

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Collette Stevenson MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee

03/06/2025

Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter regarding the recently published legal briefing: Ending Destitution in Scotland – A Road Map for Policymakers.

The briefing was independently commissioned by I-SPHERE at Heriot Watt University and funded by Joseph Rowntree Foundation as part of the Fair Way Scotland partnership. I was pleased to have had the opportunity to speak in the Chamber recently about the publication, and to hear from other members on this issue.

The Committee requested a copy of the Scottish Government's response to the briefing's recommendations, and I am pleased to attach my response to the report at Annex A.

The Committee also asked for information about what discussions have taken place between the Scottish and UK Governments in relation to mitigating destitution experienced by those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), or other restricted eligibility (RE).

The NRPF condition forces people into destitution when they are at their most vulnerable. It is our view that the condition is disproportionately applied, exacerbating inequalities and preventing individuals and families from accessing essential support when they have nowhere else to turn. When people reach this crisis point, the cost of supporting them is transferred onto local authorities, public services and the third sector.

In April 2021, Aileen Campbell, the then Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, wrote to the UK Government raising the issue of NRPF policy and announcing the publication of the Ending Destitution Together (EDT) strategy.

Ms Campbell recognised reserved matters and that the strategy is clear that there are limits on action that can be taken due to the reserved nature of NRPF policy. The Scottish Government asked the UK Government to immediately remove and cease to apply the NRPF condition to people in vulnerable circumstances, particularly in the cases of families with children and vulnerable adults, including those with care needs, people at risk of rough sleeping and women experiencing domestic abuse. Despite regular engagement on the issue by the Scottish Government, this has not been undertaken by UK Government.

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Ms Campbell also asked for the removal of the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) from the restricted public funds list to enable crisis and community care grants be provided to people subject to NRPF, where they are eligible, on the same basis as anyone else and as originally intended. This would also ensure a means to provide people subject to NRPF with a limited level of immediate support when they face short term financial crisis. We did not receive a satisfactory response to this request then, and despite the ongoing discussions that have taken place, we are frustrated by the lack of tangible progress.

As I mentioned in the Chamber, I will continue to call for the removal of the Scottish Welfare Fund from the restricted public funds list, and indeed for all schemes that are created using devolved powers to be able to determine their own eligibility requirements. Whilst the removal of the SWF will not solve issues overnight, it will go some way to improve the support available for people who are at risk of destitution. I intend to write to my counterparts in UK Government on this matter shortly.

In writing, Ms Campbell also highlighted within the EDT strategy the ask of UK Government to enable the Scottish Government to realise its ambition for everyone to have a settled home, and for the UK Government to allow funding for accommodation for people with NRPF. This has not come to be. Fair Way Scotland, supported by the Scottish Government, was mobilized and set out their five-year plan to help design-out destitution by providing accommodation pathways and support to people with NRPF who are at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, however this is only part of the solution and there remains the need for the UK Government to play its part in resolving the issue in Scotland.

Further, the Cabinet Secretary asked for the funding of refuge places and the extension of the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse (MVDA) Concession. The UK Government should enable funding of refuge spaces for people subject to NRPF by either allowing housing benefit to be accessed or by allowing alternative funding routes for refuge spaces as a form of emergency accommodation which is not restricted by NRPF. The MVDA Concession enables people who are in the UK on a partner visa to claim public funds while applying to settle in the UK, following the breakdown of their relationship due to domestic violence, but it does not extend to people whose partner has limited leave, including as a refugee. The Concession should be available to anyone who is in the UK as a dependent on someone else's visa or protection status, regardless of the timescale of that status. It is disappointing that neither of these asks have been realised which I will raise in my submission to my counterparts in UK Government.

Despite the intransigence of the UK Government to address the issues raised, we have continued to make significant progress since the publication of the strategy in 2021:

- Learning from the Scottish Crisis Fund pilot project has enabled a more targeted project to be delivered by Fair Way Scotland to support the most vulnerable people in communities and assist them in accessing their human rights and entitlements.
- The Migrants Rights and Entitlements Guidance has supported local authorities in making decisions about assistance and support to people and has provided training for local authorities working with people subject to NRPF.
- Resources have been developed with Public Health Scotland and GP Networks to improve the understanding and awareness of NRPF amongst frontline workers.

