-thirds of those affected (62,000 households) will be households containing a disabled person. However, there is a significant lack of one bedroom properties in Scotland – 44% of working age housing association tenants need a one bedroom property but only 24% occupy one. Many disabled people, who often require an extra bedroom for carers, will be unable to move and will receive less housing support, which in turn could lead to housing arrears and homelessness problems.

Case studies:

Person claiming disability and sickness benefits:
40 year old man, living on his own, claiming Incapacity Benefit, Disability Living Allowance (lower rate mobility), and Housing Benefit for a social tenancy in Glasgow.

The client will be reassessed for ESA in the next three years and is likely to have his DLA claim reassessed. If the client is found fit for work he will be moved onto JSA if he is eligible, while his DLA claim may be ended after the reassessment. The client’s Housing Benefit will also reduce.

Potential reduction in benefit payments if the client is found fit for work and loses DLA entitlement: £56.50 - £120.80 per week. There are over 190,000 IB claimants facing reassessment in the next three years.

Disabled person underoccupying social rented housing
A woman with a disability living in a two bedroom property. From 2013, her Housing Benefit will reduce if she does not find a one bedroom tenancy.

Claimants in this position stand to lose an average of £13 per week in payments if they do not move. Around 62,000 households containing a disabled person are in this position in Scotland.
Families

Families have already been affected by a freeze in Child Benefit payments, restrictions in the Sure Start Maternity Grant, and the abolishing of the Child Trust Fund. Changes in the Welfare Reform Bill will further impact on families, particularly lone parents, households claiming Housing Benefit, and families with disabled children.

Lone parents will be expected to go back to work when their youngest child enters school

The age threshold of the youngest child for lone parents claiming Income Support moved from 16 to 7 years old in 2008 and will be further reduced to 5 years old in 2012. This change will affect around 75,000 lone parents across the UK who will experience a £620 million reduction in benefit payments. While the Government argues that this will be mitigated by increased employment, the change will also increase the child care costs of lone parents.

The new child maintenance scheme will be unaffordable to many single parents

The Child Support Agency is to be phased out and replaced by a new system which would include a compulsory gateway service. Single parents would have to show they had taken ‘reasonable steps’ to set up an arrangement with their former partner or they would need to pay an application fee of £100 (or £50 if in receipt of benefits), as well as an ongoing charge of between 7% and 12% of the money collected by the service. A survey by the the charity Gingerbread found that 72% of single parents would be unable to agree private arrangements with their former partners and almost half would be unable to afford the application fee. This suggests that many children could go without maintenance support.

Families with disabled children and people who care for their partner will receive a reduction in support

Inclusion Scotland estimates that families where at least one person acts as a carer for disabled children or partner will face a reduction in benefit support. Families with disabled children stand to lose over £3,000 each in total by 2015, while couples where one partner acts as a carer also stand to lose £3,000 as a couple by 2015.

Housing Benefit changes will impact on households containing children
The Scottish Government estimates that around 10,000 children under the age of 18 are in a household claiming Housing Benefit that will be more than £10 worse off per week. Alongside other benefit changes, this is likely to cause an increase in child poverty. If parents decide to move into different accommodation to lower costs, this could lead to children moving school which can have a negative impact on educational attainment and wellbeing.
Jobseekers

**Conditionality and sanctions will be ramped up for JSA claimants**

The Government plans to introduce a Claimant Commitment that every Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimant will be required to agree to before payment. Failure to adhere to the commitment will result in significant sanctions to a claimant’s payments. The most serious failures – including failure to apply for a job, accept a reasonable job offer or to attend a mandatory meeting, will lead to a cease in payments of three months for the first failure, six months for the second, and three years for the third. Given that tens of thousands of sickness benefit claimants are likely to be moved onto JSA in the coming months, we are concerned that many will fail to meet the conditions of the benefit and have payments stopped for significant periods of time. The use of sanctions in Jobcentres has already increased markedly in recent months, increasing four fold between January and October 2010.

**Case study:**

**A JSA claimant fails to apply for job as specified**

The client will receive a sanction of three month’s JSA payments - a total of over **£770**. The client may also lose entitlement to other benefits, such as Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit, which are paid out based on the person being a JSA claimant.

