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## Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

# Health, Social Care and Sport Committee Session 6 Legacy Report



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# Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care.

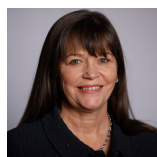


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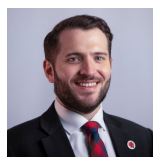


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# Committee Membership



**Convener**  
**Clare Haughey**  
Scottish National Party



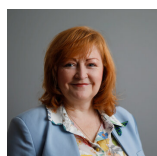
**Deputy Convener**  
**Paul Sweeney**  
Scottish Labour



**Joe FitzPatrick**  
Scottish National Party



**Sandesh Gulhane**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Emma Harper**  
Scottish National Party



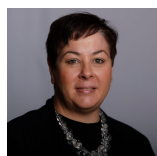
**Gillian Mackay**  
Scottish Green Party



**Carol Mochan**  
Scottish Labour



**David Torrance**  
Scottish National Party



**Elena Whitham**  
Scottish National Party



**Brian Whittle**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party

# Committee Remit

1. To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and, between 29 March 2023 and 8 May 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care.
2. The Committee was established in June 2021. Key areas of focus have included:
  - Health services in Scotland, including performance, staffing and funding
  - NHS recovery and remobilisation following the Covid-19 pandemic
  - Primary care, including dentistry, general practice, and pharmacy services
  - Public health including mental health and wellbeing, and tackling drug and alcohol misuse
  - Social care
  - Sport and physical activity.

# Committee Membership over Session 6

## 3. Conveners

- Clare Haughey (SNP) (25 April 2023 -)
- Gillian Martin (SNP) (22 June 2021 - 11 April 2023)

## 4. Deputy Conveners

- Paul Sweeney (Lab) (2 May 2023 -)
- Paul O'Kane (Lab) (22 June 2021 - 25 April 2023)

## 5. Members

- Stephanie Callaghan (SNP) (17 June 2021 - 31 October 2023)
- Joe Fitzpatrick (SNP) (18 June 2024 -)
- Dr Sandesh Gulhane (Con) (17 June 2021 -)
- Emma Harper (SNP) (17 June 2021 -)
- Patrick Harvie (Green) (21 May 2025 - 17 December 2025)
- Clare Haughey (SNP) (18 April 2023 -)
- Gillian Mackay (Green) (17 June 2021 - 21 May 2025) (17 December 2025 -)
- Ruth Maguire (SNP) (9 November 2023 - 29 October 2024)
- Gillian Martin (SNP) (17 June 2021 - 11 April 2023)
- Ivan McKee (SNP) (31 October 2023 - 17 May 2024)
- Carol Mochan (Lab) (25 April 2023 -)
- Paul O'Kane (Lab) (17 June 2021 - 25 April 2023)
- Paul Sweeney (Lab) (19 January 2023 -)
- David Torrance (SNP) (17 June 2021 -)
- Evelyn Tweed (SNP) (17 June 2021 - 9 November 2023)
- Annie Wells (Con) (17 June 2021 - 23 September 2021)
- Tess White (Con) (25 May 2022 - 10 October 2024)
- Elena Whitham (SNP) (30 October 2024 -)
- Brian Whittle (Con) (10 October 2024 -)

## 6. Committee Substitutes

- Jackie Baillie (Lab) (22 September 2021 -)
- James Dornan (SNP) (21 September 2022 - 7 January 2025)
- Jackie Dunbar (SNP) (10 September 2025 -)
- Russell Findlay (Con) (22 September 2021 - 8 September 2022)
- Ross Greer (Green) (5 October 2023 -)
- Gordon MacDonald (SNP) (18 September 2024 - 20 November 2024)
- Marie McNair (SNP) (8 September 2021 - 21 September 2022)
- Sue Webber (Con) (20 November 2025 -)

