Dear Chief Officer,

Call for views on destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status in Scotland

Further to my letter of 31 January, I would like to request your assistance with providing some additional information in relation to the Committee’s inquiry into destitution and asylum.

Members of the Committee recently undertook a fact-finding visit to Shakti Women’s Aid in Edinburgh, which provides support for Black, Minority and Ethnic women experiencing domestic abuse. This visit identified an issue related to our inquiry upon which we agreed it was essential to gather views from your organisation in order to gain a greater insight into destitution and insecure immigration status.

For clarity, we understand insecure immigration status to include (a) those with no legal right to stay in the UK; (b) those who potentially have that right but need to establish it; or (c) those that have such a right but have lost documents to prove it. For example, a woman from an European Economic Area country who comes to Scotland based on her partner’s right to reside, but then leaves her partner due to
domestic abuse, may lose her right to reside. There are of course many other circumstances which might give rise to insecure immigration status.

I have also written to NHS Boards and Local Authorities inviting views on this issue and have revised the questions below to reflect the additional information sought. When answering the questions below it would be helpful, if appropriate, if you would cover the issues of No Recourse to Public Funds and Human Rights Assessments in your response.

The specific questions that the Committee would like your input on are:

- As a public service provider, what support are you able to provide to asylum seekers and those with insecure immigration status. Also what are the main barriers to providing support in these circumstances.

- We’d also like to hear about how an asylum seeker or a person with insecure immigration status' need for support is assessed and what would make this assessment process easier, please make reference to any policies and procedures within your organisation.

- If your area does not have experience of asylum seekers or dealing with people with insecure immigration status, it would be helpful to know what training, policies, guidance or procedures are in place, or being developed, to address support should it need to be provided in the future.

The Committee requests you respond, in writing, by close of business on Wednesday 8 March 2017. Please email your written response to equalities.humanrights@parliament.scot

If you have any questions, please contact the Committee Clerks on 0131 348 5223, or by email at equalities.humanrights@parliament.scot.

Yours sincerely,

Christina McKelvie
Convener
Equalities and Human Rights Committee