Dear Minister of State,

Inquiry into destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status in Scotland

Further to my clerk’s communications with your Private Office on 22 and 24 February, I am writing to formally invite you to attend the Committee’s meeting on 30 March 2017 to provide oral evidence to assist us with our 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 we recognise 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.

We are aware 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. We would therefore welcome hearing from you on this aspect, particularly looking at where there is potential 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.

I realise it may be difficult for you to attend in person given the travelling time may impact on other commitments. If it would facilitate your participation, we could arrange for you to give evidence via a video conference link. Our prospective timing for this session is 9.30 to 10.30 am on Thursday 30 March 2017.

It would be helpful if you could confirm by Friday 17 March whether you can give evidence to the Committee, this will enable to put the necessary arrangements in place for either your attendance in person or by video conference link.

Yours sincerely,

Christina McKelvie MSP
Convener
Equalities and Human Rights Committee