



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Neil Gray MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport
Scottish Government

9 May 2025

Dear Mr Gray and Ms Todd,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee regarding evidence we have received on the issue of institutionalisation and independent living for disabled people in Scotland.

At a recent evidence session on 1 April 2025, we heard from the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) on its *report Tick Tock... A Human Rights Assessment of Progress from Institutionalisation to Independent Living in Scotland*. The report provides a comprehensive assessment of Scotland's progress in meeting its domestic and international human rights obligations, including those under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD).

While we acknowledge the Scottish Government's commitments to advancing independent living, including the development of Self-Directed Support (SDS) and policy frameworks such as A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People, the evidence presented to the Committee highlights ongoing and significant challenges. The SHRC report identifies key areas requiring urgent action, including:

- The slow pace of change, with some disabled people still experiencing institutional-style care settings;
- Barriers to the effective implementation of SDS, limiting choice and control for disabled people;
- A lack of accessible, affordable housing, which remains a critical barrier to independent living;
- Resource and workforce challenges in the social care sector, impacting service delivery and sustainability;
- Incoherence in legal and policy frameworks, resulting in gaps in rights protection and implementation.

In addition to the SHRC's findings, we have also engaged directly with individuals from Autistic Disabled People's Organisations in a session on 25 March 2025. Their testimony reinforced the SHRC's conclusions and further emphasised pressing concerns such as long waiting times for autism and ADHD assessments, difficulties in accessing appropriate mental health support, and barriers to employment caused by systemic discrimination.

Contact: Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email EHRCJ.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

Given these significant issues, the Committee would welcome further information from the Scottish Government on the following:

1. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to accelerate progress towards fully realising the right to independent living for disabled people in Scotland?
2. How is the Government addressing the barriers to effective implementation of SDS to ensure individuals have greater control over their support?
3. What measures are being considered to expand accessible and affordable housing for disabled people?
4. How does the Government plan to tackle the resource and workforce challenges in social care to ensure sustainability and quality of service provision?
5. What actions are being taken to improve coherence between legal and policy frameworks to enhance rights protections?
6. How is the Government ensuring that the voices of disabled people, particularly those with lived experience, are meaningfully involved in decision-making processes?

The Committee would appreciate a response to these questions and an update on the Scottish Government's plans to address the concerns raised by the SHRC and those with lived experience.

We would be grateful for a response by June 2025. We look forward to your response, and to working collaboratively to ensure that Scotland continues to progress towards a human rights-based approach to independent living.

Yours sincerely

Karen Adam MSP
Convener