



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Annual Report 2024-25

Date: November 2025

Office: Participation and Communities Team



Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose and Vision	3
Defining Success	3
Our Approach	4
Evaluation and Learning	4
Participation Highlights	4
Engagement Locations	6
Participation Delivery and Reach	7
25 th Anniversary Programme.....	7
Impact and Evaluation.....	11
Committee Support and Community Engagement	14
Participation Breakdown	14
Committee Engagement Delivery	14
Digital Engagement.....	16
Ensuring Inclusive Access.....	16
Deliberative Engagement.....	17
The 2024 People’s Panel on Drug Policy	17
Looking ahead	18
Evaluation Insights	18
Priorities for 2025/6	19
Annex A.....	20
Annex B.....	22

Introduction

The Participation and Communities Team (PACT) is pleased to present its Annual Report for 2024–25, covering the period from April 2024 to March 2025. This report sets out our achievements, methods and evaluation, demonstrating how we have worked with and on behalf of the people of Scotland to ensure that diverse and underrepresented voices inform committee scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament.

The 2023–24 Annual Report identified three key development priorities. During 2024–25, we have made significant progress in each area:

- Supporting the **Presiding Officer's 25th Anniversary Regional Programme** visits to communities across all eight Scottish Parliament regions
- Developing a plan for the use of **deliberative democracy** in the next parliamentary session
- Strengthening **two-way communication** with partners and stakeholders.

The work of PACT is made possible through the time, energy and commitment of our many partners. This report recognises and celebrates those partnerships and the contributions of our participants, illustrating the positive impact that diverse voices have when provided with meaningful opportunities to influence the work of the Scottish Parliament.

Purpose and Vision

Our purpose is to create safe, inclusive, and welcoming spaces where individuals and communities across Scotland feel empowered to share their views and lived experiences.

We design participation methods that reflect people's preferences and needs, and we support Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and Scottish Parliament staff in developing their engagement capabilities. Our work aims to embed meaningful public participation into scrutiny processes, ensuring that a broader range of perspectives inform parliamentary decision-making.

Defining Success

Success for PACT means that scrutiny incorporates a wider range of views and lived experiences, participants feel safe and respected in sharing their perspectives, diverse opinions are actively valued, and external partners and the public are more closely involved in the work of Parliament.

Our Approach

We deliver our work through three core participation strands:

- **Community Engagement** – Building relationships with local groups and individuals
- **Digital Engagement** – Using online tools and platforms to broaden access
- **Deliberative Engagement** – Facilitating structured dialogue and informed discussion

Our work is supported by a wide range of partners and organisations across Scotland, and we are deeply grateful for their collaboration and contributions.

Evaluation and Learning

We undertake regular evaluation of our work, gathering feedback from both internal stakeholders (MSPs and Scottish Parliament staff) and external stakeholders (community organisations and individual participants). This report provides a summary of that evaluation and highlights:

- Who has participated in our engagement activities
- The partners and organisations we've worked with
- The methods we've used to facilitate participation
- How we apply our learning to improve future engagement.

Participation Highlights

This year, PACT supported participation sessions involving **1,498 individuals**, with **315 participants** directly engaging with **11 out of 15 Scottish Parliament Committees**. While this matches the number of Committees engaged with in 2023–24, we marked a significant milestone by working with a **Scottish Parliament Cross-Committee** for the first time.

In addition, **905 people** took part in visits and events as part of the **25th Anniversary Regional Programme**, helping to bring Parliament closer to communities across Scotland.



“the Committee heard evidence that they would not otherwise have, if sessions had only involved professionals and organisations”.

Expanding Digital Reach

Through close collaboration with Committee and Communications teams, PACT supported digital engagement from **22,696 people** via our two online platforms:

- **Citizen Space**
- **Your Priorities**

These platforms continued to play a vital role in broadening access to parliamentary participation and enabling people to contribute in ways that suit their needs.

Championing Lived Experience

At the heart of our work is a commitment to ensuring that diverse and often missing voices, particularly those with lived experience, are heard and valued in the scrutiny process. We do this by working through trusted networks of voluntary and third sector organisations that help us reach and support participants.

