

**Social Security Committee**

**15th Meeting, 2017 (Session 5), Thursday 7 September 2017**

**Outcomes from Inclusion Scotland**

**Poverty and Social Security Policy Panel meeting**

**on Social Security Bill 16 August 2017**

1. On 16 August we attended a meeting of Inclusion Scotland's Poverty and Social Security Policy Panel especially arranged to focus on the Social Security Bill. The meeting was attended by about 50 Inclusion Scotland members.
2. The consideration of the Bill included a number of break-out groups, which we attended and which did not always express the same views. The note below summarises the views that were expressed:

\* There was a recognition that they needed to be a balance between primary legislation and regulations, and advantages in having all the guidance in one place - regulations - but there was a feeling in some quarters that baseline entitlements should be included in the bill.

\* in general the principles were liked and reference was made to them being the original founding principles of social security. The following additional principles were suggested:

- Social Security should have the aim of allowing recipients to contribute and participate in Scottish society
- there should be a right to independent assistance and advocacy
- the Social Security system should be person-centred

\* the Charter was regarded as a bit 'woolly'. It should include performance criteria that can be measured and there should be a method of monitoring and recourse if these are not met. It should include individual rights.

\* there was no agreement on whether it should be the responsibility of the agency or individuals to provide medical information. However, it was felt that individuals should not pay fees to doctors for information and that there should be an agreed fee structure.

\* attendees supported the creation of the short-term benefit, provided there was no repayment mechanism in the event of losing an appeal.

- \* there should be a time limit for the completion of re-determination.
  
- \* attendees were divided on whether there should be a re-determination stage or not.
  
- \* overpayment due to agency error - on balance attendees felt that there should be no repayment, but where repayments were reasonable they should be of manageable amounts.
  
- \* on balance attendees would like payments always to be in cash, rather than in kind. If in kind resources are ever provided, they should be a choice.

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Social Security Committee