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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
1. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government take on board the principles of dignity, respect, simplicity, fairness, consistency, accessibility, coherence, common-sense and both an entitlement based and human rights based approach when designing the new Scottish social security system.	<p>In December 2015 I announced the following principles which will provide the foundation for the use of the devolved social security powers:</p> <p>Principle 1: Social security is an investment in the people of Scotland</p> <p>Principle 2: Respect for the dignity of individuals is at the heart of everything we do</p> <p>Principle 3: Our processes and services will be evidence based and designed with the people of Scotland</p>

	<p>Principle 4: We will strive for continuous improvement in all our policies, processes and systems, putting the user experience first</p> <p>Principle 5: We will demonstrate that our services are efficient and value for money</p>
<p>2. The Committee recommends that, in particular, the principles of dignity and respect be included in any primary legislation concerning Scottish social security. This clear message from the start will be essential in securing the culture change required within a new Scottish system.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government has made clear that the principles of dignity and respect will be at the heart of social security. The First Minister has outlined that there will be a social security Bill by the end of the first year of the Scottish Parliament and we will consult widely on what should be in that Bill.</p>
<p>3. The Committee would like to see a Scottish social security system that follows a social model approach to disability and focuses on the positives of what a disabled person can achieve, while offering them the right to support when and where it is needed.</p>	
<p>4. The Committee recommends that when designing the Scottish social security system the Scottish Government should work closely with disabled people and those with long-term conditions who are best placed to reflect what they need from the system.</p>	<p>We have carried out an extensive programme of consultation with disabled people and representatives of disabled people and will continue to do so as policy details are developed. In particular we will be looking to take forward user panels which will act as a way of helping us develop views of those directly impacted by the powers to come through the Scotland Bill. We will look to test and develop policies over time in line with the principles we outlined as the starting point for how we will deliver new powers and in line with our commitment to involve all those directly impacted by the powers.</p> <p>More widely, we will continue to publish analytical reports and assessments of the impact on the various powers to ensure we have a robust framework to inform our policy development.</p>

<p>5. The Committee believes that the current assessment and application process for Personal Independence Payments is not effectively meeting the needs of disabled people. The Committee believes that the Scottish Government should consider new criteria, particularly in the area of mobility, which will accurately reflect a claimant's capabilities.</p>	<p>We are currently considering all aspects of the benefits that are being devolved to the Scottish Parliament; this includes the application process and eligibility criteria for Personal Independence Payments. We will consider both how the existing criteria could be improved and any opportunities for introducing new criteria, to best reflect the needs of disabled people and the impact of their disability or health condition. We are clear that this should be in line with our principles, ensuring that disabled people are supported to participate in society and fulfil their potential.</p>
<p>6. The Committee believes that a culture change in how claimants are dealt with is essential in the new Scottish social security system. It recommends that the Scottish Government ensure that all staff carrying out assessments for disability related benefits undergo disability and equality training so that they are better able to understand the needs of the people they are dealing with.</p>	<p>We intend to work with disabled people and their representatives to ensure this translates to claimants of social security in Scotland having a positive experience when claiming.</p>
<p>7. We believe that the Scottish Government should enable changes to make the system less bureaucratic, more person-centred, flexible, accessible and accurate. If the system gets an assessment right first time it not only saves the tax payer money but also significant time and stress for the claimant.</p>	<p>We agree with this statement and believe there are opportunities to improve the assessment process. We are working with a range of stakeholders, disabled people and their representatives to understand the current assessment process and consider ways of improving it. Developing an approach that is person-centred will be central to the assessment process and we will look for opportunities to make it as effective and efficient as possible.</p>
<p>8. In order to address the stress attributed to the Mandatory Reconsideration process the Committee recommends that the UK Government consider that the language be made more user-friendly and that communication be made as effective as possible.</p>	<p>Language, communication and information that is user friendly and supportive will be a vital component of our work. In the meantime, it remains the responsibility of the UK Government</p>

<p>9. The Committee recommends that when the Scottish Government creates its own system for disability benefits more weight should be given to existing medical evidence and the opinions of the claimant's own medical professionals. The expertise of occupational therapists should also be used more effectively within the system.</p>	<p>and we would be supportive of attempts to address this issue with them directly.</p> <p>We are also in discussion with health and social care colleagues to understand the current landscape and the areas of common interest.</p>
<p>10. The Committee believes that the Scottish Government should introduce long-term Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payment awards for those with severe, long term disability or illness. This would vastly reduce the stress on severely ill people of multiple assessments, continuous form filling etc. and save money by reducing bureaucracy. This measure will require close consultation with affected groups and others.</p>	<p>We are currently considering all aspects of the benefits that are being devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and will consider and develop changes in conjunction with the wide range of groups and people necessary. We want to ensure reassessment time periods are justified and necessary, and that award periods are reflective of a person's circumstances.</p>
<p>11. The Equality Act 2010 says there's a duty to make reasonable adjustments if a person is placed at a substantial disadvantage because of their disability compared to a person with no disability. The Committee believes that the Scottish Government should communicate effectively with claimants in advance of any assessment to ensure that any and all 'reasonable adjustments' are made.</p>	<p>Developing an approach that is person-centred will be central to the assessment process and we will look for opportunities to make it as effective and efficient as possible. We will also establish User Panels made up of a sample of benefit recipients, to help understand user views, shape the design of processes, and to monitor the impact of transitions and changes.</p>
<p>12. The Committee also recommends that if face-to-face assessments do take place, they should do so in an area local to the claimant and preferably in a care setting familiar to the client.</p>	
<p>13. The Committee recognises that NHS doctors have a contractual obligation to provide information free of charge when initially requested for a DLA or Attendance Allowance assessment. However, it is aware that issues can arise when</p>	<p>We are looking into the specific matter of charges in partnership with colleagues reviewing the GP contract in Scotland.</p>