This reporting period, we helped committees gather lived experience on a wide range of topics including assisted dying, establishing a disability commissioner, land reform, drug harm, police ethics, pre-budget scrutiny, and widening access to higher education.

Further Information

- A full list of Committees and the specific inquiries or Bills supported through participation can be found in **Annex A**
- A summary of the number of engagement sessions held by each Committee is available in **Annex B**
- Case studies throughout this report provide deeper insight into the communities and individuals who have contributed to our work

Engagement Locations

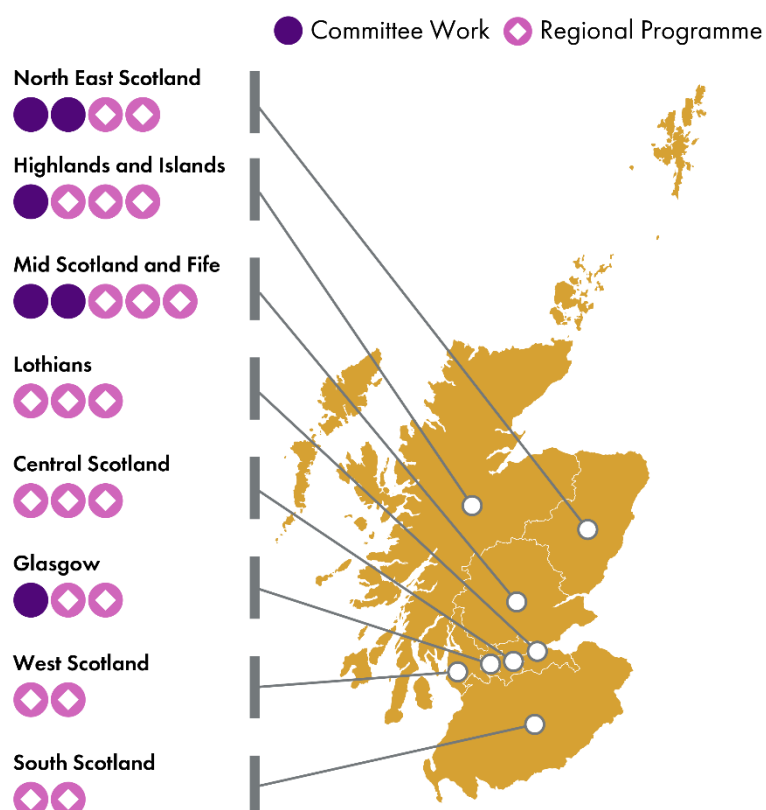
“The underpinning work with the engagement officer from Parliament was excellent. They visited young people and explained the process and how young people could influence it.”

PACT delivers a wide range of engagement activities both within the Scottish Parliament building and out in communities across the country. This year, we visited **all eight Scottish Parliament regions**, ensuring that our work reached people in every part of Scotland.

These visits took place through:

- **Committee engagement sessions**
- The **25th Anniversary Regional Programme**

By meeting people where they live, we continue to make parliamentary participation more accessible and inclusive. The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of these engagement sessions across the eight Parliamentary regions.



Participation Delivery and Reach

At PACT, our aim is to meet people in spaces where they feel comfortable contributing. We offer a range of engagement methods—both face-to-face and digital—to ensure accessibility and inclusivity across Scotland.

- **Online Engagement:** We delivered **13 online sessions**, reaching participants from across Scotland. While we do not collect detailed geographic data for online sessions, this format continues to offer broad accessibility and flexibility for participants.
- **In-Person Engagement at Parliament:** We hosted **11 in-person sessions** within the Scottish Parliament building. This included two weekend-long sessions with the **People's Panel on Tackling Drug Harm and Drug Deaths**, which are collectively counted as one engagement session (see **Case Study 1**).
- **Simultaneous Multi-Format Engagement:** For the **Disability Commissioner (Scotland) Bill**, we ran **three concurrent engagement sessions**:
 - One in-person session in **Glasgow**
 - One in-person session at the **Scottish Parliament**
 - One **online session**

This multi-format approach enabled broader participation and ensured that people could contribute in ways that suited their preferences and circumstances.



