

# SHRC

Scottish  
Human Rights  
Commission



**Help with  
human rights**

# Contents

Who we are	3
What human rights are	4
How human rights are protected	5
How to know if your issue is a human rights issue	7
Help with human rights problems	8
Advice and help services	9
Making a complaint against a professional or a public body	11
Other help and support services	13
Help to access advice services	28
Frequently asked questions	29

**If you have a human rights problem, the organisations and services listed in this leaflet may be able to help you.**

This leaflet has been produced by the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and was last updated in November 2025.

# Who we are

The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) is Scotland's human rights watchdog.

We are an independent, expert body that works with and for the people of Scotland; we monitor, listen, speak up for all of our rights and respond when things go wrong.

The SHRC is independent of government and accountable to the people of Scotland via the Scottish Parliament.

Our duties, powers and functions are set out in the **Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006**. The SHRC has a general duty to promote awareness, understanding and respect for all human rights to everyone, everywhere in Scotland, and to encourage best practice in relation to human rights. To achieve this, the SHRC carries out research about human rights, publishes reports about spotlighted issues, and gives advice to Parliament about the legal changes needed to protect human rights. This work and other work can be found on the website.

The SHRC is not a complaints handling body, and we do not provide an advisory service to individuals. This is because the law that governs the SHRC's work prohibits us from giving advice or assistance on individual legal claims or potential legal proceedings (Section 6(1) of the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006). When the Scottish Parliament set the SHRC up, it decided that it would be better for our limited resources to be used for working on strategic legal and policy work looking at systemic issues that are affecting lots of people, instead of providing an advice service. This means that we work on human rights issues that affect lots of people, like our spotlight project on Access to Justice, rather than providing advice to a smaller number of individuals. The SHRC is also part of the international human rights system. It is accredited by the United Nations as its trusted organisation to provide impartial evidence on the enjoyment of human rights in Scotland.

As Scotland's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), we comply with a set of standards called the **UN Paris Principles**. These require us, among other obligations, to

- be independent from government;
- show pluralism and independence in selecting members;
- cover a broad range of human rights issues; and
- work with both civil society and the state.

# What human rights are

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that we are all entitled to, in order to live with dignity.

Human rights include “civil and political” rights, such as:

- The right to freedom of expression
- The right to freedom of religion or conscience
- The right to be free from torture, inhuman, or degrading treatment
- The right to freedom of assembly
- The right to respect for private and family life
- The right to life.

Human rights also include “economic and social” rights, such as:

- The right to an adequate standard of living
- The right to adequate food, housing, water and sanitation
- The rights the highest attainable standard of health
- The right to education.

The foundation of human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The 30 articles of the Declaration were adopted in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly after the atrocities of WWII. Over time, these have been integrated into national laws and international treaties.

In Scotland, our human rights are protected by international and domestic law. As part of the United Kingdom, Scotland has signed up to a range of international and regional human rights treaties which describe the rights that people have under international law.

By becoming a party to these instruments, the UK has legal obligations under international law. However, without additional steps, these obligations do not become legal rights in domestic law that can be enforced in courts. Some States incorporate the Conventions into their legal systems.

So far, the UK, has fully incorporated one international Convention into its legal systems – the European Convention on Human Rights, through the **Human Rights Act 1998**. The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It came into force in 2000.

Scotland has also incorporated the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into the Scottish legal system via the **UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024**. This came into force on 16th July 2024.

These laws should help to prevent breaches of our rights and provide us with routes to access justice when things go wrong.

# How human rights are protected

Some human rights are protected in Scottish law. Others are set out in international agreements that the UK has signed up to. Human rights can also be protected by organisations taking a “human rights based approach” to providing services for people.

## The law

In Scotland human rights are protected in a number of different ways. Some human rights are guaranteed by the Human Rights Act 1998 (‘HRA 1998’). This guarantees many of the rights in the European Convention on Human Rights in our domestic legal system. The HRA 1998 means that you can defend your rights in the Scottish and UK courts and that public organizations (including the Government, the Police and local councils) have a duty to act in a way that is compatible with your rights.

Many children’s rights are also protected by the **UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024** and therefore directly enforceable in the Scottish courts. Like with the HRA 1998, this means you can defend your rights in Scottish courts, and Scottish public authorities have a duty to act compatibly with your rights. However, unlike under the HRA 1998, the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 only applies to Scottish law and Scottish authorities applying Scottish law, not UK wide ones.

People in Scotland are also entitled to other human rights because the United Kingdom has signed up to international agreements. Examples of these include:

- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**
- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**
- **Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**
- **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**
- **Convention against Torture (CAT)**
- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**
- There are also a **range of Council of Europe treaties** that protect human rights.

Taking a human rights case to court can often be costly, time consuming and stressful. You should ask a lawyer for advice at an early stage.

Some human rights issues can be resolved using non-judicial options such as using complaints services and getting help from advocacy services.