<p>claimants request additional medical evidence. It recommends that the Scottish Government ban any charges which may be levied on the provision of additional information.</p>	
<p>14. The Committee acknowledges the benefits that both national and local delivery can provide. It recommends that The Scottish Government investigate options which provide a national framework to allow consistency and transparency but capitalise on the benefits and knowledge of local delivery. The Committee recommends that, as part of this investigation, the Scottish Government draws upon the lessons from a variety of areas such as self-directed support, the integration of health and social care and the Scottish Welfare Fund.</p>	<p>We are undertaking a robust, evidence-based appraisal of a range of the options for delivery of the devolved benefits, which draws on the HMT 'Green Book' approach. We have gathered information from subject matter experts and representatives of Third Sector and other organisations and are preparing a report on our work so far.</p> <p>The appraisal process has two stages, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 (now completed) – an initial appraisal of 7 options. In Stage 1, officials used an online questionnaire and workshops with internal and external stakeholders and subject experts, to gather information on the 7 options. • Analysts are now collating the information gathered during Stage 1 and will use it to produce a report, in line with practice elsewhere in government. • Stage 2 – development of a more detailed business case. Development of the business case will be iterative and will be heavily dependent on the provision of information by DWP.
<p>15. The Committee believes that, whatever delivery mechanism is chosen concerning disability benefits for Scotland, it is essential that claimants have confidence and trust in that system. In particular, that the funding for disability benefits will not be used to meet any other local needs.</p>	
<p>16. The Committee recognises the important contribution that schemes such as Motability can make to disabled peoples' participation in society. It believes that the social security system should do all it can to enable disabled people who are currently in work to stay in work. We recommend that the Scottish Government carefully consider the importance of 'passporting'</p>	<p>Passporting is an important area with linkages to both reserved and devolved benefits. The opportunity to align with existing devolved benefits more effectively is an area we are actively exploring with stakeholders. It is also crucial that any new benefits in Scotland interact effectively with reserved benefits and we are working to understand the complex relationships that</p>

when designing the new Scottish social security system.	exist in this area.
17. The Committee recommends that training and awareness of the fast track process for the terminally ill to access benefits is improved so that a wider range of terminally ill claimants are made aware of their eligibility for this service.	Treating applicants with dignity and respect is one of our key aims. This would apply in all cases, but especially when a claimant has a terminal illness.
18. The Committee is still of the view that the UK Government should have halted the roll out of PIP in order to preserve the entitlement for as many people as possible before the benefit transfers to Scotland. The Committee recommends that difficult funding decisions be made in close consultation with those impacted by the changes.	We share the Committee's view that the Personal Independence Payments rollout should have been stopped to preserve the budget. We have been engaging with a range of stakeholders as we develop our proposals for new benefits in Scotland and we will continue to consult closely with all those who would be affected as we make decisions on funding in future years.
19. The Committee believes that it is unfair to determine the level of support available for a disabled person depending on the age at which the disability occurs. It recommends that the Scottish Government consider ways in which a mobility component could be made applicable to older people.	We are currently considering all aspects of the benefits that are being devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and the age related cut-offs for disability benefits. Ensuring there is fairness across the age range will be a key part of establishment of eligibility criteria, and the needs of older people will be considered in that.
20. The Committee supports the Scottish Government's intention to introduce a broader definition of the term 'carer' and welcomes the increased flexibility that the amendments to the Scotland Bill will allow the Scottish Government to develop its own approach to benefits for carers in consultation with carers organisations.	We consistently argued for the definition of a carer to be removed from the Scotland Bill. It is correct that the Scottish Parliament will have the ability to define who should be considered a carer for the purposes of paying benefits to carers. It is our aspiration to do more to help carers and to encourage them into work and study where we can.
21. The Committee is aware that the changes to the eligibility criteria as set out in the Scotland Bill 2015 may impact on the Scottish Governments consideration of what constitutes 'regular and substantial' care. The Committee would encourage the Scottish Government to actively consider the points made about	We will develop a definition, for the purposes of Carer's Allowance, in consultation with stakeholders once this power is transferred to the Scottish Parliament.

the limitations of the current system in its deliberations.	
22. The Committee acknowledges the knock-on effect that a reduction of the numbers of people transferring to PIP may have on the eligibility of their carers to receive Carer's Allowance.	We will, where possible, be assessing the numbers of people who lose entitlement to Carer's Allowance, though this will be difficult to assess while the benefits are administered by DWP.
23. The Committee is also aware that although people may no longer be receiving a disability benefit, they may still have substantial care needs. We would encourage the Scottish Government to consider this continued need closely and include carers and their representative organisations in any deliberations on this topic.	<p>We recognise the vital role that unpaid carers and young carers play in caring for their family, friends and neighbours, including people who are most vulnerable.</p> <p>We have also invested over £123 million from 2007-2016 in a range of programmes and initiatives including Carer Information Strategies, short breaks and the annual Young Carers Festival which gives young carers from across Scotland a platform to express their views and be heard by key decision-makers on issues such as employment.</p>
24. The Committee believes that carers make a vital contribution to Scottish society. The Committee feels that this contribution should be valued in the same way as other alternative means of employment.	<p>The purpose of the Carers (Scotland) Bill is that Scotland's carers should be better supported on a more consistent basis so that they can continue to care, if they so wish, in good health and to have a life alongside caring. The adult carer support plan and the young carer statement will set out the carer's identified personal outcomes and identified needs (if any) and will record the support to be provided to meet those needs. It will also contain information about the adult carers' personal circumstances at the time of preparation of the plan. This will include the nature and extent of the care provided, the impact of caring on the carer's wellbeing and day to day life, and importantly information about the extent the carer is willing and able to provide care.</p>
25. The Committee welcomes the Scottish Government	We will seek to make the new benefits as simple as possible.

commitment to increase the amount of Carer's Allowance to match Job Seekers Allowance. However, it recommends that the complexity in the current system be addressed in order to simplify the process.	We will co-produce guidance and forms where possible and seek stakeholder views on how to simplify processes. We are also working with DWP to understand the interactions with reserved means-tested benefits to ensure complexity between devolved and reserved benefits is kept to a minimum.
26. The Committee would encourage the Scottish Government to consider the need for a benefit that covers both the additional costs that caring entails as well as the potential need for income replacement.	We have committed to starting to increase benefits for carers to the same level as jobseekers allowance. We are committed to considering social security for carers as part of our overall approach to carer support.
27. The Committee would encourage the Scottish Government and employers to think about the ways in which they can offer greater flexibility to carers who try to balance work and caring responsibilities. This would allow people to maintain their skills and return more quickly to the labour market; if that was their wish, thereby reducing longer-term benefit dependency.	We understand the difficulty that carers may face in the workplace and when seeking employment after a long-term absence. We fund the Carer Positive scheme in partnership with Carers Scotland and other key stakeholders. This aims to raise employer awareness of carers' issues, increase the support given to employees with caring responsibilities and encourage employers to understand the business case for supporting carers in the workplace. As of October 2015, 38 employers with over 100,000 staff combined have been awarded their Carer Positive accreditation with a further 43 having indicated interest or currently in the process of applying.
28. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government consider a fast track process to allow quick access to benefits for carers when they are caring for someone with a terminal illness.	The application process for carers will be considered as we put in place our new arrangements. This is an issue that we will consider. Treating applicants with dignity and respect is one of our key aims. This would apply in all cases, but especially when a claimant is caring for someone who has a terminal illness.
29. The Committee believes that there needs to be appropriate support in place for carers after their caring role ends. Carers' benefits should not automatically stop upon the death of the	We are currently considering all aspects of the benefits that are being devolved to the Scottish Parliament; this includes the eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance. We are not yet in a

