

JOINT MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON WELFARE
Atlantic Quay, Glasgow, Thursday 16 June 2016, 09:00-10:30
5th Meeting – Meeting Minutes

Present

David Mundell MP, Secretary of State for Scotland (Co-chair)
Angela Constance MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Co-chair)
Keith Brown MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work
Stephen Crabb MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

In attendance

Ann McVie, Scottish Government
Martin McDermott, Scottish Government
Katherine Peskett, Scottish Government
Stuart Mclean, Scottish Government
Richard Cornish, DWP
Alison Evans, DWP
Michael Allison, DWP
James Dowler, Scotland Office
Jessica Niven, Scotland Office
Julie Humphreys, Scotland Office
Keelan Carr, Scotland Office

Note of last meeting and review of actions

1. The note of the last meeting of 12 October 2015 was agreed. There were no outstanding actions. The Secretary of State for Scotland (SoSS) welcomed members. SoSS also said that the group has a significant role in taking forward the transfer of welfare powers procedure.
2. The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Cab Sec CSSE) introduced her role and emphasised the importance of the newly established Minister for Social Security role which was important given the scale of challenge and complexity of the social security provisions.
3. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Cab Sec EJFW) commented that he is keen on a smooth transition of powers. It was agreed that the service provided to benefit recipients will be the primary focus for both Governments.

Terms of Reference of the Joint Ministerial Working Group on Welfare

4. The revised Terms of Reference were tabled given the responsibility for implementation of powers to be with this group. The SoSS and the DFM had previously given an undertaking to the Scottish Parliament's then Devolution (Further Powers) Committee to publish the Terms of Reference of the group.

SoS DWP confirmed that he is keen to interact with Scottish Parliament in relation to these issues.

5. It was agreed that any Minister who had an interest in the agenda would be able to attend.

6. The Terms of Reference were agreed and the importance of joint working was emphasised. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference would be shared with the Scottish Parliament's Social Security Committee and the Scottish Affairs Committee.

Action: **SO**

7. It was agreed that future dates for meetings should be agreed in line with need.

Action: **SO/SG**

Scotland Act 2016 Commencement – Tranche 1

8. SoS DWP reiterated his commitment to both Governments working together and noted the excellent engagement at official level to date. Both needed to be mindful of the potential human impact of changes to service delivery.

9. SoS DWP spoke about arrangements for commencing some of the the Welfare Benefit and Employment sections in part 3 of the Scotland Act. It was agreed that 11 of the 13 sections, including Universal Credit and Employment Support, should be commenced in an initial tranche. Once provisions had been commenced, both Governments would need to work together on timescales for delivery.

10. The SoSS noted that he planned to take the Commencement Order forward next month, along with a companion Written Ministerial Statement.

Action: **SO**

11. It was agreed that it was important to have a common understanding of practicalities and timetabling of commencement.

12. Cab Sec CSSE noted that she was content with the detail and powers proposed for Tranche 1. Cab Sec CSSE was keen that we take forward work on Tranche 2 in a timely manner.

Any Other Business

13. It was agreed that a joint communique would be agreed between members and issued following the meeting.

Action: **SO**

14. Cab Sec EJFW gave a summary of the portfolio of Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for the Economy and Jamie Hepburn, Minister for Employment who will work to Cab Sec EJFW and DFM.

15. The group agreed to task officials to start a detailed discussion on Tranche 2. Cab Sec EJFW commented that pace needs to be kept behind this work, particularly in relation to Memorandum of Understanding on the use of IT systems.

Action: **DWP/SO**

16. It was agreed that a paper on the practicalities of delivering the flexibilities provided for in the Scotland Act 2016 in relation to Universal Credit would be submitted to SoS DWP and Cab Sec CSSE. It was also agreed that Universal Credit would be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Action: **DWP/SO**

17. It was agreed that the Scottish Government and DWP, working with Scotland Office as necessary, would produce a joint paper on employability plans, for discussion at the next meeting.

Action: **SG/DWP**