# Introduction

7. This report provides a brief overview of the main areas of focus for the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee during the course of Session 6. It also sets out some key reflections on lessons learned which the Committee hopes will be helpful to any successor committee in determining its own priorities and ways of working.
8. The Committee's annual reports covering the period 2021-2026 provide further detail of the Committee's work programme over the session:
  - [Annual report 2021-2022](#)
  - [Annual report 2022-2023](#)
  - [Annual report 2023-2024](#)
  - [Annual report 2024-2025](#)
  - [Annual report 2025-2026](#)
9. From the start of the session until it was wound up in June 2023, the Covid-19 Recovery Committee led scrutiny of those elements of the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care that related to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery of health and social care services from the pandemic.
10. In anticipation of a growing set of legislative commitments as the session progressed, the Committee sought to undertake a number of proactive indepth inquiries on topics that were agreed by the Committee membership during the early weeks of the new session. These were completed over the course of the first year.
11. From the start of the second full year of the session, the Committee's work programme was increasingly focused on legislation. In total, over the course of Session 6, the Committee took lead responsibility for scrutinising four Government Bills and three Member's Bills.
12. Other areas of focus have included annual scrutiny of the Scottish Budget, post-legislative scrutiny of a number of previously passed Acts of the Scottish Parliament, and consideration of a large volume of subordinate legislation and legislative consent motions, many items of which have necessitated targeted consultation and sometimes detailed debate.
13. The Committee has also actively participated in coordinated cross-Committee scrutiny of a number of policy areas. This has included participation by nominated Members of the Committee in ongoing cross-committee scrutiny of drugs policy, alongside nominated Members of the Criminal Justice and Social Justice and Social Security Committees.

# Summary of main activity this session

## Getting started

14. At the outset of the new session, to enable Members to familiarise themselves with key aspects of the Committee's remit, the Committee undertook a series of introductory evidence sessions under the following headings:
  - 7 September 2021: [Scottish Government Priorities \(Health and Social Care\)](#)
  - 14 September 2021: [Session 6 Priorities \(Drugs Policy\)](#)
  - 21 September 2021: [Public Health Stakeholder Session](#) and [NHS Stakeholder Session](#)
  - 28 September 2021: [Social Care Stakeholder Session](#) and [Health and Social Care Finance Stakeholder Session](#)
  - 9 November 2021: [Session 6 Priorities \(Public Health, Women's Health and Sport\)](#)
  - 16 November 2021: [Session 6 Priorities \(Mental Wellbeing and Social Care\)](#)
15. These sessions were extremely useful in helping the Committee to identify initial priorities for scrutiny, including those topics to be the subject of more indepth inquiry.

## Budget scrutiny

16. As Session 6 has progressed, the Committee's budget scrutiny has become increasingly focused on specific aspects of the health and social care budget.
17. As part of its [scrutiny of the 2022-23 Scottish Budget](#), the Committee made recommendations centred on the following themes:
  - Preventative spend
  - Health and social care integration and proposals for a National Care Service
  - Data and evaluation
  - Health inequalities
  - Allocation of funding to NHS Boards
  - Budget setting
  - Silo working
  - Impact of Covid-19.

18. Similar themes were explored as part of the Committee's [scrutiny of the 2023-24 Scottish Budget](#), as well as:
  - Impact of ongoing cost pressures on health and social care spending
  - Covid-19 recovery
  - The NRAC formula
  - The need for multi-year budgeting
  - A "whole system" approach to health spending
  - Sustainability and net zero.
19. The Committee's [scrutiny of the 2024-25 Scottish Budget](#) continued to explore the case for multi-year budgeting, preventative spending and a whole system approach, while also addressing the following additional themes:
  - Transparency in the health and social care budget
  - Workforce and pay
  - Public engagement
  - The National Performance Framework and health outcomes.
20. The Committee's [scrutiny of the 2025-26 Scottish Budget](#) was specifically focused on the financial position of Scotland's integration joint boards. In this context, the Committee made a series of recommendations grouped around the following themes:
  - Long-term planning
  - Prevention
  - Integrated budgets
  - Workforce
  - Commissioning and procurement
  - In-year adjustments
  - Budget transparency and linking to budget outcomes
  - Data.
21. The Committee decided to focus its [scrutiny of the 2026-27 Scottish Budget](#) on programme budgeting and marginal analysis (PBMA) approaches to setting budget priorities, specifically in the context of the budget for mental health.
22. Certain common themes have run through the Committee's budget scrutiny over the course of Session 6. These have included:
  - Highlighting the importance and significant challenges of achieving a long-term