person they care for. A period of time should be permitted to allow the carer to make arrangements to move on in a supported fashion.	position to make decisions on individual criteria.
30. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government make provision within a Scottish social security system to better support people and their carers during points of transition in their lives.	<p>We will seek to align a benefit for carers with the support that Local Authorities will have to provide to carers under the terms of the Carers (Scotland) Bill which is currently going through the Scottish Parliament. Under section 16 of the Carers (Scotland) Bill a young carer support plan will continue to have effect, despite the fact that a young carer has attained the age of 18 years, until an adult carer support plan is in place.</p> <p>Section 13(1) of the Carers (Scotland) Bill provides that the young carer statement must contain information about the circumstances in which the young carer statement is to be reviewed. The young carer statement must also contain information about the extent to which the carer is able and willing to provide care for the cared for person. The review process will include discussion on whether the carer wishes to remain in their caring role and, if they do not, how they are supported to end that role.</p> <p>Carers are also able to access practical and emotional support and information from their local carers centres during a time of transition in their life and in their caring role. Some carers centres support carers for up to 2 years after their caring role ends.</p>
31. The Committee welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to scrap the 84 day rule which prevents families with a seriously ill or disabled child from receiving DLA and Carer's Allowance payments once the child has been in hospital	Abolishing the 84-day rule is an early signal that the Scottish Government will look to introduce fairness as an integral element of disability and carer benefits in Scotland. We will seek opportunities across all the benefits that we take responsibility

or received medical treatment for the same condition for more than 84 days.	<p>for to promote fairness and equality where clear inconsistencies and disadvantage exist.</p> <p>This change will mean families in Scotland will not be penalised when their child goes into hospital or has necessary medical treatment, and we hope this will reduce the stress and anxiety that those families are already facing.</p>
32. The Committee would hope to see a Scottish social security system which is simple and accessible in future. However, in the short-to-medium term, it recognises the benefits that a 'key worker'-style system can provide, particularly for carers. It would also welcome a 'one-stop shop' approach to benefits from the Scottish Government.	The value of information, advice and advocacy in supporting people engaged with the social security system is vast. We are exploring what services and resources already exist, what people want in the future and how they want it to be available. A system that integrates and aligns with existing devolved services must provide appropriate assistance for people to achieve the best outcomes.
33. The Committee agrees with the Scottish Government proposal that the housing element of Universal Credit should be paid direct to landlords as default. As with the previous system, it is essential that the claimant should be able to retain the choice to handle the payment personally, if that better suits their circumstances.	We are working with DWP officials to develop processes which give the claimant that choice from the outset of their claim. There will not be a default position but where claimants have previously had payments made direct to social landlords they will be encouraged to continue with this arrangement.
34. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government note the concerns about potential administrative difficulties in making adaptations to the use of DWP Universal Credit systems.	We are working closely with DWP and other stakeholders to minimise administrative difficulties and ensure the adaptations are made in an effective, efficient and economic manner.
35. The Committee supports action to increase financial autonomy for women. With this in mind, it is supportive of the ability to split household Universal Credit payments and a move	We are currently working with stakeholders to consider the options for using our powers over Split Payments in the future. There are no easy solutions for how to do this and we want to

away from the 'male bread winner' household model.	ensure that any change in the current policy will not have unintended consequences for claimants. Once we have consulted further we would impact assess any proposals with DWP in operational, financial and technical areas before making any policy decisions but will continue to monitor the roll out of Universal Credit in the meantime.
36. However, it recognises that there may be unintended practical difficulties in the processing of this split. As such, it recommends that the Scottish Government work to identify all possible unintended consequences of this policy and put in place mitigating measures where required.	We are working with stakeholders to learn lessons from the current DWP Alternative Payment Arrangement split payment procedure to aid understanding of any unintended consequences.
37. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government considers offering the choice of whether Universal Credit is to be paid monthly or on a more frequent basis should be given to claimants. This should be done only with their full knowledge of how their decision may impact on their ability to budget and their level of income in the first few months.	We remain committed to offering claimants this choice.
38. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government considers what contingency measures can be put in place to support the claimant during the waiting period before their first Universal Credit payment is received.	We do not have any devolved power over the policy on waiting days and therefore have limited means of alleviating this. There are Short Term Benefit Advances available from DWP and the Scottish Welfare Fund can assist in emergencies. However, the Committee is right to be concerned that the waiting period could increase rent arrears for some claimants. This concern is also shared by the Work and Pensions Committee in their report 'Benefit Delivery' published on 21 December (page 15). We would ask the Committee to raise their concerns directly with DWP.
39. The Committee is concerned that monthly assessment processes as they currently stand, only give a snapshot of the	While we share the Committee's concerns, we have no power to change the nature of the monthly assessment period nor

claimant's situation. It recommends that the Scottish Government engage with the UK Government to consider how the assessment can be improved in order to take into account all the changes in circumstances which may have impacted the claimant that month.	when changes impact the amount paid. This is a matter for DWP and we would ask the Committee to bring these very real concerns to their attention.
40. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government work closely with the UK Government to reduce the dependence on manual interventions to process payments and updates within the Universal Credit system.	It is in the interests of both Governments that manual interventions are minimised and as we develop processes in partnership with DWP that will be an aim. However, the operation of Universal Credit is a matter for DWP.
41. The Committee views the effective data sharing between organisations to be critical in the smooth delivery of the housing element of Universal Credit.	We agree with this approach and are working closely with DWP to ensure that appropriate data sharing arrangements are put in place for all the devolved benefits. Putting such arrangements in place is important now and will be in the future too so that the Scottish Government has all the necessary information at its disposal in taking on new benefits.
42. The Committee encourages all parties involved in benefit assessment and delivery to be as open as possible. With the understanding that there may be some data protection issues to be overcome the default position should be one of positive cooperation and transparency in all dealings.	
43. The Committee believes that lack of appropriate data sharing can lead to delays, confusion, or people being categorised or sanctioned inappropriately. This makes the need for good data sharing between reserved and devolved areas essential.	
44. The Committee recognises the additional cost and complexity of providing temporary or supported accommodation. It recommends that the UK Government consider removing all temporary accommodation costs from Universal Credit.	<p>This is an issue we also have and we would ask the Committee to bring these very real concerns to the attention of the UK Government where responsibility lies.</p> <p>The Scottish Government Accommodation/Supported</p>