25th Anniversary Programme

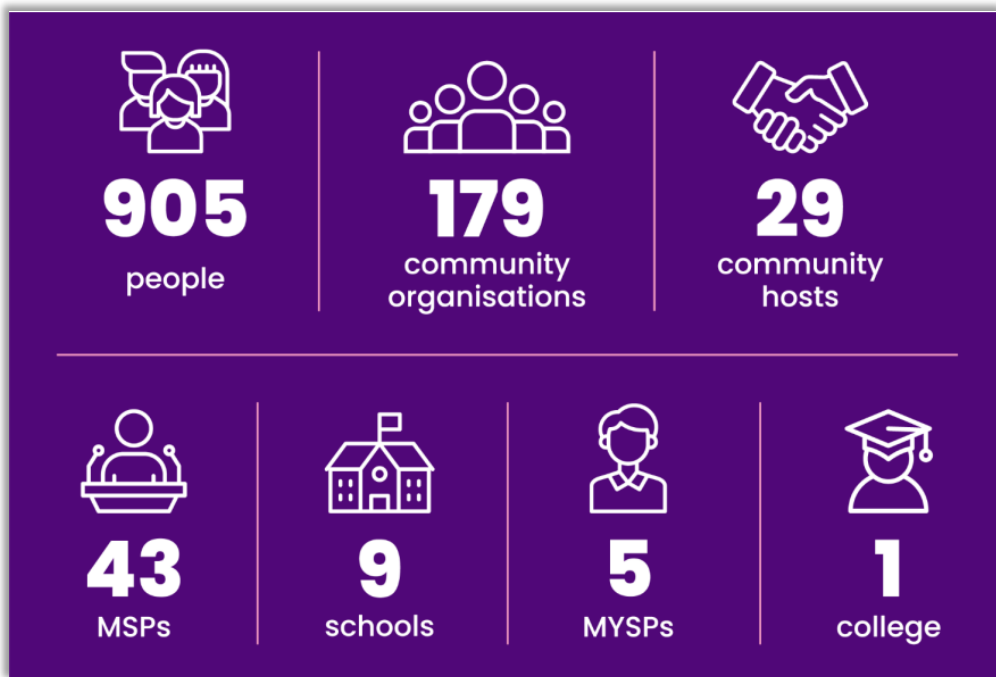
To mark the 25th Anniversary of the Scottish Parliament, the Presiding Officer led a regional programme of events across Scotland. PACT worked in collaboration with the communities we visited to address the challenge of how we involve more people in the work of their Parliament.

PACT led on the development of visits to each of the 8 parliamentary regions involving 20 different engagement events.

- Galashiels and Burnfoot, South Scotland region, 20 May 2024

- Lerwick, Highlands and Islands region, 26 August 2024
- Glasgow, Glasgow region, 30 September 2024
- Aberdeen and Peterhead, North East Scotland region, 4 November 2024
- Alloa and Sauchie, Mid Scotland and Fife region, 20 January 2025
- Dunterlie and Clydebank, West Scotland region, 24 February 2025
- Cumbernauld, Central Scotland region, 31 March 2025
- Mayfield and Easthouses, Lothian region, 28 April 2025

Who took part in the 25th Anniversary Programme:



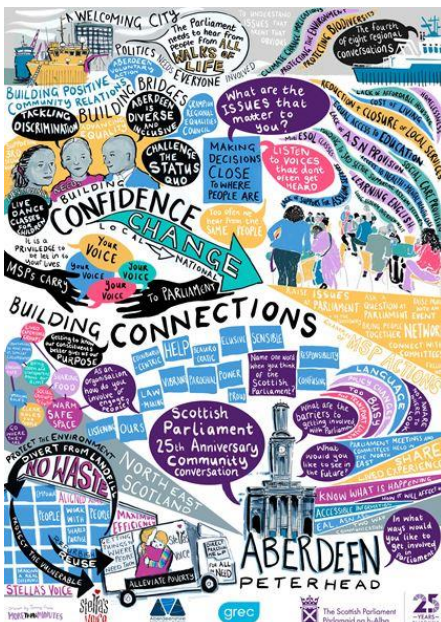
We focused on places the Parliament had rarely, if ever, visited before. Together with the communities, we designed each visit in ways that reflected their interests and creativity. The aim was not only for people to hear from the Parliament but to give them space to show and tell MSPs what they are proud of in their communities, what they have achieved together, and what challenges they face. The results were warm and welcoming, drawing in people who might never have engaged with the Parliament before, and every visit had its own character. We visited community gardens, shared coffee in local cafés, danced and drummed, cycled, and even celebrated with birthday cake. In total, we met more than 900 people from across Scotland and heard directly what they think of the Parliament and what they hope for from us.