Housing Benefit claimants

A number of changes to Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance will impact on claimants in Scotland, including a cap on payments, a reduction in payments to the 30th percentile of local rents rather than the median, an extension of the Shared Room Rate from 25 to 35 years old and reductions in payments to those considered to be underoccupying their tenancy.

**Changes in Housing Benefit will reduce payments by around £38 million annually in Scotland**

The combined effect of the changes will serve to reduce Housing Benefit payments by around **£38 million**. This will affect a wide range of people, including disabled people, large families, and those under the age of 35. The changes are likely to lead to housing arrears, increase levels of homelessness, and increased demand for welfare and debt advice services.

**55,000 households claiming Local Housing Allowance will lose around £10 a week**

Local Housing Allowance payments will be restricted to the 30th percentile of local rents rather than the midpoint. This will reduce the housing support of 55,000 households across Scotland and will restrict the number of affordable properties that are available to these claimants.
**7,500 claimants under the age of 35 will lose between £17 and £54 per week**

From April next year, single people up to 35 years old will only receive enough Local Housing Allowance to cover sharing a property, not to rent their own home. This will reduce the amount of support they are entitled to by up to £2,800 per year. This is likely to affect 7,500 people across Scotland and may force many to find shared accommodations or face arrears and possible homelessness.  

**110,000 households where tenants are considered to be underoccupying their homes will receive an average cut of £13 a week**

Tenants will be penalised for under-occupying but many have little option but to do this. There is a significant lack of one bedroom properties in Scotland – 44% of working age housing association tenants need a one bedroom property but only 24% occupy one. This represents chronic under-supply. Around two-thirds of those affected will be households containing a disabled person.

**Case studies:**

**A family claiming Local Housing Allowance for a four bedroom private rented tenancy in Glasgow**

Due to the decision to restrict LHA payments to the 30th percentile of local rents rather than the mid point, this family will experience a reduction in payments of **£35 per week**. Almost 45,000 households will be affected by this change with an average loss of £7 per week.

**A 30 year old woman claiming Local Housing Allowance for a one bedroom private tenancy in Edinburgh**

If the person does not move into a shared tenancy, she will receive around **£47.30 per week** less in Local Housing Allowance payments. This rule change will affect around 7,500 25 to 35 year olds mostly in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

It is clear from the examples given above that many people across Scotland will experience a significant detrimental impact as a result of the welfare reform proposals, especially disabled people, families and jobseekers. Some will be able to mitigate the effects by moving accommodation or finding employment. However, many will find their income considerably diminished and are likely to rely on public and voluntary services for support. The ability of services in Scotland to deal with this increased demand, alongside diminishing resources, is explored in the next section.
2) Impact on public and voluntary services

It is clear that public and voluntary services in Scotland will experience greater demand for their services as a result of the changes in the Welfare Reform Bill. However, due to wider spending cuts to the public sector, these services will be required to cope with this extra demand alongside diminishing budget and resources. As a result, many people in Scotland will experience cuts in benefit payments as public and voluntary services struggle to maintain services to them.

The recent Scottish Budget announced a significant drop in public spending. Local authorities received a greater drop than the average and will see income drop by over £700 million in the next financial year. In cash terms, local government spending in Scotland will decrease by 5.6% in 2011/12; in real terms, spending will decrease by more than 7.4%. This could significantly affect the ability of public services to mitigate the impact of welfare reform changes.\(^\text{16}\)

Local authorities will face increases in demand for their services, particularly in the areas of social work, housing and advice. Efforts to meet this demand will in turn have a detrimental impact on other services such as education, leisure and cleansing. The reduction in income of benefit recipients will also have an impact on local authority income and their ability to provide services. This will particularly be the case in charging for personal care, council tax payments, and rent payments. It is likely that local authority income from charges will reduce as benefit recipients struggle to pay council tax and rent.

The changes to DLA will force those who experience cuts to their income to seek support from local authorities in order to meet their needs – which will not have altered. Increasing demand for services while decreasing the capacity of individuals and local authorities to pay for those services is likely to result in vulnerable people being left to cope without support.