shift towards preventative spending in health and social care,

- The need for a cross-portfolio "whole systems" approach,
- Ongoing pressures on health and social care services and the workforce, and
- The need for better data and improved alignment of policy actions and spending with health and social care outcomes.

## Inquiries

23. As referenced above, at the start of the session, the Committee had strong expectations that its legislative workload would ramp up significantly as the session progressed. An effort was therefore made to frontload the Committee's work programme with a number of indepth, proactive inquiries in expectation that the Committee would have diminishing capacity to carry out such work later in the session.
24. During the first year of the session, the Committee held indepth inquiries on the following subjects:
  - [Perinatal mental health](#) (October 2021 - February 2022)
  - [Health and wellbeing of children and young people](#) (October 2021 - May 2022)
  - [Alternative pathways into primary care](#) (October 2021 - June 2022)
  - [Health inequalities](#) (February 2022 - September 2022)
25. Subsequently, as other work programme commitments allowed, the Committee undertook further indepth inquiries on the following subjects:
  - [Female participation in sport and physical activity](#) (September 2022 - 9 October 2023)
  - [Healthcare in remote and rural areas](#) (June 2023 - October 2024)
  - [ADHD and autism pathways and support](#) (April 2025 - January 2026)
26. Publication of the concluding report on a number of these inquiries was followed by a debate in the Chamber. All of these inquiries were successful in highlighting issues that might not otherwise have received attention and culminated in extensive policy recommendations being made to the Scottish Government and other key decision-makers, a number of which were subsequently acted upon.
27. For instance, many of the recommendations from the Committee's inquiry into remote and rural healthcare have been taken forward by the Scottish Government's [National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care](#).
28. Meanwhile, publication of the Committee's final report on its inquiry into ADHD and autism pathways and support at the beginning of February 2026 coincided with a commitment from the Scottish Government to invest an additional £3.4 million in

neurodevelopmental support for children, young people and their families.

## Short inquiries, one-off sessions and periodic scrutiny

29. As other work programme commitments have allowed, the Committee has sought to undertake periodic scrutiny of the many public bodies falling within its remit, as well as hosting short inquiries and one-off evidence sessions on a range of topical issues.
30. During Session 6, the Committee has undertaken periodic scrutiny of the following public bodies and office holders with responsibilities included within the Committee's remit:
- Food Standards Scotland - [24 January 2023](#), [7 May 2024](#), [10 June 2025](#) and [17 February 2026](#)
  - NHS Boards - [21 March 2023](#), [28 March 2023](#), [2 May 2023](#), [23 May 2023](#), [30 May 2023](#), [6 June 2023](#), [20 June 2023](#),
  - Women's Health Champion - [21 November 2023](#)
  - Scottish Football Association - [19 December 2023](#)
  - sportscotland - [11 March 2025](#)
  - Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland - [3 June 2025](#)
  - The Care Inspectorate - [10 June 2025](#)
  - Public Health Scotland - [10 March 2026](#)
  - Patient Safety Commissioner for Scotland - [3 February 2026](#)
31. During Session 6, the Committee has also held short inquiries and one-off evidence sessions on the following topical issues:
- Winter planning / seasonal planning and preparedness - [9 November 2021](#) and [27 September 2022](#), [5 September 2023](#),
  - Data and digital services in health and social care - [23 November 2021](#)
  - Sport and physical activity - [30 November 2021](#)
  - Social care - [22 February 2022](#) and [17 May 2022](#)
  - Tackling alcohol harms - [1 March 2022](#) and [3 May 2022](#)
  - Experiences of health and social care integration - [4 October 2022](#)
  - Programme for Government 2023-24 - [12 September 2023](#)
  - NHS Recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic - [27 June 2023](#)