## Human rights based approach (HRBA)

Many organisations and services also take a broader “human rights based approach” to their work.

This means going beyond the minimum legal requirements. It means putting the values and principles of human rights into practice throughout the service or the organisation’s approach.

**More information about taking a human rights based approach is available on the SHRC’s website.**



# How to know if your issue is a human rights issue

You might have a human rights issue if...

## Healthcare

You have been denied lifesaving treatment because of assumptions about your quality of life.

## Housing

The local authority wants to move you out of your council funded home in an area where you have been settled for years. If this proposed move would interfere with your right to family life, you may have a human rights issue.

Or the local authority has provided you with unsafe housing or housing inappropriate for your state of health or disability.

## Care

You or your family member has been forcibly taken into care by the local authority without them consulting the people affected or conducting a proper assessment of the patient's needs.

## Discriminatory restrictions in the workplace

Your employer has prevented you from wearing religious symbols at work without a good reason or properly considering your situation.

## Protests and assemblies

You have been stopped from protesting in public even though the protest did not imminently threaten public safety or peace.

# Help with human rights problems

We know that many people face problems trying to make their human rights a reality in their everyday lives and it can often be difficult to know where to get help or to access justice when there is a problem.

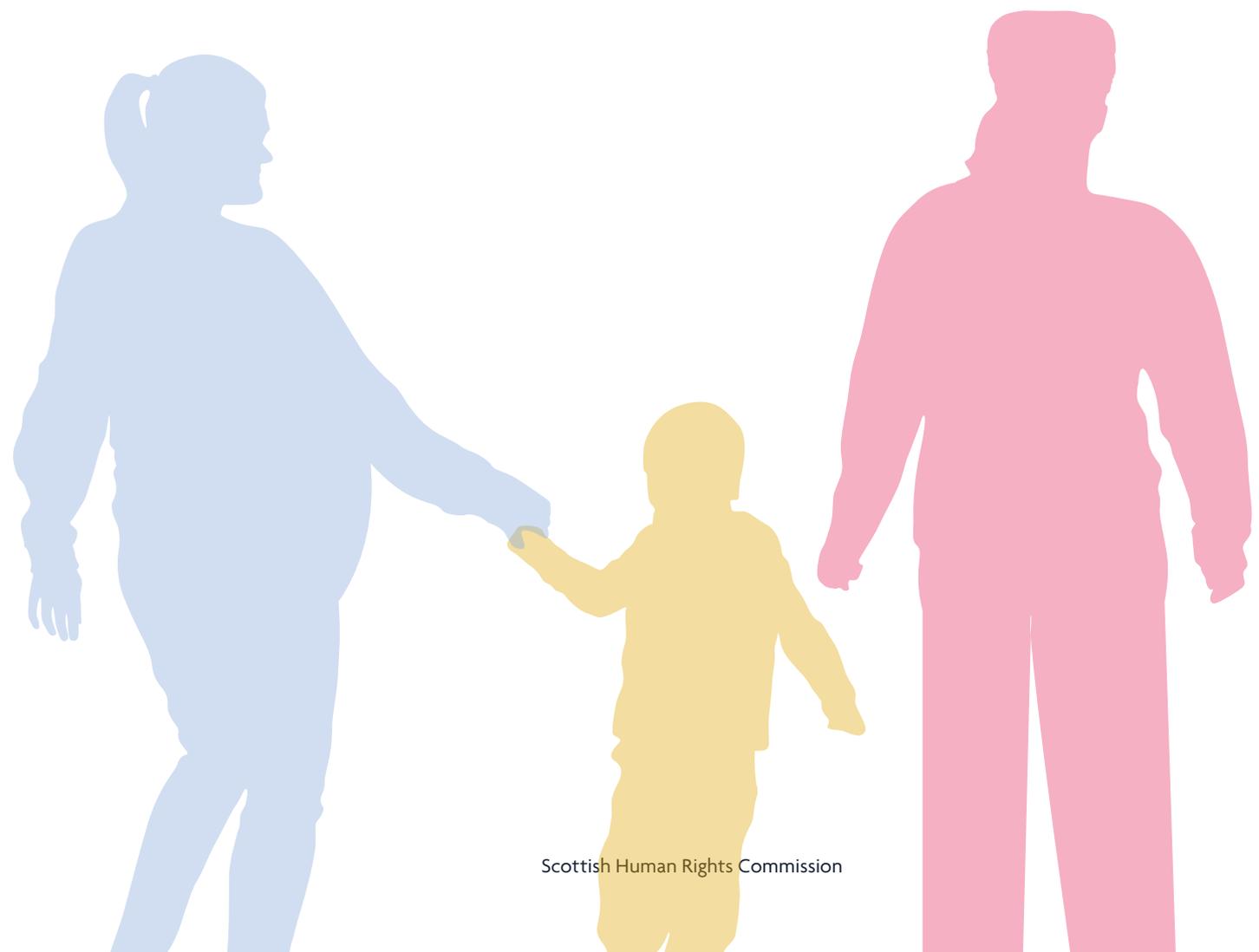
This leaflet gives details of organisations and services that may be able to help you, if you have a human rights problem.