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- Scottish Refugee Council continue to deliver diagnostic legal advice and advocacy support for people navigating through the asylum process.
- The Scottish Government also continues to support increased access to specialist immigration advice to support local authorities assisting people subject to NRPF. Delivered through the International Organisation for Migration, this helps support especially vulnerable groups and complex cases, builds local capacity and strengthens local service design, whilst also collecting data to strengthen the national evidence base on immigration advice needs.
- The establishment and success of our 'Experts by Experience' forum has been invaluable, and I very much enjoyed meeting with them last year to hear first-hand some of the issues they have experienced.

Earlier this year, several engagement sessions took place with key stakeholders, third sector organisations, local authorities, experts by experience and policy leads in Scottish Government. These engagement sessions focused on: Housing and Housing Support, Social Security, Employability, Lived Experience, Legal Advice and Advocacy Support Services. The feedback and insights gathered from these sessions has been collated and is being used to develop deliverables and key areas of work for this next phase of delivery of the strategy. In addition, the significant research undertaken by COMPAS¹, the evaluations of Fair Way Scotland and the more recent legal briefing are all valuable resources in assisting and shaping our direction of travel toward ensuring no one in Scotland is forced into destitution and everyone has their human rights protected, regardless of their immigration status.

I intend to publish this refreshed EDT workplan later this year to continue to deliver our vision and principles in the strategy. It will learn from the first four years of delivery, and continue our work with key partners, stakeholders and local authorities. It will be designed in the same spirit as the strategy was developed, remaining flexible to the ever-changing legislative and policy landscape in the UK, whilst ensuring that we are testing the boundaries of devolved competence to ensure people in our communities are supported.

I hope this response is helpful for the Committee.

KAUKAB STEWART

¹ [COMPAS: Understanding Migrant Destitution in Scotland](#)
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T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Margaret-Ann Brunjes
Homeless Network Scotland
Unit 16a
Adelphi Centre
12 Commercial Road
Glasgow
G5 0PQ
By Email: mbrunjes@homelessnetwork.scot

28 May 2025

Dear Maggie,

Firstly, let me apologise for the delay in responding directly to you on this briefing. It is a comprehensive report and I wanted to take the time to review it appropriately. I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the Chamber recently about this publication. I truly welcome the breadth of the report and the clear narrative on the position in Scotland from Jen Ang's observations and firmly believe that we should continue to challenge ourselves and each other to ensure that we are doing all we can to reduce destitution in Scotland.

As you are aware, the Ending Destitution Together strategy, and the collaborative working approach across Scotland, continues to deliver strengthened support and improved provision for our most vulnerable communities. Fair Way Scotland is a fine example of collaborative working, and I am encouraged by the progress that has been made across this space.

I do believe there is more we can do, and we can only achieve this by working together and pushing the limitations of our powers in the immigration space, including the no recourse to public funds policy. As I mentioned, destitution is not something that we can end for all overnight, but we can continue to work together and deliver services and support, legislate where we have the power to do so, and continue to press the UK Government on issues where we do not have that power.

I will now address the main recommendations from the report by theme.

Access to social security and finance – the report asked Scottish Government to:

- *Lobby the UK Government for an end to the NRPF system and to restrictions on access to benefits for EU citizens with pre-settled status*
- *Engage proactively with the UK Government and lobby for a clear and transparent framework*

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- *Negotiate a framework memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the UK Government about the use of the Public Funds guidance powers, specifically with respect to the exercise of Scottish devolved powers*
- *Create a new Scottish crisis or hardship grant*
- *Create new specific devolved purpose access grants*
- *Commission a systematic review with a view to either removing barriers to access or making intentional policy decisions about those barriers that remain in place.*

The Scottish Government remains committed to urging the UK Government to immediately remove and cease to apply NRPF conditions to people in vulnerable circumstances, particularly in the cases of families with children and vulnerable adults, including those with care needs, people at risk of rough sleeping and women experiencing domestic abuse. This was also recommended by the UK Parliament's All Parliamentary Group on Homelessness.

As I mentioned in the Chamber, for some time the Scottish Government has been lobbying the UK Government to remove the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) from the restricted public funds list. I will continue to call for this and indeed for all schemes that are created using devolved powers to be able to determine their own eligibility requirements. Whilst the removal of the SWF will not solve issues overnight, it will go some way to improve the support available for people who are at risk of destitution. I intend to write to my counterparts in UK Government on this matter shortly.

