The Equalities and Human Rights Committee [EHRiC] of the Scottish Parliament will soon consider the issue of destitution as it relates to asylum seekers and those with insecure immigration status in Scotland, and the ways in which public services can mitigate destitution. We’d like to hear from asylum seekers, and those with insecure immigration status or those who have been through these processes (or their families and friends) who are either experiencing destitution, or have experience of being destitute.

We also welcome hearing from voluntary, charitable, religions/faith groups, community leaders and third sector organisations that support or advocate for destitute asylum seekers and those with insecure immigration status. We recognise people might find it difficult to respond to this request, for various reasons. So we would encourage those organisations working to provide support to help people submit a response. The Committee will be undertaking fact-finding visits as part of this inquiry, and so we will get an opportunity to hear directly from asylum seekers and those with insecure immigration status.

EHRiC would also welcome input from Scottish public authorities, for example, local authorities, education departments, health boards that provide services or support to those seeking asylum.

Background

Immigration and asylum policy is reserved to the UK Parliament and UK Government. However, the Scottish Government can provide support to asylum seekers under its devolved functions, such as education, social care and health. Destitution is legally defined in section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. A person is destitute if they do not have adequate accommodation or any means of obtaining it, whether or not essential living needs are met or have adequate accommodation or the means of obtaining it, but can’t meet other essential living needs.

1 Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (Section 95): http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/33/section/95
The British Red Cross estimates\(^2\) over 700 people presented as destitute in Glasgow in 2015. When asylum seekers and those with insecure immigration status have no means of support they often rely on friends, charities or sleep rough. People who are destitute are also more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

**What we need your help with**

EHRiC wants to explore the gaps in the response to destitution from Scottish public authorities and to identify where changes could be made to policy, standards and guidance to address destitution. Please tell us about your experiences, for example—

- Tell us about your experience of being destitute, for example, how long you were destitute and how you found shelter and food.
- Where did you get support from when you were destitute, please explain what support helped most and why.
- If you sought help from public services, for example, health care, what made it most difficult for you to get support?
- Have you assisted destitute asylum seekers or those with insecure immigration status in a voluntary or charitable basis, what assistance do you think is required to help address the issue of destitution.
- As a public service provider what are the main barriers to providing support to destitute asylum seekers or those with insecure immigration status. Tell us about the processes you use to assess a person’s eligibility for services and where you think these might be improved.
- Please tell us about of any other comments you feel are relevant to the inquiry.

These questions are available in other languages, on request.

**THE CLOSING DATE FOR PROVIDING YOUR VIEWS IS 6.00 PM ON WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2017**

**How to engage with us?**

[Please see our policy on how we treat the information you send us](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6vJOPj0GIE)

This policy is available in British Sign Language at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6vJOPj0GIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6vJOPj0GIE)

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\(^2\) Submission to the EHRiC from British Red Cross (Scotland), Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland, Scottish Refugee Council, Scottish Women’s Aid and Engender on development of the Committee’s work programme: [http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Equal_Opps/General%20Documents/British_Red_Cross_Scotland_Children_and_Young_Peoples_Commissioner_Scotla.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Equal_Opps/General%20Documents/British_Red_Cross_Scotland_Children_and_Young_Peoples_Commissioner_Scotla.pdf)
This policy is available and as an MP3 audio file at: http://www.parliament.scot/Audio_files/TreatmentOfWrittenEvidenceMP3_20141112.mp3

You can send us your views by—

Emailing us at: equalities.humanrights@parliament.scot

You can write to us at: Equalities and Human Rights Committee
Room T3.40
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

You can find us on Twitter: @SP_EHRiC

You can find us on FaceBook: https://www.facebook.com/scottishparliament
[inc. possible video from Reporters]

You can ring us: 0131 348 5223 or 0131 348 6040

You can Text/SMS us: 07786 209 888

We welcome calls using the Text Relay service or in BSL through contactscotland-bsl.org/

You can ask questions online through live chat: www.parliament.scot/live-chat

If you would like to receive this document in Braille, or British Sign Language, please contact us and let us know