

Scottish Government High Level Action Plan in response to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Concluding Observations



November 2025

Contents

Ministerial Foreword	04
Introduction	06
1: Positive aspects	09
2: General observations	11
3: Business and human rights	14
4: Climate Change	16
5: Maximum available resources	19
6: Non-discrimination	21
7: Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers	27
8: British National (Overseas)	29
9: Equality between men and women	31
10: Right to Work and Minimum Wage	35
11: Social Security	37
12: Childcare	42
13: Protection of the family and children	44

Contents

14: Poverty	47
15: Housing	53
16: Food	60
17: Health and access to healthcare	64
18: Sexual and reproductive health	69
19: Drug policy	72
20: Education	75
21: Cultural rights	81
22: Other	85
Annex A	87



Ministerial Foreword

I am delighted to present the Scottish Government's High Level Action Plan which sets out the activity we are taking to respond to the Concluding Observations made by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN Committee) during the seventh State Party review of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

Since the last State Party review in 2016, we have faced significant global and domestic challenges. The UK left the European Union, we experienced a global pandemic, impacts of the wars in Ukraine and Palestine continue to reverberate across Europe, we are experiencing an ongoing cost of living and housing crisis and we are seeing increasingly divisive rhetoric which is threatening community cohesion. These challenges have reinforced the urgent need to increasingly place human rights, and in particular economic, social, and cultural rights, at the heart of policy and practice. This is reflected in our Programme for Government which sets out the ambitious actions we are taking to tackle our four key priorities: eradicating child poverty, growing the economy, tackling the climate emergency, and ensuring high quality and sustainable public services.

As the Minister responsible for equality, inclusion, and human rights, I fully welcome domestic and international scrutiny of our record. A significant number of policy areas relating to economic, social, and cultural rights are devolved to Scotland. Our participation in the cyclical review of the ICESCR process provides an opportunity to demonstrate the progress that we are continuing to take to implement human rights and make rights real for the people of Scotland.

During the Interactive Dialogue in February 2025, the Scottish Government presented evidence across a range of devolved policy areas, including fair work, social security, child poverty, housing, education, and cultural rights. The UN Committee welcomed Scotland's distinct approach to realising rights, particularly through the proposed Human Rights Bill which would aim to incorporate ICESCR into domestic law, within the limits of devolved competence. Scotland's public health based strategy for addressing alcohol and drug use and deaths was also positively noted. In their Concluding Observations, the UN Committee further commended Scotland's commitment to advancing children's rights, as demonstrated through both the United Nations Convention on the Rights

Ministerial Foreword

of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

This is all part of our work to continue to develop a rights respecting culture in Scotland by embedding human rights into everything we do. This is demonstrated by our National Performance Framework, our vision for a fairer more inclusive society, which includes a National Outcome to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination. This outcome is realised through a number of strategic workstreams, including Scotland's Second National Human Rights Action Plan, the Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Strategy, and human rights budgeting.

We are working with our partners to deliver a Human Rights Tracker Tool which is being designed with an aim to further promote transparency, accountability, and collaboration in implementing international human rights obligations. It will aim to enable monitoring of progress on actions related to devolved matters and support meaningful engagement with stakeholders. By making Scotland's human rights commitments visible and accessible, the tool will help increasingly embed rights in law, policy, and practice.

Whilst Scotland has made good progress in its collective human rights journey, the UN Committee highlighted areas such as poverty, housing, food, and healthcare, where there is still work to be done. We do not shy away from these issues – instead, we recognise these challenges and are committed to tackling them head on with transparency and accountability. Central to our commitment

to human rights leadership is listening to our partners and civil society, learning from global best practice, and responding constructively to scrutiny – whether from UN bodies, Scotland's vibrant civil society, the UK's National Human Rights Institutions, or Members of the Scottish Parliament.

Realising rights for everyone in Scotland is a shared endeavour. Our collective agenda is ambitious and forward-looking, and we must continually strive to do more and do better to ensure that rights are increasingly respected, protected, and fulfilled.

This High Level Action Plan marks not the conclusion, but a continuation of our dialogue on the ICESCR Concluding Observations. We invite all those with an interest in advancing human rights to engage with the actions set out in this plan and to work with us as we take the next steps on Scotland's human rights journey. Our commitment to progressing economic, social, and cultural rights remains steadfast, and we will continue to collaborate with stakeholders, partners, and rights holders across Scotland to make those rights real.



Kaukab Stewart MSP
Minister for Equalities

Introduction

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was adopted by the United Nations in 1966 and came into force in 1976. Scotland, as part of the UK State Party, is bound by the ICESCR. The Covenant guarantees rights essential to human dignity and wellbeing. These include:

- the rights to be exercised without discrimination
- the right to equality between men and women
- the right to work and fair working conditions
- the right to form and join a trade union
- the right to social security
- the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing, and housing
- the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
- the right to education
- the right to take part in cultural life

At an international level, compliance with ICESCR is monitored by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN Committee), an independent body of experts which monitors implementation, interprets treaty provisions, and issues recommendations to States to support them to further realise the rights contained in ICESCR. The UN Committee conducts periodic reviews of State parties, which typically take place every five years. As part of this process, States are required to submit cyclical reports and give oral evidence to the UN Committee demonstrating how they are implementing the rights contained within ICESCR.

The UN Committee last reviewed the UK in 2016. Since then, we have delivered a number of significant achievements including, establishing a social security system centred on dignity, fairness, and respect, incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into domestic law, and taking a human rights based approach to drug use and establishing a National Mission backed by £250 million.

Introduction

Scotland, as part of the UK State Party, completed its latest reporting cycle in February this year (2025) which culminated in an Interactive Dialogue between the UK and the UN Committee. In preparation for the Interactive Dialogue, the Scottish Government engaged with civil society organisations to assess and report on human rights progress since the previous review. This contribution formed part of the UK's State Party report which was submitted to the UN Committee. More than 70 civil society organisations and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) also submitted independent 'shadow reports' and many also travelled to Geneva to give oral evidence to the UN Committee. Following the Interactive Dialogue, the UN Committee issued its Concluding Observations.

Since the publication of the Concluding Observations in February 2025, we have engaged widely with stakeholders across Scotland to ensure their voices shape our approach to responding to treaty body recommendations. This High Level Action Plan sets out the Scottish Government's response to the UN Committee's Concluding Observations on devolved matters. It outlines current and planned actions across a wide range of rights issues, reaffirms Scotland's commitment to further embedding treaty obligations, and provides a practical framework for collaboration and accountability. Building on strong stakeholder engagement, it reflects Scotland's collective ambition to realise human rights for all and supports implementation, informed debate, and scrutiny. It should be read alongside the UK-wide State Party report submitted to the UN.

The publication of this High Level Action Plan marks a key milestone in our broader programme to strengthen the implementation of human rights in Scotland. It is part of a wider suite of activity designed to support our ambition to embed economic, social, and cultural rights more deeply and effectively across government and public services. Central to this ambition is the development of a Human Rights Tracker Tool, which we aim to launch by March 2026. This digital platform will provide a centralised, transparent record of recommendations from international human rights treaty bodies, enabling us to further monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and support accountability on actions related to devolved matters. The Tracker will help ensure that rights are increasingly embedded and realised in practice.

Introduction

Acronyms

AREP: Anti-Racism in Education Programme

AROS: Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland

ASN: Additional Support Needs

BNO: British National (Overseas)

BSL: British Sign Language

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CLW: Community Link Workers

COSLA: Council of Scottish Local Authorities

CRPD: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DDI: Digital Discourse Initiative

DES: Delivering Equally Safe

DHP: Discretionary Housing Payments

DPO: Disabled People's Organisations

EHRBAG: Equality and Human Rights Budget Advisory Group

EHRF: Equality and Human Rights Fund

ELC: Early Learning and Childcare

EMCC: Equal Media and Culture Centre for Scotland

FSD: Fairer Scotland Duty

FSM: Free School Meals

GTAF: Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund

H2040: Housing to 2040

HMRC: His Majesty's Revenue and Customs

ICERD: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

IHAGP: Inclusion Health Action in General Practice

LBTT: Land and Buildings Transaction Tax

MAT: Medication Assisted Treatment

NACWG: National Advisory Council on Women and Girls

NHS: National Health Service

NPF: National Performance Framework

NRPF: No Recourse to Public Funds

NTCs: National Treatment Centres

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PSED: Public Sector Equality Duty

RTHE: Right to a Healthy Environment

SCP: Scottish Child Payment

SGB: Scottish Governing Bodies

SNAP: Scotland's National Human Rights Action Plan

SNAP2: Scotland's Second National Human Rights Action Plan

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths

STEP: Scottish Traveller Education Programme

SWF: Scottish Welfare Fund

TIE: Time for Inclusive Education

TOC: Test of Change

UNCRC Act 2024: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

VAWG: Violence Against Women and Girls

WHO: World Health Organization

1: Positive aspects

(Concluding Observation 5)



Thematic tags

Incorporation; Progressive Realisation; Children's rights

Concluding Observation 5

The Committee welcomes the legislative, administrative and policy measures adopted by the State Party for the protection and progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 [...] and the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

Context

Our [2025-26 Programme for Government](#) reinforces that eradicating child poverty is the single most important objective of this government and that we are committed to driving forward further progress. The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) (UNCRC Act) came into force in July 2024 and directly incorporates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into domestic law in Scotland within the limits of devolved competence. The UNCRC protects rights such as an adequate standard of living, health, and education for children. The

act requires Scottish Ministers to consult with stakeholders, including children, to make a Children's Rights Scheme, setting out the arrangements that are in place, or are to be put in place, to ensure that they comply with certain duties in the Act and to secure better or further effect of the rights of children.

We have launched several initiatives to support the enhancement of children's rights. This includes a [UNCRC implementation framework](#), statutory guidance to support public authorities in the implementation and operation of their duties under [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#) (section 18) of the UNCRC Act, [non-statutory guidance](#) on taking a children's human rights approach, [participation guidance](#) for professionals, parents, carers, and children and young people, the [Children's Rights Skills and Knowledge Framework](#), and a [Children's Rights Knowledge Hub](#).

The [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#) sets in statute income-based targets to significantly reduce child poverty by 2030-31. Under the act, Scottish Ministers are required to publish Tackling Child Poverty delivery plans outlining actions to drive progress towards the child poverty targets, and to publish annual reports on progress made. We have published two Tackling Child

1: Positive aspects

(Concluding Observation 5)

Poverty Delivery Plans: [2018-22](#) and [2022-26](#). These delivery plans include action designed to influence the three key drivers of child poverty reduction: increasing income for work and earning; reducing household costs; and maximising income from social security and benefits in kind. The [latest annual report](#) was published in June 2025, covering the period 2024-25, with the [annual report](#) published in June 2022 summarising key action taken across 2018-22.

Key Actions

We laid the proposal for the [first Children's Rights Scheme](#) before the Scottish Parliament on 20 November. This sets out the arrangements we have made – and propose to make – to ensure we comply with the compatibility duty under the UNCRC Act, and to secure better or further effect of children's rights. A [draft version](#) of the scheme was published in October in accordance with the statutory duties in section 15 of the UNCRC Act.

Scottish Ministers will publish an annual progress report on the Children's Rights Scheme which details actions taken during the previous year and outlines plans for advancing children's rights during the next reporting period. We intend for the first of these reports to be laid before the Scottish Parliament in November 2026, to coincide as closely as possible with World Children's Day, and establish this reporting cycle for subsequent reports.

As soon as practicable after 31 March 2026, all public authorities listed under [section 19 of the UNCRC Act](#) will prepare and submit their first reports to us on the actions they have taken in the reporting period to comply with the compatibility duty under the act and to secure better or further effect of the rights of children, and the actions they intend to take in the next reporting period.

We will complete and publish a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment for every new piece of primary legislation, most Scottish Statutory Instruments, and certain decisions of a strategic nature that relate to the rights and wellbeing of children.

We will publish the final Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan by the end of March 2026 covering the period 2026-31.

We will publish an annual progress report on child poverty by the end of June 2026. This will cover the implementation of action across 2025-26 and the final year of [Best Start, Bright Futures](#), our second Tackling Child Poverty delivery plans for 2018-22.

2: General observations



(Concluding Observations 3; 7a; 7c)

Thematic tags

Incorporation; Access to Justice; Human Rights Bill; Available resources; Human rights budgeting

Concluding Observations 3, 7a and 7c

3: The Committee is concerned about the geographical disparities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights due to the varying financial and administrative capacities of the devolved governments.

7a: To undertake an independent review of the legal and policy framework for economic, social and cultural rights, along with the devolved governments [...] to ensure that the rights in the Covenant are given full legal effect and that victims of violations of those rights have full access to effective judicial and non-judicial remedies.

7c: To make progress on the legislative framework to incorporate economic, social and cultural rights in Scotland.

Context

We have a longstanding commitment to advancing the incorporation and justiciability of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) within Scots law. Building on the recommendations of the [First Minister's National Taskforce on Human Rights Leadership \(2021\)](#), we have been developing legislative proposals to give domestic legal effect to ICESCR rights, within the limits of devolved competence.

The proposed Human Rights Bill would place statutory duties on devolved public service providers to progressively realise the economic, social and cultural rights enshrined in ICESCR, including meeting minimum core obligations. The bill proposes to include an interpretative provision enabling courts, and tribunals to take into account certain international sources including the UN Committee's General Comments and Concluding Observations.

2: General observations

(Concluding Observations 3; 7a; 7c)

Accountability would be strengthened through a combination of judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, ensuring that rights holders can seek redress and that duty bearers are held to account. Further detail on proposed remedies is set out in the [Human Rights Bill Discussion Paper](#), published in July 2025. Oversight of the incorporation and implementation process is being led by the [Incorporation and Implementation Oversight Board](#), chaired by the Minister for Equalities, and will continue through to March 2026.

Scotland continues to take a distinct approach on human rights planning and delivery. We were the first nation in the UK to publish a [National Human Rights Action Plan \(SNAP\)](#) in 2013. Our second plan, [SNAP2](#), launched in 2023 and running until 2030, sets out 54 actions to promote awareness and embed human rights across public bodies, civil society, and communities. The SNAP2 Leadership Panel has prioritised 28 of these actions for focused delivery by duty bearers and partners.

We are also committed to increasingly embed equality and human rights across policymaking and public service delivery. Our forthcoming mainstreaming framework will include a practical action plan and toolkit to support implementation. Following public consultation on the [draft Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Strategy](#), which took place between October 2024 and February 2025, we have worked closely with key stakeholders to refine the strategy and will continue this collaborative approach as we finalise the strategy. This is complemented by our work supporting public bodies, in particular local government and health

services, to better understand economic, social and cultural rights and how they can be understood in practice through our capability building work.

Our commitment to human rights budgeting remains central to our approach. We continue to embed the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation in our budget process. Since 2009, we have published an equality statement alongside the budget. The most recent [Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement](#) reflects improvements in how evidence informs budget decisions and how key decisions are communicated to the public.

Key Actions

We are proposing to incorporate the ICESCR rights alongside other treaties into Scots law. We published a [Discussion Paper](#) setting out bill proposals and areas for further development. This is being used to test and refine proposals with stakeholders in advance of a bill potentially being introduced in the next parliamentary session, subject to the outcome of the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections.

We are funding [NHS Education for Scotland](#) and [Improvement Service](#) to strengthen public sector knowledge and awareness of the rights proposed for incorporation.

We are also taking forward targeted activities to strengthen human rights knowledge and awareness in the third sector, working with organisations funded through our [Equality and Human Rights Fund](#).

2: General observations

(Concluding Observations 3; 7a; 7c)

We have established a [Capability Building Working Group](#) to inform and review the delivery of human rights capability building activities and to help inform future capability building work beyond March 2026.

We will publish a mainstreaming strategy, action plan and toolkit by April 2026. The action plan will bring together actions that we are taking to mainstream equality and human rights, including a wide range of cross-cutting mainstreaming actions that have already been committed to, such as in response to recommendations of the [National Advisory Council on Women and Girls](#) (NACWG) or our [Mainstreaming Report](#) published in April 2025. The toolkit will be an online platform containing information, training, materials, and best practice examples to support us and the wider Scottish public sector, to evaluate and strengthen mainstreaming activity.

We continue to work with the [Equality and Human Rights Budget Advisory Group \(EHRBAG\)](#), to take stock of and deliver on the group's 2021 recommendations and agreed priority actions for this year.

3: Business and human rights

(Concluding Observation 11a)



Thematic Tags

Business and human rights; Due Diligence; Access to justice

Concluding Observation 11a

To establish a legal framework requiring businesses to conduct human rights due diligence, ensuring accountability for violations of economic, social and cultural rights in their operations and supply chains, both domestically and abroad, and guaranteeing effective access to remedies for victims, including non-nationals [...] The State Party should require mandatory human rights due diligence in sectors that have caused extraterritorial impacts and concerns, particularly the financial and banking services.

Context

While key areas such as company law, employment law, international trade regulation, and many industry-specific matters remain reserved to the UK Government, we actively support the business community in Scotland to advance equality and human rights. We do this through strategic use of devolved levers, such as public procurement, grant funding, legislation, and guidance, and through ongoing dialogue with industry and governments. Our actions are guided

by the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#).

Under the [Procurement Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), public bodies are required to consider how procurement can improve economic, social, and environmental wellbeing and reduce inequality. Non-compliance with social, environmental, or labour laws may result in contract termination, reinforcing accountability and ethical standards in public spending.

The Scottish Government's [human rights due diligence guidance](#) sets out recommendations on how we, our executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies should undertake due diligence on an individual or company's human rights record before entering into an 'investment relationship'.

Through our fair work policy, we encourage employers across all sectors to adopt fair work practices. Public sector grants and contracts are linked to the [Fair Work First](#) criteria, which employers are expected to meet where relevant and proportionate. This ensures that public investment supports inclusive and equitable workplaces.