<p>45. It acknowledges that the issues around Universal Credit and temporary accommodation, while only affecting small numbers currently, may become a growing issue as the roll-out continues. Placing vulnerable people in a situation where they will potentially accumulate significant arrears will be detrimental to their ability to improve their situation.</p>	<p>Accommodation Group has met to discuss funding issues and members have a variety of concerns that are being picked up in the new year. Scottish Government, COSLA, Local Authorities and partner organisations have been in discussion with DWP on the costs and subsidies available around temporary accommodation. We continue to do so following the announcements in the Spending Review.</p>
<p>46. The Committee believes that the maintenance of housing adaptations, such as hoists and stair lifts, is crucial to a tenant continuing to live in their home. They act as a preventative measure against further cost to the Local Authority and against distressing upheaval to the tenant.</p>	<p>We will listen to stakeholder feedback about the housing element of Universal Credit before considering options to vary the calculation, including reviewing what is included as an eligible charge.</p>
<p>47. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should investigate amending the housing element of Universal Credit to provide that maintenance costs for adaptations are included as an eligible charge.</p>	
<p>48. The Committee recommends that a common-sense approach be taken to housing cost contributions when the housing element of Universal Credit comes under Scottish control. It would encourage the Scottish Government to consider reviewing the current list of exemptions to see if any additional exemptions are required.</p>	<p>We agree with this approach and can look at the exemptions for housing cost contributions as part of our consideration of the calculation of the housing element of Universal Credit.</p>
<p>49. The Committee is concerned that the differences in housing policy between Scotland and England could have unintended consequences for young people. The Committee recommends that the UK and Scottish Government identify these gaps and work constructively with one another to make sure that they are closed.</p>	<p>We are in discussion with DWP to identify differences between housing policy in Scotland and England which might affect young people aged 18 – 21 and will look at options to address any gaps thereafter. We remain opposed to the UK Government's proposals to remove housing benefit for under 21s.</p>

<p>50. The Committee is concerned to hear about the possible knock-on effect of Universal Credit in terms of additional administrative costs and the potential impact increased rent arrears may have on capital spend for landlords. Negative impacts in these areas may affect future service delivery and the ability of landlords to build affordable housing.</p>	<p>This is a matter for the UK Government and we would ask the Committee to bring this issue to their attention. We believe however, that the implementation of the managed payment flexibility, allowing claimants the choice to have their rent paid direct to social landlords as happens with housing benefit now, will minimise risk of rent arrears for Universal Credit claimants and we are committed to using these flexibilities as soon as we are able to.</p>
<p>51. The Committee would encourage the UK Government to consider these additional costs and potential restrictions during its roll out of Universal Credit.</p>	<p>This is a recommendation for the UK Government and we would encourage the Committee to raise it with them.</p>
<p>52. Overall, our evidence has shown that there remains a series of problems which, when taken together, could create significant issues with the operation of Universal Credit, which have still not been resolved over two years since our visit to a pathfinder project. The UK Government needs to ensure that these are dealt with now.</p>	<p>We share these concerns and continue to engage with DWP to raise issues and closely follow Universal Credit Programme developments so that we can assess impacts on claimants in Scotland. Implementing the Scottish Universal Credit flexibilities will help claimants to make the transition to Universal Credit. We would again ask the Committee to raise the issue with the UK Government.</p>
<p>53. The Committee believes that there is a need to increase support for people in the private rented housing sector. It recommends that the Scottish Government evaluates how affordable the private rented sector is now in light of the changes made to Local Housing Allowance.</p>	<p>We will need to study in detail the changes to Housing Benefit put forward by the UK Government to determine the impact on private renters, before looking at options to vary the existing system.</p>
<p>54. If the Scottish Government comes to the conclusion that the private rented sector has become unaffordable for claimants it should investigate ways in which it can mitigate or resolve this issue and make it more responsive to local housing markets.</p>	<p>We will use research and stakeholder feedback to inform our approach to support for the Private Rented Sector. Support is currently available for private renters experiencing financial difficulty through Discretionary Housing Payments and the Scottish Welfare Fund.</p>

	<p>As part of the Private Housing (Tenancies) Bill we will provide clarity and predictability in rent increases and protects tenants against excessive rent rises. To combat excessive rent rises for sitting tenants in local 'hot spot' areas, councils will have the ability to apply to Ministers for a cap on rent increases in Rent Pressure Zones. This can be for up to 5 years per application.</p>
<p>55. The Committee agrees with the Scottish Government and stakeholders that the 'bedroom tax' should be abolished at the earliest opportunity. This will not only provide relief to tenants but also reduce the administrative burden and cost to Local Authorities.</p>	<p>We welcome the Committee's continued support of our opposition to the bedroom tax and our plans to effectively abolish it when powers become available.</p> <p>We are fully mitigating the bedroom tax and our investment of £90 million has supported 72,000 households. This is part of our £296 million investment over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16 in measures to mitigate the worst of the UK Government's welfare cuts.</p> <p>We are fully committed to using the powers in the Scotland Bill to effectively abolish the bedroom tax..</p>
<p>56. The Committee acknowledges the important role that Discretionary Housing Payments can have in maintaining people living independently in their own homes. In the interests of preventative spend it encourages the Scottish Government to explore options of increasing the flexibility around how DHPs can be awarded in Scotland in order to further this goal.</p>	<p>The new powers over Discretionary Housing Payments are limited in relation to eligibility. We will aim to have alignment between services including for example the Independent Living Fund Scotland and other devolved benefits to support prevention and independent living wherever possible.</p>
<p>57. The Committee expects that the Scottish Government's proposal to scrap the so called 'bedroom tax' will help to address stakeholders' concerns about DHPs being taken away from their original purpose. It recommends that The Scottish Government</p>	<p>We remain committed to effectively abolishing the bedroom tax and have already taken steps to mitigate its effects. Removing the under-occupancy charge for Universal Credit claimants would mean that Discretionary Housing Payments will no longer</p>