- [Public health impact of vaping - 14 November 2023](#)
  - [Experiences of the complex mesh surgical service -2 May 2023](#) and [16 May 2023](#)
  - [Independent Review of Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People - 7 May 2024](#), [17 September 2024](#) and [29 October 2024](#)
  - [Independent Review into Racism in Scottish Cricket - 4 October 2022](#) and [24 January 2023](#)
  - [NHS dental services - 10 December 2024](#)
  - [National Health Service waiting times - 4 June 2024](#)
  - [Pandemic preparedness - 3 June 2025](#)
  - [Welfare and sustainability in Scottish youth football - 17 June 2025](#) and [23 September 2025](#)
  - [Children and young people's participation in sport and physical activity - 24 June 2025](#).
32. Amongst the one-off sessions and short inquiries outlined above, it is worth highlighting that, coinciding with the Parliament's decision to wind up the Covid-19 Recovery Committee, this Committee held a one-off session on NHS recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic in June 2023. In an effort to address some of the key ongoing issues highlighted in the Covid-19 Recovery Committee's Legacy Report, the Committee also took evidence on NHS dental services in December 2024 and held a one-off evidence session on pandemic preparedness in June 2025.

## Cross-committee scrutiny

33. During the session, the Committee has actively participated in coordinated cross-committee scrutiny of a number of policy areas spanning multiple committee remits.
34. Specifically, the Committee has contributed to cross-committee scrutiny of the following:
- [National Performance Framework: Proposed National Outcomes](#)
  - [UK Common Frameworks](#)
  - [National Planning Framework 4](#)
  - [Draft Climate Change Plan 2026-2040](#)
  - [Good Food Nation](#) and the [Proposed National Good Food Nation Plan](#)
35. Throughout the session, nominated Members of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee have contributed to ongoing cross-committee scrutiny on reducing drug deaths and tackling problem drug use, alongside nominated Members of the

Criminal Justice and Social Justice and Social Security Committees.

36. Joint meetings of these committees to undertake this scrutiny took place on the following dates during Session 6:
- [24 November 2022](#)
  - [22 March 2023](#)
  - [26 September 2023](#)
  - [2 November 2023](#)
  - [1 May 2024](#)
  - [14 November 2024](#)
  - [20 February 2025](#)
  - [2 October 2025](#)
  - [12 February 2026](#)
37. Further information about cross-committee scrutiny on reducing drug deaths and tackling problem drug use can be found in the separate [Legacy Report produced by the three committees](#).

## Primary legislation

38. During Session 6, the Committee led scrutiny of the following Scottish Government Bills:
- [Transvaginal Mesh Removal \(Cost Reimbursement\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#)
  - [National Care Service \(Scotland\) Bill \(retitled the Care Reform \(Scotland\) Bill\)](#)
  - [Patient Safety Commissioner for Scotland Bill](#)
  - [Non-surgical Procedures and Functions of Medical Reviewers \(Scotland\) Bill](#)
39. Of these Bills, scrutiny of the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill (subsequently retitled the Care Reform (Scotland) Bill) was particularly complex and took up significant Committee time at Stage 1 and at Stage 2.
40. The Committee also had lead responsibility for scrutinising the following Member's Bills:
- [Abortion Services \(Safe Access Zones\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#)
  - [Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults \(Scotland\) Bill](#)
  - [Right to Addiction Recovery \(Scotland\) Bill](#)
41. Given the particularly sensitive subject matter, scrutiny of all three of these Bills also

took up significant Committee capacity during the latter half of the session.

