

# Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

10th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Tuesday 2  
May 2023

## Asylum Seekers in Scotland

### Note by the Clerk

#### Introduction

1. As part of its work programme discussion at its meeting on [Tuesday 17 January 2023](#), the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee agreed to undertake some work with a focus on race inequality in Scotland with a view to undertaking a short inquiry.

#### Background

2. Predecessor committees have undertaken inquiries on race inequality, with the Session 5 Committee focusing on [race equality, employment and skills](#) as well as looking at the impact of destitution on asylum seekers and those with insecure immigration status – [Hidden Lives - new beginnings: destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status in Scotland](#)
3. The Scottish Government and COSLA's [Ending Destitution Strategy](#) (31 March 2021) aims to improve support for people with No Recourse to Public Funds in Scotland, It is in response to the former committee's report. The Scottish Government has since published the [Ending Destitution Together: progress report – year one 2021 to 2022](#) (23 December 2022).
4. To inform its consideration the Committee held an evidence session on [Tuesday 7 February 2023](#), where it heard from stakeholders and grassroots organisations. The purpose of this broad session was to inform the Committee of key issues and assist it in identifying a focus for a short inquiry.
5. At its work programme discussion on [Tuesday 28 March](#), the Committee agreed that it would direct its focus initially on asylum seekers, refugees and people with insecure immigration status building on work undertaken by its predecessor Committee and monitoring progress made in the Scottish Government's Ending Destitution Strategy.
6. One area that Members wish to focus on particularly, are issues arising from the housing of asylum seekers in hotels, the lack of community engagement

preceding these and the “flashpoints” which have resulted. These have been reported widely in recent press.

7. While the decision of where to house asylum seekers is a reserved matter, the Committee is keen to explore the impacts of the current asylum system upon those seeking asylum, local communities, local authorities and private contractors.
8. It will also consider current funding and where public monies could be most effectively directed as well as exploring the provision and availability of access to wider support and advice.

## Evidence sessions

9. At its meeting on [25 April 2023](#) the Committee heard from representatives from the [British Red Cross](#), [Simon Community Scotland](#), [The Scottish Refugee Council](#) and [JustRight Scotland](#).
10. At today’s session, the Committee will hear evidence in a round table format from third sector organisations who support asylum seekers.

## Participants

11. The following people will be taking part in the evidence session—
  - Pinar Aksu, Human Rights and Advocacy Coordinator, Maryhill Integration Network
  - Selina Hales, Founder and Director, Refuweegee
  - Nick Hobbs, Head of Advice and Investigations, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland
  - María José Pavez, Policy Officer, Grampian Regional Equality Council
  - Savan Qadir, Project Manager, Refugees for Justice
  - Dr Sarah Stewart, Volunteer and Partnership Manager, Friends of Scottish Settlers

## Format

12. The meeting will be held in person.

## Topics

13. This session on Asylum Seekers in Scotland will be a chance to discuss topics such as
  - The impact of current and proposed legislation on asylum seekers and on service providers and what steps organisations are taking to address those impacts;

- What support organisations are able to provide to asylum seekers both to those awaiting a decision and to those whose application has been refused;
- What barriers and challenges are faced by organisations when providing support;
- Differences, if any, in how support is provided for those living in hotels and those housed in community settings;
- The impact, if any, of the use of hotel accommodation and how that impacts community integration;
- The level of support provided by local authorities and how well organisations are able work in partnership to provide that support;
- How tensions between communities and asylum seekers can be addressed;
- Views on current Scottish Government policy such as the New Scots and Ending Destitution strategies;
- What additional support if any, should be provided to third sector organisations by the Scottish Government;
- Whether the Scottish Government could do more within its own devolved powers to support asylum seekers living in Scotland.

## Next Steps

14. At next week's meeting, the Committee will hear evidence from public authorities with responsibilities for those within the asylum system in Scotland.

15. The Committee will discuss the evidence it has heard at today's session in private and agree on any issues it wishes to explore further

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**April 2023**