

The Poverty Alliance  
Standard Buildings  
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16.5.23

Dear Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee,

Please find attached new research published by the Poverty Alliance: "[\*Education is supposed to be free for all: Asylum seekers' experiences of accessing further and higher education in Scotland\*](#)". The research was funded by the Equality and Human Rights fund as part of the Poverty Alliance's 'Rights in Action' project.

This new research shows that unjust barriers to further and higher education in Scotland is robbing people in the asylum system of dignity and respect. The research highlights first-hand evidence of the devastating obstacles faced by those seeking asylum when it comes to accessing university and college, causing stress, anxiety, disappointment, and frustration.

Key findings from the research include:

- Fee waivers for part-time college courses only means that asylum seekers' options are restricted. In practice, this means they must do courses over two years rather than in one year like their peers.
- There are very limited opportunities to go to university due to inadequate funding.
- Asylum seekers are facing discrimination being pushed to do courses that they do not want to do.
- There is a lack of consistent advice and support from colleges and universities.

The briefing shares recommendations to build a more just education system for asylum seekers in Scotland. Key priorities include ensuring equal access to further and higher education through waiving fees for full-time college courses, providing more funding and support for asylum seekers to go to university and expanding eligibility for support when in education for example with transport and study material costs.

Scotland prides itself as being a nation of inclusivity and equality, however the way asylum seekers are treated in further and higher education fails to live up to this.

We need to see meaningful change and provide just access to education for asylum seekers in Scotland.

If you would like to discuss the findings of this research, or any element of our work at the Poverty Alliance and the Rights in Action project please contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Laura Robertson The Poverty Alliance