As you will be aware the Ending Destitution Together strategy delivery partners and stakeholders met earlier this year to discuss the impact of the strategy and what still needs to be done. As a result of those discussions and observations, a workplan is being devised and as part of that, the Scottish Government and COSLA will be writing to the UK Government seeking clarity on the process and rationale for the use of public funds powers for Scottish devolved powers. I will say however that the UK Government is not mandated to consult with the Scottish Government on the addition of Scottish public funds to the Immigration Rules.

The Scottish Government's powers to create new benefits are limited and could not provide a long term, sustainable source of income for people who are subject to NRPF. While our social security powers are limited, any new benefits should be made equally available to everyone living in our communities where that is possible.

As you will be aware, local authorities have a statutory duty to support our most vulnerable people with NRPF and that is made clear in the Migrants Rights and Entitlements Guidance for local authorities. We continually keep this guidance under review to ensure that it is relevant and a key resource for those on the front line in councils supporting people. During the engagement sessions with partners, stakeholders and local authorities, it was highlighted that this guidance could be made more accessible. We remain committed to working with local authorities and partners on improving this and it is something we intend to include in the work plan for this next phase of delivery of the strategy.

The funding that Scottish Government has provided to Fair Way Scotland to deliver a casework and emergency cash-first project has shown the benefit of this support package in assisting those who are destitute, including those with NRPF. I am pleased that we are continuing this partnership during 2025-26 and look forward to seeing the wider impact of this holistic support.

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Our work on the strategy already seeks to address some of the main barriers to access and I am unclear of the value of an additional systematic review of policy at this time. I am concerned that the broad nature of such a review may detract from us delivering tangible results across the barriers we are actively addressing. I welcome continued dialogue on this however, if there are important policy issues you feel are not currently being addressed.

Access to housing – the report asked Scottish Government to:

- *Support the consistent and fair application of the existing exception for those owed a duty of care under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 across all Scottish local authorities.*
- *Expand the Fair Way model across Scotland, offering targeted housing and homelessness support for the NRPF/RE population.*
- *Create a new Scottish crisis or hardship housing fund.*

Restricted public funds as defined under the Immigration Rules include key safety nets, such as the SWF mentioned above, as well as local authority housing and homelessness services. Through the strategy we remain committed to working with Fair Way Scotland towards the ambition of ending homelessness and specifically supporting actions that can be delivered within devolved competence relating to people with NRPF and destitute people seeking asylum, as set out in the Ending Homelessness Together action plan.

Improving access to housing is also a key action in the New Scots Delivery Plan. Scottish Government and partners remain committed to working with relevant partners (including Registered Social Landlords), to identify the current and future housing needs and barriers around housing for some groups, including those at risk of destitution who are not entitled to statutory housing or homelessness services with an intention to ensure issues that are identified are included in future housing policy development.

In addition, in light of the current housing emergency and increasing homelessness, we will continue to work towards ending homelessness for New Scots at risk of destitution, including by considering means of scaling up community-based accommodation provision and holistic support that meets the needs of those who are not entitled to statutory housing or homelessness services. Fair Way Scotland and local authorities are key partners in achieving this.

The Fair Way Scotland model is an example of sound partnership and collaborative working and is an excellent blueprint for cohesive and joint-working process.

Access to transport – the report asked Scottish Government to:

- *Extend the use of national concessionary travel schemes*

The Scottish Government recognised that free bus travel has the potential to be transformative for people seeking asylum, who are among the most vulnerable in society. I acknowledge the disappointment that we were unable to progress this in 2024-25 due to funding constraints. We are committed to exploring if we can extend free bus travel to all people seeking asylum on a longer-term basis.

In the Programme for Government, published on 6 May, the Scottish Government committed to delivering a £2 million national pilot to support free bus travel for people seeking asylum. We are working with delivery partners to consider the best way of delivering this in 2025-26.

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In the meantime, people seeking asylum in Scotland who are currently eligible for free bus travel through the statutory National Concessionary Travel Schemes, including those under 22, aged over 60 and over and those with disabilities, will continue to be able to make use of their entitlement.