conduct a review of DHP spending and produce projections of future demand.	<p>be needed to mitigate the bedroom tax in Universal Credit. However, Housing Benefit will remain reserved, so Discretionary Housing Payments will still be needed to mitigate the bedroom tax for these claimants until the transition to Universal Credit has been completed.</p> <p>Discretionary Housing Payments are used to support those struggling to meet their housing costs for a number of reasons including the benefit cap and Local Housing Allowance rates. Funding for these purposes has remained intact and has not been diverted for bedroom tax mitigation. Decisions on future Scottish Government funding will be made as part of the budget process and will depend to some extent on how much Discretionary Housing Payments funding DWP allocate to Local Authorities.</p>
58. The Committee recommends that The Scottish Government takes the opportunity presented by the devolution of new powers to issue new guidance on DHPs and develop a standard application process across all Local Authorities. This would be of particular benefit to housing providers operating across more than one Local Authority area.	We will look at opportunities to improve the current system for Discretionary Housing Payments using the powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament, including reviewing the application process and the guidance currently provided to Local Authorities by the DWP.
59. The Local Housing Allowance system currently limits the number of bedrooms claimants are entitled to in the same way as the 'bedroom tax' applies to social housing. As the Scottish Government is taking steps to resolve the issue of the 'bedroom tax' for social renters it should also be investigating ways in which it can help support private renters on benefits who may need to pay for larger accommodation than their LHA covers.	We are listening to stakeholder feedback about Local Housing Allowance rates and will take a range of views into consideration before looking at options to vary the existing system. Private Rented Sector households experiencing financial hardship may apply for the Scottish Welfare Fund or for a Discretionary Housing Payment.
60. The Committee believes that issues around employment	We are working on a collaborative approach to employment

support can only be dealt with within the context of the wider economic environment. People can only be supported into jobs if there are jobs available for them to go to. The Committee supports the Scottish Government in considering the links its employment support programmes could have with its fair work agenda and wider economic strategy.	services that is aligned to Scotland's Economic Strategy to increase competitiveness and tackle inequality, in line with our fair work agenda.
61. The Committee recognises that the current Welfare to Work Programme has produced results as least as good as previous administrations, at a "greatly reduced" cost. However, it believes that the devolution of the Work Programme is an opportunity to rethink the help and support offered to those who have trouble accessing the labour market.	We agree with the Committee and would also highlight the £40 million of cuts, representing 75% of the total budget, due to fall on Scottish employability services. Cuts of this size significantly impact the services we can provide to the people of Scotland and we would support the Committee in raising this issue with the UK Government.
62. The Committee believes that the goals in a new Scottish employment support system should be longer term in order to allow people to overcome their barriers to employment and build a suitable foundation for long term success. A staged approach to payment may be necessary in order to allow providers to continue to work towards this long term goal.	We agree in principle with this recommendation. Following a period of successful consultation, we are in the process of analysing the responses to help us determine the optimum length of programme. We are actively considering how any new contract pricing and payment structure can be simplified to ensure that supplier behaviour aligns with best practise <i>and</i> reflects the investment in engagement at the beginning of the programme. Where possible the intention will be to link part of the payment to demonstrable outcomes. As stated above, the proposed cuts to our budget will have a material effect on our ability to provide a service which realises our ambitions.
63. The Committee recommends that there should be a minimum service standard across all providers, which is tailored to meet each group's needs. Advisers should have a predictable caseload to allow them to devote the time required to get to know individuals and tailor a package of support.	We agree in principle with this recommendation and recognise that effective caseload management will help delivery of a good quality programme.

<p>64. The Committee believes that the culture in which employment support is delivered is one of the most important factors in determining client satisfaction and positive outcomes. Clear leadership from the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and The Scottish Government will be required to achieve this.</p>	<p>We recognise the importance of inter-governmental relations in this area. Mechanisms to support joint working to ensure the best possible outcomes for unemployed people in Scotland are in place and we will continue to invest time and effort in enhancing their effectiveness.</p> <p>We are willing and ready to show the leadership required here but this must be reciprocated by the UK Government. In particular, funding arrangements must show respect for the Scottish Parliament and the principles of the Smith Commission and we would support the Committee in raising these with the UK Government.</p>
<p>65. In the spirit of promoting a person-centred approach, the Committee recommends that clients be more involved in the shaping of their Work Programme experience so that they are empowered and engage more in the process.</p>	<p>We have sought opinions from a range of stakeholders and clients on how employment services should look in the future during our consultation exercise. We are committed to putting the client at the heart of service development and delivery.</p>
<p>66. The Committee believes that further training is required to make frontline advisers more aware of the particular needs of job seekers. For example: older people; lone parents; people with either mental or physical disabilities, or victims of domestic abuse. The Committee also recommends that the employment support providers work closely with local support organisations to help those with additional needs.</p>	<p>While our future delivery model is yet to be determined, ensuring Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches effectively support clients with additional barriers at the earliest possible stage in line with devolved delivery will be crucial. (For any new contracted services on-going quality assessment of delivery will be undertaken to ensuring that staff delivering services have the skills necessary to deliver the specific needs of individuals.)</p>
<p>67. The Committee believes that the issue around what constitutes 'permitted work' and difficulties accessing other support schemes seem counter intuitive and overly bureaucratic. The Committee recommends that any future Employment Support scheme in Scotland takes a common-sense approach to activities which can be seen to contribute to a person's</p>	<p>We view the devolution of employment services as an opportunity to lead greater integration and alignment of employability services in Scotland at both a national and local level. We continue to recognise the significant contribution activities such as volunteering can make to helping an individual become job ready. Scottish Ministers recognise the valuable</p>

employability such as volunteering.	contribution Local Authorities can make in this context.
68. The Committee encourages the Scottish Government to be more ambitious in what it can achieve through employment support. We believe that the goals of the programme should not just be getting people into any job available. The programme should look long term to help people into the kind of work which will allow for job progression and reduce in-work poverty.	Areas that can offer employment training will continue to be considered in the development of new services after April 2017. We remain ambitious in our aspirations for supporting people into employment and will continue to work with the UK Government to obtain a fair financial deal for Scotland which will allow us to realise those ambitions.
69. The Committee recommends that jobseekers should be classified for support on the basis of a comprehensive needs assessment as opposed to payment groups. Any design of this needs assessment should include clients as well as local subject experts to make sure that jobseekers buy into the process and perceive it as effective.	We agree that new employment support should help those groups who have been previously “let down” by UK Government programmes. However, given the significant reduction in funding for programmes announced at the Spending Review, our ability to fulfil this ambition is now restricted . It is our intention to ensure that the procurement strategy for the replacement programmes is structured to deliver commercial outcomes which will maximise the funding available and deliver wider economic benefit.
70. The Committee believes that any needs assessment should include a skills assessment and an attitudinal assessment to assess how willing a person is to find work. The assessment should also identify any barriers, such as access to transport, medical conditions and living circumstances. This will allow a more proportionate approach to be taken, and resources allocated accordingly.	We are considering how effective assessment to identify the needs of individuals in relation to employability skills and training will be built into the new service.
71. The Committee believes that a person centred approach is critical to success. It encourages the Scottish Government to focus on matching individuals to jobs effectively.	
72. The Committee believes that for a Scottish employment support programme to be successful it must integrate with the	Following an extensive and successful period of consultation, demand for a person-centred approach was a strong theme.