It is arranged by:

- general advice
- legal advice
- thematic advice

The Scottish Human Rights Commission is not a complaint handling body and does not provide an advice service to individuals. However, we work closely with other organisations and services that do provide advice on human rights issues, so that we can signpost people to them.

We also partnered with the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland to map advice and advocacy of Scotland. **The maps are available on our website on the webpage for the Access to Justice for potential human rights breaches spotlight project.**



# Advice and help services

## General advice

There are a number of generalist advice and help services that may be a good starting point for support. In addition to the services listed below, you may wish you consult the advice and advocacy map on our website, which shows what services are available in your area. Visit the SHRC website to view the maps on our website at the webpage for the Access to Justice for potential human rights breaches spotlight project.

### Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)

Advises and helps people on issues relating to equality and human rights. This service includes a helpline and online advice and resources, including how the Equality Act 2010 works and what to do if you think you have experienced discrimination.



[Homepage | Equality Advisory Support Service](#)



Helpline: 0808 800 0082  
Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Opening hours: Monday – Friday: 9am – 7pm, Saturday: 10am – 2pm  
They also provide a 'Live Chat' on their website – experts are available 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

### Citizens Advice Scotland

Can give free impartial advice on a wide range of issues.



[Homepage | Citizens Advice Scotland](#)



Helpline: 0800 028 1456

Visit the "**Get advice**" section of the Citizen's Advice Scotland website to find your local Bureau.

### Advice.Scot

Scotland's largest digital advice hub. They help people to find out if they have rights and how to exercise them. They offer advice on every subject matter that is free.



[About us | Advice.Scot](#)



0808 800 9060

## Legal advice

### The Law Society of Scotland

Can help you find a lawyer. They provide a list of people who are qualified solicitors, who can advise you. The Law Society of Scotland itself does not provide advice.

 [Find a solicitor | The Law Society of Scotland](#)

 0131 226 7411

### Community Law Centres

Community Law Centres across Scotland provide legal advice to individuals. They are usually charities that specialise in welfare, housing and discrimination issues. You can contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau for more information (see above).

The Scottish Legal Aid Board can give you information on whether you are eligible for legal aid. They can also advise on how to find an appropriate solicitor.

 [Homepage | Scottish Legal Aid Board](#)

 0131 226 7061

 [general@slab.org.uk](mailto:general@slab.org.uk)

### The Ethnic Minority Law Centre

Provides free legal advice and representation on human rights issues in relation to immigration and asylum matters.

They also support people in making discrimination claims and in employment disputes.

They are based in Glasgow, but do outreach in Aberdeen, Highlands, North Lanarkshire and Edinburgh.

 [Homepage | Ethnic Minorities Law Centre](#)

 0141 204 2888

 [admin@emlc.org.uk](mailto:admin@emlc.org.uk) or [edinburgh@emlc.org.uk](mailto:edinburgh@emlc.org.uk)

# Making a complaint against a professional or a public body

If your issue relates to a service provided to you by a public body, you are entitled to make a formal complaint.

All public services will have their own internal complaints procedure which should be followed before taking the matter further. You can usually find the complaints procedure on the website of the service in question.

If you have exhausted the complaints procedure of the service and your complaint has not been resolved, you can then contact the body responsible for regulating that service.

## Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The final stage for handling complaints about public bodies in Scotland. You must have completed the complaints procedure with the public body in question before contacting SPSO.



[Homepage | Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#)



0800 377 7330

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman has a wide remit, covering a variety of functions and services. You can contact the SPSO for complaints about most devolved public services in Scotland including councils, the health service, prisons, water and sewerage providers, Scottish Government, universities and colleges.

**Their website provides a comprehensive step-by step guide about how to raise a complaint.**

## Scottish Information Commissioner

Can help with freedom of information requests to Scottish Public Authorities.

**Their website provides a clear explainer of the rights to freedom of information.**



[Homepage | Scottish Information Commissioner](#)



01334 464610

## Police Investigations and Review Commissioner for Scotland

Considers and reviews the way police authorities, police forces and policing agencies handle complaints from the public.

They independently investigate incidents involving policing bodies in Scotland. These include serious injuries or death following police contact, allegations of criminality by on-duty officers, and senior officer misconduct cases.

They can review the way policing bodies in Scotland handle complaints made about them by members of the public.



**We are the PIRC | Police Investigations and Review Commissioner for Scotland**



01698 542 900



[enquiries@pirc.gov.scot](mailto:enquiries@pirc.gov.scot)



# Other help and support services

The following list of support services are arranged thematically. Please note, this is not intended to be a fully comprehensive list of all services available in Scotland. You may also wish to check our advice and advocacy map for services in your local area.