42. During Session 6, the Committee considered Legislative Consent Memorandums related to the following items of primary legislation being taken through the Westminster Parliament:

- Health and Care Bill - [First LCM](#); [Supplementary LCM](#); [Second supplementary LCM](#)
- [Powers of Attorney Bill](#)
- [Victims and Prisoners Bill](#)
- Tobacco and Vapes Bill - [LCM and first supplementary LCM](#); [Second supplementary LCM](#)
- Employment Rights Bill - [Supplementary LCM](#); [Second supplementary LCM](#)
- [Terminally Ill Adults \(End of Life\) Bill](#)
- [Medical Training \(Prioritisation\) Bill](#)

## **Subordinate legislation**

43. During the course of Session 6, the Committee considered a total of 152 items of subordinate legislation including:

- 95 negative SSIs
- 30 affirmative SSIs
- 9 made affirmative SSIs
- 13 laid only SSIs
- 5 Type 1 UKSIs

44. Although many of these instruments were largely technical in nature, a certain number have been the subject of more in-depth scrutiny, necessitating broader consultation and more detailed debate, sometimes over the course of multiple meetings.

## **Post-legislative scrutiny**

45. During Session 6, the Committee also undertook the following post-legislative scrutiny:

- [Social Care \(Self-directed Support\) \(Scotland\) Act 2013](#)
- [Health and Care \(Staffing\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

- [Alcohol \(Minimum Pricing\) \(Scotland\) Act 2012](#)

## Petitions

46. During the course of the session, the Committee has considered a number of petitions referred to it by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee (see table below for details).
47. In total, five petitions were formally referred to the Committee during Session 6. Four of these were initially referred to the Committee in the context of its inquiry into health inequalities and subsequently considered as part of the Committee's inquiry into remote and rural healthcare. Three of these petitions were then closed.
48. The fourth of these petitions, [PE1294: Complete an emergency in-depth review of Women's Health services in Caithness and Sutherland](#) was considered again at the Committee's meeting on [10 February 2026](#), where Members agreed to leave the petition open. The Committee therefore draws the attention of any successor committee to the contents of this petition, considering that the issues it raises may benefit from further scrutiny in Session 7.
49. A fifth petition, [PE2156: Improve access to ADHD diagnosis and treatment across Scotland](#), was referred to the Committee in the context of its inquiry into ADHD and autism pathways and support. The contents of the petition were actively considered by the Committee as part of that inquiry and the Committee then [decided to close the petition following the inquiry's conclusion](#).

### Petitions referred to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee during Session 6

Petition number and title	Current status	Date referred	Date closed
<a href="#">PE1915: Reinstate Caithness County Council and Caithness NHS Board</a>	Closed	15 June 2022	25 October 2022
<a href="#">PE1845: Agency to advocate for the healthcare needs of rural Scotland</a>	Closed	15 June 2022	21 February 2023
<a href="#">PE1890: Find solutions to recruitment and training challenges for rural healthcare in Scotland</a>	Closed	15 June 2022	21 February 2023
<a href="#">PE1924: Complete an emergency in-depth review of Women's Health services in Caithness &amp; Sutherland</a>	Under consideration	15 June 2022	N/A
<a href="#">PE2156: Improve access to ADHD diagnosis and treatment across Scotland</a>	Closed	18 June 2025	10 February 2026

50. Although not formally referred, the Committee also considered the issues raised in the petition, [PE2137: Fair regulation for non-medical aesthetic injectors](#), as part of its scrutiny of the Non-surgical Procedures and Functions of Medical Reviewers (Scotland) Bill.
51. The Committee also considered a [Session 5 Public Petitions Committee report on the petition PE1319: Improving youth football in Scotland](#), originally lodged in 2010, as part of its scrutiny of welfare and sustainability in Scottish youth football. The Committee has continued to receive correspondence on the issues raised during its scrutiny up to the end of Session 6. It therefore draws the attention of any successor committee to these matters as potentially requiring ongoing

consideration during Session 7.

