Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Hidden Lives – New Beginnings: destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status in Scotland

I am pleased to attach a copy of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee report on destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status in Scotland.

Hidden Lives – New Beginnings\(^1\) is the culmination of the Committee’s examination of the causes of destitution, the number of people destitute, the impact on human dignity, health and wellbeing, the current devolved response to destitution and increasing levels of destitution.

We spoke to many people who were seeking asylum or had insecure immigration for other reasons and had No Recourse to Public Funds who courageously shared their experience of destitution. A significant number had experienced abuse, torture and exploitation and had fled to find protection in the UK only to become destitute and vulnerable again. Others had escaped exploitative or abusive relationships to find out that they could not be supported by public funds and faced the difficult survival question of whether to remain in the relationship.

Destitute people are one of the most vulnerable groups in Scotland and we believe they should be treated with fairness, dignity and respect, whether this is by the asylum system or by public authorities.

Our work shows there is a gap in the response to this issue. We ask for a national coordinated, preventative approach to address destitution. Changes to the level of support provided for under the Immigration Act 2016, and wider dispersal of asylum seekers in Scotland, risks worsening destitution if no action is taken. Tackling destitution now will lessen the impact on people, non-government organisations and public services.

We ask for a response to our Report by 22 July.

Yours sincerely,

Christina McKelvie MSP
Convener
Equalities and Human Rights Committee