## Children's and young people's rights

### Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland (CYCPS)

Promotes and protects the rights of children and young people in Scotland. It also helps people understand what children's rights mean in practice.

See their website for more details.

The CYPCS does not provide individual advice/advocacy or handle complaints.



[Homepage | Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland](#)



0131 346 5350

### Scottish Child Law Centre

Provides free legal advice for, and about, children. They help children, parents, carers, and relatives.



[Homepage | Scottish Child Law Centre](#)



Advice Line: 0131 667 6333 (advice line)



[enquiries@sclc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@sclc.org.uk)

## Clan Child Law

Clan Child Law provides free, independent legal representation exclusively for children and young people, which is child-centred.



[Homepage | Clan Child Law](#)



08081290522



Text contact: 0752 756 6682 (text only)



[info@clanchildlaw.org](mailto:info@clanchildlaw.org)

## LGBT Youth Scotland

Provides support to LGBTQ+ young people. They provide community and support from trained youth workers. They also provide a range helpful resources for young people about health, sex, relationships, and navigating the law.



They offer live chats on their website [Information Hub | LGBT Youth Scotland](#)

## Contact a Family

Contact a Family has information, support and advice for the families of disabled children.



[Homepage | Contact a family](#)



0808 808 3555

They run a **freephone helpline**, also available via email and web form, for parent carers wanting expert one-to-one advice. Their **Listening Ear** service is for families seeking emotional support.

## Young Scot Law Line

Provides free legal advice for persons under the age of 25. The Law Line is free and confidential and aims to help you get advice on a wide range of legal issues, including debt, benefits, housing, consumer law and others.



[Get advice from the Young Scot Law Line | Young Scot](#)



0808 801 0801

## Who Cares? Scotland

Provides advocacy for care experienced children. Their advocates can help you speak to your social workers, carers, Children's Panel members or teachers. They can give advice.

 **Need advocacy? | Who cares? Scotland**

 Helpline: 0330 107 7540

 [help@whocaresscotland.org](mailto:help@whocaresscotland.org)

## Children First

Protect children from harm, keep them safe, and support them to recover from trauma and abuse through their national support line and in the children's homes, schools and communities. They help children, their families and the people who care for them for as long as it takes by offering emotional, practical and financial support.

 **Scotland's National Children's Charity | Children First**

 Advice line: 08000 28 22 33

 [cfs@childrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:cfs@childrenfirst.org.uk) or [supportline@childrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:supportline@childrenfirst.org.uk)

Please note, if you have immediate, serious concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a child or young person, you should contact your local children's social work team or the police.



## Health, mental health and social care

### The Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS)

PASS at the Citizens Advice Bureau is an independent service which provides information, advice and support to patients and their carers.

Their advisers support anyone who uses NHS Scotland to understand their rights and responsibilities as a patient, raise concerns, give feedback, or make a complaint.



**PASS | The Patient Advice and Support Service**

### The Mental Welfare Commission

Protects and promotes the human rights of people with mental illness, learning disabilities, dementia and related conditions. They offer advice and general information about good practice to do with mental health and incapacity law. They also have regulatory function, which means they can investigate the care and treatment that patients are getting. They make recommendations to services in Scotland to improve care for everyone.

You can contact their advice line for advice on mental health or incapacity law. They cannot offer specific legal advice or take complaints about services, but they may decide to investigate further if they are very concerned about someone's care and treatment.



**Welcome | The Mental Welfare Commission**



Advice line: 0800 389 6809



[mwc.enquiries@nhs.scot](mailto:mwc.enquiries@nhs.scot)

### The Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)

Offers advice on mental health issues. SAMH operates over 70 services in communities across Scotland, which offer mental health support.



**SAMH | For Scotland's Mental Health**



0344 800 0550



[info@samh.org.uk](mailto:info@samh.org.uk)

## The Care Information Scotland

A telephone and website service providing information about care services for older people living in Scotland. They provide useful advice about the support available in emergency situations and what is available from local councils,

 [About us | Care Information Scotland](#)

 0800 011 3200

 [mail@care.org.uk](mailto:mail@care.org.uk)

## The Care Inspectorate

The independent scrutiny and improvement body for care services in Scotland. It is responsible for inspecting, regulating and supporting improvement of social care and social work services across Scotland. You can find their 'inspection reports' that detail their assessment of different care institutions.

 [Welcome to the Care Inspectorate](#)

 0345 600 9527

 [enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot)

## Scottish Social Services Council

Responsible for raising standards in the Scottish Social Services workforce.

 [SSSC | Scottish Social Services Council](#)

 [enquiries@sssc.uk.com](mailto:enquiries@sssc.uk.com)

 0345 60 30 891

## Breathing Space

A free, confidential phonenumber service for any individual who is experiencing low mood and depression, or who is unusually worried and in need of someone to talk to.

