

Scottish Commission on Social Security
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Bob Doris MSP
Convener
Social Security Committee
Scottish Parliament
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8th February 2019

Dear Convener,

My colleagues and I are delighted to be appointed to the inaugural board of the Scottish Commission on Social Security, the independent body that will provide expert scrutiny of the Scottish social security system.

Judith Paterson, Sharon McIntyre and Dr Mark Simpson took up their appointments as Members from the 23rd January 2019, alongside myself as Chair. We are all honoured to have been chosen by Scottish Ministers to carry out the vital work the Commission is entrusted with.

Section 98 of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 requires the Commission to notify both Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament that it is ready to perform its function in scrutinising draft regulations.

As I am sure you will appreciate, we have a lot of work to do to get up and running as a public body. We need to develop our forward work plan, set up appropriate operating methods and establish a website as an independent outward-facing organisation, to name but a few key tasks. This may reasonably be expected to take several months. However, this will not prevent us from making a start on carrying out the functions established in section 22 of the Act. In particular, we recognise that there is some immediate business that cannot be deferred, notably scrutiny of Young Carer Grant regulations.

I can therefore say that the Commission is 'open for business' as of today's date.

I have written separately to Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People, with the same notification.

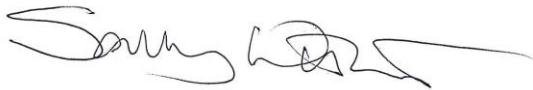
I would also like to thank you for your invitation to attend the Social Security Committee from 9.00am on Thursday 28th February. I am pleased to confirm that I

and one of my colleagues, Judith Paterson, are available to attend on that date. I would be grateful if you could contact the acting secretariat at the address above to confirm the arrangements.

While the Scottish Commission on Social Security is rightly independent of Parliament as well as Ministers, I very much welcome the opportunity at this early stage to explore with the Committee our respective roles in regards to scrutiny of the Scottish social security system, and how we might add value to each other's remits in order to strengthen and enrich that scrutiny overall.

Please do not hesitate to get in contact if the Commission can be of any further assistance at this time. Judith and I look forward to meeting you on the 28th February.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Witcher', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Sally Witcher OBE
Chair
Scottish Commission on Social Security