



The First Minister  
The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

31 May 2019

Dear First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP,

### **Human Rights in Scotland**

In the midst of Brexit uncertainty and the very real concerns about the potential impact of leaving the European Union on our human rights, we strongly welcome your commitment to ensuring that human rights in Scotland should be progressed and not regressed. We welcomed the establishment of the First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership and we were involved in the civil society Reference Group that helped to inform the Advisory Group's deliberations.

We therefore welcomed the overall direction set out by this Advisory Group in their recommendations published on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018. A new Act of the Scottish Parliament that incorporates UN treaty rights and standards would be significant progress that could potentially bring real change in human rights on the ground. We are consequently committed to doing all that we can to help to make sure that any new legislation and its preparation and implementation are effective and meaningful.

We further know that our positive reception of the direction of these recommendations is widely echoed across civil society. Indeed, the Scotland Declaration on Human Rights showed the strength of support for Scotland to be a world leader in human rights terms.

We very much hope therefore that the Scottish Government's fuller response to the recommendations is accompanied by commitment across government and by the resourcing needed to make this work effective. It is essential that the National Taskforce includes a wide range of people with experience and expertise around meaningful participation and on realising human rights in the lives of disadvantaged communities in Scotland, as well as senior representatives of government and of public bodies in Scotland.

We also strongly welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to incorporate the UNCRC and urge the Government to make this new legislation as strong as possible. We note and support the work of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) to produce a draft Children's Rights (Scotland) Bill to help Scottish Government to develop a suitable model of incorporation for the UNCRC into Scots law. In addition, the right to food needs to be at the core of food framework legislation as well as being included in upcoming human rights incorporation legislation.

We look forward to speaking with you as this crucial work to respect, protect and fulfil human rights progresses in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

Mhairi Snowden, Coordinator, Human Rights Consortium Scotland

Naomi McAuliffe, Programme Director, Amnesty International Scotland

Juliet Harris, Director, Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

Sally Witcher, CEO, Inclusion Scotland

Emma Ritch, Executive Director, Engender

Tim Hopkins, Director, Equality Network

Graeme Brown, Director, Shelter Scotland

Pete Ritchie, Director, Nourish Scotland

Lucy Mulvagh, Director of Policy and Communications, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Charles Dundas, Chair, Scottish Environment LINK