Lines are open: Weekdays: Monday-Thursday 6pm to 2am. Weekend: Friday 6pm-Monday 6am

 [Homepage | Breathing Space](#)

 0800 83 85 87

## Beat Eating Disorders

There for those with eating disorders and those supporting them. Their Scottish helpline is open all year-round Monday to Friday for people seeking support related to an eating disorder. You can contact them by chat, phone or email (see website for opening hours). They also provide online information including free downloadable resources.

 [Homepage | Beat Eating Disorders](#)

 0808 801 0432

 [Scotlandhelp@beateatingdisorders.org.uk](mailto:Scotlandhelp@beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

## LGBT Health and Wellbeing

A charity working to promote health and wellbeing for LGBTQ+ adults (16+). It has support services and a community programme. They welcome the entire diversity of the LGBT+ community including non-binary, queer, intersex, asexual people and all identities under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella.

They have access to a wide range of information on sexual health, healthcare, adoption/fertility, employment, housing, substance use, immigration and more, and can connect you with a range of support from specialist organisations across Scotland. They also provide emotional support, and their helpline is run by an experienced, friendly, and non-judgmental team of staff and volunteers, all trained on LGBTQ+ issues.

 [LGBT Helpline Scotland | LGBT Health and Wellbeing](#)

 Helpline: **0800 464 7000** Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays (12-9pm) Sundays (1-6pm)

 [helpline@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:helpline@lgbthealth.org.uk)

## Alzheimer Scotland

The leading national dementia charity in Scotland. They provide information, signposting and support for people living with all forms of dementia, their families and carers. They have a network of skilled Dementia Advisors and resource centres across Scotland, and their Freephone Dementia Helpline is available 24 hours a day at the number below.

 **Home | Alzheimer Scotland**

 0808 808 3000 (24-h Advice Helpline)

 0300 373 5774

 [advice@alzscot.org](mailto:advice@alzscot.org)

Please note, if you have immediate, serious concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a vulnerable adult, you should contact your local adult social work team or the police.

## Historic Abuse

### Redress Scotland

Provides support to victims of abuse while in care. The Scottish Government provides payments and apologies to survivors. Redress Scotland is an independent body which makes decisions on applications for redress. It tells the Government who should receive redress and how much they should be paid.

 **Welcome to Redress Scotland**

 [enquiries@redress.scot](mailto:enquiries@redress.scot)

 0300 244 9090

## Housing

### Shelter Scotland

Works to alleviate the distress caused by homelessness and bad housing. Shelter Scotland can give confidential advice to people with all kinds of housing problems including homelessness, renting rights, eviction, repairs and bad conditions, neighbourhood issues, complaints and court action and disability rights. They can give urgent advice too. They do not offer accommodation.



[Home | Shelter Scotland](#)



Advice line: 0808 800 4444

## Immigration and Asylum

### The Scottish Refugee Council

An independent charity dedicated to providing advice, information and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees living in Scotland. They provide a confidential helpline.



[Home | The Scottish Refugee Council](#)



0808 1967 274

### Migrant Help

Provides independent advice and guidance to assist people seeking asylum in the UK. They also provide human trafficking and modern slavery support.



[Contact us | Migrant Help](#)



Free Helpline: 0808 8010 503



Human trafficking Support: 0141 884 7900 (or 0141 212 8553 if out of hours).

## Modern Slavery Helpline

If you have concerns about human trafficking or exploitation, you can contact the Modern Slavery Helpline for advice:

 [Home | Modern Slavery Helpline](#)

 Helpline: 08000 121 700

## Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA)

Identifies and supports women (aged 18 and over) who may have been trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. The service works with other organisations to provide trauma informed practical and emotional support, including support to report to the police what has happened to you (if and when you are ready to do so).

 [TARA | Tara Scotland](#)

 0141 276 7724

## Older People's Rights

### Scottish Helpline for Older People

Can provide information and advice on a range of topics from money matters and benefits entitlements to social care, housing, energy and legal issues. They also provide friendship for when you just need a chat. It's free to call and available Monday-Friday, 9-5pm.

 [Helpline | Age Scotland](#)

 0800 12 44 222

## Women's Rights

### Scotland's domestic abuse and forced marriage helpline

Supports anyone experiencing domestic abuse or forced marriage, as well as their family members, friends, colleagues and professionals who support them. They provide a free and confidential service. They can offer crisis intervention, emotional support and support with a range of issues like housing.

Their support is 24h a day, 7 days a week.



**Home | Scotland's domestic abuse and forced marriage helpline**



0800 027 1234



[helpline@sdafmh.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk)

### Domestic Abuse Helpline

A UK-wide national 24-hour helpline. They have a team of highly trained, female advisors. They can help you understand your options and support you in making decisions about your future. They can also help you access refuge spaces. They also have a range of resources about 'leaving your abuser' and specialist service for survivors of domestic abuse.