3: Business and human rights

(Concluding Observation 11a)

Human rights are also central to our [Vision for Trade](#) which embeds human rights as a core consideration in trade policy. The [Plan for Growing Scotland's Exports](#) sets out our clear expectations for Scottish based companies to adopt ethical business practices, conduct due diligence on business partners, and understand local conditions in export markets.

To address exploitation in business operations and supply chains, the [Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) introduced a new offence of slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour. In 2018, we published [Guidance for Businesses](#) outlining their role in preventing and mitigating trafficking and exploitation, reinforcing our commitment to ethical and rights respecting business practices.

Key Actions

We are continuing to promote fair work practices through our [Fair Work policy and Fair Work First approach](#), including encouraging employers accessing public sector grants and contracts to address workplace inequalities, such as pay and employment gaps for disabled people, racialised minorities, women and workers aged over 50, and to offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment.

We are promoting content on flexible working, job security, and diversity and inclusion for employers on the [fair work digital resource hub](#). This contains advice and guidance on implementing fair work practices in relation to areas such as flexible working, job security, and diversity and inclusion. We published [guidance](#) in April 2025 which was co-produced with businesses.

On 3 September 2025, the First Minister announced to the Scottish Parliament that we will pause the payment of new business grants to, or investment in, companies involved in the design, production, supply, and support of military equipment, technologies and services whose products or services are provided to specific identified countries, where there is plausible evidence of genocide being committed by that country.

In July 2025, we published the revised [Human Trafficking Strategy](#) setting out our four outcomes to prevent human trafficking in Scotland. We will publish a delivery plan outlining how the strategy will be implemented in the spring of 2026.

In June 2025, the Deputy First Minister provided an update to the Scottish Parliament regarding Scottish Enterprise's review of its human rights due diligence checks. The Deputy First Minister confirmed Scottish Enterprise identified opportunities for improvements to ensure its human rights due diligence procedures continue to align with good practice. These improvements will be rolled out incrementally over 2025-26.

We are exploring how the proposed Human Rights Bill could place duties upon private actors who are contracted or have been procured to carry out public functions, where possible and within devolved competence, so that private actors carry out these public functions in a manner that respects, protects, and fulfils the economic, social and cultural rights set out in the bill.

4: Climate Change



(Concluding Observation 13)

Thematic Tags

Thematic Tags

Climate Change; Right to a healthy environment; NetZero

Concluding Observation 13

The Committee recommends that the State Party take all measures necessary to meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement and implement its net-zero strategy, particularly in the energy, transport, land use, agriculture and building sectors. It further encourages the State Party to enhance its decarbonization policy for dwelling stock.

Context

We remain fully committed to our ambition and duty to reach net zero by 2045. We are now more than halfway to net zero and continue to be ahead of the UK as a whole in delivering long term emissions reductions. We are determined to achieve net zero in a way that distributes the costs and benefits fairly, and which tackles inequality and injustice.

Scotland was the first country in the UK to establish a [Just Transition Commission](#) providing independent scrutiny and advice on how to put justice at the heart of climate action in Scotland. Based on the Commission's advice, we developed a [National Just Transition Planning Framework](#), which is designed to ensure a strategic, consistent approach to planning for a just transition across our economy and society.

Since the publication of our last [Climate Change Plan](#), we have introduced a ban on the supply and manufacturing of certain problematic single use plastic items; fully allocated the £30 million [Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund](#); created over 15,000 hectares of new woodland; brought the [New Build Heat Standard](#) into force; and launched an [Emerging Energy Technologies Fund](#) committing £80 million of funding to support the development of carbon capture storage and negative emissions technologies in Scotland.

We continue to build on our legally binding commitment to a just transition, as set out in the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#), with a focus on people and equity. We published our annual [Climate Change Plan Monitoring Report](#) in May 2025. Of the 43 indicators, 26 are on track.

4: Climate Change (Concluding Observation 13)

Key Actions

We are considering how to recognise the right to a healthy environment (RTHE) in the proposed Human Rights Bill to reinforce the importance of the environment. We are also working to develop the strength, scope and application of a duty for the RTHE which could require duty bearers to proactively consider the right to a healthy environment in their decision making processes. The domestic articulation of the right is being developed using the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to a healthy environment and consists of six substantive elements which includes a safe climate.

We published our updated [Climate Change Plan](#) on 06 November 2025 covering the policies and proposals we will take to reduce emissions in Scotland during the period 2026-2040.

We are proposing to amend the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) to introduce multi-year 'carbon budgets' to replace linear annual targets and better reflect the reality of how emissions change. If approved by the Scottish Parliament, the first carbon budget (2026-30) aims for an average 57% reduction in emissions compared to 1990 levels, increasing to 94% by 2041-45.

We are developing [Just Transition Plans](#) to help businesses and investors realise economic opportunities related to net zero. We published a consultation on the [Land Use and Agriculture Just Transition Plan](#) in August 2025, which focuses on maintaining and supporting thriving rural and island communities, and the draft [Transport Just Transition Plan](#) in February 2025.

We are providing £25 million to the Just Transition Fund for Grangemouth, bringing our total commitment and investment in the Grangemouth and Falkirk area to £87 million. The [Grangemouth Just Transition Plan](#) was published in June 2025.

We will invest a further £8.5 million in capital funding through the [Just Transition Fund](#) in 2025-26 to support new projects in the north east and Moray, with a focus on projects that support jobs, skills and economic opportunities. We have allocated more than £75 million to the fund so far to support workers and communities in the heartlands of our oil and gas sector as we transition from fossil fuels. In its first two years, projects supported through the fund have created and safeguarded 230 jobs and opened up over 750 training places.

We are continuing to work on the delivery of our [Green Industrial Strategy](#) which we published in September 2024. The strategy aims to harness Scotland's strengths to secure economic growth from the global transition to net zero by focusing investment and policy on key opportunity areas such as wind, hydrogen, carbon capture, green financial services, and clean industries.

In 2025-26 we are committing £4.9 billion in capital and resource spend for activities that will have a positive impact on delivery of our climate change goals. This means that 40% of total capital budget is being targeted towards programmes that will tackle the climate emergency and respond to climate change.

4: Climate Change

(Concluding Observation 13)

We are also committing £936 million in 2025-26 to climate adaptation. This is supported by our [third National Adaption Plan](#) which sets out the actions that we and partners will take from 2024-29. This was published in September 2024 alongside an [Adaptation Monitoring Framework](#) making Scotland the first UK nation to publish both policy and monitoring frameworks together.

We will invest over £188 million to support high quality active travel and bus infrastructure, sustainable travel integration, and behaviour change activity to promote walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday shorter journeys and other sustainable journeys.

We will also invest £263 million to put more zero emission buses on Scotland's roads, to help local authorities leverage more private investment for electric vehicle charging.

In 2025-26 we will increase funding for low carbon and climate positive activities to £54.4 million supporting the switch to zero emission vehicles and decarbonisation of the bus sector.

We are also providing a further £4.5 million to expand public charging in rural and islands communities.

We are developing a fleet decarbonisation action plan that reflects the current fiscal operational environment and the scale of emission reduction required.

We will invest in woodland creation on Scotland's national forests and land. [Forestry and Land Scotland](#) will deliver an annual contribution towards the overall woodland creation target by creating new sustainable woodland on Scotland's national forests and land, including through partnerships with external organisations to scale carbon capture opportunities.

5: Maximum available resources



(Concluding Observation 21a)

Thematic Tags

Business and human rights; Tax; Due Diligence

Concluding Observation 21a

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Strengthen efforts to combat illicit financial flows, tax evasion and fraud, particularly by wealthy individuals and businesses, by establishing public registries of companies and trusts with mandatory due diligence.

Context

The establishment of registers of companies and trusts is reserved to the UK Government. Where we have the power to do so, we take the toughest possible approach to tackling tax avoidance. The responsibility for income tax is split between us and the UK Government, and it is collected and managed by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). The [Scotland Act 2012](#) gave the Scottish Parliament the power to set a different rate of income tax in Scotland, known as the Scottish Rate of Income Tax, and took effect in 2016. [The Scotland Act 2016](#) extended these powers, enabling the Scottish Parliament

to set income tax band thresholds (excluding the personal allowance) as well as rates.

The [Revenue Scotland Tax Powers Act 2014](#) establishes the Scottish general anti-avoidance rule. This rule allows Revenue Scotland to take counteraction against tax avoidance arrangements in relation to devolved taxes which it considers to be artificial, even if the arrangements otherwise operate within the letter of the law. We introduced the [Non-Domestic Rates \(Miscellaneous Anti-Avoidance Measures\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#) which enable local authorities to tackle anti-avoidance practice for non-domestic rates. With effect from 1 April 2025, local authorities can retain 50% of the additional non-domestic rates income raised from the use of these powers.

We published an [updated Tax Strategy in December 2024](#), outlining our commitment to establishing a fair, efficient, and effective tax system, which involves collaboration with revenue authorities to enhance compliance with devolved taxes and to develop an efficient system that minimises compliance costs for taxpayers.

5: Maximum available resources

(Concluding Observation 21a)

Key Actions

We will enhance data sharing with local authorities and HMRC to better identify individuals who can pay non-domestic rates but do not. A pilot [study](#) by Audit Scotland in 2020 found that data sharing increased collected liabilities to about £1.9 million annually.

We are working to strengthen our approach to Scottish tax compliance as laid out in our June 2025 [Medium-Term](#)

[Financial Strategy](#) and accompanying [Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan](#). This includes working in partnership with HMRC through the joint compliance working group, a sub group of the [Scottish Income Tax Board](#), and collaborating with Revenue Scotland to deliver Scottish Aggregates Tax and Scottish Building Safety Levy through the use of data and operational insights.

6: Non-discrimination

(Concluding Observations 25b; 25c)



Thematic Tags

Non-Discrimination; Equality; Public Sector Equality duty; Socio-economic background; Disability; Racialised minorities; Gypsy/Travellers; Persons of African or Asian descent; Migrants; Refugees and asylum seekers; Faith and belief; Fair work; Social security; Adequate housing; Education

Concluding Observation 25b

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Enact the outstanding provisions of the Equality Act 2010, in particular part 1 (1), on the public sector duty regarding socioeconomic inequalities.

Context

Equal opportunities are primarily the responsibility of the UK Government. However, the encouragement of equal opportunities, excluding actions based on prohibition or regulation, is devolved to the Scottish Government. Additionally, Scottish Ministers have powers to establish duties to enable public authorities to improve their performance of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED), which is the general duty on public sector authorities to have due

regard to the need to eliminate unlawful behaviour that is banned by the [Equality Act 2010](#), including discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equal opportunities and foster good relationships between people who have protected characteristics and people who do not. We have established a public sector improvement equality duty stakeholder reference group, with duty bearers and equality advocacy organisations, to inform the development of proposals to improve the operation of the PSED in Scotland.

The public sector duty regarding socio-economic inequalities is set out in legislation in section 1 of the Equality Act 2010. In Scotland, it is known as the [Fairer Scotland Duty](#) (FSD). It places a legal responsibility on certain public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions.

When deciding how to fulfil the FSD, named public bodies must take into account the statutory guidance issued by Scottish Ministers. In October 2021, we published [revised statutory guidance](#), which drew on learning and practice from the first three years of implementation,

6: Non-discrimination

(Concluding Observations 25b; 25c)

and was developed with input from the Improvement Service, Equality and Human Rights Commission, public bodies and stakeholders.

From the introduction of the FSD in 2018 to September 2022, we funded a National Duty Co-ordinator based in the Improvement Service who offered support, advice and training on the FSD to public bodies to help embed practices.

Key Actions

We will publish a set of proposals to improve the operation of the PSED in Scotland. These proposals will support duty bearers to more effectively discharge the three needs of the PSED. We plan to publish the proposals in our regulation 12 report in December 2025.

We will continue to take action to meet the [2025-29 Equality Outcomes](#). We developed these outcomes following engagement with nearly 120 duty bearer organisations. The outcomes emphasise a proactive approach to addressing structural inequalities in Scotland.

Concluding Observation 25c

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Prevent and combat discrimination, racism, stereotypes and inequalities faced by persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, persons of African or Asian descent and members of Jewish, Muslim and Hindu communities, and migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers by implementing targeted awareness-raising campaigns and affirmative action measures in such areas as decent work, social security, adequate housing, healthcare and education.

Context

While the Equality Act 2010 is reserved legislation, its implementation is central to our efforts to create a fairer and more inclusive Scotland. It underpins our work across devolved areas to advance equality, eliminate discrimination, and uphold the rights of individuals and communities. Our actions contribute directly to [the National Performance Framework's](#) vision of a Scotland where everyone can thrive and participate fully in society.

Our [Hate Crime Strategy](#) and [Delivery Plan](#) sets out our vision for a Scotland where everyone lives free from hate and prejudice. The strategy includes improved support for victims, enhanced data collection and analysis, and additional focus on ways to prevent hate crime. Delivery of the strategy is overseen by the [Hate Crime Strategic Partnership Group](#).

The [Hate Crime and Public Order \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#) came into force in April 2024. The act provides legislative protections against offences aggravated by prejudice against disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity, variations in sex characteristics, and age.

Our [Faith and Belief Engagement Strategy](#) supports inclusive policymaking by fostering meaningful dialogue with diverse communities, promoting mutual understanding, and advancing community cohesion as a foundation for tackling hate and discrimination.

6: Non-discrimination

(Concluding Observations 25b; 25c)

Our third [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#) sets out our vision for a welcoming Scotland where refugees and people seeking asylum are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive. We published an accompanying [delivery plan](#) which outlines the specific actions partners will take and within what timelines to implement the strategy. We work with our partners, the Council of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), and the Scottish Refugee Council to deliver this work.

In June 2025 we published our [Disability Equality Plan](#), co-produced with disabled people's organisations (DPOs), setting out a whole of government approach to advancing disability equality. It includes investment of £3 million, with £1.5 million allocated to a new fund improving access to support and services for disabled people. The plan marks a significant step toward realising the CRPD in practice.

We published the [Anti-Racist Employment Strategy](#) in December 2022. Embedded in and given an intersectional focus through our [Fair Work Action Plan](#), the strategy seeks to address the causes of the ethnicity pay and employment gaps. It provides resources and guidance to help employers and commits us to actions including increasing the capability of senior leaders, encouraging use of positive action schemes and improving support for employers on recruitment and training. We have provided £1.3 million in projects for ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups through the workplace equality fund. The [Fair Work Convention's Framework](#) defines fair work as work that offers opportunities to effectively challenge, job fulfilment,

opportunity, respect and security. This means better fair work outcomes for all, as well as specific improvements in the experience of work and the workplace for women, disabled people, and people from ethnic minorities.

In June 2025, an [independent archival report](#) into the historical policies and actions applied to Gypsy/Traveller communities in Scotland was published. In July 2025 the First Minister told the Scottish Parliament that these policies were unacceptable and made a formal apology to the communities.

In January 2025, at an anti-racism summit of education leaders, the First Minister recognised that racism exists within our education system – interpersonally and institutionally – and committed to eradicating racism through our anti-racist actions and policies. Work to achieve this is being taken forward within the [Anti-Racism in Education Programme](#) (AREP) which takes an intersectional approach, cognisant of the different experiences of racism and discrimination for those with intersecting characteristics such as gender, disability and religious identity. Within its scope, the AREP covers both visible and non-visible ethnic minority groups.

6: Non-discrimination (Concluding Observations 25b; 25c)

In September 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care identified racism as a key driver of racialised health inequalities and a significant public health challenge. The [statement](#) included an explicit commitment to take an anti-racism stance across health and care. We have issued [anti-racism planning guidance](#), developed in collaboration with stakeholders, including the NHS ethnic minority forum, to NHS Boards.

Key Actions

Our proposals for a Human Rights Bill seek to give further effect to rights for women, disabled people, and racialised minorities.

The recently published [Discussion Paper](#) details plans to incorporate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and establish an equality provision.

We are providing £7.9 million to third sector organisations in 2025-26 to support anti-racism work, interfaith dialogue, hate crime prevention and asylum and refugee integration projects.

The funding aims to support work that brings communities together to challenge misinformation, bridge divides and enhance connections across shared needs and interests.

We are committing an additional one-off £300,000 of funding in 2025-26 to support cohesion projects that are

bringing communities together across Scotland to challenge division and exclusion.

We will publish a [toolkit](#), co-developed with COSLA and launched through [Victim Support Scotland](#), to support local authorities in tackling hate and prejudice locally. We will also raise awareness of Education Scotland's new [professional learning resource](#) to help practitioners identify and address prejudice-based behaviours in education and youth work settings, and publish research into effective approaches for overcoming barriers communities face when reporting hate crime.

We are providing approximately £3 million funding from 2025-27 for the establishment of the [Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland \(AROS\)](#) to support community led efforts to address racism within the public sector. An initial mobilisation phase is underway, focused on building the infrastructure and processes required to operationalise AROS. Once fully operational, it is anticipated AROS will focus on developing strategic partnerships across all sectors to collaboratively embed anti-racism change. This will include working collectively with the third sector (including organisations working with people and communities of African and Asian descent) to ensure lived experience and co-production are at the heart of driving meaningful change for our diverse communities across Scotland. AROS is expected to be operational in early 2026.

6: Non-discrimination

(Concluding Observations 25b; 25c)

Together with COSLA, we are implementing the [Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan 2024-26](#) and have committed or spent nearly £15 million through the [Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund over 2021-25](#) for more and better accommodation. The plan sets out 32 goals across five areas to improve the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: accommodation and planning, education, health, social security and work, and community empowerment.

We continue to speak with Gypsy/Travellers across Scotland to ensure their voices are heard and inform our actions and policies. Our recent listening exercise heard from over 100 individual Gypsy/Traveller voices. The Minister for Equalities will attend further community conversations with Gypsy/Travellers communities over the coming months. We remain open to continuing dialogue and we will explore what more can be done in partnership.

As part of the [Disability Equality Plan](#), we launched the the £1.5 million [Improving Access Fund](#) on 07 November 2025. Jointly designed with DPOs, the Fund will provide grants for projects that improve access to essential services and promote independent living, choice, and participation.

