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McLeod highlights progress on tackling pensioner poverty

SNP MSP for the South of Scotland Aileen McLeod has highlighted the benefits of decisions being made in Scotland have been highlighted – as new figures show that Scotland has made more progress in tackling pensioner poverty than the rest of the UK since devolution.

New figures from SPICe show that pensioner poverty in Scotland stood at 12 per cent in 2011-12 compared to 14 per cent in the UK as a whole – and has been consistently lower than in the rest of the UK since 2006-07.

The powers of devolution have allowed the Scottish Parliament to pursue a number of policies which make a contribution to tackling pensioner poverty – including free personal care, freezing the council tax and concessionary travel.

However, the limitations of the status quo mean that control over issues like welfare remain in the hands of Westminster – meaning that Tory welfare cuts and further austerity measures could put the progress of devolution in this area at risk.

Spending on pensions is more affordable in Scotland than in the rest of the UK, a view supported by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, who have also made clear that the demographic challenge is no more significant for Scotland than it is to the rest of the UK.

Aileen, who is a member of the Parliament’s Health Committee, said:

“Devolution has allowed us to make great strides in tackling the scourge of pensioner poverty – showing the importance of decisions about Scotland being taken in Scotland rather than by a distant Westminster government.

“On issues like free personal care and concessionary travel, the Scottish Parliament has taken strong and decisive action to improve the lot of pensioners –and the results speak for themselves.

“With the limited powers of devolution we have made good progress in tackling pensioner poverty but still too many older people live in poverty – and the progress we have made risks being undermined by Westminster’s austerity agenda and welfare cuts.

“With the full powers of independence we could do even more to support our pensioners – including a triple lock on the state pension to keep pace with the cost of living and a review of the pension age – making our country a fairer place for pensioners and further tackling pensioner poverty.”

Ends.

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Notes to editors:

The SPICE figures are below:

% of pensioners living in households with less than 60% of contemporary median household income

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | Scotland | UK |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1999-00 | 28 | 28 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2000-01 | 27 | 27 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2001-02 | 26 | 26 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2002-03 | 25 | 25 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2003-04 | 23 | 23 |  |  |  |  |  |
|   |   |   |
| 2004-05 | 21 | 21 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2005-06 | 18 | 18 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2006-07 | 16 | 18 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2007-08 | 16 | 18 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2008-09 | 14 | 18 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2009-10 | 13 | 16 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2010-11 | 12 | 15 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2011-12 | 12 | 14 |  |  |  |  |  |