**National Domestic Abuse Helpline | Refuge**



Helpline: 0808 2000 247

### Scottish Women's Aid

The lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse. It is an umbrella organisation for local Women's Aid groups which provide specialist services to women, children and young people, including safe refuge accommodation, information and support. They also provide a helpline.

Scottish Women's Aid does not offer frontline support for domestic abuse but instead advocates for improved response to domestic abuse.



**Helpline | Scottish Women's Aid**



0131 226 6606



[info@womensaid.scot](mailto:info@womensaid.scot)

## Rape Crisis Scotland

Scotland's leading organisation working to transform attitudes, improve responses and ultimately to end rape and sexual violence in all its forms.

They have a helpline open daily from 5 pm to midnight for people affected by sexual violence. They also work with 15 independent member Rape Crisis Centres across Scotland who provide trauma-informed support to more than 6000 survivors annually. They can direct you to these services if you need support.

 [What RCS does | Rape Crisis Scotland](#)

 08088 01 03 02

 [support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](mailto:support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

## Shakti Women's Aid

Provides help for black minority ethnic (BME) women, children and young people who are experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic abuse.

They will keep everything confidential, not telling your family or community.

 [Homepage | Shakti Women's Aid](#)

 0131 475 2399

## Amina the Muslim Women's Resource Centre (Amina MWRC)

Empowers and supports Muslim and minority ethnic women. Their helpline provides a free & confidential culturally sensitive support service in areas including domestic abuse, mental health information, employability support and visa issues. They also provide employability support.

 [MWRC – Amina | The Muslim Women's Resource Centre](#)

 0808 801 0301

 [helpline@mwrc.org.uk](mailto:helpline@mwrc.org.uk)

## Support for people in prison

If you have concern about a relative or friend in prison, the most direct route is to contact the prison. If you have immediate, serious concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a person in prison you should use this route.

### Scottish Prison Service

Has a dedicated helpline available within every prison that you can contact if you have a concern about the mental health or wellbeing of a prisoner. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



**Raise a concern | Scottish Prison Service**

Please see the above website for the list of phone numbers for each prison.

### Independent Prison Monitors

Any prisoner can raise concerns directly with the Independent Prison Monitors on their regular visits to the prison. Prison Monitors aim to ensure that prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners are of an acceptable standard. They are independent and do not work for the prison.

Contact details for the Independent Prison Monitors should be posted near the phones within the prison and are free to use.

The confidential freephone number is 0800 056 7476.

### Families Outside

Families Outside is an organisation offering support and advice for families affected by imprisonment in Scotland.



**Support and Advice for Families Affected by Imprisonment | Families Outside**



Free helpline: 0800 254 0088



**support@familiesoutside.org.uk**

## Citizens Advice Scotland

Provides some general advice for prisoners and their families:

**Information for prisoners and their families can be found on the Citizens Advice Scotland website.**

The Scottish Human Rights Commission collaborated with Parkhead Citizens Advice Bureau to develop “**Your Rights Under the Scottish Prison Rules**”, a guide for people in prison and their families. The guide explains what the law says about rights in prison and how prisoners can make a complaint if those rights are not being met.

## The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

The final stage for handling complaints about the Scottish Prison service and the NHS which operates in prison. You must have completed the internal complaints procedure before contacting SPSO.



[Homepage | SPSO](#)



0800 377 7330

## Environmental and Planning Issues

### Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS)

Aims to support individuals and communities to use their environmental rights to protect the environment, tackle climate change, and improve local biodiversity and greenspaces for health and wellbeing.

ERCS’s law service offers free advice to individuals, community groups and organisations on environmental and related planning law.

You can contact them for specific advice on an environmental issue or for general information on environmental or related planning law.



[Contact us | Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland](#)



Freephone: 0800 861 1738 (for those who have difficulty accessing the form).

## Planning Aid Scotland

Helps people across Scotland understand and engage with the planning system.

They offer a free, impartial, and confidential Advice Service provides information on a wide range of planning issues, including:

- Planning matters related to your own home
- Planning issues in your local area
- How to represent yourself or engage the services of an appropriate professional

They cannot make representations on behalf of clients. The service is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Planning Aid Scotland staff and volunteers.



Advice | Planning Aid Scotland



Online enquiry form | Planning Aid Scotland



0300 323 7602

## Reporting Abuse or a Hate Crime

If you've experienced a hate incident or hate crime, or witnessed one, you can report it to the police.

There are different ways to report a hate crime. You can contact the police directly by calling 999 (in an emergency) or 101 (in a non-emergency). You can also visit a local police station.

If you would prefer to report it online you can complete a **Hate Crime Reporting Form on the Police Scotland website** (non-urgent matters only):

If you would prefer not to report it to the police, you can contact a **Third Party Reporting Centre**.