A progress report on the [Disability Equality Plan](#) will be published in 2026 setting out achievements against the plan's actions and identifying opportunities for further impact. We are committing to invest £3 million to support the overall disability equality plan and improve the lives of disabled people across Scotland.

We continue to support DPOs to support disabled people through the [Equality and Human Rights Fund \(EHRF\)](#), the [Access to Elected Office Fund](#) and the [Scottish Access Panel Network](#). The EHRF supports projects that work to promote equality and tackle discrimination and prejudice; the Access to Elected Office Fund helps disabled people who want to stand for elected office in Scotland and provides practical and financial guidance and support to remove barriers for disabled candidates; and Access Panels are groups of disabled people who volunteer their time to support improvements in accessibility in their local community.

We continue to fund the [Independent Living Fund](#), with an investment of £75.6 million in 2025-26. By opening the fund to new applications in April 2024, we are helping up to 1,400 more disabled people to access the support they need to lead independent lives.

6: Non-discrimination (Concluding Observations 25b; 25c)

We will undertake several actions to address the barriers faced by disabled people in rural and island communities.

These will build on ongoing partnership work being undertaken to strengthen holistic support in communities, including a revised approach to service design based on people's needs. We will work with DPOs to ensure the voices and experiences of disabled people's needs are central to service delivery and policy development in island areas, building on the findings of the [National Islands Plan Consultation](#) and [subsequent analysis](#).

In early 2026 we will publish guidance on developing a whole-school approach to addressing and responding to racism and racist incidents. We published [interim guidance](#) on responding to racist incidents towards children and young people in schools in June 2025.

We are taking forward the [Education Reform programme](#), including the creation of new and reformed national bodies and qualifications by 2031. This provides the opportunity to strengthen and embed equality and human rights within our education system at all levels.

In May 2025 we published our [Commitment and Guidance to support the Anti Racism in Education Programme](#). The guidance will contribute to the development of a proactively anti-racist education system and create the conditions to achieve the aim that by 2030.

We are supporting the Scottish Trades Union Congress to pilot and develop activity designed to promote equality and diversity in the workplace and tackle discrimination at work, we will deliver this by March 2026.

We will develop a healthcare inequalities action plan by the end of 2027. This will include developing the general practice healthcare inequalities programme to reduce barriers to accessing care; developing practical guidance on equitable care to support a systemic focus on health equity that reduces the chance of missing data and digital exclusion; supporting health inequalities training and education for health, social care and social work professionals; and addressing stigma and discrimination and racialised healthcare inequalities.

We are working with Public Health Scotland to improve and normalise race and ethnicity data capture and use across health datasets, taking into account anti-racism and ethical approaches, as well as individual preferences and identities.

For further actions see:

Social security Concluding Observations: 41a to 41d

Housing Concluding Observations: 47a to 47f

7: Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

(Concluding Observation 27b)

Thematic Tags

Migrants; Refugees and asylum seekers; Social security; Healthcare; Education; Fair work

Concluding Observation 27b

The Committee recommends that the State Party [...] along with the devolved governments [...] enhance its integration strategies focusing on access to social security, healthcare and education, including language courses, family unity and access to the labour market and employment services.

Context

Being able to seek asylum in another country is a human right and we have a long history of welcoming refugees and people seeking asylum to Scotland. Asylum is a matter reserved to the UK Government. We are responsible for devolved matters, including access to essential services like healthcare and education, that enable the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum in our communities. All residents of Scotland have the right to access healthcare, this includes refugees, people seeking asylum, and those whose asylum claims have been refused.

Alongside our third [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#) and [delivery plan](#), we have also co-published the [Ending Destitution Together Strategy](#) with COSLA. The strategy sets out initial actions to support people who are not allowed to claim public funds. This includes actions to deliver essential needs, enable access to specialist advice and advocacy and promote inclusive approaches so that people can pursue their ambitions and be active members of our communities.

On 7 July 2025, we wrote a [joint letter with COSLA](#) to the UK Government to raise concerns about the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) rule. We called on them to take a range of actions including ceasing the application of the NRPF rule to people in vulnerable situations and setting up a clear process for adding devolved funding to the public funds list.

Key Actions

We will publish deliverables and key areas of work for the next phase of the [Ending Destitution Together Strategy](#) by the end of 2025. This will be informed by the outputs of several engagement sessions which took place earlier in 2025 with key stakeholders including third sector organisations, local authorities and subject experts.

7: Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

(Concluding Observation 27b)

We will also publish an annual report which will provide an update on progress across all the [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy Delivery Plan](#) commitments including those related to employment.

We are providing £8 million to the Scottish Refugee Council to run the [national Refugee Support Service](#) to support refugees and people seeking asylum across Scotland. This includes helping people understand their rights and giving advice and support to people so they can rebuild their lives and become part of Scottish society.

We are providing over £1 million to support delivery of the [New Scots Plan](#). This includes English language classes, support for family reunion, translation and interpretation services, training in different languages, resources for people who are stateless, and making sure people with lived experience are involved in shaping services.

On top of this, 10 charities will receive a total of £488,058 over 2025-26 to run projects that support refugees and people seeking asylum to feel at home in Scotland and integrate into local communities by providing a range of services, such as language support, employability training, and social and cultural activities.

We continue to invest in the delivery of a casework and emergency cash first support initiative delivered by [Fair Way Scotland](#). During 2025-26, we have provided over £440,000 to increase caseworker capacity, supporting caseworkers to cut caseloads and waiting times, extending geographical reach across Scotland, and providing cash first crisis support as well as interpretation services.

In addition, we are providing £701,000 of funding to COSLA in 2025-26 to increase access to specialist immigration advice to support local authorities assisting people subject to NRPf. This work, delivered by the [International Organization for Migration](#), helps support vulnerable groups and complex cases, build local capacity and strengthen local service design, whilst also collecting data to strengthen the national evidence base on immigration advice needs.



8: British National (Overseas)



(Concluding Observations 29a; 29d)

Thematic Tags

British Nationals Overseas; Social Security; Fair Work; Public Funds

Concluding Observation(s)

29a: The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Remove barriers to labour market access for British National (Overseas) visa holders by ensuring the recognition of qualifications, job training opportunities and access to social security and public funds.

29d: The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Strengthen integration measures through targeted support programmes and awareness-raising initiatives.

Context

While immigration rules are set by the UK Government, we have used our devolved powers to improve access to public services, education, and employment. British Nationals Overseas (BN(O)) visa holders can live, work, and study in Scotland, and they are entitled to use services like healthcare and schools. We are committed to ensuring that individuals arriving on a BN(O) visa are treated with dignity and respect as they begin their new lives here.

We published the [Scotland Welcome Pack for British Nationals \(Overseas\) from Hong Kong](#) in August 2021. This guide explains how to access public services, find work, get training, and apply for financial support. We will continue to promote and update this resource so that BN(O) visa holders have the information they need from day one. COSLA has developed a [Welcome Hub](#) which provides information to Hong Kong BN(O)s on employment, housing, healthcare, education, ESOL language classes and safety.

8: British National (Overseas)

(Concluding Observations 29a; 29d)

Key Actions

We are supporting new Scots, including Hong Kong BN(O)s, by providing multi-year funding (October 2025-March 2028) for a national [Refugee Support Service](#).

The funding will enable more people to be supported and ensure that new Scots are helped to understand their rights and the services they are entitled to access.

Through the [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy Delivery Plan](#), we are taking forward actions to address labour market barriers for all people coming to Scotland, including BN(O)s, through engagement with employers, work with training providers supporting modern apprenticeships and work with the [Scottish Local Authority Economic Development Group](#) to monitor and promote local authority employability services.

We will help BN(O) visa holders with overseas qualifications to understand how to get them recognised in the UK.

We will provide clear guidance on how to contact the right regulatory bodies through the [New Scots](#) website so that people can work in their chosen professions, thereby adding to Scottish society, without unnecessary delays.

We will continue to provide information and support for people to apply for a change of conditions and lift their NRP restriction if they are at risk of destitution, and ensure that people know how to access support via their local authorities, Social Security Scotland and [Shelter Scotland](#), especially if they are homeless or in urgent need.



9: Equality between men and women

(Concluding Observations 31a; 31b; 31c)

Thematic Tags

Equality; Gender; Violence against women and girls; Access to justice; Legal Aid; Media; Gender Budgeting

Concluding Observation 31a:

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Intensify efforts to combat negative gender stereotypes and promote attitudinal change, including by addressing stereotypical imaging and the objectification of women in the media.

Context

We are committed to advancing gender equality in media and culture. The National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) [recommended](#) that we create a resourced media body to publicly review media which is sexist, misogynistic or bigoted, as well as to provide guidance on gender equal media and strengthen the intersectional voices of women in media. The [Equal Media and Culture Centre for Scotland](#) (EMCC) launched in 2023.

We commissioned [Zero Tolerance](#) to develop guidelines for journalists and content creators on how to accurately and sensitively report on violence against women and girls (VAWG) ([broadcast edition](#) and [national edition](#)). The guidance includes tips for reporting on different forms of violence, including rape and sexual assault, domestic abuse and domestic homicide, harmful traditional practices, commercial sexual exploitation, online abuse, and child sexual abuse.

While broadcasting is reserved to the UK Government, we continue to advocate for improving diversity, equality and data collection in broadcasting in our communications with the UK Government, broadcasters and the UK communications regulator, the Office of Communications.

9: Equality between men and women

(Concluding Observations 31a; 31b; 31c)

Key Actions

As per our [Equally Safe Delivery Plan](#), we will host a ministerial summit to challenge the nature of existing media coverage of VAWG. Work to explore the scope of the summit will take place in spring 2026, in preparation for it taking place in summer 2026.

We continue to fund the [EMCC](#) and have provided £111,000 per year since 2022. It conducts research to understand gender representation and diversity in Scottish media and culture. It also monitors progress towards gender equality, such as monitoring representation in leadership positions, diverse portrayals of women in media content, and the presence of harmful gender stereotypes.

The [Culture Fair Work Taskforce](#) will develop recommendations for actions to further implement the Fair Work First policy in the culture sector, including consideration of a sectoral culture fair work agreement by the end of 2025.

A fair work agreement for Scotland's creative and culture sectors is likely to have a disproportionately positive impact for women, including those groups facing intersecting inequality such as disabled women and women from ethnic minorities.

We continue to work in partnership to increase diversity in the cultural sector, sharing new approaches and codes of practice that ensure skills development and board membership have diversity at their core. This includes helping recruitment diversity by introducing equal remuneration for board members of national culture and heritage public bodies.

Concluding Observation 31b

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Ensure women's access to justice and strengthen responses to gender-based violence through comprehensive legislation, public policies and investigation protocols, alongside robust protection, remedies and support for victims.

Context

We are committed to making sure women can access justice and get the support they need if they experience gender based violence. We updated our [Equally Safe Strategy](#) in December 2023. This strategy sets out a vision to prevent violence from occurring in the first place, to build the capability and capacity of support services, and strengthen the justice response to victims and perpetrators. Our [Equally Safe Delivery Plan](#) consists of 14 deliverables and associated actions. These include making sure our work reflects the needs of minority women, raising public awareness about the impact of VAWG, and helping health services identify and support victims and survivors.

In February 2025, we published a [Legal Aid Reform Discussion Paper](#) setting out three key strands of work to improve the legal aid system. This includes delivering improvements to the operation of the judicare system, simplifying it for users and providers, improving the payment system through greater use of block fees, and introducing a simplified online application process. These reforms aim to improve access to justice, including for those affected by gender based violence.

9: Equality between men and women

(Concluding Observations 31a; 31b; 31c)

Key Actions

We will publish a revised timeline for the implementation of part 2 of the [Domestic Abuse \(Protection\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#) by the end of 2025. This will give authorities the right to terminate Scottish secure tenancies in cases involving abusive behaviour.

We are investing £21.6 million in 2025-26 in specialist services and projects through the [Delivering Equally Safe \(DES\) Fund](#). This is an increase of £2.4 million on previous funding. The DES fund supports the work of the [Equally Safe Strategy](#).

We are providing £48 million in funding to victims' organisations for the period 2022-25 under our [Victim Centred Approach Fund](#). The fund benefits 20 diverse organisations spread across the country.

We continue to fund the [Scottish Women's Rights Centre](#) £230,000 per year to provide free legal information, advice, representation and advocacy support and ensure access to justice for women who have experienced domestic abuse, sexual violence, and other forms of gender based harm.

We have provided funding of up to £432,000 to a pilot project in Edinburgh, the Legal Services Project, which is run by Scottish Women's Aid in partnership with [Edinburgh Women's Aid](#) and Baker Gostelow Family Law Ltd for specialist trauma informed legal support in cases of domestic abuse.

We are providing £1.5 million for a national fund to leave. Survivors of domestic abuse are often unable to leave abusive partners due to financial implications and economic coercive control, often leading to unsafe housing situations. The fund will allow women to purchase essentials and offer breathing space while they navigate the social security system. It could support up to 1,800 women and their children across the whole of Scotland, improving their housing outcome and assisting with the transition to a more stable and independent future.

Concluding Observation 31c:

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Enhance gender-responsive budgeting to guarantee women's equal access to employment, social security, healthcare, education and decision-making roles in both the public and private sectors, with targeted measures for women with disabilities and ethnic and sexual minorities.

Context

We are committed to ensuring women have equal access to work, healthcare, education, social security, and leadership roles. Our work on gender budgeting is helping us to improve how we assess our spending, how revenue raising impacts men and women differently, and if we can better use our budget process to reduce gender inequality.

9: Equality between men and women

(Concluding Observations 31a; 31b; 31c)

We funded work with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to explore how gender budgeting can be used in Scotland. An [evaluation](#) on this pilot was published alongside the 2025-26 budget.

Every part of government is required to assess the impacts of their budget decisions in relation to the 'relevant protected characteristics' defined in the [Equality Act 2010](#). This assessment includes assessing the impacts of budget decisions on women and men in connection with the 'relevant protected characteristic' of sex, as well as assessing the cumulative impact of budget decisions.

Key Actions

We are co-designing Scotland's first equality strategy for women and girls with gender equality stakeholders and diverse women and girls. We aim to publish the strategy in the first half of 2026. Developing gender goals is one of the enablers identified by the OECD pilot for successful implementation of gender budgeting. Any accompanying measurement frameworks to assess the efficacy of the strategy will also be designed through an intersectional gendered lens.

We are piloting further activity on 'gender budget tagging' for the 2026-27 budget. Until gender goals are available, this will look at a cross-cutting policy area which focuses on improving outcomes for women. We are also piloting the tagging of a sample of budget lines for 'relevant protected characteristics' defined in the Equality Act 2010, including sex. We will actively learn from this experience, publish an evaluation of the approaches we are piloting in early 2026 and discuss next steps with the [EHRBAG](#) and other stakeholders.



10: Right to Work and Minimum Wage

(Concluding Observation 37a)

Thematic Tags

Work; Employment; Cost of living; Adequate standard of living

Concluding Observation 37a

The Committee urges the State Party to index the minimum wage to the cost of living and adjust it regularly, in collaboration with social partners, to ensure that workers and their families enjoy an adequate standard of living and to guarantee full compliance with minimum wage regulations across all sectors and forms of employment in all jurisdictions.

Context

The minimum wage is reserved to the UK Government. However, fair work is at the heart of our ambition to move towards a wellbeing economy in Scotland that benefits employees and the planet. We published the [Fair Work Action Plan](#) in 2024 setting out the actions we will take to promote fair and inclusive workplaces across Scotland, incorporating actions on the gender pay gap, the disability employment gap, and the anti-racist employment strategy.

Through our [Fair Work First](#) approach, it continues to be a requirement for employers in receipt of public sector grants to pay their workers at least the real living wage, and for suppliers delivering Scottish Government contracts to do likewise for those workers directly involved in delivering the contract. Additionally, employers awarded such grants and public sector contracts are encouraged to address workplace inequalities, including pay and employment gaps for disabled people, racialised minorities, women and workers aged over 50, and to offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment. More than 72,000 workers have had a pay rise as a result of accredited real living wage employers, making a real and ongoing impact for people in Scotland.

10: Right to Work and Minimum Wage

(Concluding Observation 37a)

We have supported [Living Wage Scotland](#) with grant funding since 2014 to roll out the real living wage accreditation scheme, and later in 2021 extending to the [Real Living Hours Scheme](#). This resulted in the Scottish Government becoming the first government in the UK to become an accredited living wage employer in 2015. The number of accredited living wage employers is up from 14 in 2014 to over 3,900 in 2025, and there are over 100 living hour accredited employers since the scheme's launch, including the Scottish Government who were accredited in November 2023. Scotland remains the best performing of all four UK nations with the highest proportion of employees (18+) paid the real living wage or more (88.7%).

Key Actions

We will [halve the disability employment gap by 2038](#) through partnering with local authorities and stakeholders, including health and voluntary organisations, to build on the existing [no-one left behind](#) approach. This has supported 61,930 people since April 2019, 19% of whom reported having a disability.

We are investing £125 million in 2025-26 to enable adult social care workers in the third and private sectors to be paid at least the real living wage rate, which takes the estimated total investment up to £950 million.

We are also providing an additional £9.7 million to local authorities in 2025-26 to support an increase in the pay of childcare workers in the private and third sector delivering funded early learning and childcare so that they can be paid at least the real living wage from April 2025.

Since April 2024, we have invested a total of £50 million in funding towards the pay of staff at the real living wage who deliver direct care in commissioned services, namely, secure care, care home for children and young people, support services for disabled children and more.

In September 2025 we published our [Impact Report](#) on our fair work action plan. This shows that fair work has been embedded in the public sector, and that we continue to provide significant employment opportunities for women, while also reducing the mean pay gaps for disabled people and people from minority ethnic groups.



