



WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE

TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Direct Tel: 0131 348 5228
Fax: 0131 348 5184
WelfareReformCommittee@scottish.parliament.uk

12 March 2014

Dear Minister for Employment,

Invitation to appear before the Welfare Reform Committee

Thank you for your letter of 1 March 2014 declining the Committee's invitation to give formal evidence to the Committee.

The Committee is very disappointed that you have declined its invitation, especially as this follows a number of previous invitations to UK Ministers to formally provide evidence to the Committee which have all been declined. The Committee feels strongly that evidence from a UK Minister is important in its current work of scrutinising the impact in Scotland of the revised benefit sanction regime.

With regard to your stance that accountabilities as Minister for Employment are first and foremost to the UK Government and Parliament, in inviting you to attend, the Committee was, of course, aware that a number of UK Ministers have appeared formally before committees of this Parliament to provide evidence on matters where UK Government policy on reserved matters impacts on devolved responsibilities and perhaps more importantly those we as Committee Members represent.

That this has happened suggests to us that formal appearances by UK Ministers at Scottish Parliament committees can be very beneficial to the work of Scottish Parliament committees. It is disappointing that this cannot occur in relation to welfare reform matters.

The Committee is however, keen to pursue discussions with you on DWP policy on sanctions, and would therefore like to accept your offer to meet with the Committee in an informal meeting.

In addition, since formal evidence from the DWP is a vital part of our scrutiny of benefit sanctions, we would therefore also like to accept your offer to arrange one of your senior officials to attend our evidence session on 29 April.

I will ask my committee clerks to contact your department to make the necessary arrangements for the informal meeting.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael McMahon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**MICHAEL MCMAHON MSP
CONVENER**