## Engagement and accessibility

52. During the first year of the session, the Covid-19 pandemic prevented the Committee from undertaking face-to-face engagement as part of its work programme.
53. During the second year of the session, the Committee's engagement activity was focused on a number of visits and online engagement events related to its scrutiny of the then-titled National Care Service (Scotland) Bill.
54. The Committee also undertook a series of four informal engagement events in May 2022 as part of its inquiry into health inequalities.
55. As part of the Committee's inquiry into female participation in sport and physical activity, Members of the Committee participated in informal engagement in Dunfermline in March 2023.
56. In early, 2024, the Committee undertook two online informal engagement events with local patient campaign groups, rural GPs and multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) as part of its inquiry into healthcare in remote and rural areas. Subsequently in May 2024, Members of the Committee undertook a visit to the Isle of Skye as part of the same inquiry.
57. Also during 2024, the Committee undertook formal and informal engagement as part of its scrutiny of the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill.
58. In 2025, during its Stage 1 scrutiny of the Right to Addiction Recovery (Scotland) Bill, the Committee undertook informal engagement with people with lived experience of recovery from alcohol and/or drug addiction.
59. The Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny of the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill included informal engagement with members of the Scottish Assembly, an organisation that brings together people with a learning disability and autistic people across Scotland and helps them to engage with the political process and a range of support and services. To improve accessibility, an Executive Summary of the Committee's Stage 1 report on the Bill was also produced in accessible formats, namely British Sign Language (BSL), Easy Read and Gaelic. Following the conclusion of Stage 2 proceedings for the Bill, SPICe and Public Information also produced a summary of the outcome of those proceedings in BSL, Easy Read and Gaelic formats.
60. The Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny of that same Bill was further informed by a process of engagement with organisations involved in the provision of frontline care and support for adults living with a terminal illness. The purpose of this exercise was to identify individuals with such experience who might be willing to contribute personal testimonies about their experience and their views of the Bill. As a result, the Committee received two written testimonies which Members considered and reflected upon at the Committee's meeting on [25 March 2025](#).
61. The Committee's ongoing scrutiny of the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults

(Scotland) Bill at Stage 2 included further work to gather the views of young people regarding the age limit aspect of the Bill. To this end, the Committee worked with the Scottish Youth Parliament to host a workshop on this subject with a group of Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament in September 2025. The Scottish Youth Parliament then produced a [report summarising discussions at the workshop](#) which it submitted to the Committee as correspondence.

62. As part of its inquiry into ADHD and autism pathways and support, the Committee undertook online informal engagement with a number of individuals with lived experience of autism and/or ADHD in September 2025.
63. Access to the inquiry was further facilitated by the creation of Easy Read, Gaelic and BSL versions of the Committee's call for views. The Committee also took additional steps to ensure witnesses with autism and/or ADHD were suitably supported, including providing expected questions in advance and arranging a quiet room for witnesses to use during their evidence session.

# Key reflections

## Health policy

64. Given its breadth and the substantial proportion of the Scottish Budget now focused in this area, the Committee has found it challenging to undertake more than superficial scrutiny of many aspects of the health element of its remit during this session. In this context, the Committee highlights the importance of sustaining ongoing periodic scrutiny of the multiplicity of health-related bodies falling within that remit as a means of ensuring ongoing accountability for policy development and decision-making in this area.
65. The Committee would also encourage any successor committee to consider other innovative approaches to scrutiny, such as regional scrutiny of health boards, as an alternative means of effectively covering this aspect of its remit.