11: Social Security



(Concluding Observations 41a; 41b; 41c; 41d)

Thematic Tags

Social Security; Cost of living; Adequate standard of living; Maximum available resources; Digital exclusion; Disability

Concluding Observation 41a

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To assess the impact of the welfare reforms introduced since 2010 on the most disadvantaged groups and to take corrective measures, including reversing such policies as the two-child limit, the benefit cap and the five-week delay for the first Universal Credit payment.

Context

Social security plays a central role in Scotland's efforts to reduce poverty and promote social justice. Since the passage of the [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#), we have established a devolved social security system built on dignity, fairness, and respect, aiming to support Scotland's most vulnerable people and address inequality. We have deliberately built a radically different system to both tackle the worst impacts of UK Government cuts and to tackle inequality and child poverty, as well as providing vital assistance to enable older people to heat their homes and to help disabled people live independent lives.

Existing work related benefits paid to people in Scotland remain reserved to the UK Government. This includes Universal Credit and the decision to enforce a two child limit, the benefit cap and the five week delay for the first Universal Credit payment. We continue to believe the UK Government's benefit cap and bedroom tax policies should be reversed. We believe that the Universal Credit five week wait pushes people who need support into a deficit and that no one should be automatically forced into debt when applying for support by having to repay an advance. We have called on the UK Government to replace advance payments with a non-repayable grant once the application for Universal Credit is verified. On [4 December 2024](#) we set out plans to mitigate the two child cap in Scotland as part of the annual budget statement to the Scottish Parliament.

11: Social Security

(Concluding Observations 41a; 41b; 41c; 41d)

Key Actions

We will launch the new [two child limit payment](#) on 2 March 2026 to support low income families in Scotland impacted by the UK Government's two child limit policy in Universal Credit. Social Security

Scotland will begin issuing payments as soon as possible thereafter aiming to reduce the number of children living in relative poverty in Scotland by 20,000 in 2026-27 compared to no mitigation. The [Scottish Fiscal Commission](#) estimates that the mitigation will be paid to 42,000 children at a cost of £3,609 per child per year in 2026-27 (equivalent to Universal Credit child element payments for a year), rising to 49,000 children at a cost of £3,845 in 2029-30.

We are making over £99 million available to local authorities in 2025-26 to spend on discretionary housing payments, an increase of nearly £9 million in 2024-25.

£79.7 million of this is to fully mitigate the bedroom tax, helping over 94,000 households in Scotland sustain their tenancies, 14,000 of which are families with over 20,500 children.

In 2025-26 we have made £9.4 million available for benefit cap mitigation, helping to support around 3,400 families with almost 10,500 children. This is an increase of £1.6 million over 2024-25.

Concluding Observation 41b

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To increase its budget allocation for social security and ensure that social benefits, including unemployment benefits [...] are regularly indexed to the cost of living through an independent and transparent mechanism to provide recipients with an adequate standard of living.

Context

Scottish Ministers are legally required, under the [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#), to consider the impact of inflation on social security payments when deciding the level at which they should be up-rated in the following financial year to meet the duty to up-rate. Following this, a [report containing this analysis](#) and the approach we intend to take to address the impact is then laid in the Scottish Parliament.

It remains the case that the action which would have the biggest impact on the standard of living for the most marginalised people would be an increase in the level of the UK Government's Universal Credit so that it provides sufficient income to cover essential living costs. Indeed, as the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights alluded to in his [2023 report](#), increasing Universal Credit would be the single most important step that the UK Government could make towards meeting its international obligations.

We have called on the UK Government to deliver progress towards an essentials guarantee, this would ensure that social security benefits adequately cover the cost of food and other essential items.

11: Social Security

(Concluding Observations 41a; 41b; 41c; 41d)

Key Actions

We increased social security payment rates by 1.7% in April 2025. We will review social security assistance using the recognised measure of inflation, the 12-month rate of the Consumer Prices Index, which is taken from September 2024.

In 2025-26, approximately £6.9 billion is being allocated towards social security benefits and other payments. This will support around 2 million people, that is one in three people in Scotland, and is £1.2 billion more than the funding received from UK Government for social security.

We are planning, subject to budget processes, to increase our investment in social security benefits and other payments to around £9 billion by 2029-30.

Concluding Observation 41c

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...]: To conduct an independent review of the eligibility criteria for social security, including the temporary reduction and suspension of benefits, and the reliance on a digital-only, automated approach to ensure that those measures are reasonable, comply with due process and do not create barriers to the uptake and maintenance of benefits.

Context

In addition to concerns about adequacy, we oppose the widespread use of UK Government sanctions due to the hardship they cause, with [evidence](#) showing they simply do not work. The UK

Government should also address digital barriers to Universal Credit to improve accessibility and inclusion, particularly for vulnerable clients with complex needs.

For example, we and Social Security Scotland are committed to ensuring that digital and language barriers do not prevent individuals, particularly those from marginalised communities and seldom heard groups, from accessing the support they are entitled to. Our [benefit take-up strategy](#) places a strong emphasis on person-centred approaches, recognising that inclusive communication is essential at every stage of the social security journey.

We do not rely on a digital only approach and offer multiple channels for engagement, including online, telephone, postal, and in person options. This ensures that digital exclusion does not act as a barrier to benefit take up for those accessing their entitlements. Key benefit information is proactively translated into languages commonly spoken in Scotland's communities, including Urdu, Polish, and Scottish Gaelic, with additional materials in Ukrainian and Russian to support displaced people. Social Security Scotland also provides interpretation and translation services in over 100 languages, and all written materials are available in accessible formats such as Braille, large print, Easy Read, and audio. Interpreter assisted calls are available through the Social Security Scotland helpline, and in person interpretation is offered where needed.

11: Social Security

(Concluding Observations 41a; 41b; 41c; 41d)

In support of the [British Sign Language \(BSL\) national plan](#), we have reviewed our provision for the deafened and hearing-impaired community and developed new service specifications with stakeholder input. A BSL video relay service is available through Contact Scotland, and we also offer video remote interpreting via our supplier, [Sign Language Interactions](#).

Key Actions

Lessons learned from the implementation of the first [benefit take-up strategy \(2019\)](#) will inform the development of the next update to the strategy which will be published by October 2026. This

strategy will continue to embed our human rights based, person-centred approach and will contain tangible activity that tackles known barriers to take-up such as lack of awareness, complexity of the system, and stigma.

In August 2025, we published a [Seldom-Heard Groups Action Plan](#). The plan sets out practical actions we will take with Social Security Scotland to better engage and support the communities who face structural barriers to accessing social security. It covers a focused 12-month programme of work.

Concluding Observation 41d

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To ensure that disability-related benefits [...] adequately cover additional

disability-related costs, in line with the human rights model of disability, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Context

We recognise that disabled people, and those with a long-term health condition that impacts daily life, face additional costs compared to non-disabled people. When not mitigated, these costs create poorer living standards which can contribute to poorer outcomes for disabled people. Our disability benefits are designed to help cover the costs of everyday tasks such as washing, going to the toilet, getting dressed, and eating, as well as the additional costs of leaving the house and getting around. Social Security Scotland delivers four non means tested forms of disability assistance: [Child Disability Payment](#), [Adult Disability Payment](#), [Pension Age Disability Payment](#) and [Scottish Adult Disability Living Allowance](#). They are not taxed, rise in line with inflation and passport to other types of support, such as disability premiums, a Blue Badge, Housing Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Universal Credit, and are exempt from the benefit cap. 74% of people surveyed in Social Security Scotland's [2023-24 client survey](#) gave a high rating for how much disability payments helped make a difference to their life and helped them pay for what they needed.

11: Social Security

(Concluding Observations 41a; 41b; 41c; 41d)

As set out in [chapter 3 of part 2](#) of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, any determination regarding an individual's entitlement to social security assistance may be contested through a re-determination process. During this process, an independent decision maker reviews all relevant new and existing information to reach a fresh decision on entitlement. The individuals may then appeal the re-determination to the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber). [Short-term assistance](#) is available for people in Scotland challenging a reduction or end to their disability benefits. This financial support is distinct to Scotland and helps maintain household income by restoring a person's disability award to its previous level for the duration of their appeals or re-determinations.

Key Actions

We commissioned an [independent review of the Adult Disability Payment which was published in July 2025](#). The report made 58 recommendations to improve systems and client experience. We will publish a response in early 2026.

In 2025-26 we are investing £320 million more in our Adult Disability Payment than we are forecasted to receive from the UK Government through the corresponding social security block grant adjustment.

We remain committed to the Adult Disability Payment in response to the cuts to Personal Independence Payment previously announced by the UK Government.



12: Childcare

(Concluding Observation 43a)



Thematic Tags

Childcare; Children's Rights; Poverty; Disability

Concluding Observation 43a

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Adopt or strengthen measures to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of childcare through increased public funding and targeted financial support, such as childcare allowances.

Context

We are committed to building a more accessible and affordable system of school age childcare in Scotland and to supporting parents and carers of primary school age children to access the childcare they need to be able to enter or sustain employment. We recognise the importance of this in relation to our mission to tackle poverty and have targeted our early delivery of funded or subsidised school age childcare services to families most at risk of living in poverty.

We provide 1,140 hours per year of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) to all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds regardless of parents' working status. Families receive up to 30 hours per week of funded childcare during term time, or 22 hours year-round. If families were to pay for this themselves, it would cost them around £6,000 per child per year. Since 2021, around £1 billion has been invested yearly in ELC. As of September 2024, 88% of eligible children aged two-five were reported to be accessing the full entitlement of 1,140 hours. An [interim report](#) for the ELC expansion to 1,140 hours was published in August 2024, which considered progress against the intermediate outcomes of flexibility, quality, accessibility and affordability. Across our [school age childcare programme](#), we are currently supporting over 5,000 children from low income families to access services.



12: Childcare

(Concluding Observation 43a)

Key Actions

We will update the [strategic early learning and school age childcare plan for Scotland 2022-2026](#) in 2026 reflecting progress on commitments and identifying next steps.

We expect to publish a full report on the ELC 1,140 expansion evaluation for the period 2018-25 in early 2026. This report will draw together findings from across all the strands of the evaluation.

We will publish an early years speech and language action plan for Scotland in December 2025. The plan seeks to address the growing level of concerns being reported about children's speech and language development since the COVID-19 pandemic. It will set out the practical steps that public services will take to build the confidence and capacity of families and staff to support children's early speech and language development.

In 2025-26 we have increased our 'extra time' programme investment to £5.5 million and will expand delivery of before and after school, and holiday clubs, through 53 football clubs and trusts in partnership with the Scottish Football Association. This will provide places for up to 5,000 children and their families and is targeted at those families most at risk of living in poverty. Impact reports were published in [November 2024](#) and [June 2025](#).

We continue to invest in our access to childcare fund projects in 2025 to maintain access to subsidised and funded school age childcare services for families who are benefiting from them. With almost £1.5 million of investment to March 2027, the fund is supporting over 600 children through seven projects to deliver funded or subsidised school age childcare and wider family support for families on low income, exploring new models of childcare.

We have committed up to £16 million over 2024-26 to deliver 23 childcare early adopter community projects providing early learning and school age childcare services for priority families benefitting around 1,000 children in six local authorities: Dundee City, Clackmannanshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, Fife, and Shetland. We will publish an evaluation covering impacts and spend in the second half of 2026.

We are providing an additional £1 million in 2025-26 to enhance the delivery of holiday play schemes and activities for disabled children across all 32 local authorities.

We have established and delivered a £3 million [bright start breakfasts fund](#) expanding delivery of breakfasts clubs through the creation of 9,000 places, for up to 20,000 children. This is supporting the delivery of clubs for the 2025-26 academic year.

13: Protection of the family and children

(Concluding Observations 43c; 43d)

Thematic tags

Social Care; Carers; Childcare; Disability; Older People; Gender

Concluding Observation 43c

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Adopt legislative measures to establish a comprehensive, inclusive care and support system that promotes shared caregiving responsibilities for children, persons with disabilities and older persons and integrates a gender-sensitive, intersectional, intercultural and human rights-based approach.

Context

Social care has the power to transform people's lives. This is why we are reforming social care to ensure that those accessing services receive the highest quality care, delivered consistently across Scotland. Thousands of people with experience of accessing, delivering and receiving social care, social work and community health services have helped co-design the [Care Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#), which received Royal Assent (22 July 2025). This will transform social care across Scotland. The act also enshrines [Anne's Law](#) to ensure people living in adult care homes can stay connected with their loved ones, including by having a named friend or family member to support their wellbeing. The act will also improve access to independent advocacy, and create a national Chief Social Work Adviser role to provide professional leadership and champion to the sector.

We launched the [Carer's Allowance Supplement](#) in November 2024 which is an extra payment for people in Scotland who get [Carer Support Payment](#) or [Carer's Allowance](#). The supplement has been paid to over 164,000 carers.

13: Protection of the family and children

(Concluding Observations 43c; 43d)

Key Actions

We will publish a National Care Service charter to support people to claim their care specific rights in 2026. The charter is being co-designed with people with experience of accessing and providing community health, social work and social care support, and unpaid carers to ensure that it meets their needs. Over 500 people were involved in the first two phases of the design of the charter, and the final phase is underway. The charter will be published alongside an Easy Read, community language, audio, and BSL versions.

We will establish a non-statutory advisory board that will play a critical part in the National Care Service's efforts to drive improvement and make sure services are consistent, fair and high quality across Scotland. We have established an [Interim Advisory Board](#) which will run for nine months while the advisory board is being designed and established.

The 2025-26 budget provides £2.2 billion for social care and integration. This means that funding for social care has increased by over £1.2 billion compared to 2021-22 and exceeds the Programme for Government commitment to increase social care spending by 25% over this Parliament.

We are taking forward a review of the [Health and Social Care Standards \(HSCS\)](#) in collaboration with stakeholders, including regulators and people who use health and social care. This review is ongoing, and we will use the learning to ensure that the standards remain fit for purpose, are outcomes focussed and are firmly embedded in human rights.

The HSCS are rights based and seek to provide better outcomes for everyone who uses health, social care or social work services.

For further actions see:

Childcare Concluding Observation: 43a

Concluding Observation 43d

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Strengthen measures aimed at tackling the sexual exploitation of and violence against children, including by implementing the recommendations of [...] the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and other relevant inquiries and investigations conducted by independent bodies, as also recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Thematic tags

Children's rights; Child abuse; Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Context

[Scotland's redress scheme](#) seeks to acknowledge and provide tangible recognition of harm caused by historical child abuse in various care settings. It aims to empower survivors by incorporating their insights, adopting a trauma-informed approach, and offering an alternative to a possibly adversarial legal process. The scheme provides elements of accountability, justice, and financial and non-financial redress. Redress payments ranging from £10,000 to £100,000 have been made to over 3,000 applicants, totalling more than £161 million to September 2025.

13: Protection of the family and children

(Concluding Observations 43c; 43d)

The ongoing [Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry](#), established by statute in 2015, is independent of government and examines abuse in care settings between 1930 and 2014. The inquiry's goal is to identify systemic failures and make recommendations for improvement. As of August 2025, over 1,300 witnesses have given evidence in 550 public hearing days. We will address recommendations once the inquiry concludes to ensure better future protection for children in care.

While regulation of the internet is reserved to the UK Government, we have successfully engaged with them on the [Online Safety Act 2023](#) to strengthen protections for young people. We continue to engage with them on the [UK Government's Crime and Policing Bill](#), including work to extend a number of new offences to Scotland in relation to online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Key Actions

The [2025-26 Programme for Government](#) commits to **taking forward the ministerial online safety taskforce to strengthen our approach to keeping children safe online, providing oversight and direction across the Scottish Government and identifying what more can be done to protect children and young people.** The taskforce will have joint ministerial leadership from the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise, and the Minister for Victims and Community Safety.

In 2024 we formed a [national child sexual abuse and exploitation strategic group](#) with **Police Scotland and other expert stakeholders to review and strengthen measures protecting children from abuse, including online harm.** The group is developing a workplan to more effectively prevent, disrupt and provide support to victims of child sexual abuse and their families, with initial work looking at improvements to workforce education and training and multiagency data collections. The group are assessing the recommendations of the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#), the findings of the [Casey Audit](#) (Baroness Casey's audit on group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse published in June 2025) and wider strategic work as they develop their workplan.



14: Poverty

(Concluding Observations 45a; 45b; 45c; 45d)



Thematic Tags

Poverty; Child Poverty; Children's Rights; Care; Social security; Adequate standard of living; Maximum available resources; Migrants; Racialised minorities; Disability; Gender; LGBTQI+; Rural

Concluding Observations:

45a: The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To develop or enhance measures to address the multidimensional determinants of poverty [...] by focusing on poverty eradication through clear, measurable targets, paying particular attention to groups disproportionately affected, including migrants, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, female-headed households and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, in the regions and cities most affected and ensure sufficient resources for effective monitoring and implementation.

45b: The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments: To expedite the adoption or enhancement of measures, including necessary fiscal reforms and increased budget allocations, to end child poverty [...] setting clear targets and timelines, establishing reporting obligations and oversight and

participatory mechanisms and providing adequate resources for implementation.

Context

Eradicating poverty is a national mission of this government. We have supported families through the continued delivery of key anti-poverty actions. This includes [no one left behind](#) – our approach to devolved employability support – which has supported 28,030 parents between April 2020 and June 2025; delivery of 4,947 affordable homes across Scotland, between April and December 2024, 3,981 of which were for social rent; and investment of £41 million for people struggling with energy costs in winter 2024-25. We are also providing free bus travel for 2.3 million people, including all children and young people under 22, disabled people and everyone age 60 and over, and permanently scrapped peak rail fares on ScotRail services from 1 September 2025 – making everyday commutes cheaper.

14: Poverty

(Concluding Observations 45a; 45b; 45c; 45d)

The latest poverty statistics, published in March 2025, show that the rates of both relative and absolute child poverty were 9 percentage points lower than the UK average in 2023-24 (22% and 17% Scotland, 31% and 26% UK). This means that the proportion of children in Scotland living in relative poverty in 2023-24 is now lower than it has been since 2014-15, while the proportion in absolute poverty has also fallen with the annual figure the lowest in 30 years.

