SHRC
Scottish
Human Rights
Commission

Patricia Ferguson MP
Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
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Via email only: scotaffcom@parliament.uk

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Dear Chair,

Report: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the South of Scotland

On behalf of the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC), I am pleased to share with you formally SHRC's report on the current enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights in the South of Scotland. This is the second report in our Spotlight programme of local monitoring of economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights across Scotland, following our 2024 report on the Highlands and Islands.

The monitoring work was undertaken under section 4(1)(b) of the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006. As Scotland's National Human Rights Institution, we seek to promote and protect the human rights of all in Scotland by ensuring awareness of and compliance with domestic and international human rights obligations. The focus here is on the rights contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The report highlights significant challenges in the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights across the South of Scotland. Drawing on direct testimony from rights holders alongside a review of more than 200 reports and policy documents, it provides an indicative assessment of where rights are progressing, where they are deteriorating, and where public services and policies appear to fall short of international human rights standards.

While much of our monitoring and analysis has focused on policy and public services in areas devolved to the Scottish Parliament, we are sharing the report with the Committee because a number of its findings also engage directly with matters that fall within the responsibilities of the UK Parliament.

These include issues relating to:

- work, employment rights and conditions of employment.
- social security, including the interaction between reserved and devolved benefits; and
- energy regulation, particularly the impact of energy costs and fuel poverty on the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living.

The report demonstrates the importance of considering how reserved and devolved responsibilities interact in practice. The enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights is shaped by the combined effects of policies, legislation and resource decisions taken at different levels of government.

We consider that the Scottish Affairs Committee has an important role to play in scrutinising the policies, regulations and actions of the UK Government that have a direct impact on the lives of people in Scotland. We would therefore encourage the Committee to consider how the findings of this report on the South of Scotland (and our previous evidence from Highlands and Islands) might inform its scrutiny of policy and legislation, particularly in relation to employment, social security and energy, and the extent to which these support or undermine the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights.

The report calls for a detailed and engaged response to the systemic challenges identified. We hope that its findings and recommendations will contribute to the Committee's work in holding the UK Government to account for decisions affecting people in Scotland, while also supporting a more coordinated approach to improving the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights across different areas of government responsibility.

Ultimately, we hope this report contributes both to tangible improvements for people in the South of Scotland and to a stronger, more systematic approach to the protection and realisation of economic, social, and cultural rights across Scotland.

The SHRC would be happy to provide further evidence to the Committee on the findings and recommendations from our ESC Rights Spotlight. We have also recently begun our next round of regional human rights monitoring in Mid and

Northeast Scotland. We will share the evidence from this report when it is published in 2027.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Angela O'Hagan
Chair

Enclosed: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the South of Scotland Report