Dear Chief Constable,

Destitution, Asylum and Insecure Immigration in Scotland

I am writing to you in relation to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee’s current inquiry on Destitution, Asylum and Insecure Immigration in Scotland. The Committee launched its inquiry following concerns raised by the Scottish Refugee Council, Red Cross Scotland and others about destitution amongst asylum seekers and others with insecure immigration status in Scotland.

While immigration policy and legislation is a reserved matter to the UK Government, most, if not all of the key public services which need to respond to the presence of asylum seekers in Scotland such as health, social care, housing and education are all within the devolved competency of the Scottish Parliament and Government.

The Home Office has been engaging with local authorities in a bid to increase the number of asylum dispersal areas in the UK. The number of dispersal areas has increased in the past few years.¹ To date, the main asylum dispersal area in Scotland has been Glasgow, but it is likely that other Scottish local authorities may agree to become dispersal areas. There is, therefore, a pressing need to develop a

joined-up and effective Scottish response to asylum and immigration, from the
Scottish Government, local authorities and across the public sector and third sector.

Police Scotland, as an agency which must enforce both reserved and devolved
policy and legislative decisions in terms of policing and law enforcement, is in a
unique position to contribute to the conversation on the development of such a
response.

During the Committee’s evidence gathering process, several issues of grave concern
have been raised with us in terms of the vulnerability to criminal activity of those
seeking asylum, or who have insecure immigration status. Given this, the Committee
is seeking Police Scotland’s views on the following—

- What are the risks to destitute asylum seekers and those of insecure
  immigration status from organised crime?

- Are these vulnerable groups being exploited by organised criminal activity in
  Scotland? And if so, do you have evidence of the main areas of criminal
  activity where this is a problem?

- What are the wider risks to Scottish society of destitute asylum seekers and
  those of insecure immigration status becoming victims of crime, in terms of
  domestic criminal activity (for example, in relation to crimes such as such
  domestic abuse and sexual violence, prostitution, forced marriage, crimes
  involving FGM etc.)?

- Has Police Scotland been involved in any discussion with the UK Home Office
  about increasing the number of asylum dispersal areas in Scotland?

- How is Police Scotland preparing for the potential increase in asylum
  dispersal areas in Scotland?

I also wish to draw your attention to the fact the Committee has launched a call for
public evidence which is available online.² If there are any issues from this, or any
other issues you wish to raise with the Committee in relation to asylum seekers and
those of insecure immigration status, we would very much welcome your input.

The Committee would welcome a written response from Police Scotland by
Wednesday 22 March.

If you have any questions, please contact the Committee Clerks who would be
happy to assist you.

² EHRiC Call for Evidence:
http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Equal_Opps/Inquiries/Destitution_Asylum_Insecure_Immigration_revised_Call_for_Evidence_Final_20170224.pdf
Yours sincerely,

Christina McKelvie MSP
Convener
Equalities and Human Rights Committee