

Key Messages



Health Policy Officers Network – Parliamentary Engagement Event March 2022

Attendees:

- Kimberley Somerside – VHS
- Lauren Blair – VHS
- Jennifer Forsyth – Obesity Action Scotland
- Kirsten Walker – Care Inspectorate
- Greg Thomas – See Me
- Chloe Boullier – SHAAP
- Jane Gordon – SHAAP
- Rebecca McColl – SFAD
- Tilly Robinson-Miles – Eat Well Age Well, Food Train
- Alexandra Taylor – AFS
- Lewis Clarke – HIV Scot
- Sam Harrison -HIV Scot
- Sofia – PACT
- Alongside five colleagues from SPICe

Kimberley welcomed everyone and handed over to Sofia who led the event on behalf of the Scottish Parliament's Participation & Communications Team (PACT).

Engaging with Parliament

Sofia provided a general overview of the parliament's work and the role PACT has in increasing engagement with underrepresented groups. She described the committees as the "engine room" of parliament. They undertake "formal" and "informal" engagement. She also provided some tips on how to maximise our engagement with parliamentarians:

- Meet MSPs in person when possible
- Bring "lived experience"
- Do your homework!
- Have clear, specific objectives
- Be prepared to listen
- Be realistic about outcomes
- Link-up with other groups
- Engage with parliamentary staff

Role of SPICe – Scottish Parliament information Centre

SPICe colleagues then took us through the work SPICe does in answering queries from parliamentarians and staff, drafting briefings and writing blogs. It was highlighted that evidence collected during committee calls for views get used to develop the questions asked by committee members during evidence sessions for inquiries.

They then outlined the upcoming work of the Health, Social Care & Sport and Covid-19 Recovery Committees, including future work on:

- Alcohol harms
- Social care
- The Audit Scotland NHS in Scotland 2021 report
- Science communication during COVID
- Debt and mental health
- Common frameworks (intergovernmental work on harmonising legislation)

They then took us through their research on children and young people's mental health, noting a briefing would be published soon on "older" young people's mental health.

They highlighted the development of a timely and upcoming briefing on social work in Scotland. It will cover a range of things from funding to governance and regulation. They described this as an example of a proactive briefing.

Q&A

We then turned to questions from the health policy officers:

- We heard the best time to engage with the committee (members and conveners) on their work programme was in June.
- Scotland Policy Conferences were highlighted as a valuable asset: <https://www.scotlandpolicyconferences.co.uk/conferences/scotland-policy-conferences>
- SPICe welcomes research and briefings from organisations to inform their work.
- SPICe used to host seminars before the pandemic, which they are hoping to restart soon!
- There are always briefings from SPICe on legislation and just before stage 3 debates, but not always for committee inquiries.
- Petitions were highlighted as a great way to get things done in parliament, this was described as "guaranteed air time" in comparison to lodging motions through members.
- It was highlighted that the portal system for submitting consultation responses wasn't great if your response contained graphs and references. Colleagues said the committee gladly receives responses by email in these instances. Policy officers noted they sometimes submit their responses through the portal and by email to ensure all the content is received.

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