

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE
SOCIAL SECURITY (SCOTLAND) BILL
SUBMISSION FROM JOAN FRASER

I wish the Social Security Committee well in establishing a fair, accessible, and affordable system for Scotland.

PIP/DLA Disability Benefits - I work with people with Learning Disabilities - many also have Mental Health issues and/or Physical Disabilities. Times have been hard of late, and never more so than when

1. Subjected to Sanctions that they can't understand as a result of (often unnecessary) reassessment processes for DLA/PIP
2. Been made to feel like beggars and scroungers because they have a health or genetic or some other condition
3. Had to find out about food banks and emergency loans - when Mandatory Reconsiderations take months (stress filled months)

The new system should not just consist of box ticking by someone who meets the individual for 45 minutes; and disregards GP, Consultant, Professional Care Support. and other long term input reports re the individual and their condition/situation. Currently UK Govt tortures and denies genuine cases, yet makes life easy for people who have little integrity, and are far less eligible; but know how to 'work the system' - None of my clients have that ability, and are the ones who are penalised

Family/Informal Carers - I have been a family Carer, and still have occasional Caring responsibilities. I have never been eligible for Carers Allowance, but that's ok - I am happy to do what is needed whilst I have health and ability. However, I see daily, people who have given up careers, are forced to neglect themselves and their own mental or physical health to look after a child, a parent, a sibling.

I feel a decent earning threshold should exist, and that Carers should at least be paid the same as those seeking employment - these carers (the genuine ones) deserve respect and some income for all they do. Only those with recognised Carers Assessments might be considered..... as once again a small minority 'work the system' and make life harder for genuine cases and carers

Discretionary Housing Benefits - A house is a home. People's needs change, and I applaud the Scottish Parliament for actions to offset some of the hardships the 'Bedroom Tax' has brought elsewhere. However, whilst at the time of this being brought in few Local Authorities actually had smaller homes available; subsequent house building programmes should have been accommodating this need, and making room for single people willing to move into attractive homes. I own my own property and had to 'downsize' because not to do so would have been living outwith my means.....We all have to be responsible and take responsibility - but it is difficult

for someone to leave a family home of 40+ years and this process should be dealt with in a humane discretionary manner and only when an appropriate alternative that meets their current and future needs can be offered. Few young families or young single people can get on the housing ladder these days - perhaps the other European models should be considered more?

Working Families/Single People - A scourge and disgrace is that working people have to use food banks, miss out on fuel benefits/discounts, and often be worse off than those we pay taxes to support. I have worked for 47 years and have 4 more years to go, but cannot have heating on (only when my son is visiting-because I don't want him to know how hard it is), I cannot get a winter fuel or cold weather payment, or a new draught proof front door, or any central heating deals.....why - because I work and contribute.....Similarly (although this is a UK/DWP issue), I am a WASPI so cannot get my pension as I thought at 60; and the knock on effect is as shown above.

I am however grateful to have my **Travel Card** because although my wages haven't gone up in 7 years, at least I am £50pm better off in travel savings; I hope this will continue

Illness, Clinic Visits, and Hospital stays again bring unplanned expenses - PLEASE petition **NHS Scotland** have people treated near to home-stop downgrading facilities! My son's illness (before I had my Travel Card) cost me £1,000 in travel, excessive time off work, and associated expenses and outlays - I am still making up this extra spending

Information & Communication: Sadly we have high illiteracy levels, and a system where Dyslexia often goes unsupported. We also have a UK system which deals in jargon and gobbledegook - ALL Scottish Government information should be available in different media types, ALL printed matter should be Easy Read & Audio and made easily accessible to as many community and voluntary organisations as possible.....Ignorance is not bliss

I look forward to seeing a fair, accessible, and affordable system in place in Scotland