



House of Commons
Work and Pensions Committee

Appointment of Professor Sir Ian Diamond as Chair of the Social Security Advisory Committee

Fourteenth Report of Session 2017–19

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 9 May 2018*

Work and Pensions Committee

The Work and Pensions Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Work and Pensions and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

[Rt Hon Frank Field MP](#) (*Labour, Birkenhead*) (Chair)

[Heidi Allen MP](#) (*Conservative, South Cambridgeshire*)

[Andrew Bowie MP](#) (*Conservative, West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine*)

[Jack Brereton MP](#) (*Conservative, Stoke-on-Trent South*)

[Alex Burghart MP](#) (*Conservative, Brentwood and Ongar*)

[Neil Coyle MP](#) (*Labour, Bermondsey and Old Southwark*)

[Emma Dent Coad MP](#) (*Labour, Kensington*)

[Ruth George MP](#) (*Labour, High Peak*)

[Steve McCabe MP](#) (*Labour, Birmingham, Selly Oak*)

[Nigel Mills MP](#) (*Conservative, Amber Valley*)

[Chris Stephens MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Glasgow South West*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

Committee reports are published on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Adam Mellows-Facer (Clerk), Katy Stout (Second Clerk), Libby McEnhill (Committee Specialist), Rod McInnes (Committee Specialist), Tom Tyson (Committee Specialist), Jessica Bridges-Palmer (Senior Media and Policy Officer), Esther Goosey (Senior Committee Assistant), Michelle Garratty (Committee Assistant) and Ellen Watson (Assistant Policy Analyst).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Work and Pensions Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 8976; the Committee's email address is workpencom@parliament.uk.

Contents

The appointment of Professor Sir Ian Diamond	3
The Social Security Advisory Committee	3
The suitability of Professor Sir Ian Diamond	3
Formal minutes	5
Witnesses	6
Published written evidence	6
List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament	7

The appointment of Professor Sir Ian Diamond

The Social Security Advisory Committee

1. The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) is an independent statutory body that provides advice on social security and related matters to the Department for Work and Pensions.¹ Its main responsibilities are to:

- Scrutinise proposed regulations underpinning social welfare on behalf of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. Most social security draft regulations are subject to scrutiny by SSAC, except for those that are referred to other advisory bodies² or that set benefit rates. If SSAC is content for the Department to proceed, it publishes minutes of this decision. If, however, SSAC has any concerns, it can request that the Department send it the regulations under ‘formal reference’. This means that there is a public consultation and SSAC’s report, setting out its advice and recommendations, is laid before Parliament. If the Department disagrees with any of SSAC’s recommendations, and therefore does not amend the draft regulations accordingly, it must lay its response before Parliament at the same time that it lays the regulations.
- Provide advice and assistance to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether in response to a specific request or through its own independent research programme. The Secretary of State is under no obligation to act upon findings of the Committee’s independent research.

SSAC performs a similar role for the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland. It is made up of a Chair and up to 13 other members. Its activities, as well as small secretariat, are funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, with which it shares offices.

2. On 23 October 2017, Baroness Buscombe, Minister for Work and Pensions, informed us that Paul Gray CB, the current Chair of SSAC, will step down in July 2018 after six years in the role. We are responsible for pre-appointment scrutiny of the Government’s preferred candidate for his successor, Sir Ian Diamond.

The suitability of Professor Sir Ian Diamond

3. Sir Ian’s background is in academia. In August 2017 he announced his intention to retire as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Aberdeen University, a post he has held since 2010. Before that, he spent seven years as Chief Executive of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). He moved to the ESRC from the University of Southampton, where he spent most of his career, holding various positions since 1980. He currently holds several non-executive and board posts, though he will step down from a number of these over the course of 2018 and 2019.³

1 Established by section 9 of the Social Security Act 1980, its statutory functions are now set out in section 170 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992

2 For example, regulations relating to Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit are considered by the [Industrial Injuries Advisory Council](#).

3 Sir Ian Diamond’s CV

4. The job criteria for Chair of SSAC focus on relationship-building, communication skills, leadership qualities and independence. Knowledge of social security policy is desirable.⁴ It was against these criteria that we considered Sir Ian's suitability for the role. He provided his CV and answered our written questions before giving oral evidence on 9 May 2018. We thank Sir Ian for his evidence, which is appended to our Report.

5. We questioned Sir Ian on a range of issues, focusing on his: ability to think and act independently, willingness to challenge senior political figures and Whitehall officials, relevant professional experience, social security knowledge, and competence to lead SSAC and set its strategic direction.

6. We are satisfied that Professor Sir Ian Diamond has the personal independence and professional competence to be Chair of the Social Security Advisory Committee. We wish him every success in his role and we look forward to working with him.

7. We would also like to put on the record our thanks to Paul Gray CB for his service in the role.

Formal minutes

Wednesday 9 May 2018

Members present:

Heidi Allen, in the Chair

Jack Brereton Steve McCabe

Alex Burghart Chris Stephens

Ruth George

Draft report (*Appointment of Professor Sir Ian Diamond as Chair of the Social Security Advisory Committee*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 7 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourteenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 16 May at 9:00

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 9 May 2018

Question numbers

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Government preferred candidate for Chair of the Social Services Advisory Committee

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

1 Sir Ian Diamond (PAS0001)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

First Report	Universal Credit: the six week wait	HC 336
Second Report	A framework for modern employment	HC 352
Third Report	Protecting pensions against scams: priorities for the Financial Guidance and Claims Bill	HC 404
Fourth Report	PIP and ESA assessments: claimant experiences	HC 355
Fifth Report	Universal Credit Project Assessment Reviews	HC 740
Sixth Report	British Steel Pension Scheme	HC 828
Seventh Report	PIP and ESA assessments	HC 829
Eighth Report	European Social Fund	HC 848
Ninth Report	Pension Freedoms	HC 917
Tenth Report	Assistive technology	HC 673
Eleventh Report	Universal Credit: supporting selfemployment	HC 997
First Special Report	Child Maintenance Service: Government's Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 354
Second Special Report	Self-employment and the gig economy: Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 644
Third Special Report	Disability employment gap: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17	HC 652
Fourth Special Report	Victims of modern slavery: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 672
Fifth Special Report	Employment Opportunities for Young People: Government response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2016-17	HC 827
Sixth Special Report	Protecting pensions against scams: priorities for the Financial Guidance and Claims Bill: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 858
Seventh Special Report	A framework for modern employment: Government response to the Second Report of the Work and Pensions Committee and First Report of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee	HC 966
Eighth Special Report	PIP and ESA assessments: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh	HC 986