



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Kaukab Stewart MSP
Minister for Equalities
Scottish Government

18 June 2025

Dear Kaukab,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee following up on the evidence sessions the Committee held on the recent [Concluding Observations](#) issued by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) following the seventh periodic review of the United Kingdom's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The CESCR's March 2025 Concluding Observations highlighted both positive developments in Scotland and areas where further action is required. These include:

- Full incorporation of ICESCR into Scots law;
- A stronger intersectional approach to gender equality;
- Tackling child poverty and food insecurity;
- Better access to healthcare for marginalised groups;
- Improved conditions for migrants, disabled people, Gypsy/Traveller communities, and others.

On 29 April, the Committee heard from the following witnesses:

- Lucy Mulvagh, Director of Policy, Research and Impact, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)
- Charlie McMillan, Interim Director, Human Rights Consortium Scotland
- Clare MacGillivray, Director, Making Rights Real
- Lorne Berkley, Strategic Lead: Policy and Rights, Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (virtual attendance)
- Professor Angela O'Hagan, Chair, Scottish Human Rights Commission

Each organisation submitted a shadow report to the CESCR review in January 2025. Their contributions focused on how international human rights obligations can better shape law, policy, and lived experience in Scotland.

Contact: Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email EHRCJ.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

Subsequently, we heard from you about the Scottish Government's response to the CESCR's recommendations and its approach to the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in devolved areas.

Further to the Committee's evidence session with you we would be grateful for further information from you on the following:

1. The Committee heard from witnesses that the realisation of rights is not possible without the full incorporation of those rights into Scots law. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to accelerate progress towards the incorporation of international treaties in Scots law?
2. In relation to the recommendations from the UN committee, the Committee heard that this is not just about incorporation; it is about undertaking an independent review of the legal and policy framework for economic, social and cultural rights to ensure that those rights are given full effect and that victims of any violation of them have full access to effective judicial and non-judicial remedies. Does the Scottish Government have plans for such an independent review, and if so, how will it be undertaken?
3. What is the Scottish Government doing to ensure that human rights realisation is seen as an opportunity and not a threat by the public and private sector? With reference to the private sector, will you consider re-instigating the idea of a Scotland-specific business human rights action plan?
4. The Committee heard arguments for a review of social security payments at both a UK and Scottish level in order to assess their adequacy for providing an adequate standard of living for the most marginalised people in society. How does the Scottish Government respond to this suggestion?
5. The Committee also heard about the need for a right to housing in Scotland, particularly in the context of a housing emergency. How does the Scottish Government intend to give effect to this right? Will such a right be enshrined in the Human Rights Bill and how will it be furthered in the meantime? In what way has the Housing Bill been informed by a human rights approach?
6. Concerns were presented to the Committee about the slow progress toward a mental health law reform programme. The Committee would welcome an update from the Scottish Government on what progress it is making toward this reform programme.
7. The failure to introduce a Human Rights Bill this session was very disappointing to the Committee. We welcome your commitment to bringing a bill to Parliament to next session, In the meantime, the Committee would appreciate any updates on progress towards the introduction of the Bill.
8. The Committee welcomed hearing from you about the work of the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls. In particular, the

Committee was interested in the development of a strategy for equality for women and girls in Scotland. The Committee would welcome any updates on the development of this strategy. Relatedly, the Committee would also welcome any updates on the Scottish Government's reflections on the Sullivan review.

9. The Committee welcomes the Scottish Government's work toward the development of a human rights digital tracker tool. What assurance can you give the Committee that it will be in place before the end of this session allowing the Committee to consider it before dissolution? Moreover, the Committee heard serious concerns about the adequacy of the data available to inform any monitoring. What work is the Scottish Government to improve the collection and robustness of that data?
10. Finally, when can the Committee expect to see a full response from the Scottish Government to the CESC recommendations and concluding observations?

We would be grateful for a response by September 2025. We look forward to your response, and to working collaboratively to ensure that people in Scotland can fully realise their human rights.

Yours sincerely

Karen Adam MSP
Convener