



Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, and Social Justice and Social Security Committee (Joint Meeting)

Thursday 12 February 2026

Session 6



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

7th Meeting 2026, Session 6

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

6th Meeting 2026, Session 6

CONVENER

*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)
*Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
*Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Ind)
Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP)
*Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con)
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)
Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green)
Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
*Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab)
*Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Diane Barr
Alex Bruce

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, and Social Justice and Social Security Committee (Joint Meeting)

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[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:01]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Clare Haughey): Good morning, and welcome to this joint meeting of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and the Social Justice and Social Security Committee. We have received apologies from Gillian Mackay, and Sandesh Gulhane joins us remotely.

Item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. Do members agree to take item 2 in private?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Before we move into private, I understand that some members wish to say a few words about our cross-committee work during this session. I invite Collette Stevenson to make some remarks.

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): Good morning. Drug deaths are not abstract statistics. I lost my brother to a heroin overdose back in 2002, and that loss stays with our family every single day. My thoughts go out to every single family that is affected by drug harms and drug deaths.

I will touch on the work that we carried out with the people's panel. We commissioned a people's panel to consider the question, "What does Scotland need to do differently to reduce drug related harms?" Members of the public, some of whom had personal experience of drug use, heard from a wide range of experts on the issues that lead people to take drugs and the barriers that exist to them getting the help that they need. Members of the panel were supported by the Parliament's fantastic participation and communities team to discuss each issue and come to a view on their recommendations.

I was pleased that the Scottish Government agreed in principle with all the panel's recommendations and that action was taken to implement them. Some of those actions were measures that were introduced to ensure that more people with lived experience provide on-

going support and aftercare in the statutory workforce. There was guidance to employers on how they can promote an anti-stigma approach, which is really important. There was work on a new alcohol and drugs strategic plan to enable services to refer to each other. There was also work to extend the approach and principles of the medication assisted treatment standards to cover all substances. Crucially, there was also work on providing multiyear funding through the Corra Foundation.

I also found it helpful—as did other committee members—to visit the Thistle prior to its opening and again five months after it opened. Those visits were informative and I was blown away by some of the things that it is doing, such as its engagement with the local community, which includes engaging with concerns, answering questions and addressing issues. We also heard about the range of services that it provides for the local community.

I will not say much more other than to say a huge thank you to the clerks for the amount of work that they have done in pulling everything together. The Thistle and the work that we are doing will not be a silver bullet, but it is clear that the facility has saved lives. It has been a privilege to work with the clerks and the committees on all of that.

The Convener: Thank you, Ms Stevenson. As no other members have indicated that they wish to make any remarks, I will close the public part of the meeting

09:05

Meeting continued in private until 09:27.

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Room T2.20
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