Access to health and social care – the report asked Scottish Government to:

- *End barriers in access to primary and secondary health care by reviewing the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors)(Scotland) Regulations 1989 and associated guidance and removing the link between access to any form of health care to immigration status.*
- *Ensure local authorities meet their duties to assess needs for all people with NRPF/RE in their area to whom they owe a duty, and to provide equal access to social care support, in a manner that is consistent across all Scottish local authorities*
- *Commission a systematic review of access pathways for NHS health care and social care services in Scotland.*
- *Ensure that local authorities make fair and transparent decisions about whether or how to meet assessed needs.*
- *Establish minimum Scottish national standards for accommodation and financial support.*
- *Explore evidence of gatekeeping.*
- *Commission a systematic review of access pathways for NHS health care and social care services in Scotland.*

Many NHS services are provided free of charge to people in Scotland regardless of their nationality or immigration status. Be assured the Scottish Government remains committed to improving access to primary health services and mental health services for adults and children with NRPF. We are working with Public Health Scotland to improve the understanding of the NRPF condition amongst frontline workers. A person should never be refused an assessment or assistance solely because they have NRPF as this does not exclude them from social services' assistance.

The Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Displaced people network, which is managed by Public Health Scotland, is a cross-health board network for staff who work with and support refugees, people seeking asylum and displaced people. The network has identified challenges and barriers in providing healthcare for these population groups and is committed to exploring solutions to these challenges. This includes barriers to primary care, screening and mental health services.

The network has identified that improved national guidance and information on healthcare provision for these population groups is required. Further discussions would be required with Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) regarding a review of access pathways. PHS is undertaking scoping work on the oral health needs of migrant health groups and information available to them. This work will be undertaken later this year.

During the recent EDT engagement sessions feedback showed the barriers people still face when registering with a GP and that the issue relates more to practice rather than policy, and stems from a lack of awareness of NRPF, lack of fixed address for those in temporary accommodation, and rough sleeping people with NRPF prioritising the search from accommodation over navigating the healthcare system to get support. The Scottish

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Government acknowledges that more work needs to be done to fully understand the barriers preventing people from accessing healthcare.

Through work on the Ending Destitution Together Strategy, Public Health Scotland has developed an information resource for NHS staff on the right to healthcare for people subject to NRPF to raise awareness amongst NHS staff. It explains that some people may be reluctant to access healthcare because of uncertainty over charges and whether their information will be shared with the Home Office. The resource encourages staff to reassure people that their information will not be shared and explains about the Immigration Health Surcharge and who is eligible for free healthcare. NHS Education for Scotland (NES) could support with further work on staff awareness of these issues.

Immigration status is not routinely recorded by the NHS. Patients may be asked for their ethnicity, and it should be explained to them why this information is being recorded. The Access to Healthcare – GP registration cards have been designed to support people to register with a GP. They explain that people do not need to provide ID or proof of address to register which are often barriers for some migrants when accessing primary care.

Information to raise awareness of the cards was disseminated in March by PHS to GP practices across Scotland to ensure practice staff understand and know what to do if a patient presents them with a card. PHS is currently exploring with the Scottish Refugee Council potential to provide information about the cards in alternative languages to support SRC clients understanding of the cards and how to use them.

Access to justice and legal aid – the report asked Scottish Government to:

- *Prioritise reform of the current legal aid system.*
- *Approve an urgent uplift of funding for immigration and asylum and housing legal matters.*
- *Commission a review of the barriers for migrants in accessing justice.*

People with NRPF, along with all Scottish residents, looking for advice and representation have the full range of publicly funded legal assistance in Scotland open to them. People applying for legal aid funding through the Scottish legal aid systems are not subject to a residency test, and there are no plans to introduce one. The legal aid system in Scotland is also flexible in the way that it operates. If an individual does not have a bank account or financial records, this would not necessarily mean that legal aid would be denied. The Scottish Legal Aid Board solicitor would only look for evidence that could reasonably be provided. There are no eligibility requirements for legal aid based on a person's nationality or immigration status, so a person with NRPF can access free legal advice and assistance in Scotland.

The Scottish Government recognises however that reform is needed to the legal aid system, which is why our Programme for Government commits us to taking forward actions in the Legal Aid Reform discussion paper. Change is needed in order for legal aid in Scotland to be responsive, user-centred and to work effectively towards the delivery of agreed outcomes in the way that would be expected of a public service, with transparency and accountability for public funding embedded in the process.

In the short term, we have identified priority changes we believe will impact positively on users and providers, to bridge the gap between the current system and the future one, in line with our reform objectives and expected benefits. This is the first stage in a longer journey

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towards a more strategically focused and managed legal aid system, that includes a framework for decision making.