Our approach included:

- Partnership working which valued the skills and expertise of individuals, communities and organisations, including listening to their priorities and what they needed from the Parliament.
- Meetings that were in person in the community, aiming to be friendly, informal and inclusive.
- Creating an environment where people felt that we were genuinely working and learning together.
- Producing information for the event in a style that was approachable, informal and user friendly.
- Warm up and scoping visits to support participants.
- Considering individual and group needs and tried to put measures in place to support and encourage everyone to feel able to attend.
- Ensuring that all those attending, including MSPs knew of the format and what to expect.

Feedback and visual notes from some of the Regional Programme

“Thank you so much for the wonderful opportunity to participate in the 25th Anniversary Regional Event! [We] thoroughly enjoyed the event, and it was a pleasure to be a part of it.”



“Sometimes parliaments can feel a bit closed off and “elite”. The event really showed young people that they are important as people and residents of Scotland.”

“Enthusiasm and community were the key words for me of the day. And our community know that parliament is accessible to them.”



Full details of the programme (including reports, videos and visual notes) can be found on [our website](#).

Scottish Parliament 25th Anniversary Regional Programme of Community Engagement



This is a summary of the full report which you can find at parliament.scot/communities

The learning from the programme contributed in a [Communities Approach](#) which PACT is testing over 2025 / 2026.

To mark the end of the programme we held a Communities Conference in June 2025 in the Parliament where we invited community organisations who had participated in the regional programme to attend and make opening speeches in the Debating Chamber. This will be reported in our Annual Report 2025/2026.

PACT Case Study 1: Peoples Panel on Tackling Drug Harms and Drug Deaths, Cross Committee¹ on Tackling Drug Harms and Drug Deaths

October–November 2024

We were proud to deliver our sixth People’s Panel, commissioned by the Scottish Parliament’s Cross Committee on Drug Harms and Drug Deaths. The Panel was tasked with answering: **“What does Scotland need to do differently to reduce drug-related harms?”**

¹ The Cross Committee brought together three Committees: Social Justice and Social Security, Health, Social Care and Sport, and Criminal Justice.

Following 5,000 invitation letters sent across Scotland, **23 participants**, broadly representative of the population, were selected. Aged between **16 and 74**, they took part in **two residential weekends** at the Scottish Parliament and **two online sessions**.

Over the course of the Panel, participants heard from experts, frontline workers, and people with lived experience. They explored the current landscape of drug harm in Scotland and considered a range of policy and service responses.

The Panel produced a **collective statement and 19 recommendations**, which were presented to the Committee in early 2025. Their work will inform both parliamentary scrutiny and the development of a **blueprint for embedding deliberative democracy** in the Scottish Parliament.

👉 [Read participant reflections](#)

Impact and Evaluation

Engagement beyond formal committee meetings, whether in communities or within the Parliament building, remained a cornerstone of PACT's approach. For many participants, these settings offered the most accessible and meaningful way to engage with parliamentary scrutiny.

Building Confidence and Contribution

We saw powerful examples of how informal engagement can build confidence and lead to formal contributions in committee settings. Notable examples include:

- Representatives from the **People's Panel on Drug Harms and Drug Deaths**, who shared lived experience in formal committee sessions (**see Case Study 1**)
- Participants who gave evidence on the **Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill** (**see Case Study 2**)

Our community engagement also played a vital role in supporting evidence gathering. By offering a range of participation options, included digital tools and face-to-face sessions, we helped people make their voices heard in ways that suited their needs and circumstances.