We have introduced a broad range of policies to address child poverty and published guidance on our [six priority families concept](#) to tackling child poverty in June 2025, which identifies the family groups at greatest risk of child poverty. The [Scottish Child Payment](#) (SCP) was increased from £26.70 to £27.15 in April 2025, in line with inflation, compared to initial payments of £10 per week made to eligible families in February 2021. The SCP is forecast to benefit around 330,000 children in 2025-26. We estimate that it will keep 40,000 children out of relative poverty in 2025-26, with levels of relative child poverty four percentage points lower than they would have otherwise been, according to the most recent modelling published in March 2025. Together, the five family payments (SCP, [Best Start Foods](#) and the three [Best Start Grant](#) payments) could be worth over £10,000 by the time an eligible child turns six and around £25,000 by the time an eligible child turns 16. We are also developing the systems needed to effectively scrap the impact of the two child cap, with the new payment opening for applications from 2 March 2026.

Key Actions

In June 2025 we welcomed a report from the [minimum income guarantee expert group](#) setting out a roadmap towards a potential [minimum income guarantee in Scotland by 2036](#). We are considering the recommendations and the research that was published alongside and will respond in due course.

We are investing over £3 billion in 2025-26 to continue to drive forward progress on child poverty and to tackle the cost of living crisis facing households. On average, households with children in the poorest 10% are estimated to be £2,600 a year better off in 2025-26 as a result of our policies. This value is projected to grow to an average of £3,700 a year by 2029-30.

We will publish a third tackling child poverty delivery plan for 2026-31 by the end of March 2026. This will outline actions to drive further progress toward the 2030 targets set out in the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#) while responding immediately to the challenges faced. In February 2025, an [external reference group](#) was created to oversee the development of the plan, and will continue until March 2026.

We are investing £37 million in 2025-26 to deliver the expansion of free school meals programme to those in receipt of SCP in primaries 6 and 7 providing healthy and nutritious meals to around a further 25,000 children and saving those who take up the offer around £450 a year per child.

14: Poverty

(Concluding Observations 45a; 45b; 45c; 45d)

We are investing an estimated £28.3 million through our [Winter Heating Payment](#) in 2025-26. Providing a reliable annual payment of £59.75 to people on low incomes to help with their heating expenses every winter.

We are providing targeted support to families with a disabled person through measures such as the [Child Winter Heating Payment](#). Families of almost 45,000 disabled children and young people are set to receive winter heating support worth £255.80 in 2025-26.

Concluding Observation: 45c

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To allocate sufficient resources to the children's social care system across all jurisdictions with a view to supporting low-income families, to prevent the separation of children from their family environment and their institutionalization or placement in alternative care and, in coordination with anti-poverty strategies and social security policies [...].

Context

In 2016 we commissioned an [independent care review](#) to look at Scotland's care system. This concluded in 2020, and the outcome was [The Promise](#), which was published the same year. The Promise includes over 80 calls to action that will improve the lives of care experienced children and young people across Scotland. We published [The Promise implementation plan](#) in 2022 setting out the actions that we will take to deliver the recommendations by

2030. At the heart of The Promise is the commitment to a Scotland where care experienced children and young people can all grow up loved, safe and respected.

The Promise highlighted that the outcomes of children and young people who have experience of care throughout childhood are generally less positive than those who face adverse outcomes across the wider population. This includes outcomes relating to education, justice and health. [Evidence](#) has shown a [correlation between poor outcomes, and living in areas of deprivation or experiencing poverty](#). For families who experience poverty, various social and economic factors can make it harder for parents to care for children, and mean they are more likely than others to be involved in the care system.

In September 2024, we published an update to [The Promise implementation plan](#) which provides a review of the actions which have been undertaken. This includes an 18.1% reduction in the number of looked after children between 2020 and 2024; the introduction of a [Scottish recommended allowance for kinship and foster carers](#); the introduction of the [Children \(Care and Justice\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) which has ended the detention of 16 and 17 year olds in young offenders' institutions in Scotland, moving them to secure care units; and a full-scale independent review of the [Children's Hearing system](#) analysis was published February 2025.

14: Poverty

(Concluding Observations 45a; 45b; 45c; 45d)

Key Actions

We introduced the [Children \(Care, Care Experience and Services Planning\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) to parliament on 17 June 2025 at Stage 1 which will be completed by 16 January 2026. The scope of the bill is presently being determined, and it will include changes in relation to the Children's Hearing System and fostering and support for young people transitioning out of the children's care system.

As part of our [whole family wellbeing funding investment approach](#) we committed to extending the whole family wellbeing funding for [children's services planning partnerships](#) in 2026-27. In addition, we have increased funding from £32 million to £38.1 million in 2025-26 and 2026-27. This investment, and associated activity, supports both our commitment to keep The Promise, and tackle child poverty by transforming holistic family support in local communities to ensure families can get the help they need, where and when they need it.

We will invest £10 million per year through our care experience grant which will provide a £200 annual grant for 16-25 year olds with care experience. This grant will provide some additional financial security for young people with experience of care and will help reduce some of the financial barriers that young people face in transitions to adulthood and more independent living. The grant will support families with care experience by contributing to the maximising of incomes, a key driver of child poverty reduction.

We are providing £30 million in 2025-26 to increase the pay of those providing direct care to vulnerable children and young people, namely for residential childcare services for looked after children, support services for disabled children, and housing support services for disabled or care experienced young people transitioning to independent living. Since April 2024 we have invested a total of £50 million.

Concluding Observation: 45d

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To step up measures to ensure that everyone has access to affordable electricity, gas, water, sanitation, heating and clothing.

Context

Our vision is for everyone to have a warm, safe home that they can afford and that meets their needs in a place where they want to live. We recognise that weather, poor energy efficiency in the home and reduced heating options, especially in rural areas, as well as high energy prices can make fuel bills unaffordable, resulting in fuel poverty.

In 2019, we introduced the [Fuel Poverty \(Targets, Definition and Strategy\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#). This landmark piece of legislation remains the most ambitious and comprehensive fuel poverty legislation in the UK. Our 2021 [fuel poverty strategy](#) sets out the actions we are taking to tackle the four main drivers of fuel poverty. Progress towards meeting our fuel poverty targets is monitored by the statutory [Scottish fuel poverty advisory panel](#).

14: Poverty

(Concluding Observations 45a; 45b; 45c; 45d)

We provided a £41 million package to support individuals struggling with increased energy costs in winter 2024-25. This funding included an additional £20 million allocated to the [Scottish Welfare Fund](#) (SWF), a further £20 million for the [warmer homes Scotland scheme](#), and £1 million in grant funding made available to registered social landlords to facilitate initiatives that help sustain tenancies. Additionally, the [homeowners support fund](#) offers aid to those at the lower end of the Scottish housing market who are experiencing difficulties in managing loan payments secured against their homes and are at risk of repossession.

Key Actions

From November 2025 onwards, all pensioners in Scotland will generally receive £203.40 or £305.10 per household, depending on age, through our [Pension Age Winter Heating Payment](#). This is a higher rate of payment than the £200 or £300 provided by the UK Government. Unlike the UK Government's Cold Weather Payment, Scotland's Winter Heating Payment is guaranteed annually for eligible households, regardless of temperature. Payments will be recovered from those pensioners with a taxable income above £35,000.

In total, we will provide an estimated £28.3 million through our Winter Heating Payment and £11.4 million through our Child Winter Heating Payment. The Child Winter Heating Payment, unique to Scotland, supports households with severely disabled children and young people with household winter heating costs.

We are providing £14.2 million to local authorities to enable them to pay [school clothing grants](#) to eligible families. These payments assist families with the cost of buying school clothing and shoes. At least £120 is provided each year for every eligible child of primary school age and £150 for every eligible young person of secondary school age.

We are investing £41 million in the [SWF](#) in 2025-26. Since the scheme started in 2013, £493.1 million has been spent. Official statistics show that awards tend to go to applicants living in the more deprived areas of Scotland. The majority of crisis grant awards were for food, heating costs and other living expenses.

In 2025-26 we have allocated £16.9 million for the provision of free income maximisation support, welfare and debt advice. This vital support ensures that Scottish households are supported to claim all that they are entitled to, challenge decisions affecting their payments, maximise their household incomes and ensure that those facing problem debt are able to access the support they need.

We continue to call on the UK Government to remove the SWF from the list of public funds for immigration purposes to allow vulnerable groups that would benefit from the fund to be able to access this short-term support in a crisis, such as those with NRPF.

14: Poverty

(Concluding Observations 45a; 45b; 45c; 45d)

For further actions see:

Equality Concluding Observations: 31a to 31c

Social Security Concluding Observations: 41a to 41d

Food Concluding Observations: 49a to 49e

Sexual and reproductive Health Concluding Observations: 53a to 53c

15: Housing

(Concluding Observations
47a; 47b; 47c; 47d; 47e; 47f)



Thematic Tags

Adequate housing; Accessible housing; Temporary accommodation; Homelessness; Disability; Intellectual disabilities; Older people; Migrants; Racialised minorities; Gypsy/Travellers; Socio-economic background; Tax; Maximum available resources; Culturally appropriate housing

Concluding Observations 47a

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To take all measures necessary to ensure the availability of affordable and social housing units by streamlining planning regulations, prioritizing funding for new construction, rehabilitating substandard housing and ensuring accessibility for disadvantaged groups, in particular persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants, ethnic minorities and low - and middle-income households, with a focus on single mothers.

Context

[Housing to 2040](#) (H2040) is Scotland's long-term housing strategy, focusing on supply, affordability, choice, net zero goals, and accessibility. It addresses housing supply across Scotland, including rural and island areas.

A central commitment in the strategy is our commitment to deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 70% should be for social rent and 10% in rural and island communities. Between April 2007 and March 2025, 139,203 affordable homes were delivered, including over 99,000 for social rent and more than 28,000 council homes.

In response to the housing emergency, we targeted funding of £42 million in 2024-25 to local authorities with the most sustained temporary accommodation pressures, the aim being to increase the supply of social and affordable homes through acquisitions and bringing long term empty social homes back into use.

Key Actions

We have increased the [affordable housing supply programme](#) budget for 2025-26 to £808 million. There has been a total of 28,537 affordable homes completed between 23 March 2022 and 31 March 2025 towards the target, consisting of 21,937 (77%) homes for social rent, 4,087 (14%) for other affordable rent, and 2,513 (9%) for affordable home ownership.

We will increase the supply of affordable housing by doubling our investment in acquisitions from £40 million to £80 million in 2025-26.

15: Housing

(Concluding Observations 47a; 47b; 47c; 47d; 47e; 47f)

Through the EHRF, we are providing funding of over £1.1 million to organisations working to promote LGBTQI+ equality in Scotland in 2025-26. This funding provides support for a range of initiatives, including supporting policy development for LGBTQI+ people, including housing inequality, research into the lives of the LGBTQI+ community and an LGBT helpline.

We introduced the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#) in October 2025. The act brings forward a package of reforms to help ensure people have a safe, secure and affordable place to live, delivering on the strategies we have brought forward in recent years. The act deals mainly with rented, particularly private rented, accommodation and homelessness prevention.

We established a [H2040 strategic board](#) to assess progress towards the H2040 vision. The strategic board is co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and the COSLA community wellbeing spokesperson. It provides strategic oversight of policy development and delivery; accountability on progress by providing advice on the development of an appropriate measurement framework and tracking progress; ownership of H2040 beyond government; and the ability to involve 'end users' by bringing a range of views into consideration.

Concluding Observation 47b

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To review property tax rates with a view to increasing the supply of housing units for sale or long-term rental and carry out an assessment of the economic and social impacts of the complete exemption from tax on profits and capital gains by real estate investment trusts.

Context

We have taken account of the specifics of Scotland's housing market when setting the rates and bands for residential [Land and Buildings Transaction Tax](#) (LBTT). Various reliefs are in place such as support for the provision of affordable housing by local authorities and housing associations and encouraging the development of the [build to rent model](#) in Scotland. The rates and bands for LBTT are considered annually as part of the budget process.

Key Actions

We are undertaking a review of LBTT legislation, which will look at the residential and non-residential LBTT arrangements to ensure their policy intent is still met. We have appointed [Alma Economics](#) to undertake independent research and stakeholder engagement is underway. The review will run over the remainder of the current parliamentary term. The review is intended to support decisions by a future government in the next Scottish Parliament on whether any legislative changes should be brought forward.

15: Housing

(Concluding Observations 47a; 47b; 47c; 47d; 47e; 47f)

Concluding Observation 47c

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] To ensure the greatest possible security of tenure to tenants [...] and guarantee that evictions, when unavoidable, comply with due process, involve consultation with the affected persons, consider alternatives, allow for appeal and result in adequate compensation or adequate alternative housing.

Context

Through the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#), we will build a system of rent control that offers vital protections to tenants and values investment in delivering new homes specifically for the rented market. The act includes measures to provide greater protection for tenants during the eviction process and to make it easier and more meaningful for tenants to challenge an unlawful eviction and receive appropriate damages (between three and 36 times the monthly rent) where an unlawful eviction is found to have occurred.

Discretionary housing payments (DHPs) in Scotland play a vital role in supporting tenants to sustain their tenancies and prevent homelessness. DHPs provide financial assistance to a qualifying individual if they are struggling with their housing costs. Since 2017, we have invested over £712 million in DHPs to deliver our commitment to fully mitigate the UK Government's removal of the spare room subsidy (the bedroom tax) and benefit cap; delivering vital action to reduce poverty, safeguard tenancies and prevent homelessness.

Local authorities are legally obligated to provide accommodation, advice, and assistance to individuals at risk of homelessness. They also bear statutory responsibility for preparing local housing strategies that assess housing needs within their jurisdictions. These strategies must include a statement affirming the local authority's commitment to addressing housing inequalities. Furthermore, local authorities should demonstrate that they have considered specialist provision requirements for people of all ages, household types, tenures, and protected characteristics, including those from ethnic minority groups.

Key Actions

This year £79.7 million will be spent mitigating the bedroom tax, helping over 94,000 households in Scotland sustain their tenancies, 14,000 of which are families with over 20,500 children. Over 11,000 of those families are lone parent families.

We will take steps through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 to create a new route for ending a joint tenancy that does not require mutual agreement, which will ensure that no tenant can inadvertently be made homeless. To end a private residential tenancy, all joint tenants must agree and sign a notice to leave, giving the landlord at least 28 days' notice in writing (unless a shorter notice period has been agreed). Additional provisions in the act will ensure that no joint tenant can be 'trapped' in a tenancy indefinitely against their will.

15: Housing

(Concluding Observations 47a; 47b; 47c; 47d; 47e; 47f)

To support domestic abuse victim/survivors the act includes duties on social landlords to develop, implement and maintain a domestic abuse policy setting out how they support their tenants experiencing domestic abuse.

The policy will also direct particular consideration to individuals building up financial arrears due to domestic abuse before any legal action to recover possession of a property on rent arrears grounds can begin.

The act will broaden Scottish Ministers' powers to implement 'Awaab's Law', which will ensure landlords promptly address issues that are hazardous to tenants' health, starting with damp and mould as well as a review of circumstances where rents could be increased above the level of the rent cap.

We continue to fund the [Mortgage to Rent and Mortgage to Shared Equity schemes](#), which are part of the [Home Owners' Support Fund](#) which offers aid to those at the lower end of the Scottish housing market who are experiencing difficulties in managing loan payments secured against their homes and are at risk of repossession.

Concluding Observation 47d

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments: To address the root causes of homelessness by ensuring adequate resources for local authorities, prioritizing long-term solutions [...] guaranteeing safe and adequate living conditions in temporary accommodation, including through a comprehensive regulatory framework, and ending the punitive approach towards rough sleeping.

Context

We declared a housing emergency on 15 May 2024 in recognition of the pressure on local authority housing supply and homelessness services which led to a rise in temporary accommodation use. On 2 September 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Housing launched the [housing emergency action plan](#). The plan has three key objectives: ending children living in unsuitable accommodation; supporting the housing needs of vulnerable communities; and building our future by maximising growth and investment in Scotland's housing sector.

Our [ending homelessness together action plan](#) outlines how national government, local government and third sector partners will work together on our shared ambition to end homelessness. Since 2018, we have provided £62.5 million to Scottish local authorities to support a transition to a rapid rehousing homelessness model. This model includes [Housing First](#), which offers a settled tenancy and wrap around support to people experiencing homelessness who have multiple and complex needs. Since 2020, we have supported the eradication of night shelters in Scotland by providing £1.29 million of funding to deliver [Rapid Rehousing Welcome Centres](#) in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

15: Housing

(Concluding Observations 47a; 47b; 47c; 47d; 47e; 47f)

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 establishes new 'Ask and Act' duties on 'relevant bodies' named in the act, such as social landlords, NHS Scotland and Police Scotland, to ask about a person's housing situation as early as they can and act to avoid them becoming homeless wherever possible. The act also makes changes to existing homelessness duties for local authorities, so that help is provided to those threatened with homelessness six months before homelessness rather than the current two months.

Key Actions

We are providing £100 million in multi-year funding (2018-2026) for the [ending homelessness together fund](#) which aims to prevent homelessness, end rough sleeping, and reduce use of temporary accommodation. Since 2018, £72.5 million has supported rapid rehousing, including the [housing first initiative](#), which has delivered over 2,100 tenancies – 83% of people remained in a settled home after a year.

We are investing £4 million in homelessness prevention pilots in 2025-26 to help local authorities, frontline services and relevant partners prepare for the new homelessness prevention duties. The fund opened for applications in September 2025 and will run until December 2026.

We are investing £2 million through [DHPs](#) to support households in temporary accommodation to find settled homes in the private rented sector.

We have asked councils to prioritise the acquisition of family homes, and to contact every household with children in quality temporary accommodation to discern whether homes can be made permanent.