The national guidance for local authorities sets out the legal framework and good practice to assist local authorities in meeting their statutory duties and delivering an effective response when working with people who have NRPF.

I am pleased the Scottish Government is continuing to support a diagnostic legal advice and advocacy support service for people with NRPF through the Refugee Support Service, delivered by the Scottish Refugee Council. This project also provides data to help us understand the circumstance of people that require legal support and the extent and nature of NRPF destitution in Scotland.

The Scottish Government is also continuing to support the increased access to specialist immigration advice to support local authorities assisting people with NRPF through the International Organisation for Migration. This provision supports especially vulnerable groups and complex cases, as well as building local capacity and strengthening local service design. It also provides second tier advice to frontline staff in councils and third sector organisations.

Access to education – the report asked Scottish Government to:

- *Establish with local authorities and commit to meeting minimum capacity levels for provision of free access to ESOL and access courses for migrants to Scotland in their area*
- *Create a new “support for education access” fund*
- *Review and reform the SFC waiver policy and the SAAS funding regulations*

All children, regardless of their immigration status, can receive state school education whilst they are of compulsory school age. When applying to undertake Further Education, a person with NRPF will only be able to undertake a course for free if they meet the funding criteria; immigration status and length of residence in the UK will be relevant factors. For Higher Education, the criteria for lower ‘home’ fee rates, and student finance to help with course and living costs, are also based on immigration status and length of residence in the UK.

After primary 5, free school meal entitlement is generally linked to the parent being in receipt of qualifying benefits or asylum support. However, local authorities have the discretion to provide free school meals in cases where the regular eligibility is not met – this includes NRPF families.

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of English language learning in supporting the integration of New Scots. Language is fundamental to all areas of refugee integration, from understanding information about public services to gaining employment and participating in community activities. Being able to communicate confidently with people, including neighbours, shop workers or members of a local community group, helps refugees to feel settled, build social connections and be involved in their local area.

This year, £500,000 has been made available from Scottish Government’s Asylum and Refugee Integration Unit in response to the recommendation from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development for Scottish Government to take immediate action to address the exceptional pressures and increasing levels of need for ESOL provision in Glasgow.

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Evidence of high levels of demand in Glasgow was captured in the recent Independent Review of Community Learning and Development and continues to be tracked through the Glasgow ESOL Access Register. Funding has been made available to the Glasgow ESOL Strategy Partnership which consists of Glasgow Clyde College, Glasgow Kelvin College, City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Life, ESOL Scotland and WEA Scotland.

The analysis paper makes recommendation to review SAAS regulations. You will be aware that in order to access support, there are eligibility conditions which must be met for tuition fee and living-cost support in Scotland. These conditions are set out in legislation and underpinned by residency criteria. They generally require students to:

- Be ordinarily resident in Scotland on the relevant date (the relevant date is the 1 August for Autumn start courses; ordinary residence can be described as habitual or normal residence, by choice, over a period of time in one place and does not include residence solely for the purposes of education).
- Have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands for 3 years immediately prior to the relevant date, and
 - o (i) Be settled in the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971 (for example, be a UK national or otherwise have a right to stay in the UK without time restriction, for example 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'); or
 - o (ii) Have been granted a form of leave to enter or remain in the UK, where that leave has not expired; or
 - o A family member of a person described in (i) or (ii).

The Scottish Government has previously reviewed the residency criteria for student support with the aim of proposing changes in the rules which would enable certain groups of people seeking asylum and refugees to access tuition fee and living cost support while they study. As such, changes were made to open up home tuition fee status and student support to the following groups:

- Afghan nationals
- Iraqi nationals granted leave under the Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme
- Persons granted Stateless Leave
- Syrian Refugees
- Ukrainian nationals
- Victims of Human Trafficking
- Those granted Calais Leave
- Persons granted Indefinite Leave to Remain as victims of domestic violence.
- Persons granted discretionary leave as victims of modern slavery

Under the current regulations, students who have applied for asylum can be supported if they have been granted refugee status or have applied for refugee/asylum status and although not considered to qualify, have been granted another form of leave to enter or remain in the UK. Individuals will be eligible for student support as soon as they have either been granted refugee status or another form of leave following an application for asylum.