Reductions in Housing Benefit payments will have a significant impact on local authorities and housing associations. Housing Benefits payments to claimants in Scotland will be reduced by around £38 million annually. This will have a significant impact on local authorities in terms of rent arrears, provision of housing, homelessness services, and temporary accommodation. Local authorities stand to deal with the effects of this loss in housing support alongside drops in income if the Housing Benefit caseload reduces.

Impact on the voluntary sector

The voluntary sector is in a similar predicament to the public sector as it faces an increasing demand for its services alongside cuts in funding. In many cases, local authorities fund voluntary sector organisations to provide services for vulnerable people. As local authority funding decreases, inevitably the funding provided to the voluntary sector will decrease.
The Welfare Reform Bill will put exceptional pressure on advice services across the country. Our experience is that changes to benefit entitlement are the number one driver of advice need at citizens advice bureaux, causing advice issues involving appeals, debt, housing arrears, and homelessness.

The implementation of ESA is a good example of welfare reform driving advice need. As a rule of thumb, bureaux deal with around 10 benefit problems for every 100 benefit claimants each year in Scotland. Two years after the implementation of ESA, bureaux were dealing with more than three times this ratio and we estimate that 1,100 adviser working days were spent on assisting ESA appeals last year. Widespread changes to benefit entitlement promise to have the same effect.

Problems with welfare will also lead to increased need for debt, housing, consumer, relationship and many other areas of advice. This advice costs money, and the main funders of bureau advice are local authorities who are themselves suffering cutbacks.

However, good advice ultimately saves money – debt and welfare advice is significantly cheaper than homelessness and bankruptcy, and the social outcomes for clients are far better. Research by the New Economics Foundation shows that for every £1 gained through welfare rights advice, an additional £1.70 is gained for the local economy. Advice works and pays for itself in better outcomes and public money saved.

It is a significant concern that bureaux are facing the expected increase in advice demand alongside standstill or reduced budgets. Citizens advice bureaux are playing a pivotal role in helping people in communities across Scotland, but they need support to continue this work. Local authorities and citizens advice bureaux have a shared agenda in helping local people avoid crisis point and need to work together to achieve the best outcome.

**Local government and voluntary services may have to pick up the pieces for those affected by welfare reform – all on a shrinking budget.**
3) Impact on the devolution of benefits to the Scottish Government

There are specific implications and challenges posed for the Scottish Government through the devolution of various benefits. The devolution of these benefits will impact on individuals, families and communities across Scotland and considerable consideration must be given to this before implementation.

Council Tax Benefit

The Welfare Reform Bill will abolish Council Tax Benefit (CTB), and devolve responsibility for replacement council tax rebate schemes in April 2013. There will be a 10% cut in expenditure with, as yet, no commitment to ring-fence budgets.

Local authorities in Scotland already administer the benefit and it is proposed that protections will be in place for pensioners, meaning that claimants of working age, especially those claiming JSA, ESA or in low paid work, are likely to lose out. Local authorities will have greater freedom in administering the benefit, but will probably find that the reduced budget will increase council tax arrears for people in these groups. CAS believes that any scheme developed to replace current council tax benefit entitlement should not reduce the level of support low income households depend on, and should not introduce a myriad of differing taper rates at which benefit is withdrawn that could provide further work disincentives.18

The Social Fund

The Welfare Reform Bill will also abolish discretionary social fund community care grants and crisis loans, with responsibility devolved to Scotland in April 2013 for developing locally based provision to take the place of grants and crisis loans.

In England, responsibility for this provision will be given to local authorities. This has been controversial as the budget for Social Fund provision may not be ring-fenced – and therefore could be used on other spending – while some have suggested this may lead to a postcode lottery. For example, a person could be offered a food parcel, a grant, or a loan, or not be eligible for anything, depending on where they live.

The Scottish Government is currently consulting on what form the provision should take in Scotland. The consultation paper makes a clear preference for grants, rather than loans, which CAS welcomed. What is less clear is whether provision will be centralised or localised. A centralised scheme would lead to consistency of service and reduced costs, while a localised scheme may achieve a more client focussed and joined up approach. This could have huge implications for the way in which local authorities deliver services to vulnerable groups in society.