We are providing a £1 million housing first uplift to rapid rehousing transition plan funding in 2025-26 taking our investment to £9 million.

We will invest £500,000 in winter preparedness measures to help ensure people at risk of rough sleeping get a suitable bed for the night in the cold winter months.

In May 2025, we launched the [Upstream Homelessness Prevention Fund](#) backed by £1 million to help prevent people from becoming homeless. Partnerships funded by the programme will receive a cash fund for individual payments of up to £1,300 to help prevent people becoming homeless.

Concluding Observation 47e

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments [..] To ensure access to adequate housing for individuals with intellectual disabilities, enabling those residing in inpatient units to be discharged and preventing their institutionalization.

Context

The Scottish Government has made it clear that [Coming Home](#) is a priority and that a hospital cannot ever be a home. We are working closely with COSLA and other partners to deliver the change required to ensure the rights of individuals to adequate housing are upheld.

15: Housing

(Concluding Observations 47a; 47b; 47c; 47d; 47e; 47f)

Key Actions

We have established a Coming Home Action Plan Short Life Working Group, which is meeting between July to November 2025. The aim of this group is to develop a joint action plan with COSLA to address the outstanding recommendations within the [Coming Home Implementation Report 2022](#) and address key recommendations within other reports. This action plan will focus on seven key themes: National Support Panel; people in hospital 10+ years; housing; dynamic Support Register data; skilling up community services; redesign of learning disability inpatient services; and collaborative commissioning.

We have commissioned [Healthcare Improvement Scotland](#) to deliver specific local improvement work to reduce delayed discharges for people with learning disabilities and complex needs, including a physical adaptations test of change within NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

We continue to implement [The Coming Home Programme](#) through allocation of £20 million to health and social care partnerships, consulting on a national panel for the upcoming [Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill](#), and building a professional network via [Healthcare Improvement Scotland](#).

We asked the [Mental Welfare Commission](#) to review the care and treatment of people with learning disabilities and complex care needs who have remained in hospital for more than ten years.

The [‘Hospital Is Not A Home’](#) report was published in January 2025 and we are considering the findings and recommendations of this report.

Concluding Observation 47f

The Committee urges the State Party, along with the devolved governments: To ensure adequate, culturally appropriate accommodation and stopping sites for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, including access to water, sanitation and electricity, in coordination with local authorities and review and repeal law or policies that undermine their traditional ways of life.

Context

We published our second joint [Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan Action Plan](#) with COSLA on improving the lives of, and setting out steps to improve outcomes for, Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland. Under the [Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Fund](#) (GTAF) nearly £15 million has been committed or spent between 2021-22 and 2024-25 to allow councils to progress projects for more and better accommodation. To drive a significant improvement in the quality of sites, we published an [interim site design guide](#) for Gypsy/Traveller sites, developed in conjunction with local authorities and with input from members of Gypsy/Traveller communities. This will assist new build and site redevelopments of a high quality to meet the varying needs of families, including children, older and disabled people.

15: Housing

(Concluding Observations 47a; 47b; 47c; 47d; 47e; 47f)

Key Actions

We are taking the necessary steps so that, from April 2026, funding for Gypsy/ Traveller accommodation can be accessed alongside housing through the [affordable housing supply programme](#). This demonstrates a long term commitment to supporting local authorities to meet their duties in relation to the provision of Gypsy/Traveller accommodation.

We will commission work on an accommodation needs toolkit. This will focus on improving how housing needs and demand assessments, local housing strategies, and development plans represent the needs of Gypsy/Travellers.

An independent evaluation of the Gypsy/ Traveller accommodation fund and interim site design guide is currently underway with a final report due to be published in 2026. The aim is to collect key insights from demonstration projects to inform future initiatives, the final site design guide, and policy related to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation. Diffley Partnership has provided Gypsy/Traveller community members with an [update](#) on the research undertaken so far and next steps.

16: Food

(Concluding Observations 49a; 49b; 49c; 49d; 49e)



Thematic Tags

Right to adequate food; Social Security; Poverty; Food Insecurity; Tax

Concluding Observation 49a

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Expedite the adoption of a comprehensive national strategy for the protection and promotion of the right to adequate food, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to address food insecurity and reduce reliance on food banks, setting clear, time-bound targets and establishing appropriate mechanisms to assess progress.

Context

The [Good Food Nation \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) places duties on Scottish Ministers, councils, and health boards to produce plans that set out the main outcomes to be achieved in relation to food related issues, the policies needed to do this and the measures we will use to assess progress. The act provides that, when developing [good food nation action plans](#), Scottish Ministers and relevant authorities are required to consider that access to adequate food is recognised as a human right and is linked to the realisation of other human rights. The

act also stipulates that Scottish Ministers must consider Article 11 of the ICESCR – specifically regarding adequate food – when preparing the national [good food nation plan](#).

In June 2023 we published the [ending the need for food banks in Scotland plan](#) to improve our response to the food insecurity crisis and to use a cash first approach so that fewer people need to use food banks. We are taking forward nine actions over three years (2023-26) and the plan is backed by funding of £1.8 million.

Key Actions

We are currently updating the proposed [National Good Food Nation Plan](#) following parliamentary scrutiny. The final plan will be published by the end of 2025 and will include outcomes and indicators. This will be followed by relevant authority (council and health boards) Good Food Nation Plans.

We will create a new public body, the [Scottish Food Commission](#), which will have an oversight role to assess the progress and effectiveness of Good Food Nation Plans by both Scottish Ministers and relevant authorities.

16: Food

(Concluding Observations 49a; 49b; 49c; 49d; 49e)

We are investing around £465,000 for inclusive community-led responses that maximise dignity and integrate help to reduce the future need for food banks.

This funding will be used to redistribute high quality surplus food to community organisations with an emphasis on shared meals and cash-first; develop a food security learning and resource centre; and enhance dignity in food provision.

In July 2025, we published an interim [independent evaluation of the cash-first programme](#) highlighting the individual work of the eight cash-first partnerships and the impact of the programme. We will publish the final evaluation report by spring 2026 and consider and share it widely to inform future policy development by both central and local government.

Concluding Observations

49b: The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments: Take measures to address the triple burden of malnutrition (under-nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity).

49c: The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Ensure that social protection programmes target those most in need of access to healthy and nutritious food.

Context

No one should go hungry in Scotland, and we are committed to ensuring that everyone has access to healthy and nutritious food. Our vision is for a Scotland where everyone eats well and has a healthy weight. This is set out in our 2018 [Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan](#) and we continue to make progress on the implementation of a range of actions across five key outcomes: giving children the best start in life; creating a healthier food environment; better access to weight management services; leadership across all sectors promoting healthy weight and diet and reducing health inequalities. This vision is restated in our [Population Health Framework](#). This framework will embed a prevention-led approach across all sectors, addressing inequality, enhancing economic opportunity, and shaping environments that enable healthier choices.

Free school meals are a crucial element of our ambition to eradicate child poverty, and they are currently available to over 230,000 pupils across Scotland, saving families who take up the offer around £450 per child per year.

We provided £2.5 million in funding to health boards and local partners between 2020-21 and 2023-24 to encourage healthy eating and physical activity in children aged zero-five at risk of health inequalities, and their families. Over £530,000 was additionally provided to ten boards for projects in 2023-24, including specialised training for practitioners, increasing physical activity, and support for those experiencing food insecurity.

16: Food

(Concluding Observations 49a; 49b; 49c; 49d; 49e)

Key Actions

We are developing a new diet and healthy weight implementation plan to support the ambitions set out in the [population health framework](#) and deliver our vision of a Scotland where everyone eats well and has a healthy weight.

We are continuing to provide funding for inclusive community-led responses that maximise dignity and integrate help to reduce future need. This includes £100,000 for regional community food networks which help the most marginalised communities get access to healthier food options.

We continue to invest £169.8 million annually to support [free school meals \(FSM\)](#) for all pupils in P1 to P5, and in special schools, plus eligible pupils in P6 to S6 during term time. In 2025-26, £37 million was allocated to the current phase of FSM expansion among pupils in P6 and 7. This phased expansion began rolling out in February 2025 and will support a further 25,000 pupils in P6 and P7 whose families are in receipt of the SCP. Once this phase is completed, 84% of all pupils in primary schools in Scotland will be eligible to receive a meal.

We are providing £3 million to support a [test of change \(ToC\) for FSM](#) to pupils from families in receipt of the SCP in S1 to S3 in selected schools within eight local authority areas. We will work closely with local authorities in the coming months to help establish the ToC which will support around 6,100 newly eligible pupils across 60 schools. The ToC will be independently evaluated which will help inform any future phases of the programme.

We are expanding and enhancing access to breakfast clubs for children in primary and special schools over the 2025-26 academic year through the new £3 million [bright start breakfasts fund](#).

490 breakfast clubs have been awarded funding which will establish 142 new clubs, creating almost 9,000 breakfast club places, and supporting up to 20,000 children to access a healthy breakfast so they can start their school day ready to learn.

We continue to provide support, via [best start foods](#) to low income families, to help mothers buy healthy foods like milk or fruit during pregnancy and for children under 3. Forecasts show that 47,000 people will receive £17 million of support through best start foods in 2025-26.

We are continuing to provide £125,300 to [Food Train](#) to deliver two projects, [eat well age well](#), and [meal makers](#), aimed at addressing malnutrition in older people.

We are considering the recommendations of the prevention, early detection and early intervention on malnutrition and dehydration working group. The recommendations made are being used to develop our upcoming Diet and Healthy Weight Implementation Plan, including to review the Food Fluid and Nutritional Care Standards (2014), in alignment with the [Scottish Population Health Framework](#) publication.

16: Food

(Concluding Observations 49a; 49b; 49c; 49d; 49e)

Concluding Observations

49d: The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Promote balanced diets through effective social and behavioural change communication strategies and ensure the affordability of diversified diets.

49e: The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments: Introduce higher taxes on junk food and sugary drinks and strengthen regulations on the marketing of such products.

Context

We want everyone in Scotland to live healthy, happy lives for as long as possible. Supporting people's health and wellbeing is key to reducing inequality, tackling child poverty and building a fairer Scotland. Our [Population Health Framework](#) will complement work being taken forward through the [Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework](#), to make a clear contribution to realising our health and social care vision.

Key Actions

We will develop a new Diet and Healthy Weight Implementation Plan (due summer/autumn 2026), to deliver our vision of a Scotland where everyone eats well and has a healthy weight. The Plan is expected to span a wide range of policy across Government, with a primary focus on prevention. Mass media campaigns are part of a range of intervention types that could be used, although [evidence](#) suggests that interventions that are more upstream and less reliant on personal behavioural change are more effective and less likely to lead to a widening of inequalities.

[The Food \(Promotion and Placement\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2025](#) were laid in the Scottish Parliament on 31 October 2025. The regulations aim to reduce overconsumption of food and drink within targeted categories that are significant contributors of calories, fat, sugar or salt to the Scottish diet, including those of most concern to childhood obesity. This will encourage healthier options and make it easier for people to eat well by making the balance of foods available on promotion healthier and restricting the location of less healthy foods both in stores and online. The regulations deliver one of the first actions under the Population Health Framework and will come into force on 1 October 2026.

17: Health and access to healthcare

(Concluding Observations 51a; 51b)

Thematic Tags

Right to health; Mental health; Rurality; Gypsy/Traveller; Migrants; Refugees and asylum seekers; LGBTQI+; Gender identity; Maximum available resources; Digital access

Concluding Observation 51a

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Strengthen measures to ensure universal health coverage in practice by increasing resources for the National Health Service, securing sufficient qualified medical staff, ensuring access to adequate medical equipment and infrastructure, reducing waiting times, improving health services in remote and rural areas and removing stigma and informational and technological barriers to access to health for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers and to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons in relation to gender identity-related healthcare, particularly in Scotland, guided by the Committee's general comment No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

Context

We acknowledge that the National Health Service (NHS) needs renewal and reform to remain sustainable amid rising demand. On 27 January 2025, the First Minister [outlined plans](#) for health service renewal, to ensure long-term sustainability, reduce inequalities, use digital technology effectively, and improve health outcomes. In March 2025, we published the [Operational Improvement Plan](#) aimed at enhancing healthcare delivery by improving access to treatment, reducing waiting times, and shifting care from hospitals to primary care. This plan is backed by an investment of £200 million.

In June 2025, we jointly published two frameworks with COSLA. The [Population Health Framework](#) focussed on prevention, taking a cross government and cross sector approach to improving the key building blocks of health and reducing health inequalities for the next decade; and the [Health and Social Care Renewal Framework](#) focused on prevention and community involvement to enhance the sustainability, efficiency and accessibility of health and social care services in Scotland.

17: Health and access to healthcare

(Concluding Observations 51a; 51b)

We are implementing targeted strategies to reduce health inequalities by ensuring timely care for those most in need.

Since 2023, we have invested over £3 million in the highly targeted [Inclusion Health Action in General Practice](#) (IHAGP) programme, which provides additional funding to over 60 general practices in high-deprivation areas in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board, which has the highest concentration of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. IHAGP implements practices to tackle healthcare and health inequalities through practical actions. [The Equity in Screening Strategy and Action Plan \(2023-26\)](#) aims to address disparities across national screening programmes for better access and outcomes among underrepresented groups.

Since December 2022, we have invested over £6.3 million to support work to improve the delivery and accessibility of NHS gender identity services in Scotland. More than £5.2 million of this has been allocated directly to NHS health boards with gender identity clinics, to support them to increase their capacity and reduce waiting times. In 2023, we awarded a grant of £256,000 to the University of Glasgow to establish an ongoing programme of research on long-term health outcomes for people who access gender identity healthcare in Scotland.

Key Actions

We are allocating £21.7 billion in 2025-26 for health and social care, with over £110 million directed at reducing the longest waits in specialties like trauma and orthopaedics, imaging, cancer treatment, and ophthalmology,

as well as funding an additional 213,000 appointments, surpassing our target by over 60,000.

We are providing £200 million in funding to increase capacity, reduce delayed discharge, and enhance patient flow.

[National Treatment Centres](#) (NTCs), a network of healthcare facilities across Scotland which provide extra capacity for planned in-patient care and day case treatments and diagnostic services, will further boost care, particularly for long-waiting patients. NTC activity is projected to grow from 20,000 procedures in 2024-25 to over 30,000 in 2025-26.

We will develop a Healthcare Inequalities Action Plan by the end of 2027.

This will include actions such as developing the General Practice Healthcare Inequalities Programme to reduce barriers to accessing care; developing practical guidance on equitable care, including guidance on addressing causes of low engagement in healthcare; and supporting health inequalities training and education for health, social care and social work professionals.

We continue to invest in general practice [Community Link Workers \(CLWs\)](#) through the [Primary Care Improvement Fund](#).

We have invested over £12 million on CLWs to sustain service levels. There were 342 whole-time equivalent CLWs in post at 31 March 2025 and we are reviewing national policy to better align CLWs capacity where there is greatest need, primarily areas of high deprivation.

17: Health and access to healthcare

(Concluding Observations 51a; 51b)

We are funding the [Scottish Deep End Project](#) £124,371 in 2025-26. The Project supports GPs working in some of Scotland's most deprived communities through peer support, practice-sharing and research, with the aim of improved health outcomes for patients.

We are funding the [National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care](#) £3 million to March 2026. This centre is supporting the delivery of improved care for remote, rural and island communities across Scotland, with a focus on reducing health and wellbeing inequalities and improving primary care and community-based workforce and service delivery.

We are contributing £155,000 in 2025-26 towards the funding of the Community Health Workers programme. The programme is led by the [Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project](#) and supports Gypsy/Traveller communities across several health board areas. Community health workers are members of the Gypsy/Traveller community who play a pivotal role in acting as a bridge between the community and the health system to improve healthcare access and break down barriers.

We continue to fund [LGBT Youth Scotland](#) over £68,000 in multi-year funding as part of our action to implement the [Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Action Plan](#). [LGBT Youth Scotland](#) are working to ensure that LGBTQI+ young people have improved awareness around sexual health and wellbeing and increased access to this information to address inequity in sexual health care.

We have established a 'Task and Finish' group to design a sustainable long-term model for young people's gender identity services. The model will emphasise holistic, person-centred care and shared decision making and will be shaped by the recommendations in the Chief Medical Officer's [Cass Review](#) report. The group is expected to sign off on a new target operating model for young people's gender identity services by the end of 2025.

We will drive improvement following the publication of an [independent evaluation](#) in August 2025 of the impact of our funding to health boards for improvement work to their gender identity clinics. With our NHS partners, we will continue to work constructively and collaboratively to address issues and build on improvements to date.

Concluding Observation 51b (Mental Health)

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Strengthen mental health services and support systems by allocating sufficient resources, strengthening community-based support, undertaking initiatives to destigmatize mental health issues and implementing targeted measures for groups disproportionately affected by mental health problems.

17: Health and access to healthcare

(Concluding Observations 51a; 51b)

Context

Our joint [Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) with COSLA sets out our long-term vision and approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing of everyone in Scotland. The [delivery plan](#) and [workforce action plan](#) detail the initiatives underway to address each of the strategy's ten priority areas. To ensure effective governance and oversight, we have formed the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Leadership Board](#) which consists of diverse partners from the public, private, and third sectors at both local and national levels to support the delivery of the strategy, delivery plan, and workforce action plan.

Our ten-year [suicide prevention strategy](#) and [action plan](#) set out a clear plan to reduce suicides in Scotland and to address the inequalities which can contribute to suicide. To ensure that our suicide prevention work has real impact, our approach prioritises people who live in high-risk settings, for example prisons and those who have a higher risk of suicide, like Gypsy/Traveller communities. We have doubled investment in suicide prevention to £2.8 million and we are working closely with COSLA to set out a clear plan to reduce suicides in Scotland and address the inequalities which lead to suicide.

We recognise that social isolation and loneliness is a public health issue, which can affect anyone at any age or stage of life. In March 2023 we published our [Social Isolation and Loneliness Plan](#) (2023-2025) to take forward the delivery of our [strategy](#) for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections. Within the first 100 days of the Parliament, we provided £1 million to support projects tackling social isolation and loneliness, including helplines, befriending, and practical support.

