In attendance:

- Catherine Lazcano-Thornton (owner)
- Dan Thornton (owner)
- Bill Bowman MSP
- Ash Denham MSP
- Dean Lockhart MSP
- Gordon MacDonald MSP
- Jane Gotts, Adviser to the Committee
- Rachel Edwards, Assistant Clerk

- Home Sweet Home (HSH) was founded in 2004. It is a domestic cleaning agency working with self-employed cleaners. HSH provides insurance, cover, and employment offers.
  - they have over 200 self-employed cleaners working in over 800 properties in Edinburgh
    - a “handful” of these are male
    - Householders tend to ask for female cleaners
    - mostly women apply for posts
  - the cleaners range from their 20s to 60, with most in their late 20s/early 30s.
    - men tend to be in their late 20s
  - they have a high turnover of staff
  - they estimate 95% of their workforce is female.

- HSH take on experienced cleaners. They do not offer training - clients want experienced cleaners.
  - as they are drawing from an existing pool, they are not bringing “new blood” into the sector. However, they feel that “advertising for new talent wouldn’t work” because people don’t choose to go into cleaning as a career

- Pay:
  - When setting up the company, Catherine wanted to have an ethical ethos and raise wages for cleaners
  - HSH suggest as a minimum the living wage. They can’t enforce this but find their clients are very supportive of it.
  - speaking anecdotally about other cleaning jobs, Dan mentioned that very low pay was common but not gendered.

- Segregation within cleaning:
  - while HSH have both male and female cleaners, the women tend to work as regular domestic cleaners while the men tend to do the “one-off jobs”- usually end of tenancy cleans which are longer (6-7 hours) and more physically demanding
    - they pay slightly more than domestic cleaning
- Women do not tend to apply for these posts, and men do not tend to apply for domestic cleaning posts.

- People do not view cleaning as a career.
  - People tend to move on to “better things”
  - Cleaners are “looked down on” as part of the service industry

- Under-utilisation of skills
  - Cleaners are often highly qualified (some of HSH’s cleaners are lawyers, for example)
    - Often they come from the EU and work in the sector until their English improves then move on
    - Approximately 90% of HSH cleaners are from EU countries

- Flexible working:
  - Many of their cleaners are looking for work after having children which fits around their schedules
  - Cleaning allows them to do a few hours of work
  - They are not tied to anything and can move on whenever they want
  - Cleaners choose their own hours
  - The job suits them to work around school and nursery hours
    - Many HSH cleaners have childcare responsibilities
  - The majority of cleaners work part-time, with a recognition that it’s a hard (physically demanding) job to do full time.