



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Councillor Shona Morrison
President
COSLA

9 May 2025

Dear Cllr Morrison

The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee has been gathering evidence on the experiences of autistic people and disabled people across Scotland, particularly in relation to independent living, access to services, and human rights-based approaches to support. We are writing to COSLA to seek clarity on the role of local authorities in addressing the challenges raised in our recent engagement sessions and in the Scottish Human Rights Commission's (SHRC) report, *Tick Tock... A Human Rights Assessment of Progress from Institutionalisation to Independent Living in Scotland*.

The Committee has heard extensive evidence from disabled people's organisations and individuals with lived experience regarding systemic barriers that prevent independent living. These include the inconsistent implementation of Self-Directed Support (SDS), challenges in housing provision, workforce shortages in social care, and the reliance on behavioural intervention models that have been widely criticised by those with lived experience. We also note concerns about 'off-rolling' in schools, where autistic young people are being excluded from mainstream education without adequate support, exacerbating social isolation and limiting future opportunities.

The SHRC's Tick Tock report highlights systemic barriers to the realisation of independent living for disabled people in Scotland, with significant implications for local government and service delivery. Given COSLA's role in coordinating local government policy and practice across Scotland, the Committee seeks responses to the following:

1. Pace of Change - What steps is COSLA taking to ensure that local authorities accelerate the transition from institutional models of care to independent living, in line with Scotland's human rights obligations?
2. Self-Directed Support (SDS) - What actions is COSLA taking to address inconsistencies in how SDS is implemented across local authorities, particularly in relation to funding restrictions and administrative barriers?
3. Accessible Housing - How is COSLA supporting local authorities to ensure there is adequate accessible and affordable housing to meet the needs of disabled people, and what work is being done to improve collaboration between councils and housing providers?

4. Social Care Workforce - What measures is COSLA putting in place to address the workforce shortages in social care and ensure that staff are adequately trained in human rights-based approaches?
5. Legal and Policy Coherence - How is COSLA ensuring that local authorities' policies and practices align with Scotland's legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)?

The Committee would appreciate COSLA's views on how these challenges can be addressed at a strategic level and would welcome an update on any relevant work being undertaken. Additionally, we ask that COSLA commit to regular engagement with the Committee on these issues, including updates every six months on progress made.

We would be grateful for a response by June 2025, and we look forward to continued dialogue on these critical matters.

Yours sincerely

Karen Adam MSP
Convener