Key Actions

We will develop a refreshed [Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan](#) in 2026. It will contain a focused selection of strategic actions that will make the most significant progress towards our overall vision for health and social care reform, including strengthening mental health services and support and tackling stigma.

We will also publish a renewed [Suicide Prevention Action Plan covering 2026-29](#) in 2026, ensuring it builds on the progress we have made to date, and maximise our shared impact in reducing suicide deaths.

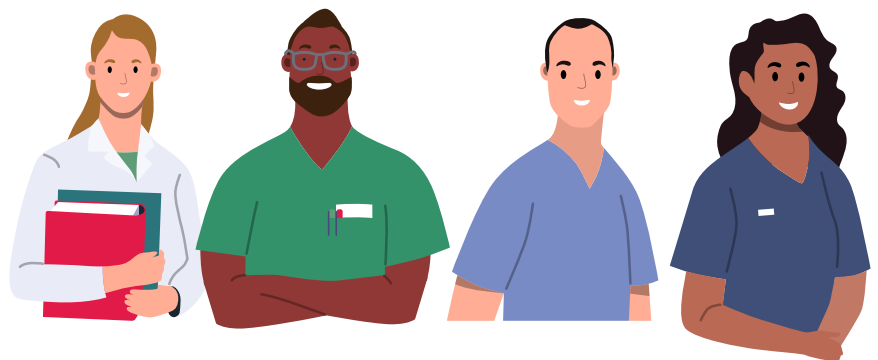
We will fund the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults](#) through the [Fairer Funding for the Third Sector Pilot](#) which has been allocated a further £15 million in 2026-27.

17: Health and access to healthcare

(Concluding Observations 51a; 51b)

We continue to work with NHS boards to meet the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services waiting times standard (that 90% of children and young people start treatment within 18 weeks of referral) and clear backlogs by December 2025. Despite the standard being met nationally in the last three quarters, performance still varies across NHS boards. We are providing enhanced support to those not on track to meet the standard, providing access to professional advice, and ensuring they have robust improvement plans in place, and monitoring their implementation. We have also commissioned and reviewed performance trajectories for when NHS boards will meet the standard and clear long waits.

We published the [National Specification for Eating Disorders](#) in November 2024 to support both the NHS and local services to deliver person-centred, safe and effective care for children, young people and adults. We continue to work closely with NHS boards to support the specification's phased implementation, and to improve services and support for people impacted by eating disorders in Scotland. We have also established the [National Eating Disorders Network](#) which will further support implementation.



18: Sexual and reproductive health

(Concluding Observations 53a; 53b; 53c)

Thematic Tags

Right to health sexual and reproductive healthcare; Access to healthcare; Maternal healthcare; Rurality; Migrants; Racialised minorities

Concluding Observation 53a

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Increase efforts to ensure equal access to maternal health services for migrant women and women from ethnic minority groups with a view to reducing maternal and infant mortality rates and to adequately equip facilities for antenatal, perinatal and postnatal care, particularly in rural areas.

Context

We are committed to delivering care which meets the [Best Start](#) vision – that all mothers and babies are offered a family-centred, safe and compassionate approach to their care, recognising their own unique circumstances and preferences. We are committed to reducing maternal and infant mortality and advancing health equity by increasing efforts to ensure equal access to maternal health services for all women, and in particular those with additional complex needs by strengthening

antenatal, perinatal, and postnatal care in alignment with our National Outcomes on health, human rights, and reducing inequalities.

A [Remote, Rural and Islands Task and Finish Group](#) has been established to evaluate ways of delivering safe, quality health care services to populations including maternal health services for migrant women and women from ethnic minority groups in these areas. As part of its work, the group aims to define ‘core services’ that should be provided locally, taking into account the requirement for specialised care that may need to be accessed outside the local area when clinically necessary.

We continue to take forward work nationally to address the challenges faced by maternity services in rural health boards. Initiatives such as the introduction of model of continuity of care, development of community hubs, and the increased use of [Near Me](#) all improve the delivery of rural maternity services.

18: Sexual and reproductive health

(Concluding Observations 53a; 53b; 53c)

Key Actions

We will publish a Rural Delivery Plan and a new National Islands Plan by the end of this Scottish Parliament, setting out how we are delivering for our rural and island communities respectively. We are working with islanders, local authorities and partner organisations to ensure the refreshed Plans drive progress towards our shared vision of thriving, sustainable and successful island and rural communities.

In May 2025, we published [a report on our progress to implement Best Start](#). This confirmed the delivery of three quarters of the government's recommendations from 2017-24. Work to implement the remaining recommendations, including continuity of care and the new model of neonatal intensive care, continues.

We published the [Tackling Racialised Health Inequalities in Maternity Care Action Plan](#) and interpretation toolkits on 6 February 2025. These are designed to support NHS Boards to continue to improve outcomes and experiences for women and families from minoritised communities, including those who require access to an interpreter. The action plan sets out 14 actions to be taken forward over the immediate, shorter, medium and longer-term. It sets the expectation of NHS Boards, [Scottish Perinatal Network](#) and other national partners to ensure that local clinical guidelines and pathways meet the needs of all service users, with a particular focus on the needs of women and babies with Black and Brown skin.

We continue to engage on the perinatal care priority for NHS Boards' anti-racism planning guidance to ensure that tackling racialised inequalities is built into wider work on safety and standards from the outset.

Concluding Observations

53b: The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Strengthen measures to ensure the accessibility and availability of appropriate, good-quality sexual and reproductive healthcare services and information, such as access to safe abortion services, including abortion medication, contraception and emergency contraception, for all women and adolescent girls in the State Party, particularly those living in rural or remote areas.

53c: The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments: Be guided by the Committee's general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health and the [Abortion Care Guideline \(2022\)](#) of the World Health Organization (WHO) and take into account the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its inquiry.



18: Sexual and reproductive health

(Concluding Observations 53a; 53b; 53c)

Context

Women's health remains a principal focus for us, and we became the first government in the UK to introduce a [Women's Health Plan](#) in August 2021. The plan outlined 66 actions designed to improve health outcomes for women and girls, concentrating on: menopause; menstrual health including, endometriosis; abortion and contraception; post-natal contraception; and heart health. A [final report](#) on the first plan was published in November 2024.

The [Abortion Services \(Safe Access Zones\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) was enacted in September 2024. Safe access zones (sometimes also called 'buffer zones') protect and ensure women and girls can access abortion services without fear or intimidation. It also protects staff working to provide abortion services by preventing activities, which could influence or alarm them, within a 200 metre radius of hospitals and clinics.

Access to free period products for anyone who needs them is protected in law by the [Period Products \(Free Provision\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#). We are proud to have taken world leading action through investing over £47 million since 2018 to fund access to free period products across a range of settings including schools, colleges and universities, plus wider public spaces.

Key Actions

We aim to publish the next phase of our Women's Health Plan in January 2026.

We gathered the views of women and girls, key stakeholders, clinical experts, academics, and those working in women's health.

We established an [Abortion Law Expert Group](#) to provide an independent assessment of the current law on abortion and, if appropriate, make recommendations for reform. The [Expert Group's report](#) was published in November 2025.

This report forms only one part of the review and we will now begin our own programme of stakeholder engagement on these recommendations with a wide range of individuals and organisations interested in this subject before determining the need for legislative proposals. Any future consideration of legislative proposals would be subject to a full public consultation.

As part of our [Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Action Plan](#) we have allocated £800,000 to several projects aimed at increasing accessibility to sexual and reproductive health services, including testing, contraception, and post-abortion care.

We continue to support Early Medical Abortion at Home where it is clinically appropriate in line with the findings of the 2023 independent [evaluation](#).

We established a [Task and Finish Group](#) to agree a recommended service model to support women to have later stage abortions in Scotland. The group has developed a model, and work will begin with health boards to move towards implementation of this as soon as possible.

19: Drug policy

(Concluding Observations 55a; 55b)

Thematic tags

Right to health; Access to healthcare;
Drugs; Young people

Concluding Observation 55a

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] review its legislative framework to adopt a human rights-based approach to drug use, including by: Conducting preventive awareness-raising on the serious health risks associated with drug abuse, particularly among young people.

Context

We take a human rights and public health-based approach to reducing drug deaths. The [National Mission](#) is based upon the right to life, health, dignity and respect, and is supported by a commitment to provide £250 million in additional funding from 2021-25. We have made it clear that prevention is key to improving lives and reducing deaths for people impacted by drugs. The [National Mission](#) has been developed around six outcomes including harm reduction; treatment; residential rehabilitation; workforce; data and surveillance; and monitoring and evaluation. The [latest National Mission Annual Report](#) covers progress in 2024-25.

Key Actions

We will publish an alcohol and drugs plan in early 2026, setting out how we and our partners will reduce alcohol and drug related harms and deaths.

We will publish standards for young people with emerging problematic drug or alcohol use by the end of 2025.

The standards will outline what young people aged 25 and under should expect when seeking help for a drug or alcohol problem. Upholding these Standards will ensure young people have local access to consistent and high quality treatment services from an early stage.

We continue to invest in the expansion of the [successful routes model](#) which supports young people affected by substance use. As part of the multi-year funding, in 2025-26 we are providing £1.3 million to Scottish families affected by alcohol and drugs to support delivery of the [Grow Your Own Routes Project](#). In collaboration with the [Whole Family Wellbeing Fund](#) we have expanded the Routes Programme to six new areas of Scotland.

19: Drug policy

(Concluding Observations 55a; 55b)

We are investing another £750,000 in 2025-26 in the [Planet Youth pilot](#) in addition to £1.5 million over 2023-25. Planet Youth is an evidence based primary prevention model which empowers communities to support their young people to reduce the risk of substance use and harms. As of October 2025, Planet Youth is operating in 40 schools across 6 areas in Scotland and we will expand into more schools in 2026.

We continue to support the implementation of [Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Action Plan](#) with £1.7 million per year of funding. This includes supporting work to ensure that people who inject drugs have access to and take up optimal harm reduction services and if deemed clinically ready, antiviral therapy to prevent the onward transmission of infection.

Concluding Observation 55b

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] review its legislative framework to adopt a human rights-based approach to drug use, including by: Ensuring the treatment of drug use disorder and the provision of healthcare services, psychological support, rehabilitation services and harm reduction programmes for persons who use drugs and considering the adoption of alternatives to the punitive approach and criminal penalties for drug use.

Context

The number of drug deaths in Scotland remains much too high. To date we have launched the [Charter of Rights](#); supported the UK's first [Safer Drug Consumption Facility in Glasgow](#); worked closely with the UK Government to support the establishment of Scotland's first drug checking facilities in Glasgow, Dundee, and Aberdeen along with a national testing laboratory; provided £13 million in funding to community and grass-roots organisations supporting over 300 projects; invested £38 million to expand residential rehabilitation capacity; and widened access to life-saving Naloxone.

In 2023 we published [A Caring, Compassionate and Human Rights Informed Drug Policy for Scotland](#) calling on the UK Government to introduce immediate legislative changes to support harm reduction measures, arguing for decriminalisation of possession for personal supply, and examining the opportunities for a future debate on strict regulated markets. We continue to engage with the UK Government and hosted a Four Nations meeting in September 2025.



19: Drug policy

(Concluding Observations 55a; 55b)

Key Actions

We will continue to fund Glasgow's safer drug consumption facility, [The Thistle Facility](#), with £2 million annually. This facility provides medical intervention and support to people who may otherwise not have contact with any drug treatment service.

We have committed to funding 1,000 residential rehab placements per year by 2026. [Publications from Public Health Scotland](#) suggest that we are making good progress towards meeting our 1,000 placement target by 2026, with a recent publication showing that in 2024-25, statutory funding was approved for 913 residential rehab placements.

We have [committed to increasing residential rehabilitation capacity to 650 beds by 2026](#). This is supported by £38 million investment in eight projects across Scotland.

[Healthcare Improvement Scotland](#) are **working to support areas across the country to develop and implement their own local protocols by March 2026, following the publication of the [National Mental Health and Substance Use Protocol](#) in September 2024.** This sets out a gold-standard of joint working between mental health and substance use services for co-occurring mental health and substance use conditions.

We have committed to full and sustained implementation of the [10 Medication Assisted Treatment \(MAT\) Standards in community and justice settings by April 2026](#). The last benchmarking report, published in June 2025, showed that across all 29 Alcohol and Drug Partnership areas for MAT Standards 1-5,

91% were assessed as fully implemented and for MAT standards 6-10, 75% were assessed as fully implemented.

We are supporting national, and UK surveillance work to develop timely and accurate information on drug trends. This information is used to provide alerts to the public and services regarding harmful drug supplies.

We are reviewing community sentencing by the end of 2025. While evidence suggests that court-ordered treatment is less effective than voluntary treatment, it is still likely to produce more positive outcomes for people than custody.

We continue to support the [Scottish Recovery Consortium](#) to deliver the **Prison Recovery Project that increases opportunities for people to access recovery support, mutual aid and peer support within prison and creates recovery pathways when people return to their community.**

We continue to fund the [Prison to rehab pathway programme](#) with up to £21,500 available per placement, which supports individuals who would benefit from accessing abstinence-based treatment, into residential rehab upon release from prison. Since 2021, over 200 individuals have transitioned directly from prison to residential rehabilitation. We have updated our current guidance to make the application process clearer for the individual requesting residential rehabilitation straight from prison and for all the stakeholders involved in supporting the placement.

20: Education

(Concluding Observations
57a; 57b; 57c; 57d; 57e; 57f)



Thematic tags

Education; Children's rights; Childcare; COVID-19; Educational Attainment; Poverty; Culturally appropriate; Gypsy/ Traveller; Disability; Migrants; Bullying and harassment; Non-discrimination

Concluding Observation 57a

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Guarantee high-quality and affordable early childhood education for all children [...] especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Context

Our [strategic early learning and school age childcare plan for Scotland](#) sets out our vision for early learning and school age childcare, as well as our strategic priorities, and what families can expect from services. All local authorities have a duty to ensure that eligible children can access their entitlement of funded ELC. The [National Standard](#) for funded ELC makes clear that ELC settings must provide appropriate support, including making any reasonable changes to the care and learning environment, to ensure that children's additional support needs are not a barrier to them accessing the full range of experiences.

Key Actions

We will review and refresh the strategic early learning and school age childcare plan for Scotland in 2026. This will reflect progress on commitments and possible next steps.

We expect to publish a full report on the ELC 1140 expansion evaluation for the period 2018-25 in early 2026.

Data collection has been completed and concentrated primarily on being able to analyse outcomes by child poverty priority families, gender, age, area deprivation, and household income.

We continue to provide 1140 hours per year of funded ELC to all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds regardless of parents' working status, putting children first. We continue to invest around £1 billion each year in funded ELC.

Concluding Observation 57b

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] adopt effective measures to mitigate learning opportunity loss in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular for disadvantaged children, and effectively prevent the further disruption of education.

20: Education

(Concluding Observations 57a; 57b; 57c; 57d; 57e; 57f)

Context

We recognise the ongoing impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on children and young people, including on their education and wider health and wellbeing. [The COVID-19 Education Recovery Group](#) was established in March 2020 to provide advice on education policy and delivery to ministers and local government leaders. In May 2020, we published the joint [Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools and Early Learning and Childcare Provision](#), providing guidance on the potential requirement for a blended model of in school and at home teaching. Nearly 30 versions of this guidance were published over the ensuing months.

In October 2021 we published our [COVID-19 Education Recovery Actions and Next Steps Plan](#), which summarised how we would plan to build on the innovation and strengths that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, and incorporated key principles including diversity, equality and sustainability.

Following this, subsequent policy development and implementation at both local and national level is being done in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children and young people. Scottish Ministers also have a duty under the [Coronavirus \(Recovery and Reform\) \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) to publish regular reports on how well prepared local authorities are to provide remote learning for children and young people, should that be required. The [first report](#), published in May 2024, found that most local authorities have a contingency plan in place for remote learning and most confirmed that the potential for remote learning is on their local authority's risk register.

Key Actions

We will publish an Early Years Speech and Language Action Plan for Scotland in December 2025. The plan seeks to address the growing level of concerns being reported about children's speech and language development since the COVID-19 pandemic. This work directly contributes to mitigating learning opportunity loss by targeting the single largest domain of developmental delay, early communication, which disproportionately affects disadvantaged children. It will set out the practical steps that public services will take to build the confidence and capacity of families and staff to support children's early speech and language development.

Over the next year we will deliver a number of actions to support schools, young people and their families. This includes work to improve recording and monitoring, develop new guidance on substance use and review national guidance on exclusions and attendance. A national marketing campaign will also be launched to support parents of children who are struggling with attendance.

Concluding Observation 57c

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments: Evaluate the impact of the existing programmes [...] on improvement in the educational attainment gaps and adopt effective measures, with a view to raising the educational attainment levels of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from low-income families to promote social mobility.

20: Education

(Concluding Observations 57a; 57b; 57c; 57d; 57e; 57f)

Context

Scotland's education system is being [reformed](#) to improve outcomes for learners of all ages, while ensuring that those delivering education in settings, schools and colleges are better supported. Our education reform programme has been informed by a series of independent reviews, which were published between [2021](#), [2023](#), and [2024](#). These reports detail the ways in which we could build on the strengths of the current system, for the betterment of children and young people, adult learners and practitioners.

As part of a commitment to empowerment for local planning and decision making, local authorities are required to set stretch aims for raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap by 2025-26. Through attainment advisors assigned to each local authority, [Education Scotland](#) provide local authorities and schools with support and challenge in their work to close the poverty related attainment gap.

Key Actions

We have allocated £1 billion to the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#) over the course of this parliamentary term. All 32 local authorities receive funding to support strategies for addressing the attainment gap and initiatives for care experienced children and young people. This funding finances a variety of positions, including nearly 700 teachers, family link workers, classroom assistants, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, and school counsellors.

