For the attention of Ms Christine McKelvie MSP

Equalities and Human Rights Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Ms McKelvie

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

Thank you for your letter dated 10 February 2017 requesting the views of the Falkirk Integration Joint Board (IJB), regarding destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status.

NHS Forth Valley has provided a separate and detailed response, which would be supported by the Falkirk IJB members, for those health services that are in-scope functions for the IJB.

In addition, the following comments are provided in response to the specific questions that the Committee would like input on:

- As a public service provider, what support are you able to provide to asylum seekers and what are the main barriers to providing support.

Depending on their status asylum seekers may have no recourse to public funds. However where an asylum seeker has been awarded leave to remain they will be entitled to a full housing and homeless application and can be provided temporary accommodation whilst the homeless application is being assessed. The temporary accommodation provided will be relevant to their needs for example supported accommodation.

- We’d also like to hear about how a person’s 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 an asylum seeker has been granted right to remain they are entitled to a homeless application, Falkirk Council undertake a full Housing Support Needs Assessment as part of the homeless process. We also offer Housing Options interviews to discuss all accommodation options available to that particular applicant; again a full support assessment would be undertaken. In relation to applying for housing an application would be taken and support would be assessed at the time of allocation. As previously indicated when providing temporary accommodation the individual’s needs are taken into account and where applicable supported accommodation will be provided.

- If your area does not have experience of asylum seekers, it would be helpful to know what policies, guidance or procedures are in place or being developed to address support for asylum seekers.
Falkirk Council has received occasional applications from asylum seekers and therefore our experience is limited. However it would be helpful if the Home Office could share information on the individual needs and vulnerabilities identified as part of their asylum assessment to assist the local authority in providing appropriate support. Due to greater diversity in larger cities, established communities and cultural activities, there will likely be a preference for housing there.

I hope this information is helpful to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Cassidy
Chief Officer
Falkirk Health and Social Care Integration