**For more information on reporting hate crime, visit Police Scotland's website.**

Citizens Advice Scotland also provide useful information on hate crime on their website, including:

- How to report a hate crime
- How to check if what you have experienced or witnessed is a hate crime
- How to seek help from Victim Support Scotland before reporting
- What might happen after you report a hate crime
- A list of organisations to contact if you have experienced specific types of hate crime.

## Employment

### Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

Provides advice on employment law and good practice for both employers and employees.

It runs helpline offering free, confidential advice for anyone who needs employment law or workplace advice. They can talk through:

- any work-related problem or questions
- what the law says and how it relates to individuals
- good practice at work
- options available, including any risks and benefits



Contact | ACAS



0300 123 1100 (open Monday to Friday 8am-6pm)

### Citizens Advice Scotland

You can find **information on help with problems at work on the Citizens Advice website.**

# Help to access advice services

Some people may need additional support to be able to access advice services or to make a complaint. Some people may be entitled to help from an independent advocacy service. Independent advocacy safeguards people who are vulnerable and discriminated against, empowering people who need a stronger voice by enabling them to express their own needs and make their own decisions.

## The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Promotes, supports and defends the principles and practice of independent advocacy across Scotland.



[Homepage | Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance](#)



0131 524 1975

**The SIAA website also provides a map that helps you find your nearest independent advocacy organisation.**

## Who Cares? Scotland

Supports care experienced people to have their voice heard in Scotland. They provide professional, independent advocacy services in most local authority areas in Scotland to Care Experienced children and young people to ensure that they know and can exercise their rights.

They provide a helpline to support Care Experienced with support and signposting in relation to a range of issues.



[Get support | Who cares? Scotland](#)



0330 107 7540 (open 12.00-16.00 Monday- Friday)

# Frequently asked questions

## Can the SHRC help with my human rights problem?

The Scottish Human Rights Commission does not operate an advice service and cannot represent individuals or take on their cases. This is because the law that governs the SHRC's role prohibits us from giving legal advice or assistance in relation to claims or legal proceedings (Section 6(1) of the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006). We can signpost you to organisations who may be able to help you. This information gives those details.

The exception to this is in relation to the UNCRC (Incorporation)(Scotland) Act 2024. The SHRC's has the power to start legal proceedings in its own name where we consider that a public authority has unlawfully failed to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ("UNCRC"). The SHRC currently only has this power in relation to the rights contained in this Act.

If you wish notify us of a compatibility issue under the UNCRC Act, please email [legal@scottishhumanrights.com](mailto:legal@scottishhumanrights.com).

## What does the SHRC do?

We work mainly on human rights issues that affect lots of people, rather providing an individual advice service.

We do this by:

- responding to Scottish Government and Parliament consultations on issues that affect human rights;
- monitoring and reporting on implementation of international human rights in Scotland;
- Highlighting specific human rights concerns via our Spotlight project.
- raising awareness of human rights.

More information on our work can be found on our website.

Under our current Strategic Plan, we are working across four strategic areas of focus:

- Poverty
- Places of detention
- Access to justice
- Rights of at risk specially-protected groups

**The SHRC does have some limited legal powers. Our Act determines how we can use these powers. More information about our legal powers can be found on the SHRC website.**

## I'm looking for a human rights lawyer, can you recommend one?

The Scottish Human Rights Commission does not keep a database of lawyers and we cannot make recommendations. However, the Law Society of Scotland can help you find a lawyer. We cannot advise you whether there are human rights arguments relevant to your individual case – this should be done by your legal representative.

The exception to this is in relation to the UNCRC (Incorporation)(Scotland) Act 2024. The SHRC has the power to start legal proceedings in its own name where we consider that a public authority has unlawfully failed to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (“UNCRC”). The SHRC currently only has this power in relation to the rights contained in this Act. If you wish to notify us of a compatibility issue under the UNCRC Act, please email [legal@scottishhumanrights.com](mailto:legal@scottishhumanrights.com).

## I've tried everywhere you've suggested and no-one can help. What do I do now?

Sometimes people have tried all the possible avenues open to them and have not had a satisfactory outcome. We understand that this is extremely upsetting and can sometimes seem as if no one is willing to help.

There are a number of independent advocacy services across Scotland that are set up to give a stronger voice to vulnerable people. The **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance** (0131 556 6443) can help you find a local advocacy organisation who may be able to help you.

The SHRC also recognises that the laws and policies that are in place to protect people's rights do not always filter down to people's experiences in everyday life. That is why we are focusing on issues around Access to Justice via a spotlight project. **See the Access to Justice page on the SHRC website for more information.**

The SHRC also produces a series of rights reviews, which explore the human rights implications of issues drawn to its attention. Rights reviews are not legal advice, but they outline relevant human rights and explain how they might be at risk in a given situation. However, the SHRC only produces a small number of these about issues that are likely to affect many people. Given this, raising an issue does not guarantee that the SHRC will produce a rights review.

If you would like to raise an issue with us, please email [legal@scottishhumanrights.com](mailto:legal@scottishhumanrights.com).