CAS believes if responsibility for the replacement of social fund community care grant and crisis loans is to be devolved, a national framework should be set out that protects the conditions of eligibility in law and allows for a right of independent review of adverse decisions. The level of funding for any replacement scheme must be maintained to recognise the vital support that it provides to families and individuals in need.
4) Impact on devolved areas

The Welfare Reform Bill will have significant and too often very negative impacts on individuals and communities across Scotland, and on devolved housing, childcare, passported benefits, social care, kinship care and anti-poverty policy. The main impacts on devolved areas that CAS has concerns about are outlined below.

Social Care Services

The responsibility for social care is devolved to the Scottish Government. As one in three working age DLA clients in Scotland will lose their DLA entitlement, a solution must be found to ensure these disabled people still receive the proper care and support they need. This must be achieved within the backdrop of reducing local authority budgets without affecting the care and mobility support disabled people can access.

There is an increasing divergence between devolved policy and UK welfare reform. This is especially the case for Scottish health and social care policy, which appears to be travelling in a different direction to the UK benefits policy. For example, the Self Directed Support (Scotland) Bill represents a move towards an outcomes focussed, personalised care system that individuals can control and direct, and local authorities are moving towards this system. However, the Government’s proposed replacement for DLA, the Personal Independence Payment (PIP), has been criticised for its exclusive focus on the applicant over any social or other external barriers that inhibit personal independence. It is these barriers that often account for additional costs for people with disabilities, rather than their conditions, which is recognised by the Self Directed Support Bill. It is a significant worry that the disparity between PIP and self directed support will create a complex and confusing system that will reduce the effectiveness of support provided to people with disabilities by local authorities.19

Housing Services

Scottish housing services policy will need to reflect the narrowing of housing options available to private sector tenants caused by changes to how the private rented sector Local Housing Allowance is calculated. This could reduce the income of some 50,000 claimants in Scotland, increasing demand for public sector housing, debt advice and homelessness services.

The Scottish Government will need to increase the number of one bedroom properties available in Scotland to avoid housing arrears amongst social tenants. The new under occupancy rules for housing will restrict housing benefit for working age social tenants who occupy a larger property than their family size, leading to many people downsizing and needing one bedroomed properties. For example – a couple whose children have left home and are no longer dependants will be expected to downsize to a one bedroomed property. Currently in Scotland there is a shortage of supply of these types of property and certainly not enough to house the 110,000 households this could affect. Many people will need to find the shortfall in their rent to stay in the same property which will increase housing arrears.
Homelessness

The changes to Housing Benefit are likely to have an adverse effect on the Scottish Government’s 2012 homelessness commitment. COSLA estimates that if 5% of those affected by the drop in income from underoccupancy in the social rented sector become homeless there will be an annual increase in current homeless levels of 4,700. In the private rented sector, they make a conservative estimate that a further 3,000 additional homeless cases will present in 2011/12 and 2012/13 alone. For councils, the key issues will be how homelessness prevention strategies can assist households affected by changes to secure alternative accommodation before homelessness actually occurs. 20

Passported benefits

New criteria will need to be set for devolved passported benefits as people’s incomes change. This will include free school meals, the energy assistance package and school clothing grants, all of which play a crucial role in supporting families across Scotland. The setting of new criteria to establish entitlement to passported benefits must ensure that support for those clients in and at risk of poverty is maximised and barriers to take up minimised, with, at the very least current levels of entitlement retained. Passported benefits play an important role in enabling government at every level to meet wider education, health and anti-poverty objectives and targets.

Childcare

The responsibility for childcare is devolved to the Scottish Government. The Welfare Reform Bill, however, fails to recognise the lack of high quality, flexible and affordable child care, required to meet the demands being made upon benefit claimants who are parents in Scotland. The Welfare Reform Bill legislates to move all lone parents from income support to job seekers allowance when their child is five years old, from the current age of seven. This means more parents of young children will require affordable childcare if they are to maintain their income levels as they move from benefit into the workplace. There is then an urgent need to improve the level and availability of childcare provision across the UK, particularly in Scotland, and particularly for children requiring out of school care. This is necessary if claimants with children are to avoid being penalised through the Welfare Reform provisions, either as a result of missing out on key support to help them move into work, or by suffering sanctions for failing to work or to participate in work related activity.