## Mental health

66. Mental health policy and the legislation underpinning it has been the subject of some scrutiny and internal discussion during Session 6. Following on from the independent Scottish Mental Health Law review that concluded in September 2022, the Committee is aware that the Scottish Government is undertaking ongoing work to address the review's recommendations and notes that this may continue to be an area of further policy development and potential interest to any successor committee in Session 7.

## Neurodiversity

67. The Committee's inquiry into ADHD and autism pathways and support highlighted many persistent challenges facing people with neurodevelopmental conditions in having timely access to assessment, diagnosis and support. Noting also the related [inquiry undertaken by the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee into neurodivergence in Scotland](#), the Committee therefore highlights this as a specific area of policy that could benefit from further scrutiny, including cross-committee scrutiny, during the next session.

## Covid-19 and pandemic preparedness

68. This Committee acknowledges and pays tribute to the work of the Covid-19 Recovery Committee during the first two years of Session 6, without which it would have had considerably less capacity to undertake its own proactive scrutiny of health, social care and sport policy.
69. The Committee notes that residual impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic and the issue of pandemic preparedness could be a useful area for ongoing scrutiny in Session 7.

## Social care

70. Encompassing its scrutiny of the Care Reform (Scotland) Bill, ongoing scrutiny of health and social care integration and the work of integration joint boards, and its post-legislative scrutiny of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act

2013, social care has been an extensive area of focus for the Committee during Session 6.

71. Amongst other challenges, Scotland's ageing population, the ongoing process and progress of health and social care integration, interaction between social care and health including the issue of delayed discharges, workforce recruitment and retention and implementation of self-directed support all point to social care as being a policy area that will continue to demand attention from any successor committee in Session 7.

### **Palliative care**

72. During Session 6, the Committee's indepth consideration and scrutiny of the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill shone a light on issues associated with provision of and access to palliative care services in Scotland. This is another important policy area that could merit particular attention and further scrutiny during Session 7.

### **Sport and physical activity**

73. Almost inevitably, given the size of the Committee's remit, the time available for the Committee to focus on sport and physical activity has been limited. Nonetheless, the Committee was pleased to have been able to focus some attention on this policy area during its inquiry into the health and wellbeing of children and young people and, subsequently, to have been able to carry out an indepth inquiry into female participation in sport and physical activity. The importance of increased participation in sport and physical activity as a preventative health measure has also been consistently highlighted during the Committee's budget scrutiny and its scrutiny of the National Performance Framework and national outcomes.
74. Throughout Session 6, the Committee has heard consistent evidence of the crucial contribution of sport and physical activity to improved healthy life expectancy and that further action is needed to overcome multiple barriers to increased participation in sport and physical activity across Scotland's population. The Committee therefore highlights these and other related issues in sport and physical activity as potentially fruitful areas for ongoing scrutiny in the next parliamentary session.

### **Food policy**

75. While fully recognising its importance, the Committee has found it challenging to identify time and capacity to undertake regular scrutiny of the food policy aspect of its remit, particularly due to its increasing legislative workload as the session has progressed. Nonetheless, we have sought to undertake scrutiny of Food Standards Scotland at least annually, with a dedicated session taking place in 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026. Our scrutiny of food policy has also encompassed scrutiny of the proposed national Good Food Nation Plan in the second half of 2025.
76. During the most recent session with Food Standards Scotland in February 2026, the Committee learned that an immediate challenge the organisation faces would be potentially revisiting a large volume of recently implemented subordinate legislation to ensure compliance with a new sanitary and phytosanitary standards agreement between the UK and the EU. The Committee highlights that this may be the source of a significant workload for any successor committee early in Session 7.

77. In this area, the Committee also highlights the future creation of local Good Food Nation plans as a subject worthy of further scrutiny in the next session.

