



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Social Security Committee

Thursday 18 March 2021

Session 5



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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SOCIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE
8th Meeting 2021, Session 5

CONVENER

*Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)

*Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con)

*Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)

*Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)

*Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green)

*Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Anne Peat

LOCATION

Virtual Meeting

Scottish Parliament

Social Security Committee

Thursday 18 March 2021

[The Convener opened the meeting in private at 09:01]

10:10

Meeting suspended until 10:15 and continued in public thereafter.

Subordinate Legislation

Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/82)

The Convener (Bob Doris): Good morning, and welcome to the public part of the Social Security Committee's eighth meeting of 2021. No apologies have been received, and we have a full house for our final meeting of the session.

We took our first agenda item in private. It was a presentation by Dr Simon Roberts on the implications for Scotland's devolved benefits following the United Kingdom and European Union trade and co-operation agreement. I thank Dr Roberts for visiting the committee.

As this is the committee's final meeting in the current parliamentary session, I take the opportunity to thank my fellow members, the clerking team, the Scottish Parliament information centre, the outreach team and all those who have supported the committee over the past five years. I also thank Sally Witcher and the other members of the Scottish Commission on Social Security for their invaluable scrutiny of the social security draft regulations.

I also give special thanks to the witnesses who gave evidence to the committee and those who shared their lived experience with us at our outreach events. Their input has been invaluable to our work. The Parliament is working to improve the diversity of its witnesses, and I am pleased to say that, over the past year, 57 per cent of the Social Security Committee's witnesses were female. I hope that that trend will continue in the next session.

We will move on to agenda item 2, which is subordinate legislation. I refer members to paper 2. The committee is invited to consider the Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2021. The regulations are subject to the negative procedure. The purpose of the instrument is to establish a new scheme for

providing free milk or non-dairy alternatives, and a healthy snack item—a portion of fresh fruit or vegetables—to eligible children who receive childcare services for at least two hours per day from a registered childcare provider.

Are members content to note the instrument?

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I was involved in delivery of milk to children in a previous life, so I spotted the regulations right away. It is a negative instrument, so we do not learn much about the regulations—we are just presented with them. I will not oppose the regulations, on the assumption that they are not a detriment. I had a quick flick through them and did not notice anything of concern.

Over the years since free school milk was introduced in 1966, there have been some changes. Recently, children under five have been entitled to free milk or a non-dairy alternative. I assume that the regulations do not detract from the previous scheme and, on that basis, I am content with them.

The Convener: That is my understanding. Our successor committee might want to look at the entitlement and compare the schemes, but you are right to make that point, Pauline. That said, are members content to note the instrument?

As there are no requests to speak in the chat box, I assume that members are content.

Social Security (Telephone and Video Assessment) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/97)

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is still subordinate legislation. I refer members to paper 3. The instrument is also subject to the negative procedure. Its purpose is to provide a statutory basis for undertaking assessments through alternative channels such as video or telephone for personal independence payment—PIP—and industrial injuries disablement benefit. Are members content to note the instrument?

As I do not see anything in the chat box, I assume that members are content.

Carer's Allowance (Coronavirus) (Breaks in Care) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/140)

The Convener: Agenda item 4 is, again, subordinate legislation. I refer members to paper 4. The instrument is subject to the negative procedure. Its purpose is to extend the date of the temporary suspension, from 12 May 2021 until 31 August 2022, regarding the rules that carers can take only four weeks of breaks in caring within a

six-month period and continue to receive carers allowance.

As members know, and as we mentioned at our meeting last week, we would not usually consider an instrument before the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee has reported. However, the DPLR Committee has not had an opportunity to consider the regulations. Members are invited to consider the policy intent of the instrument today and the DPLRC will consider the technical aspects next week. On that basis—and only on that basis—are members content to note the instrument, subject to the DPLR Committee's consideration next week?

As there are no comments in the chat box, I will assume that members are content.

Disability Assistance for Children and Young People (Consequential Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/122)

The Convener: Agenda item 5 is, again, subordinate legislation. I refer members to paper 5. The instrument is subject to the negative procedure. Notice was given that this amending instrument would be brought forward. Its purpose is to clarify that the term “care home” has the meaning that is given by the Disability Assistance for Children and Young People (Scotland) Regulations 2021. Are members content to note the instrument?

As there are no comments in the chat function, I assume that members are content.

Council Tax Reduction (Scotland) Amendment (No 3) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/137)

The Convener: Agenda item 6 is, once more, subordinate legislation; we are going out on a real high at the end of this parliamentary session with all these pieces of subordinate legislation. I refer members to paper 6. The instrument is subject to the negative procedure. The purpose of the instrument is to amend the council tax reduction regulations to fully disregard the £500 payment when calculating entitlement to council tax reduction. Once more, the instrument will not be considered by the DPLR Committee until next week. For the reasons that were mentioned earlier, on that basis, are members content to note the instrument, subject to the DPLR Committee's consideration next week?

As there are no comments in the chat function, I assume that members are content.

I started the meeting with my thanks to a range of people. Finally, I thank my fellow MSPs across all parties. This committee is still in its infancy, and

a lot of the heavy lifting from some of the members who have stayed on it right through the session has been remarkable, as has been the cross-party non-tribal approach to establishing Scotland's new social security system. I am sure that that will also be the case in the new parliamentary session; it is absolutely vital that it continues. I thank all members, past and present, for the tremendous efforts that they have made.

Because of the nature of politics, some of us will return and some of us will not; that is up to the electorate. I offer a heartfelt thanks to every one of you. Whatever the future holds for us all, stay safe and take care.

Meeting closed at 10:23.

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.

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