

Minister visits Edinburgh Cyrenians to discuss new benefits system



The Minister for Social Security Jeane Freeman MSP visited homeless charity Edinburgh Cyrenians this morning to speak to some of their clients and the charity's managers about the new social security system and how it will work. [The Minister wrote a column](#) for us yesterday on the devolution of part of the social security budget to Scotland earlier this year.

The manager of advice and support services for the Edinburgh based charity, Mark Kennedy, spoke to us after the visit which he thought was quite a positive move on the part of the Scottish Government. Explaining that they work to alleviate the effects of homelessness he said : "This has really helped us to get a good idea of what the Scottish Government's priorities are for the new social security system. It's also been a really good opportunity for us to communicate the frustrations and difficulties we have with the current system and hopefully that will help to feed through into the legislation. It would be good to have a system which is more user friendly and more fit for purpose.

Interesting to talk to Mark Kennedy of [@Cyrenians1968](#) earlier about the new Scottish social security system pic.twitter.com/j0ebpTvJP4

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [August 24, 2016](#)

"I would say that most of the people we support tend to have real difficulties with the existing system. Even people who are in normal circumstances very able struggle with the system

because it is quite Byzantine and quite distant from people in the sense that it is all done over the telephone or online in language that people don't understand very well. People have difficulty with that.

"We are supporting people who are in danger of losing their homes and becoming homeless and that is often because they can't engage with that system properly because it's too difficult for them to engage with. In general the decentralisation of services that people need to use is going to be a good thing. It will be a good thing to have this services being administered closer to home and it will be a good thing having ministers, politicians and civil servants who live closer to the people who are actually using the service and understand what those specific needs are.

"I'm hopeful that it will bring many benefits yes."