wide range of existing supports available.	Sustainable employment is best achieved where the needs of clients and employers are aligned. As we enter the design phase of new employment services, we agree that this should be a focus.
73. The Committee has concerns about the profitability element of the 'Welfare to Work' programme.	<p>There are clear lessons to be learned from the contracting of previous welfare to work programmes, most recently, the Work Programme and Work Choice. Should Ministers decide to contract for new services, we agree it will be essential to take account of the problems in previous contracts, including high levels of administrative costs identified by evaluators of Work Choice and the unintended consequence of the Work Programme model which saw many of those furthest from the labour market unsupported.</p> <p>In contracting for new services ministers will look to learn lessons from the existing delivery model. The procurement strategy will aim to maximise opportunities for Third Sector, Small and Medium Enterprises, consortia and public sector provision by ensuring that contract packages are structured to reflect existing provision and support local delivery.</p>
74. It would encourage the Scottish Government to consider a range of delivery models, beyond those currently contracted, when considering its future employment support programme.	We agree and continue to explore all options for better integration and alignment of existing provision with new employment services.
75. Committee recommends that when the Scottish Government takes control over the Work Programme and Work Choice it considers it in context of all the other employment supports which are currently available.	We agree and continue to explore all options for better integration and alignment of existing provision with new employment services to reduce duplication and costs nationally.
76. We would encourage the Scottish Government to investigate	We believe that it is important to set a minimum service standard

ways in which supports can be streamlined and brought together to save money, focus support and reduce duplication. We would also encourage reconsideration of the 'black box' approach to service delivery.	for new services. The new contracts will require contractors to meet minimum service levels and ensure that a consistently high quality of service delivery is provided. Service levels will be directly linked to key performance indicators which contractors will be encouraged to exceed and that providers must be encouraged to be creative and innovative in their approach to helping customers enter employment.
77. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government balance the benefits of a local delivery with a national set of standards and principles. It also encourages the Scottish Government to consider local delivery at a wider level than Local Authority boundaries in order to capitalise on economies of scale and take into account various travel to work areas.	We agree and want to work with Local Authorities and service providers on such a model with contracts specifying a high quality of service based on existing best practise approaches. The procurement strategy will aim to provide opportunities for local delivery via Small and Medium Enterprises, Third Sector, Consortia and public sector bodies. Quality of service delivery and outputs will be a key criterion when considering the award of replacement contracts.
78. The Committee believes that the Work Capability Assessment, which determines whether people should be placed in the Work Related Activity Group, is not fit for purpose. Many people who were previously considered unfit for work are now being re-categorised and forced into unrealistic job preparation activities. It calls on the UK Government to review this system in order to accurately identify the appropriate support programme for clients.	We agree and would support the Committee in making representations to DWP on this issue.
79. The Committee believes that the work programme is not working well enough for disabled people. It believes that specialist programmes are essential to help disabled people fully contribute in a way that works for them.	We agree that the Work Programme does not meet the needs of customers who have a disability. We continue to consider a delivery model that will help those furthest away from the labour market who struggle most to enter work. Integration with health services is essential. The procurement strategy will aim to promote the opportunities for supported businesses through

	sub-contracts/consortia bids. We would support the Committee in raising this issue with the UK Government, especially in light of recent changes to employability programmes.
80. The Committee believes that the expectation of full time work is not realistic for some disabled people. However, these people should be encouraged to participate in whatever way possible whether that is part time, volunteering or other options.	We accept this recommendation and recognise the significant contribution activities such as volunteering can make to people.
81. The Committee acknowledges that conditionality is an important part of any social security system. However, it believes that it should only be used proportionately and as a last resort. For example, with clients with a history of poor engagement due to motivational or attitudinal issues.	We agree with the Committee and continue to work with the UK Government to understand how the sanctions and conditionality regime will apply to both DWP and Scottish Provision in the future. We continue to have significant concerns about the way that DWP is applying sanctions to people on benefits. Our own research has found that claimants who face sanctions are often unable to comply with conditions for a range of complex reasons. However, while we proposed amendments to the Scotland Bill to give us powers over conditionality and sanctions, responsibility for this aspect of the benefits system will remain with the UK Government.
82. The Committee believes that the majority of people want to work. We believe that there is a disconnect between the policy and application of sanctions and that a culture change around the use of sanctions is essential. If sanctions can be used in Scotland only as a genuine last resort, this could make a huge difference in benefit claimants' lives. Clients who are on the Work Programme on a voluntary basis should not be subject to sanction.	We will do all we can, working with welfare rights officers and others, to reduce the number of people who are sanctioned and help them when they are. This includes continuing to make explicit in our Scottish Welfare Fund Guidance that people on benefits who are sanctioned can apply for a Crisis Grant. We are exploring how we can use the UK Government's new Yellow Card System to minimise the imposition of sanctions across all benefits.
83. The Committee would encourage the Scottish Government to consider what preventative work could be done to avoid sanctions. In particular, that the Scottish Government consider the issue of information sharing and whether claimants, rather than the providers should 'own' their personal information so that it could be shared promptly with providers in order to design the right package of support from the start.	We are also keen to develop a data sharing agreement with the UK Government, Providers and clients and to look at how this can be used to mitigate against incorrect sanctions being

<p>84. The Committee believes that, if a sanction is unavoidable, the providers should actively meet the client to explore how the jobseeker might improve their compliance and identify any additional support needed.</p>	<p>applied.</p>
<p>85. Although Access to Work is not being devolved to Scotland the Committee feels strongly that the DWP and the UK Government should be doing more to promote this essential programme. A small amount of money can have a big impact and allow a disabled person to find empowerment, fulfilment and contribute towards society through employment.</p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation and continue to push for this service to be devolved to Scotland to align with the Scottish Government service to help disadvantaged people into work. We would ask the Committee to highlight their concerns to the UK Government.</p>
<p>86. The Committee acknowledges the on-going passage of the draft Burials and Cremations (Scotland) Bill 2015, which is dealing with issues outside the Committee's remit, such as increased funeral costs. It would encourage the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and funeral providers to discuss how to better support those eligible for the funeral payment.</p>	<p>We have worked closely with funeral directors in developing the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Bill, and are engaging with stakeholders on the development of the successor benefit to the DWP Funeral Payment. This will include setting up a bespoke stakeholder reference group to advise on the development of the processes for the benefit, including support for applicants.</p> <p>In particular, recognising that one of the stresses caused in the process is delays in hearing about an award decision, we will aim to process applications within ten working days of receipt of a completed application and make payments as soon as practical thereafter. We believe that this will create more clarity for funeral directors, allowing them to give appropriate advice and potentially reducing the need to take a deposit from those who make a successful application.</p> <p>In October 2016, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights commissioned the chair of the Scottish Working Group on Funeral Poverty, John Birrell,</p>

