



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Social Security Committee

Thursday 18 January 2018

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Thursday 18 January 2018

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION.....	2
Draft Public Services Reform (Poverty and Inequality Commission) (Scotland) Order 2018	2
Universal Credit (Claims and Payments) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2017 (SSI 2017/436)	4

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

1st Meeting 2018, Session 5

CONVENER

*Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)

*Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con)

*Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green)

*Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

*Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Gillian Cross (Scottish Government)

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con) (Committee Substitute)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Simon Watkins

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Social Security Committee

Thursday 18 January 2018

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Clare Adamson): Good morning, and welcome to the first meeting in 2018 of the Social Security Committee. I remind everyone to turn off or silence mobile phones and other devices, as they may disrupt the broadcasting.

We have received apologies from our deputy convener, Pauline McNeill, and from Adam Tomkins. I welcome Gordon Lindhurst, who is a former member of the committee and who is attending as Adam's substitute.

The first item on the agenda is a decision on whether to take items 4, 5 and 6 in private. Do members agree to take those items in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Subordinate Legislation

Draft Public Services Reform (Poverty and Inequality Commission) (Scotland) Order 2018

09:31

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is a proposed draft order. I welcome from the Scottish Government Gillian Cross, child poverty lead; Paul Tyrer, head of social justice strategy; and Colin Brown, senior principal legal officer with the economy and transport division. I understand that Ms Cross has an opening statement.

Gillian Cross (Scottish Government): Yes—thank you. As members will know, the draft order was laid on 8 November and published on the Scottish Parliament website. The 60-day consultation period comes to an end on 23 January. The aim of the order is to expand the functions of the poverty and inequality commission that is to be established by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 on 1 July 2019. The commission that is to be established via that act has functions that relate specifically to child poverty and the child poverty targets, and the key aim of the draft order is to expand that remit to cover poverty and inequality more broadly. The order also makes minor changes to the number of commissioners and the experience requirements of the commission as a whole to reflect that new wider remit.

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 requires the Scottish ministers to send copies of the draft order and explanatory material to any stakeholders that they think will be impacted by or will have an interest in the proposals. We have contacted a number of organisations that fall into that category, including the existing Poverty and Inequality Commission, which was established by ministers on 3 July last year, Oxfam Scotland, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Poverty Alliance, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and all the members of the former ministerial advisory group on child poverty.

To date, we have received comments from the existing commission, Oxfam Scotland, the Poverty Alliance, the Child Poverty Action Group and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Stakeholders have warmly welcomed the draft order. For example, CPAG and the Poverty Alliance have confirmed that they are satisfied with the draft order and will seek no further changes to it. Members will recall that Oxfam Scotland was instrumental in developing proposals for a statutory commission and, in its consultation response, it states that the draft order fulfils its initial expectations and that it welcomes the

constructive nature in which it has been able to input into the commission's development.

A few minor comments and suggestions have been made, which we will consider and discuss with stakeholders before we lay the final draft of the order. For example, the existing commission has recommended that we amend the order to include direct experience of poverty and inequality as one of the skills criteria that the commission as a whole is required to fulfil. We will revise the next draft of the order to make that explicit.

Reminders were issued to interested parties at the beginning of January, so it is possible that we will receive more consultation responses in the next few days, but the responses so far have been positive, which we think is a result of the extensive engagement and collaboration that took place in advance of the order being published, which committee members will recall. We would like to thank the committee for its role in that work.

We are happy to take any questions that members have.

The Convener: Thank you very much for that, and for your kind comments about the contribution of committee members, which was before I joined the committee.

You mentioned a lot of stakeholders, but can you say a bit more about how the consultation is open to participation by ordinary members of the public?

Gillian Cross: The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 requires the draft order to be laid in the Parliament and the Scottish ministers to distribute copies to those with an interest in the proposals or those who might be affected. We have fulfilled those requirements. There is no requirement for a full public consultation, but the draft order was publicised by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities in the chamber during the stage 3 proceedings and it was published on the Scottish Parliament website.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): This is a good piece of work that builds on the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. I am interested in your point about the commission involving people who have had experience of poverty. This may go slightly beyond your remit, but how do we get the appropriate individuals for that so that, with respect, we do not just end up with the usual suspects on the commission? How do we try to grasp people's real-life experience? I understand your answer to the convener's question, but the average person probably does not watch stage 3 debates in Parliament. How do we involve a wider range of people? Has any thought been given to that?

Gillian Cross: That is a really important question. As I said, we will make it explicit in the order that commission members should include people with direct experience of poverty and inequality. We will work closely with the Scottish Government's public appointments team to ensure that the appointments process is open to people from all backgrounds and that the person specifications do not put off anyone from applying. We will also take advice from stakeholders who have expertise in that area.

The Convener: As there are no further questions, I thank the officials for attending.

Do members want to make any representations to the Minister for Social Security about the proposed draft order?

As there are no comments on what we have heard, is everybody content with progress so far?

Members indicated agreement.

Universal Credit (Claims and Payments) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2017 (SSI 2017/436)

The Convener: At our meeting on 21 December, members agreed that no further evidence was required regarding the amendment regulations. Are members content to note the instrument?

Members indicated agreement.

09:38

Meeting continued in private until 09:55.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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