

Shetland Partnership: Tackling Inequalities Together

10 March 2017

The purpose of this event was to hear about new evidence and policy at a national, regional and local level, to **reduce inequalities in Shetland**. Through the Community Empowerment Act, tackling inequalities is now central to the work of Community Planning Partnerships and is very much about what we can all do, in the public, private and third sector, and personally, to reduce inequalities within our communities.

Representatives from across the Shetland Partnership were in attendance.

The event was chaired by **Chair, Councillor Gary Robinson, Leader of Shetland Islands Council and Chair of Shetland Partnership Board**.

Scotland's Fairer Scotland Action Plan and Social Security Consultation – Ms Jeane Freeman, MSP, Minister for Social Security

The Minister highlighted two actions from the Fairer Scotland Action Plan:

- Digital connectivity is vital, highlighting the concept of 'Outside In' – addressing needs in more remote areas first; and
- Free bus passes for all Modern Apprenticeships from April 2018.

She also spoke about opportunities provided by the devolution of 11 Social Security benefits. This is 15% of current welfare spend in Scotland, and is accessed by 1.4mn people. In particular she highlighted:

- Experience Panels, which are being used to involve current claimants in designing the new system; and
- Cold Weather Payment, with the opportunity to redesign in order to take into account climatic conditions in the North of Scotland, and therefore the potential for a redesigned Payment to impact on reducing Fuel Poverty.

She said that she recognised that issues may be similar across the country, but the solutions are not always the same; and to provide the right solutions requires partnership working at all levels. Her visit to Shetland led to her wishing to better understand the additional cost of living here and in other parts of Scotland, and a commitment to Islands Proof plans for Scotland's new Social Security agency.

Relevant Documents

[Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland - Our Approach - 2014 - 2017](#)

[Fairer Scotland Action Plan](#)

[Child Poverty Bill consultation](#)

[Consultation on Social Security in Scotland](#)

[Experience Panels](#)

Minimum Income Standard (MIS) for Remote Rural Scotland – Alastair Nicolson, Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Alastair summarised the MIS methodology and shared an update for 2016 that shows reduced additional costs of between 10-30% are due, in the main, to a reduction in fuel costs. He shared the key issues in a number of policy areas, progress made since 2013 and challenges that remain.

Relevant Documents

[Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland](#)

[Presentation by Alastair Nicolson](#)

Shetland's Commission on Tackling Inequalities: Update, a Year On

Reporting on 'Living Well in a High Cost Economy' – Steven Hope, Ipsos MORI

Shetland's Commission on Tackling Inequalities heard that in-work poverty is a growing issue, but not enough is known about the level and experiences nationally, and in Shetland, nor about how best to reduce it, including the role of employers. The Commission also wanted to understand more about the scale of Shetland's high cost of living and how to incorporate this aspect of rural disadvantage into national data

sources. Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Council commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake research – Living Well in a High Cost Economy, in order to inform the Shetland Partnership’s work on reducing inequalities. Key findings include that 6% of working households in Shetland are in poverty, and 42% of working households do not earn enough to achieve a minimum acceptable standard of living.

Relevant Documents

[Living Well in a High Cost Economy Presentation by Steven Hope](#)

Launch of ‘Make a Difference’, a project to tackle loneliness, isolation and stigma in Shetland – Susan Laidlaw, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, NHS Shetland

The Commission also heard about the impact of socio-economic inequalities on loneliness, isolation and stigma in Shetland, hearing about recent research into the physical and mental consequences of loneliness. Dr Susan Laidlaw launched the Shetland Partnership’s project aimed at tackling loneliness, isolation and stigma in Shetland.

[Shetland Partnership’s Make a Difference Project and Film](#)

Feedback

As tackling inequalities needs everyone, throughout organisations and Shetland, to think differently about what we do, and how we do it, in order to reduce inequalities, attendees were asked:

- How can Shetland help the Government
- How can the Government help Shetland
- What are your Individual Pledges: Personal and Professional.

As a flavour, the area where Shetland feels it is most able to help the Government is by sharing local research, knowledge and practice about the high cost society, and working with the Government to ensure national policy is able to mitigate against this. And where the Government can most help Shetland is with Digital Connectivity, reducing external travel costs, Island Proofing and ensuring Cold Weather Payments take account of Shetland’s climatic conditions.

Everyone felt they could do more to reduce loneliness within their local communities

If you have any questions or feedback about the event, please contact Emma Perring on emma.perring@shetland.gov.uk .



The Minister, at Shetland Islands Citizen’s Advice Bureau, and the Partnership Event in the afternoon.