	<p>working with Citizens Advice Scotland, to come up with a series of recommendations to address funeral poverty. This report along with our response was published on 3 February 2016 and can be found at at http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/fairerscotland/future-powers/Publications.</p> <p>We have committed to leading a process to bring together the relevant interests which can have an impact on funeral poverty in a series of round table discussions, led by the Cabinet Secretary for Social justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights as well as a national conference. This will allow for a broad discussion across the wide range of interest and aspects of funeral costs, with a focus on action to achieve the greatest impact.</p>
87. The Committee recommends that the access and qualifying criteria for the Funeral Payments need to be made simpler and clearer with a narrower definition of next of kin. It recommends that the Scottish Government consider the usefulness of the 'nearest relative test' as used under the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006.	We have noted the Committee's recommendation and will look at ways to recognise the uniqueness of family structure in the eligibility criteria for the new Funeral Payment.
88. The Committee is concerned to hear about the postcode lottery concerning burial and cremation charges across Scotland. It would encourage the Scottish Government to look at standardisation of charges across all Local Authorities. It would also encourage a standardisation in awards to avoid any uncertainty regarding what will and won't be included in the Funeral Payment.	<p>We have heard the concerns about the postcode lottery and will be looking to the funeral industry, local authorities and stakeholders from other organisations with an interest to come together through the round table discussions and national conference, to reduce funeral costs where possible.</p> <p>The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Bill is not the best way to implement changes to funeral director charges. The main purpose of the Bill is to improve and modernise the legal</p>

	<p>framework for burial and cremation. There are, however, some steps that will be taken in the Bill to help make the costs of a funeral easier to understand. The Scottish Government intends to bring forward an amendment when the Bill reaches stage 2 to require local authorities to publish all costs that relate to burials and cremations. Many of the legislative options to control charges directly, particular funeral directors' charges, are reserved, but the Bill may have positive effects on these costs through the introduction of statutory inspection and the possible introduction of a licensing regime. Accessibility and reducing uncertainty will also be considered in development of the successor benefit to the DWP Funeral Payment.</p>
<p>89. In the medium to long term the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government explore what options are available to people to help plan more effectively for funerals through better, more affordable insurance, and savings through organisations such as credit unions.</p>	<p>Concern over the difficulty that low income families have in planning ahead for funerals is one of the reasons why the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security, Communities and Pensioners' Rights commissioned the report and recommendations on Funeral Poverty. In response to the recommendations in the report, the Scottish Government will explore the viability and affordability of a Scottish Funeral Bond or similar provisions to help people prepare for the cost of a funeral.</p> <p>We recognise the valuable role that credit unions play as responsible financial services providers, which promote long term savings. We will consider this recommendation alongside the work resulting from the Credit Union Working Group report which is due to be published in February 2016. In response to concerns about Over 50's insurance and the regulation of funeral plans, we plan to raise these issues with the Financial Conduct Authority.</p>

	We will also work with stakeholders to ensure that there is coherent and up to date public information available through stakeholder communication and leaflets and on line via NHS inform, mygov.scot and Scotland's Financial Health Service website.
90. The Committee recommends that the first child rule be relaxed and that the time frame for applying for the grant be reconsidered.	We have noted the Committee's recommendation and will take it in to account as we consider options for the successor benefit.
91. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government consider what links and signposting arrangements can be made to the Community Care Grant aspect of the Scottish Welfare Fund.	We have noted the Committee's recommendation to consider links and signposting to the Scottish Welfare Fund and are currently doing so.
92. The Committee recommends that information and advice about the grant is made more available to low income families at an early stage. It would particularly encourage the health service and health visitors to signpost to Sure Start Maternity Grants when offering 'Healthy Start' vouchers.	We have noted the Committee's recommendation to make information to low income families wider available and will take it in to account as we consider options for the successor benefit.
93. The Committee acknowledges stakeholder views that the current systems for Winter Fuel and Cold Weather Payments are generally effective and well received by claimants.	We welcome the Committee's report and recommendations. We have been completely clear that there are no plans to means-test Winter Fuel Payments but that does not mean that we cannot consider ways to expand eligibility.
94. The Committee recommends that The Scottish Government should consider whether it can extend the eligibility for the payments to include carers below pension age and PIP / DLA claimants.	We are keen to consider the different ways that any devolved benefits can be used to help those that need them most within the financial resources available to us which will be agreed through the Fiscal Framework and have consulted/are consulting on this.
95. The Committee welcomes the legal powers regarding top-	We agree with the Committee's concerns but remain committed

ups and new benefits contained in the Scotland Bill. However, it notes with concern that there may be a number of administrative, economic and logistical barriers that could restrict the flexibility of these powers being used in practice.	to using all new powers which come our way to the benefit of the people of Scotland.
96. The Committee notes the importance of the Fiscal Framework in determining the scale of these funding and administrative issues, particularly around the 'no detriment' principle. It looks forward to the publication of the document.	Negotiations around the Fiscal Framework are continuing. Both Governments aim to complete these as soon as possible to give the respective Parliaments time for due consideration of the Fiscal Framework and the Scotland Bill. This work has a significant impact on Scotland's future spending power, and it is right both sides engage in thorough and detailed discussions to support a long lasting agreement. The Deputy First Minister has stated publicly that he will refuse to recommend the Scottish Parliament consent to the Scotland Bill without a Fiscal Framework agreement that allows us to use the new powers effectively to support the people of Scotland.
97. The Committee feels that top-up powers, if they are able to be used effectively, could be a useful tool to overcome short term problems which may save claimants from difficulties and work preventatively to save future public expenditure.	We welcome the flexibilities now contained in the Scotland Bill to top up benefits. Whilst the ability to top up is welcome, clear thought would need to be given to the rationale as well as the administrative functions needed in order to make this possible. The Scottish Welfare Fund is already in place to help with crisis situations.
98. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government work with its stakeholders and those who responded to our call for evidence to consider all suggestions for positive ways in which it can effectively use its powers for new benefits and top-ups.	We will continue to work closely with all stakeholders, who have an interest in the effective use of these new powers.
99. The Committee notes the various arguments made regarding universalism and means-testing. Decisions on the	Negotiations around the Fiscal Framework are on-going. Both Governments aim to complete these as soon as possible to give