Evaluation Approach

PACT evaluated all activities in collaboration with colleagues and the public to assess the quality and impact of our work. We conducted quarterly reviews and actively sought feedback from all stakeholders to:

- Understand the impact of engagement on committee work
- Capture participants' experiences
- Identify opportunities for improvement

Feedback Summary

We asked participants to rate a range of indicators on a scale from **1 to 5**. Our annual summary includes:

- **103 participant responses** from those directly involved in committee work
- Feedback from **31 Parliament staff members** and **13 MSPs**

For the **25th Anniversary Regional Programme**, we used a simplified evaluation method:

- Participants rated their experience using a **1 to 4 scale**
- **326 people** contributed feedback across the entirety of the 25th Anniversary Regional Programme

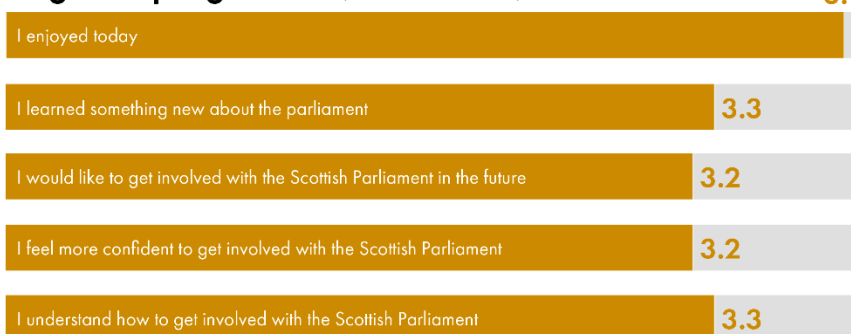
Participant Feedback

Committee engagement (scored out of 5)



Regional programme (scored out of 4)

3.9



Feedback from Staff & MSPs

How effective was the engagement in support the work of the Committee?



“Was great to hear from a range of local people at one event. An efficient way of hearing from a lot of people and enabled them to bounce off each other, so maybe making points they wouldn’t otherwise have thought of.”

PACT Case Study 2: Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, January 2025

In January 2025, PACT supported an informal engagement session between the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and members of the Scottish Assembly—a group advocating for adults with learning disabilities and autistic people who “don’t do politics.”

The Committee sought personal perspectives to inform scrutiny of the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill. Seven Assembly members from across Scotland were selected to attend, following an online preparation session with SPICe, clerks, and PACT staff to ensure clarity and comfort.

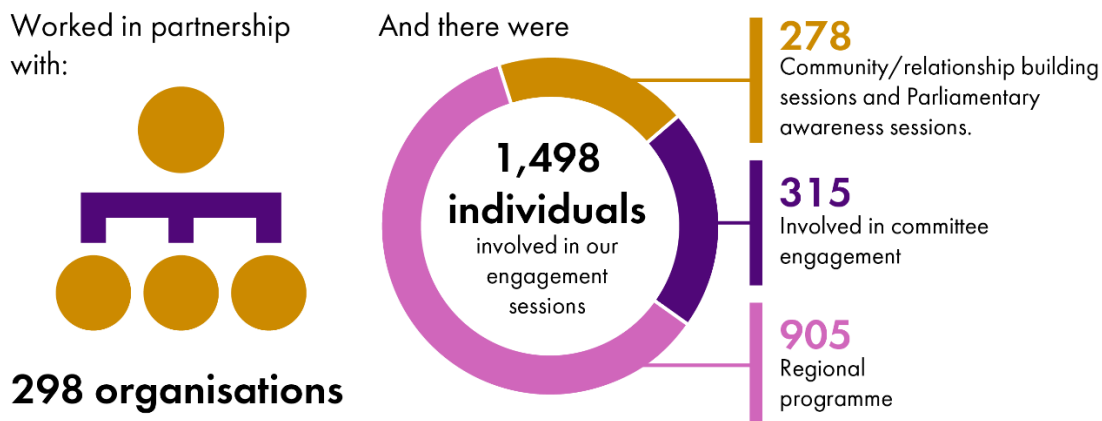
The in-person meeting was held in a private, café-style format, with MSPs rotating across tables to discuss key issues such as capacity, discrimination, and communication. PACT ensured the session was safe, accessible, and trauma-informed, providing Easy Read briefings to support understanding.

MSPs later referenced the Assembly’s contributions during formal Committee questioning, including with the Member in charge of the Bill. PACT shared clips of these moments with participants to demonstrate their impact.

