



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE

AGENDA

11th Meeting, 2013 (Session 4)

Tuesday 11 June 2013

The Committee will meet at 10.00 am in Committee Room 3.

1. **Decision on taking business in private:** The Committee will decide whether to take item 4 in private.
2. **Fact-finding visits:** Members will report back to the Committee on recent fact-finding visits to local authorities.
3. **Work Capability Assessments:** The Committee will consider whether to take further action.
4. **Draft Budget Scrutiny 2014-15:** The Committee will consider its approach to the scrutiny of the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2014-15.

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The papers for this meeting are as follows—

Agenda Item 2

Note by the Clerk

WR/S4/13/11/1

Agenda Item 3

Note by the Clerk

WR/S4/13/11/2

Agenda Item 4

PRIVATE PAPER

WR/S4/13/11/3 (P)

Welfare Reform Committee

11th Meeting 2013 (Session 4), Tuesday, 11 June 2013

Fact-finding visits to local authorities

1. The Committee agreed at its meeting on 26 March to conduct a series of fact-finding visits to Department of Work and Pensions and Scottish Government welfare reform 'pilots' in local authorities.

2. These pilot areas are experimenting principally with support services, in advance of the introduction of welfare reform changes from October 2013. The Committee agreed to visit all 6 pilots together with West Lothian Council which has developed a reputation for being well-prepared, and a group in the Borders (New Horizons) which is concerned about the impact of welfare reform and whom Members first encountered through the first Parliament Day.

3. It is expected that the Committee will have conducted the following fact-finding visits to local authorities by the time of the Committee meeting:

- Aberdeenshire
- Dundee City
- North Lanarkshire
- South Lanarkshire
- West Dunbartonshire
- West Lothian

4. It is also expected that the Committee will be visiting Dumfries and Galloway Council and New Horizons Borders in the near future.

5. The item on today's agenda gives Members the opportunity to report back to the Committee their findings from the fact-finding visits. A short note of each meeting will then be produced and published on the Scottish Parliament website.

Simon Watkins
Clerk to the Committee
June 2013

Welfare Reform Committee

11th Meeting 2013 (Session 4), Tuesday, 11 June 2013

Work Capability Assessments: Further Action

1. Members will recall that the Convener submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to get the geographical breakdown of Work Capability Assessment figures for Scotland.
2. The response from the DWP is attached. It was included in the public papers for the meeting with DWP officials on 14 May, but no action has been taken on it to date.
3. The table shows some interesting patterns.
4. Firstly, some ATOS assessment centres appear to clear many fewer 'applications' without the need for a Work Capability Assessment interview than others. In this respect Glasgow stands out. Only 41.8% of applications are cleared compared to the average of 52.6% throughout Scotland and the highest figure of 58% in the 'Others' area (predominantly the Highlands and Islands). The only other centre that comes close is Ayr, with only 45.7% cleared.
5. **Recommendation: The Committee could write to the DWP to request an explanation of the variation in percentage of cases cleared without the need for a Work Capability Assessment.**
6. The second issue is the performance of GPs in returning Further Medical Evidence (FME) within the deadline of 14 days, which the Committee has been told in evidence, is a contractual requirement for GPs.
7. There is a wildly varying level of performance between GPs in different areas. Perth stands alone in only achieving a 30.4% return within the deadline. The 'Others' area (predominantly Highlands and Islands) only achieved 53.4%, Dundee 56.0% and Glasgow 57.2% compared to the highest returns of 77.4% in Greenock and the overall average of 58.9%.
8. Whilst there will be very variable pressures on GPs in different areas - with those in poorer areas bearing the brunt of requests - and the % of FMEs received before the Assessment does not show such stark variations, nevertheless there are big variations.
9. When they appeared before Committee on 22 January, officials from the Scottish Government's Department of Health and Community Care indicated that if issues with GP returns were found in particular areas, they would be happy to pursue via the Health Boards.
10. The statistics that the Committee has acquired appear to indicate that there is an issue with FME returns, both across Scotland generally and in specific areas.

11. According to this analysis the worst performing Health Board is Tayside, in which both the Perth and Dundee assessment centres lie.