<p>approach to be taken will be dependent on the financial constraints of the Fiscal Framework which, at the time of writing, is yet to be published.</p>	<p>the respective Parliaments time for due consideration of the Fiscal Framework and the Scotland Bill. This work has a significant impact on Scotland's future spending power, and it is right both sides engage in thorough and detailed discussions to support a long lasting agreement. The Deputy First Minister has stated publicly that he will refuse to recommend Scottish Parliament consent to the Scotland Bill without a Fiscal Framework agreement that allows the Scottish Government to use the new powers effectively to support the people of Scotland.</p>
<p>100. The Committee believes that a coherent approach to benefit delivery between reserved and devolved elements is essential. It believes that this cannot be achieved without very good inter- governmental relations between the UK and Scottish Governments and complete transparency, including a commitment to the open sharing of data.</p>	<p>As referenced earlier, we agree on the need for good working relationships between the two administrations and for both governments to commit to this. At Ministerial level the Joint Ministerial Working Group was set up to act as the vehicle for the devolution of benefits between the two governments. The Ministerial Group is supported by the Joint Senior Officials Group, comprising senior officials from the Scottish and UK Governments. The Group is tasked with approving, owning and reviewing a programme of joint key milestones and activities, encompassing the initiation, transition and future joint-working phases and including a joint approach to stakeholder communication and inter-governmental sharing of data.</p>
<p>101. It recommends that the Scottish Government undertake a thorough comparative scoping exercise in order to determine the most cost-effective, efficient and timely method of delivery. It may be necessary for the Scottish Government to consider short-term and longer-term options for delivery as well as how delivery would be coordinated between the UK and Scotland. Maintaining access to benefits for claimants during transition is one of the most</p>	<p>We are undertaking a robust, evidence-based appraisal of a range of the options for delivery of the devolved benefits, which draws on the HMT 'Green Book' approach and includes gathering information from subject matter experts and representatives.</p> <p>We will also undertake an additional appraisal exercise which will look at options for the practical means by which a delivery</p>

important considerations.	platform operating nationally can be aligned with existing services in order to maximise consistency and efficiency and minimise confusion, duplication and uncertainty.
102. While the Committee is aware that the Scottish Government will make a decision on delivery based on the needs of each particular benefit we would encourage the Scottish Government to consider the benefits of a national framework within which to operate locally. This provides the consistency of approach to avoid a postcode lottery as well as taking advantage of the benefits of local knowledge and expertise.	
103. The Committee believes that if powers and funding are to be devolved to the local level then it needs to be at a scale where the administration of that fund does not cost a disproportionate amount compared to the value of the fund itself.	
104. The Committee recognises that the process of simplifying the benefits system may well be an extremely complex thing to achieve. However, it recommends that the Scottish Government works towards this goal and considers the benefits of a single assessment or increased passporting for claimants.	We are committed to working with stakeholders and current users to fully integrate real-life knowledge, experience and understanding, with the detailed process by which we will design, develop and implement our devolved social security system. Where there is evidence in relation to single assessments or increased passporting, we will look at this as part of our process.
105. The Committee encourages the Scottish Government consideration of a 'one-stop shop' style approach to service delivery that would simplify the process for service users and reduce bureaucracy.	We expect that the delivery of devolved benefits will align with local services and support a seamless customer experience – from advice, to application, to payment.
106. The Committee recommends that all communications are made clear, accessible and written in plain English. Claimants should have options in terms of the method of communication	We are committed to working with stakeholders and current users to fully integrate real-life knowledge, experience and understanding, with the detailed process by which we will

that they would find most useful	design, develop and implement our devolved social security system.
107. The Committee encourages the Scottish Government to consider how it can simplify the information which is required for applications and join up applications for various benefits that could be passported where possible.	Where there is evidence in relation to single assessments or increased passporting, we will look at this as part of our process.
108. The Committee believes that the Scottish Government needs to make the links between the newly devolved benefits and existing services and supports. Achieving the best value for money and working preventatively to address issues which may be barriers to people progressing is essential, particularly at a time of reduced budgets and increased demand.	Effective alignment with existing services and support is reflected in our principles which will look to drive some significant cultural shifts from the way benefits are currently delivered.
109. If a person is deemed ineligible for benefits this can be a financial cliff-edge for some people. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government consider the ways in which it can help and signpost those who are ineligible for social security benefits but still require a level of support. The Committee would encourage these kinds of referrals as a minimum service standard and could include local community based supports.	We are committed to working with stakeholders and current users to fully integrate real-life knowledge, experience and understanding, with the detailed process by which we will design, develop and implement our devolved social security system.
110. While recognising the excellent and essential work that the advice and advocacy sector provides for Scotland, the Committee is troubled that the current social security system is so complex that the average person cannot navigate it without significant support.	<p>We agree with this. It has been clear in our consultations also and so we have stated already our aim is to reduce the bureaucracy involved in claiming benefits and ensure that, at all stages, people are provided with the relevant information on how the system will work for them.</p> <p>As the majority of benefits will remain reserved to the UK Government we recommend that you note this concern to them.</p>
111. The Committee acknowledges the severe and growing	Responsibility for the provision of advice and advocacy services

pressure under which the advice and advocacy sector is currently operating. In the short term it recommends that the Scottish Government continue to fund this essential service. It also recommends that the Scottish Government consider an approach which trains and builds up a bank of local volunteers who will be able to offer peer support through the process.	lies with Local Authorities as they are best placed to tailor services to local needs. We will continue to support specific projects, for example through the Scottish Welfare Fund and Scottish Legal Aid Board.
112. With the recognition that there will always be some in society that need additional support , the Committee recommends that in the medium to long term the Scottish Government address the complexity of social security procedures within its control, so that the majority of people can be empowered to steer themselves through a benefit claim.	We agree with this. We have stated already our aim is to reduce the bureaucracy involved in claiming benefits and ensure that, at all stages, people are provided with the relevant information on how the system will work for them
113. The Committee believes that thorough scrutiny of the detail of the Fiscal Framework is essential before drawing conclusions on the issue of funding and resourcing. The Committee notes the importance of the method of indexation	Negotiations around the Fiscal Framework are on-going. Both Governments aim to complete these as soon as possible to give the respective Parliaments time for due consideration of the Fiscal Framework and the Scotland Bill. This work has a significant impact on Scotland's future spending power, and it is right both sides engage in thorough and detailed discussions to support a long lasting agreement. The Deputy First Minister has stated publicly that he will refuse to recommend the Scottish Parliament consent to the Scotland Bill without a Fiscal Framework agreement that allows the Scottish Government to use the new powers effectively to support the people of Scotland.