An anonymous summary of the discussion was published on the Parliament website. Assembly members expressed interest in future opportunities to contribute.

Committee Support and Community Engagement

Community Engagement



Through our community engagement work, PACT delivered a wide range of participation opportunities. Some of these directly supported the work of Scottish Parliament Committees, while others helped organisations and communities better understand how they can engage with Parliament more broadly.

Participation Breakdown

Of the **1,498 participants** reached this year:

- **315 people** took part in **committee-based sessions**, contributing directly to parliamentary scrutiny
- **278 individuals** engaged in **relationship-building sessions**, such as:
 - Parliamentary Awareness workshops for new partners
 - Ad hoc sessions with existing partner organisations

These sessions help build understanding, confidence, and long-term engagement with the work of Parliament.

Committee Engagement Delivery

Between **1 April 2024** and **31 March 2025**, PACT delivered a total of **30 sessions** in support of Committee work. This figure includes:

- **Preparation sessions** to support participants ahead of formal engagement
- **One-off sessions** focused on specific inquiries or Bills
- **Multi-session engagements**, such as:

- Work on the **Disability Commissioner (Scotland) Bill**, which involved several groups across multiple locations and extended engagement over several months

Some Committee engagements were facilitated directly within the Parliament building, while others took place in communities across Scotland.

The chart below illustrates the number of sessions delivered for each Committee.



PACT Case Study 3: Tenants and Landlords Housing Panels, Local Government Housing and Planning Committee, February – May 2024

As part of pre-legislative scrutiny for the proposed Housing Bill, the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee sought views from tenants and landlords through informal engagement. PACT, SPICe, and clerking staff collaborated to recruit and support two panels—one of tenants and one of landlords.

Participants were identified through partnerships with organisations such as Shelter, Living Rent, TPAS, Citizens Advice Scotland, and the Scottish Association of Landlords. A two-stage selection process ensured diversity aligned with the Scottish Household Survey, including surveys and interviews to confirm understanding and readiness.

Panel members received safeguarding support and welcome packs ahead of their sessions. PACT facilitated a series of online meetings, with the Convener attending the first. Final sessions were held in person, where each panel presented their recommendations directly to the Committee.

Both panels worked collaboratively to produce a set of recommendations, which were published in August and helped shape the Committee

Digital Engagement

Over the past year, **22,696 members of the public** engaged with Parliament through digital platforms. A key driver of this engagement was our well-established **Call for Views** process, which enabled people to share their perspectives on parliamentary inquiries and legislation.

22,688 written submissions were received via the **Citizen Space** platform, reflecting strong public interest and participation in parliamentary scrutiny.

Ensuring Inclusive Access

While digital tools provide broad reach and convenience, PACT remains committed to ensuring that participation is accessible to all. We therefore offer hybrid options that combine digital and face-to-face methods, ensuring that people who are digitally excluded, or who prefer not to engage online, still have meaningful opportunities to contribute.

Digital Engagement

Citizen Space

Call for Views has led to **22,067** written submissions received this year.



Deliberative Engagement



Over the past five years, PACT has been exploring how to embed deliberative democracy into the work of the Scottish Parliament. In collaboration with Committee support teams, we've continued to develop the Parliament's use of deliberative processes such as **People's Panels** (our term for Citizens Panels) and **Lived Experience Panels**.

The **Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee (CPPPC)** report, *Embedding Participation in the Work of the Parliament*, highlighted the potential of deliberative democracy to:

- Increase the diversity of public participation
- Build trust in the political process

Following the CPPPC's recommendations—endorsed by the whole Parliament—PACT delivered a **People's Panel on Drug Harms and Drug Deaths** for a Cross-Committee initiative.

The 2024 People's Panel on Drug Policy

Commissioned jointly by the **Criminal Justice, Health, Social Care and Sport**, and **Social Justice and Social Security Committees**, the Panel explored the question:

"What does Scotland need to do differently to reduce drug-related harms?"

Participants included academics, frontline workers, and individuals directly affected by drug harm. The Panel produced a **collective statement and 19 recommendations**, calling for:

- A compassionate, health-led approach to drug use
- Improved access to services
- Greater support for families and communities

Their report was presented to MSPs in **January 2025**, and informed a **joint committee evidence session in February**, where Panel members gave evidence before the Committee questioned the Cabinet Secretary on the Government's response.