### **Drugs and alcohol policy / Cross-committee scrutiny**

78. Given the breadth of the Committee's remit and the progressively increasing legislative workload, the Committee has found it invaluable to have been able to pool responsibility for regular scrutiny of drugs policy with two other parliamentary committees during the course of Session 6. The Committee believes this could offer a useful model for future cross-committee scrutiny of aspects of its remit that intersect multiple policy portfolios - as well as for any successor committee to contribute towards scrutiny of policy areas falling within the remit of other committees which have a bearing on outcomes in health, social care and sport.

### **Data / Assessing and evaluating outcomes**

79. During Session 6, the Committee has focused some attention on ways of improving data gathering and assessment and evaluation of outcomes in health, social care and sport, including as part of its annual budget scrutiny as well as its scrutiny of the National Performance Framework. In this context, it highlights progress towards meeting the United Nations health-related sustainable development goals as an additional useful metric for scrutinising performance against health policy outcomes in the future.

### **External engagement**

80. The Committee has, at times, been frustrated that its legislative workload has prevented it from undertaking as much external engagement as it would have liked. Members of the Committee who participated in a visit to Skye as part of the Committee's inquiry into remote and rural healthcare found their visit to Broadford Hospital and engagement with the local community to be particularly useful in providing insights around the real, practical challenges associated with delivering healthcare in rural and island communities.
81. Based on this experience, the Committee would encourage any successor committee to make particular efforts to find time in its work programme to accommodate regular opportunities for external visits and engagement, to help inform its scrutiny role.

### **Topical issues**

82. The Committee's heavy legislative workload during Session 6 has also made it more difficult for the Committee to adapt its work programme quickly to address emerging topical issues. For example, as the session draws to a close and in light of recent events at the Scottish Cup Quarter Final on 8 March 2026, the Committee would have liked to address the specific issue of policing at sporting events but regrettably did not have time to do so.
83. In this context, while acknowledging that the level of legislative workload in Session 7 will be largely out of any successor committee's control, the Committee would encourage its successor to consider, at the outset of the session, ways of building into its work programme a degree of flexibility to allow it to respond more quickly to emerging topical issues.

## Cross-portfolio scrutiny

84. The Committee's inquiry into health inequalities in particular highlighted the reality that a broad range of policies beyond health, social care and sport have a direct bearing on health outcomes. This emphasises the importance of cross-portfolio working and the need for future committees to be empowered to undertake scrutiny of Ministers and other key decision-makers with responsibilities beyond health, social care and sport, in cases where the exercise of those responsibilities has a material impact on health outcomes.

## Post-legislative scrutiny

85. During Session 6, the Committee has seen particular added value in the post-legislative scrutiny it has undertaken. This has been especially true of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, where the Committee's [concluding report](#) identified many examples of local good practice but also certain local authority areas where delivery of self-directed support had fallen considerably short of what the Act promised. The report also made far-reaching recommendations for future improvement.
86. Based on this experience, the Committee would recommend that any successor committee should consider targeted post-legislative scrutiny of legislation passed in previous parliamentary sessions as a priority for its work programme over the course of Session 7.

## Attendance of certain public bodies

87. On occasion, the Committee has been frustrated that, when invited to give evidence, certain public bodies with responsibilities directly within the Committee's policy remit have shown themselves to be reluctant or unavailable to do so. Given the importance to effectively fulfilling its scrutiny role, in such future circumstances, the Committee would encourage any successor committee to show itself willing to escalate such cases or to take further action to ensure public bodies invited to give evidence treat such invitations as a priority and do routinely appear.

## Committee size

88. The Committee notes that the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's recent "Strengthening Committees' Effectiveness" Report has recommended that, in the next parliamentary session, committees should normally have a maximum of seven members. While respecting the rationale behind this recommendation, we note that, given the breadth of its remit and its considerable legislative workload, this Committee would have struggled to fulfil its scrutiny role during Session 6 with a membership smaller than ten members.
89. The Committee notes that, going into the next parliamentary session, there is likely to be a particularly high turnover of MSPs. In this context, we hope that the reflections set out in this Legacy Report will prove particularly useful to any successor committee.