Kinship Care

There are provisions contained within the Welfare Reform Bill that will have an impact on all kinship carers across the UK. These include the conditionality requirements imposed upon claimants to be seeking or preparing for work, and the proposed benefits cap. However, the context of kinship caring is different in Scotland compared with the rest of the UK. This means that there are some aspects of the Welfare Reform Bill that could have a different impact on Scottish kinship carers, leaving them less well supported than their English and Welsh counterparts.
For example, where Scottish local authorities make payments to kinship carers, they can use different legal powers from the rest of the UK to make these payments. This means that local authority payments to Scottish kinship carers can have complex interactions with UK benefits. Secondly, in England and Wales, formal kinship carers are assessed as foster carers, but in Scotland, formal kinship carers are not assessed as foster carers. Benefit and tax rules that make good sense for English and Welsh kinship/foster carers can, in some cases, be very disadvantageous to Scottish kinship carers.

**Conclusion**

The Welfare Reform Bill will have a major and damaging impact on people, services and the economy of Scotland. As the current welfare system is facing fundamental revision, it is Scotland’s public and voluntary services that will need to pick up the pieces - at a time when they are facing huge cuts themselves. These worrying changes for the people of Scotland should be addressed by the Scottish Parliament.

**CAS urges the Scotland Bill Committee to recommend to the Scottish Parliament and Minister for Parliamentary Business that a Welfare Reform Committee be established for the lifetime of this parliament.**

Whilst we understand that the proposed Legislative Consent Memorandum will be scrutinised by the Health and Sport Committee, we believe that the changes the Welfare Reform Bill will introduce are wide ranging, varied, and cross cutting and will impact on the work of various committees and government departments including local government, housing, justice, and equality.

CAS believes that MSPs must take the opportunity to give due consideration and scrutiny to the proposed reforms and their impact, not only during the passage of the Welfare Reform Bill at Westminster, but also whilst those welfare reform changes are introduced and implemented over the next few years. We believe it is important that there is a role for MSPs to oversee how these changes impact on Scotland’s citizens and services. That is why four leading children’s charities - Action for Children; Barnardo’s Scotland; Children 1st; and One Parent Families Scotland - have also recommended the idea of such an ad hoc committee.

We also believe that a Scottish Parliament Welfare Reform Bill Committee could help steer a way through the unanswered questions that have been posed by the proposals in the bill in relation to the devolution of benefits and the impact on devolved services.

The Scottish Government has stated in written answers that it does not believe that the UK Government has provided sufficient detail on the on implementation of its reforms on either the Scottish budget or local government budget - despite repeated requests – and that there is a need for the Scottish Government to look at repeals and changes in existing legislation and entitlement criteria. CAS would argue that a Welfare Reform Bill Committee could ask UK Government Ministers for evidence/submissions on the impact to Scotland that the planned welfare reforms will
have, and work with the Scottish Government on looking at the areas of legislation that will require change.

The Scottish Parliament has the power to set up committees to look at particular issues. This has been done in relation to the Scotland Bill which proposes major changes to the current devolution settlement. We ask the same of another bill that will also have a massive impact on many people, communities and services in Scotland. CAS strongly urge the Scotland Bill Committee to recommend the establishment of a Welfare Reform Bill Committee.

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17 Quoted by Wiggan and Talbot, *The benefits of welfare rights advice: a review of the literature*

18 SCOWR letter on welfare reform to Scottish MSPs

19 SCVO submission to the Scotland Bill Committee

20 COSLA evidence to the Welfare Reform Committee
Citizens Advice Scotland and its member bureaux form Scotland’s largest independent advice network. CAB advice services are delivered using service points throughout Scotland, from the islands to city centres.

The CAB Service aims:

- to ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, or of the services available to them, or through an inability to express their need effectively

and equally

- to exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services, both locally and nationally.

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