Impact and Recognition

- The **Scottish Government welcomed** the Panel's recommendations and acknowledged the value of deliberative democracy in shaping drug policy.
- During the **parliamentary debate on 6 March 2025**, MSPs from across parties praised the Panel's work for its depth, compassion, and clarity.
- An **independent evaluation by the University of Edinburgh** described the process as:

"A high-quality deliberative process that met international standards of good practice."

The Panel's call for an inquiry into drug harm in prisons led to the **Criminal Justice Committee launching an inquiry into substance misuse in prisons**, demonstrating the tangible impact of this work.

This initiative reflects the Parliament's commitment to inclusive, evidence-informed scrutiny and highlights the power of public deliberation in addressing Scotland's most pressing challenges.

"The PACT team were HUGELY thorough and helpful in working to make sure that people felt comfortable and able to participate."

Looking ahead

Evaluation Insights

Feedback from our participation activities continued to score highly across all areas. The only metric falling below a score of 4 (out of 5) was:

- **"My views will be valued by the committee" – average score: 3.9**

Quarterly reviews identified isolated sessions where participants felt MSPs were not fully listening. We addressed this through improved facilitation and MSP preparation.

We also noted a **disparity in evaluation formats**:

- General evaluations use a **5-point scale**
- Accessible formats (e.g. Easy Read) use a **4-point scale**

To improve consistency, we will align these metrics in the next reporting year.

Priorities for 2025/6

Our focus for the coming year will be:

- ☒ Finalising and rolling out our **Communities Approach**, through our Communities Action Plan and other initiatives
- ☒ Developing a **framework for embedding deliberative democracy** in readiness for Session 7
- ☒ Aligning our **general and accessible evaluation metrics**.

Annex A

Date	Engagement Inquiry or Bill	Committee
16 th April 2024	Climate Change Peoples Panel – Evidence session	Net Zero, Energy and Transport
April 2024	Disability Employment Gap (2 sessions)	Economy and Fair Work
April 2024	Police Ethics Bill (5 sessions)	Criminal Justice
April - May 2024	Housing Bill – Tenants (2 sessions)	Local Government, Housing and Planning
7 th May 2024	Suicide Prevention Strategy Inquiry	Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice
13 th May 2024	Remote and Rural Healthcare Inquiry	Health, Social Care and Sport
10 th June 2024	Housing Bill	Social Justice and Social Security
June 2024	Housing Bill – Landlords (2 sessions)	Local Government, Housing and Planning
21 st August 2024	Pre-Budget Scrutiny – Third Sector Principles	Social Justice and Social Security
28 th August 2024	Pre-Budget Scrutiny – Retaining Young People in Scotland	Finance and Public Administration
10 th September 2024	Disability Commissioner (Scotland) Bill (3 sessions)	Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice
23 rd September 2024	Land Reform Bill	Net Zero, Energy and Transport
October – November 2024	Peoples Panel on Drug Harms and Drug Deaths	Cross Committee on Tackling Drug Harms and Drug Deaths

7th January 2025	Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill	Health, Social Care and Sport
22nd January 2025	Tenant Farmers	Net Zero, Energy and Transport
18th February 2025	Right to Addiction Recovery (Scotland) Bill	Health, Social Care and Sport
27th February 2025	Review of the UK EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement Inquiry Part 2	Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture
3rd March 2025	Widening Access Inquiry	Education, Children and Young People
24th March 2025	The Promise - Voice	Education, Children and Young People
25th March 2025	Informal session on the delay of the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill (LDAN Bill)	Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice
26th March 2025	Financial Implications of Leaving Abusive Relationships	Social Justice and Social Security

Annex B

Committee	Number of engagement sessions supported by PACT
Criminal Justice	5
Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice	5
Local Government, Housing and Planning	4
Health, Social Care and Sport	3
Net Zero, Energy and Transport	3
Social Justice and Social Security	3
Economy and Fair Work	2
Education, Children and Young People	2
Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture	1
Cross Committee on Drug Harms and Drug Deaths	1
Finance and Public Administration	1