We are committing a further £29 million in 2025-26 for additional investment for additional support needs (ASN). This investment will include an allocation for local and national programmes to support the recruitment and retention of the ASN workforce and will enable us to build on the work being delivered through our [Additional Support for Learning Action Plan](#).

In May 2025 we published a [report on our progress in meeting the key National Improvement Framework measures of the poverty-related attainment gap](#). This was accompanied by the [Pupil Equity Funding report](#) (May 2025) and [School Survey report](#) (August 2025) which include the views of children and young people and school leaders and wider staff.

Concluding Observation 57d

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Ensure that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, children with disabilities, migrant children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to quality education that is culturally appropriate and adapted to their needs.

20: Education

(Concluding Observations 57a; 57b; 57c; 57d; 57e; 57f)

Context

The [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#) places duties on education authorities in Scotland to identify, provide for and review the additional support needs of their pupils who may require additional support for learning, this includes Gypsy/ Travellers, disabled children, migrant children and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The needs of these groups are being carefully considered in our response to the [Additional Support for Learning Review](#). We continue to work closely with local government partners through the [Additional Support for Learning Project Board](#) to deliver the remaining 26 actions in our [Additional Support for Learning Action Plan](#) by March 2026.

We are implementing the [School Age Childcare Programme](#) to design and pilot funded school age childcare services in selected communities throughout Scotland, including funding for specialist providers supporting children with complex additional support needs.

Key Actions

We are continuing to invest £15 million per year, helping local authorities to respond to the individual needs of children and young people who may require support adapted to their needs.

We have invested an additional £29 million in 2025-26 to support local and national programmes to improve the recruitment, retention and training of the ASN workforce to support children and young people with an additional support need.

As part of our work to implement the [Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/ Travellers Action Plan](#), we are funding the [Scottish Traveller Education Programme \(STEP\) £234,837 in 2025-26](#). STEP supports education leaders, practitioners and families to ensure that education is accessible for all children and young people from traditionally nomadic cultures in Scotland.

We are supporting staff to improve educational outcomes for Gypsy/ Traveller children and young people, identifying and supporting community members and educators to work together to raise awareness of Gypsy/Traveller culture and build local relationships and trust.

We are supporting schools to be proactive in communicating with Gypsy/ Traveller parents through the STEP School Pledge programme which includes establishing a named contact point in school to ensure that they have access to information and support at all stages of their children's education. In addition, the STEP Starter Packs Programme is being extended and developed so every child is able to learn through play, offering the best start for going to school and improving opportunities throughout life.

Concluding Observation 57e

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] Take effective measures to ensure the protection of all children from bullying, including cyberbullying, and violence in schools and strengthen efforts to prevent those phenomena and promote understanding and tolerance.

20: Education

(Concluding Observations 57a; 57b; 57c; 57d; 57e; 57f)

Context

In November 2024, we published [Respect for All](#) our revised anti-bullying guidance for all adults working with children and young people. The guidance promotes a proactive and inclusive approach to preventing bullying, supporting all professionals and carers to foster environments where bullying cannot persist. The updated document also provides expanded guidance on prejudice-based bullying, emphasising that certain behaviours may constitute criminal offences, such as hate crimes, and should not be merely categorised as bullying.

We have published new and updated national guidance for schools on [consequences](#), [risk assessments](#), [gender-based violence](#), [bullying](#), [mobile phones](#), [restraint and seclusion](#), and [racism and racist incidents](#).

Key Actions

We will develop additional guidance to supplement Respect for All, outlining how local authorities and schools should record and monitor bullying incidents by spring 2026.

In August 2024 we published a joint action plan with COSLA on [Relationships and Behaviours in Schools](#). The plan outlines 20 strategic actions, including identifying effective, evidence based approaches to relationships and behaviour, reviewing all current procedures for incident reporting, including violent incidents, supporting children and young people in developing healthy relationships and positive behaviours, and empowering staff members.

Concluding Observation 57f

The Committee recommends that the State Party, along with the devolved governments: Take effective measures to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes in educational materials and the school environment and ensure that educational institutions and teachers do not perpetuate such stereotypes, including through the provision of appropriate training programmes for teachers.

Context

[Education Scotland's Building Racial Literacy Programme](#) promotes racial literacy in teachers and educators, helping to tackle the issue of race evasiveness amongst teachers. The ultimate goal of the programme is to make every educator in Scotland racially literate, effective at dealing with racism, and confident in leading anti-racism attitudes.

In March 2024 we published a [national framework for schools to help tackle sexual harassment and gender based violence](#). This framework outlines measures for schools to address underlying causes of gender-based violence, including gender inequality, and describes actions to take in response to specific incidents.

20: Education

(Concluding Observations 57a; 57b; 57c; 57d; 57e; 57f)

Key Actions

We are working in collaboration with the [Scottish Qualifications Authority](#) as part of a review of history qualifications on how to embed an anti-racist and decolonised approach in the curriculum.

This will form part of change within the wider reform of the curriculum and qualifications being implemented over the coming years.

We will publish wider guidance on developing a whole-school approach to preventing and responding to racism and racist incidents, following the publication of our June 2025 [interim guidance](#) on responding to racist incidents towards children and young people.

Since 2022 we have invested over £600,000 to support the creation of new resources for educators developed with anti-racism expertise. The [Breaking the Mould](#) anti-racism curriculum principles (2023) and the children's anti-racism in education [Calls to Action](#) (2024) outline the scope of these initiatives. Resources for educators are being developed to address a range for curriculum areas.

We are funding [Time for Inclusive Education \(TIE\)](#) with over £71,000 in 2025-26 to expand its [Digital Discourse Initiative \(DDI\)](#), which helps schools teach students to assess sources, fact-check, and spot false or prejudicial conspiracy theories. The DDI includes an online teacher training module covering social media, disinformation, hate speech, extremism, radicalisation, strategies for countering disinformation, curriculum tools, and ways to address online hate with pupils.

We also continue to provide funding of £335,700 to TIE to support delivery of LGBTQI+ inclusive education in Scottish schools. This supports the implementation of our [National Approach to LGBT inclusive education guidance](#) for Scottish schools and teachers.

21: Cultural rights

(Concluding Observations 59a; 59b; 59c)



Thematic tags

Culture; Science; Sports; Maximum available resources; Non-discrimination; Rural; Disability; LGBTQI+; Gender Identity

Concluding Observation 59a

The Committee requests that the State Party [...] Take the steps necessary to strengthen the protection of cultural rights and respect for cultural diversity [...] by increasing the budget allocated to promote the development and dissemination of science and culture, guided by the Committee's general comment No. 21 (2009) on the right of everyone to take part in cultural life.

Context

We published a [Culture Strategy](#) in 2020 which draws on the themes raised by artists, creative producers, organisations and communities across Scotland. In December 2023 we published the refreshed [Culture Strategy Action Plan](#) to support delivery, which responds to recent challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased cost of living. In March 2024, we published Scotland's [International Culture Strategy](#).

Since 2023, we have progressed a number of actions to deliver the strategy. This includes, but is not limited to, a review of how the culture sector is supported, including [an independent Review of Creative Scotland](#) led by Chair Angela Leitch CBE; established a Culture Sector Support Programme, which will consider the wider sector support landscape to help inform future funding models and make the most of opportunities for collaborative working; restarted our Culture Collective programme; continued work to implement the recommendations of the [Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums Steering Group](#); and continued collaboration and active engagement with the UK Government and devolved administrations on how to implement the ratification of the [UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#).

21: Cultural rights

(Concluding Observations 59a; 59b; 59c)

Key Actions

The First Minister has committed to investing at least £100 million more annually in culture and the arts by 2028-29. We have demonstrated this commitment by increasing the culture budget by £15.8 million in 2024-25 followed by a further £34 million in 2025-26. Through this increased investment we want to drive up opportunities for participation in creative pursuits, support the production of new works, and ensure that Scotland's cultural output has platforms at home and abroad.

Subject to budget processes in January 2026, we aim to provide a further £20 million in 2026-27, taking the total multi-year funding for Creative Scotland budget to £74 million. This will ensure that more people have access to cultural projects which will benefit their health and wellbeing as well as bringing enjoyment.

We have committed a further £34 million in 2025-26 to support cultural participation and engagement. This is over £50 million more in culture funding than in 2023-24 and is the biggest increase in culture funding in the history of this Scottish Parliament after the COVID-19 pandemic recovery support.

We increased funding to [Youth Music Initiative](#) in 2025-26 totalling £9.8 million annually. This fund is delivered by Creative Scotland.

We fund [Screen Scotland](#) who are supporting a range of work to encourage better equity of access to the creative industry. This includes the [British Film Institute Diversity Standards](#) pilot, which is a new framework designed to tackle under-representation and encourage

equality of opportunity in the screen sectors.

We are also supporting public libraries through our funding to Scottish local authorities, and our own annual [Public Library Improvement Fund](#).

We are investing over £3 million per year in science centres, festivals, and other public science engagement activities.

This supports our commitments to making science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) accessible to a wide audience.

We continue to fund Science Centre £2.67 million and Science Festival £220,000 annually, to deliver key science engagement activities to the public, including disadvantaged community groups, women and girls, to enhance access to and interest in STEM to inspire Scotland's next generation of scientists and engineers.

We fund STEM for Young People £93,273 annually to address economic and social barriers by encouraging young people, particularly young women and girls, to study STEM subjects and consider STEM-related careers.

Concluding Observation 59b

The Committee requests that the State Party [...] Increase resources and improve programmes for the development of accessible recreational, art and leisure spaces, in both rural and urban areas, for persons with all types of disabilities and make the existing sports and recreational infrastructure accessible to all persons with disabilities, in line with the promotion of independent living.

21: Cultural rights

(Concluding Observations 59a; 59b; 59c)

Context

The [National Performing Companies](#) deliver live and interactive creative learning and storytelling activities through touring programmes and lead the way in the use of innovative digital technologies, to reach children in communities and educational settings. The National Performing Companies' work in educational settings reaches across the country and prioritises children in some of the most deprived and remote areas of Scotland. Last year 28% of the primary school pupils the National Performing Companies engaged with lived in the most deprived areas in Scotland and 23% lived in rural or remote areas.

In October 2024, we launched our [National Physical Activity for Health Framework](#) which provides a context for those developing plans and strategies at both national and local level. The framework is firmly founded on evidence based international guidance from the [World Health Organization](#) and other global partners as to the approach, which is needed to deliver sustainable change.

Our [Active Schools](#) flagship sportscotland programme, which is delivered across all 32 Scottish local authorities, provides free high quality opportunities for all young people to take part in sport and physical activity before school, at lunchtime and after school. Active Schools is delivered in both mainstream and ASN schools, and with close to 50% female participation, it is one of the most gender-balanced large scale sporting programmes.

Our latest [Scottish Household Survey results from 2023](#) show that disability inequality in sports participation decreased since 2013. This is driven by an increase in disabled people taking part in sport. We recognise that there is more to be done to address gaps in participation, and we continue to work closely with sportscotland, organisations and individuals across Scotland to breakdown the barriers that keep too many people from leading active lives.

Key Actions

We are providing an additional £20 million in multi-year funding to Creative Scotland for its programme in 2025-26 totalling £54 million. A total of 251 cultural organisations are receiving multi-year funding in 2025-26, which is more than double the number that previously received regular core funding from Creative Scotland. Of these 251 organisations, 164 have an equality, diversity and inclusion focus to their work.

We are re-starting the Culture Collective and allocating £4 million in 2025-26. This project gives funding to a number of creative projects that are based in the local community. In previous years, this has worked throughout Scotland including rural and island projects, and our intention is to continue to support rural and island communities.

We are investing £46.43 million in 2025-26 in our ongoing commitment to sport and active living. Our investment is targeted at addressing inequalities in participation to break down the barriers that keep too many people from leading active lives.

21: Cultural rights

(Concluding Observations 59a; 59b; 59c)

We continue to provide £2 million annually to [Walking Scotland](#) to provide programmes which encourage and support people to walk more. This includes a [Health Walk Network](#) which is specifically designed to support people with long term health conditions and disabilities.

Sportscotland has also increased investment in Scottish Disability Sport up to £754,080 for 2025-26 to help improve access to sport for disabled people.

Concluding Observation 59c

The Committee requests that the State Party [...] Ensure non-discrimination in cultural participation and sports, particularly based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and guarantee that all individuals, including transgender persons, are supported in sports participation, in line with the principles of reasonableness, proportionality and equality.

Context

We are committed to non-discrimination in cultural participation and to provide opportunities for everyone to lead active lives. Our national agency for sport, [sportscotland](#), alongside the wider UK Sport Councils, have developed the [Moving to Inclusion Framework](#). This framework helps Scottish governing bodies of sport (SGBs) to tackle inequalities and enhance participation across groups. Sportscotland are supporting over 40 SGBs with wrap-around support to implement the framework. Our [Non-Binary Equality Action Plan 2023-28](#) also sets our ambition for non-binary people to increasingly feel welcomed and able to take part in sport.

We recognise that it is essential that there are options for everyone to lead active lives, and to participate in an enjoyable, safe and fair sporting environment. Sport governing bodies know their sports best. They set their own rules on domestic transgender participation in line with the [UK Sport Council Guidance](#). This Guidance is primarily aimed at National Governing Bodies of sport and considers the needs of people of all genders. Sports are incredibly diverse and there can be no, 'one size fits all' approach. There may need to be different solutions for different sports, which is why the guidance encourages sports to consider options around fairness, safety and inclusion. The UK Sport Councils, including sportscotland, are reviewing the guidance in light of UK Supreme Court judgment of 16 April 2025 on the meaning of sex in the Equality Act 2010.

Key Actions

We have provided £71,402 in 2025-26 to [LEAP Sports Scotland](#) through our [EHRE](#). LEAP Sports works for the greater inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in sport.

We continue to deliver our annual [Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week](#) campaign, which aims to increase the visibility of women and girls in sport, highlight opportunities to participate, and discuss barriers and drivers to participation.

We continue to support sportscotland's [Fit for Girls](#), [Young Ambassadors Programme](#) and [Female Athlete Performance Group](#) which all play a key role in addressing barriers to participation, while also increasing the visibility, confidence and leadership of women and girls in sport.

22: Other



(Concluding Observations 68; 69)

Thematic tags

Implementation; Accountability; Human rights indicators

Concluding Observation 68

The Committee recommends that the State Party take steps to progressively develop and apply appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in order to facilitate the assessment of progress achieved by the State Party in complying with its obligations under the Covenant for various segments of the population. In that context, the Committee refers the State Party to [...] the human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Context

The [National Performance Framework \(NPF\)](#) is our high level strategic framework that sets out a vision for collective wellbeing for all of Scotland. One of the 11 [National Outcomes](#) describes [Human Rights](#): We respect, protect, and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination. Four national indicators measure progress on this outcome: access to justice, influence over local decisions, ensuring that

public services treat people with dignity and respect, and the quality of public services.

We have established a dedicated [Tracker Design Group](#) comprising members from across civil society, Scottish Parliament and the public sector to support the development of a Human Rights Tracker Tool. The Tracker will be developed in a phased approach. The Tracker aims to consolidate treaty body Concluding Observations into a single, accessible online platform and is intended ultimately to provide information on action taken and outcomes.

Key Actions

We are taking forward work to reform the [National Performance Framework](#) and plan to launch the next iteration around the start of the new government and parliamentary session following the Scottish Parliament elections.

We will aim to launch a first phase of the Human Rights Tracker Tool in March 2026 as a repository of recommendations in relation to devolved areas, from the seven UN core treaties to which the UK is a signatory. Subject to the outcome of the Scottish Parliament elections, we will continue to work with the Tracker Design Group to inform the development

22: Other

(Concluding Observations 68; 69)

of an implementation methodology that will underpin the delivery of Phase 2. Following this, we will review the operation of the Tracker and consider options for expanding the scope, introducing advanced functionality and longer-term ownership arrangements.

Concluding Observation 69

The Committee requests that the State Party, along with the devolved governments [...] disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that Parliament plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State Party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee encourages the State Party to continue to engage with the [...] Scottish Human Rights Commission [...] as well as with non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society, in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

Context

The ICESCR Concluding Observations align with our ambition for a fairer more inclusive Scotland and our key priorities such as eradicating child poverty, growing the economy, tackling the climate emergency, and ensuring high quality and sustainable public services.

Key Actions

This High Level Action Plan sets out the current and future action that we are taking and plan to take to implement the ICESCR Concluding Observations in devolved policy areas. This response provides a basis upon which to further develop an implementation methodology that can inform future phases of the Human Rights Tracker Tool and our wider approach to the consideration, reporting on and implementation of international human rights treaty body recommendations. Our longer term ambition with regard to treaty reporting follow-up is to have a robust approach, which can ultimately be supported by the Tracker Tool.

We continue to engage with the Scottish Parliament Committee on Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice on the monitoring, reporting and implementation of human rights in Scotland. The Minister for Equalities gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament in May 2025 on our approach to economic, social and cultural rights and provided a further [update in writing](#) in September 2025.

Engagement with civil society, the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Scottish Parliament has informed the development of this High Level Action Plan. We will continue to engage with stakeholders on the development of the Tracker Tool and the development of our approach to reporting and implementation through the Tracker Design Group.

Annex A



Stakeholders engaged with in the development of this High Level Action Plan
ALLIANCE Scotland
Caithness Health Action Plan
Castlemilk Housing Association
Castlemilk Housing Human Rights and Lived Experience Board
CEMVO Scotland
Citizens Advice Scotland
Engender
Equality Network
Glasgow Disability Alliance
Hong Kong Scots
Human Rights Consortium Scotland
Making Rights Real
Nourish Scotland
Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities
Scotland Housing Network
Scottish Human Rights Commission
Scottish Parliament – Equalities Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee
Together Scotland
University of Strathclyde



© Crown copyright 2025

OGL

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80643-389-6 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, November 2025

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1659246 (11/25)

w w w . g o v . s c o t