

Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government
Scottish Government
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Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Free Bus Travel for Asylum Seekers Living in Scotland

I am writing to request further information regarding the decision-making criteria for cuts to the promised two million pounds to pilot free bus travel for asylum seekers living in Scotland.

Through our participation and engagement work, we have heard directly from members of the Voices Network co-ordinated by, but independent from, The British Red Cross about the disappointment they felt in relation to this decision. While we were pleased to see reports that free bus travel for asylum seeker pilot is proposed to be revived in 2026, we are also conscious this is a delay of two years from when the £2m of investment was initially promised by the Scottish Government

In addition, the Commission has been a significant contributor to the work of the Equality and Human Rights Budgets Advisory Group for a number of years now, encouraging improvements in the application of human rights approach to budgetary decisions. The decision to remove the pilot for free bus travel for asylum seekers does not appear to have been subject to robust assessment.

This delay is significant given that access to good quality, affordable public transport is key to realising many economic, social and cultural rights including work, education, healthcare, and leisure which are protected under the International Covenant for Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

As you may be aware, the Commission is currently preparing to report on enjoyment of ESC rights in Scotland to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva in February 2025.

To inform our reporting, the Commission would like to better understand how the decision was reached. I would therefore welcome a response to the following question:

- What human rights-based assessment was used in the decision making to not move forward with the proposed £2 million investment to pilot free bus travel for asylum seekers as part of budget cuts announced in September of 2024?

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,



Angela O'Hagan
Chair, Scottish Human Rights Commission

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