

Members of the Scottish Parliament
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Date: 19th May 2026
Our reference: SHRC202617

Dear Members of the Scottish Parliament,

Human rights and the Scottish Parliament

I write to congratulate you on your election to the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) looks forward to working with you, and wish you the very best as you settle into your role in the 7th Session.

As Scotland's human rights watchdog, the SHRC promotes and protects the human rights of all people in Scotland.

We are independent of, but accountable to, the Parliament in the delivery of that mandate. This accountability is through committee sessions on our Annual Report, submission of which to Parliament is required by the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006, and oversight by the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body.

An independent and pluralist body, we are also accredited as the UN's trusted body in Scotland to monitor human rights enjoyment in Scotland. Through this accreditation, we are recognised as an A-status National Human Rights Institution, providing expertise and advice to ensure that human rights are understood and secured for all. When things go wrong, we hold the State to account - the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, local government, public bodies and the courts - and make recommendations on how to do better.

We work with MSPs to promote and protect human rights in a range of ways. These include:

- providing MSPs with advice on the human rights implications of proposed legislation, including the annual Scottish Budget

- delivering an annual State of the Nation Report to MSPs, which spotlights the key human rights concerns we have identified over the year.
- publishing Spotlight Reports where the SHRC takes a deeper look at a systemic human rights issue facing people in Scotland, and makes recommendations to improve their human rights realisation
- assessing the extent to which particular rights are enjoyed in communities across Scotland, with a recent focus on Economic, Social and Cultural rights in rural areas

Human rights belong to everyone. From access to housing and health, to the rights to a fair trial or to be protected from violence, every single issue you consider will have implications for human rights. As you join your new colleagues in the Scottish Parliament to legislate, debate and scrutinise in Session 7, I encourage you to remember that you are guarantors of the rights of your constituents and the people of Scotland - and that the SHRC is here to support you in that endeavour.

In the last parliament, the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee recognised in its [report](#) that with the appropriate powers and resources, the SHRC as Scotland's NHRI would be even better equipped to protect the rights of groups most affected by gaps in human rights protections, as well as to hold duty-bearers in Scotland to account for the realisation of human rights more broadly.

The Equality, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee's [Session 6 Legacy Report](#) makes further recommendations to its successors, including a follow-up on a wider review of the remit and powers so that the SHRC can perform its role as Scotland's NHRI most effectively.

[These reports are available on the Parliament's website.](#)

Once you have settled into your office, our teams will be in touch to discuss how we can best work with you in these pursuits. In the meantime, if you have any questions about human rights, the role of the SHRC or our work, please contact us at chairandexecutive@scottishhumanrights.com.

I look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,

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Professor Angela O'Hagan
Chair

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- [SHRC 2024-2025 Annual Report](#)
- [SHRC 2025 State of the Nation report](#)
- [SHRC Help with Human Rights leaflet](#), which provides details of organisations and services that may be able to help people if they have a human rights problem. This may be of particular value to your constituency office.