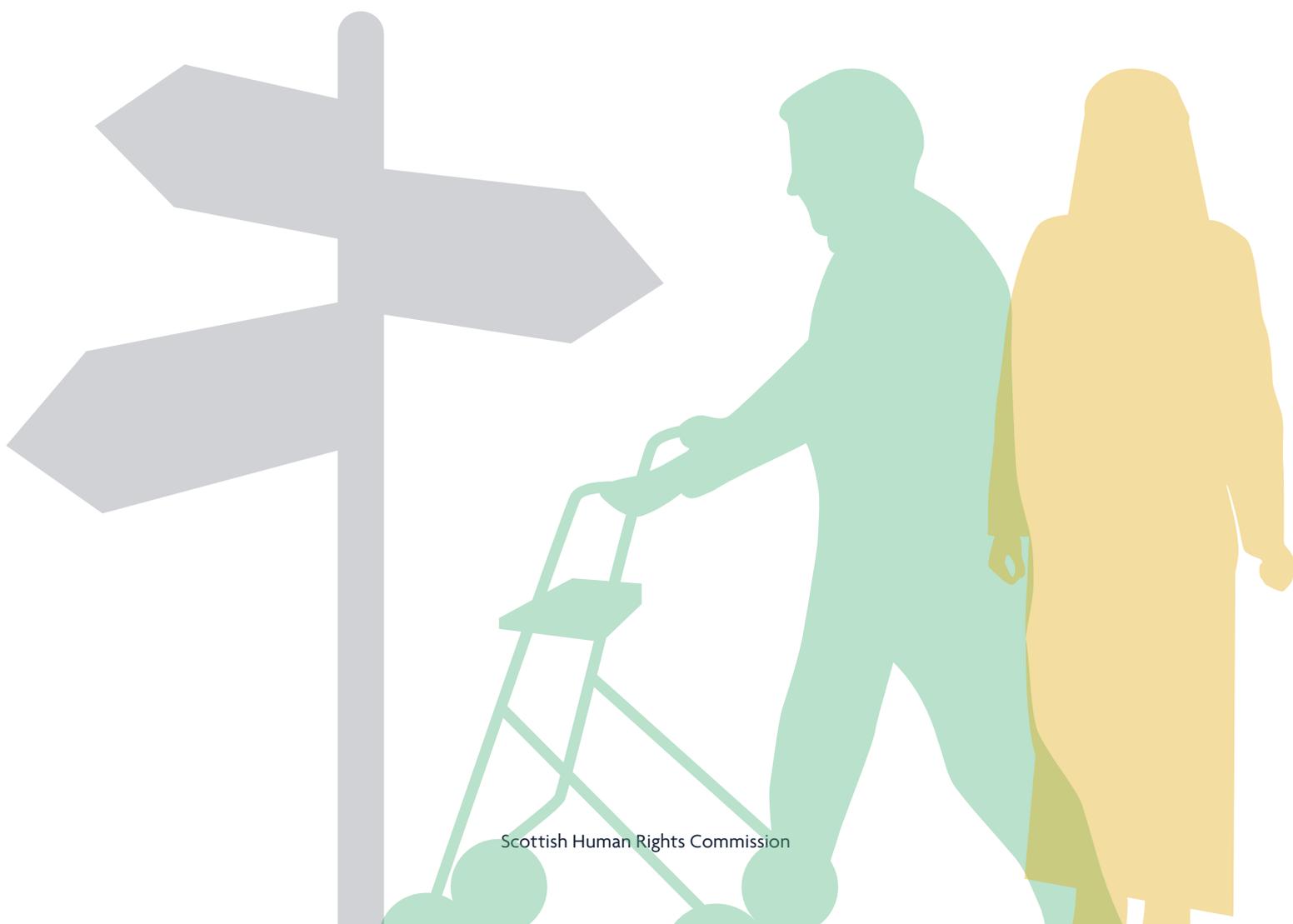
## How do I take a case to the European Court of Human Rights?

If you have taken a case through the domestic courts and still believe your human rights have not been upheld, then you can consider exercising your right to apply to the European Court of Human Rights ('ECtHR') in Strasbourg to hear your case.

**The ECtHR has produced a guide on how to bring your claim, which can be found on their website.**

Importantly, before you can consider taking your case to the ECtHR, you must remember to 'exhaust domestic remedies'. This means that you have tried to use the remedies available to you in the UK. In practice, 'having exhausted domestic remedies' will normally mean that you have used available complaints mechanisms and either taken your case all the way to the most senior court or tried to bring your case to court or to appeal but were not allowed to do so. Your lawyer should be able to give you advice on this.

Applying to the ECtHR does not automatically mean that the court will hear your case, even if you have exhausted domestic remedies. The court may hold your application 'inadmissible' for several reasons; the court will apply its own strict criteria. The court may, for example, find your application inadmissible because it is anonymous or made within the applicable four-month time-limit.





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