12. Recommendation: The Committee could write to the Department of Health and Community Care, outlining the data that it has received and asking it to pursue the issue of FME non-returns generally, and specifically with those Health Boards where GPs are poor performers, and inviting it to report back to the Committee.

**Simon Watkins
Clerk to the Committee
June 2013**

DWP Work Capability Assessments requests sent to GPs for Further Medical Evidence

	01 Mar 12 - 31 May 12				01 Jun 12 - 31 Aug 12				01 Sep 12 - 30 Nov 12				01 Dec 12 - 28 Feb 13				Aggregated Totals			
	Requested	% Returned within 14 days	% Returned after 14 days but before	% Cleared WCA not required	Requested	% Returned within 14 days	% Returned after 14 days but before	% Cleared WCA not required	Requested	% Returned within 14 days	% Returned after 14 days but before	% Cleared WCA not required	Requested	% Returned within 14 days	% Returned after 14 days but before	% Cleared WCA not required	Requested	% Returned within 14 days	% Returned after 14 days but before	% Cleared WCA not required
ABERDEEN	1091	58.9%	26.4%	49.9%	804	63.1%	24.9%	59.6%	908	62.1%	23.2%	62.1%	951	52.1%	29.2%	57.2%	3754	58.8%	26.0%	56.8%
AYR	1418	62.3%	17.6%	42.6%	1299	68.1%	15.9%	45.3%	1553	67.7%	14.7%	47.4%	1367	66.2%	17.4%	47.4%	5637	66.0%	16.4%	45.7%
DUMFRIES	341	55.4%	22.9%	46.6%	278	61.2%	20.1%	50.4%	342	61.4%	16.1%	53.8%	297	60.9%	18.5%	53.5%	1258	59.6%	19.4%	51.0%
DUNDEE	1369	58.9%	25.9%	45.4%	1169	56.3%	25.8%	53.9%	1180	58.7%	24.2%	56.1%	1435	50.8%	28.4%	52.6%	5153	56.0%	26.2%	51.8%
EDINBURGH	2689	59.7%	22.3%	44.5%	2016	65.2%	18.8%	52.9%	2277	62.4%	20.5%	55.8%	2583	54.8%	26.0%	52.4%	9565	60.2%	22.1%	51.1%
GLASGOW	8566	53.7%	20.1%	37.7%	7534	58.5%	19.2%	41.6%	8307	58.5%	16.4%	43.1%	8004	58.2%	17.2%	44.9%	32411	57.2%	18.2%	41.8%
GREENOCK	121	73.6%	15.7%	50.4%	106	77.4%	12.3%	61.3%	121	78.5%	11.6%	61.2%	107	80.4%	12.1%	55.1%	455	77.4%	13.0%	56.9%
INVERNESS	628	62.4%	20.7%	49.7%	491	60.5%	22.0%	58.9%	484	60.1%	23.6%	59.7%	580	46.6%	29.1%	56.6%	2183	57.3%	23.9%	55.8%
KIRKCALDY	1077	69.5%	21.8%	43.5%	883	70.3%	21.1%	52.1%	943	66.7%	20.7%	61.7%	999	62.0%	22.7%	55.1%	3902	67.1%	21.6%	52.8%
PERTH	25	24.0%	44.0%	56.0%	8	50.0%	25.0%	37.5%	14	35.7%	35.7%	50.0%	9	22.2%	66.7%	77.8%	56	30.4%	42.9%	55.4%
STIRLING	1009	64.1%	21.7%	44.7%	875	67.0%	20.0%	55.0%	869	63.2%	20.6%	57.7%	926	60.2%	23.0%	58.9%	3679	63.6%	21.4%	53.8%
Amalgam stats for 17 MECs	926	50.8%	27.6%	55.4%	651	57.3%	23.8%	58.2%	702	55.6%	21.5%	60.1%	691	51.1%	22.7%	59.2%	2970	53.4%	24.2%	58.0%
Grand Total	19260	57.8%	23.9%	47.2%	16114	62.9%	20.8%	52.2%	17700	60.9%	20.7%	55.7%	17949	55.4%	26.1%	55.9%	71023	58.9%	22.9%	52.6%