From the start of the 2023/24 academic year, the Scottish Government has also extended access to the home tuition fee rate and tuition fee support for young people seeking asylum and the children of people seeking asylum. The following criteria applies to these groups:

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- Is a child of a person seeking asylum or a young person seeking asylum;
- Is resident in Scotland on the relevant date;
- Is under 18 years old on the date the application for asylum was made.

The Scottish Government has also opened up access to Discretionary Funds for people seeking asylum who can receive support to meet travel and study costs.

Access to work – the report asked Scottish Government to:

- *Lobby the UK Government to establish a Scottish pilot right to work scheme for NRPF/RE people on a path to regularisation of status*
- *Commission a systematic review of access pathways for existing employability and professional skills training initiative with a view to either removing barriers to access or making intentional policy decisions about those barriers that remain in place.*

The Scottish Government believes that people seeking asylum should have the right to work after six months but the Home Office has refused to take forward our pilot proposal that would enable us to test this. On 27 November 2024, we published our asylum right to work pilot proposal and wrote to the Home Office to ask them to consider it. The Home Office replied on 7 January to say that they were unable to commit to exploring feasibility of this proposal further at this time.

Right to work would enable people to use and develop their skills, make connections in a work environment, help to support themselves and their families, contribute to our economy and restore people's dignity. Through partnership with local authorities, our jointly managed No One Left Behind approach provides employability support to individuals of all ages, supporting them to increase confidence, skills and experience; and enabling them to progress towards or enter employment. For many people with NRPF who have a legal right to work in the UK, No One Left Behind and its aligned programmes have the potential to provide key support into the labour market.

No One Left Behind sets out our ambition to create a more joined up and aligned employability system in Scotland, with existing employability services aiming to deliver flexible, person-centred employability support in partnership with local government, private and third sector partners. Our overarching principles of equality of access to fair, inclusive labour markets and high-quality jobs will remain key in any decisions we make. Through partnership with local authorities, our jointly managed No One Left Behind approach provides employability support to individuals of all ages, supporting them to increase confidence, skills and experience; and enabling them to progress towards or enter employment. For many people with NRPF who have a legal right to work in the UK, No One Left Behind and its aligned programmes have the potential to provide key support into the labour market.

The Scottish Government is also committed to halving the disability employment gap and supporting disabled people to access and sustain fair work. That is why Specialist Employment Support for disabled people will be introduced through No One Left Behind from Summer 2025 which will enhance existing provision and support more disabled people to access and sustain meaningful employment. As set out in the Programme for Government,

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Specialist Employability Support will be implemented for disabled people across Scotland by July 2025 so that more people can access fulfilling jobs.

A person who is employed and has a disability, or physical or mental health condition, may be able to apply for Access to Work to get extra help to be able to carry out their job. Access to Work is not a public fund for immigration purposes and therefore can be accessed by a person who has permission to work and is subject to NRPF, if they meet the qualifying requirements. Access to Work could include a grant to obtain additional practical support, such as a BSL interpreter or to pay for a taxi to work if the person cannot use public transport. It may also be possible to get mental health support.

An Access to Work grant is available when a person is living and working in England, Scotland, or Wales. The Department for Work and Pensions staff guide on Access to Work states customers who have a work permit or leave to remain status do not need to hold a British passport. They are allowed to work in the UK and receive support. Customers who have been given leave to work in the UK but have NRPF are still allowed to apply for Access to Work support.'

New Scots sets out a vision for a welcoming Scotland where refugees and people seeking asylum are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive. This approach to integration recognises the challenges people can face which may limit inclusion and aims to support people and communities to share and build their skills, knowledge and experience. It includes specific work to support participation, including through access to education and employment, and to build connections which can strengthen communities. The Delivery Plan also commits to working with employers in identifying sectors to develop pathways to employment working with a range of partners to engage and recruit from New Scots communities who have the right to work.

Given the wide-ranging nature of support already in place and the dedicated work to remove barriers to access, I am unclear of the value that a systematic review would bring to this work but I remain open to continued dialogue on the merits of this.

I hope that my response has been useful and that there might be some areas of shared interest that we can work together on in the coming months. I am happy to meet with Fair Way Scotland and the report author if it would be useful to continue discussions on the specific recommendations made in the report. As I said at the start, it is only through strong partnership working that Scotland has been able to improve the support and provision for people with No Recourse to Public Funds and I recognise that there will always be more we can do to improve this.

Kind regards,

Kaukab Stewart, Minister for Equalities

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