



17 May 2023

Dear Chief Executive

## Realising human rights for all

Human rights are about dignity for everyone. By placing human rights at the heart of all we do in Scotland, we can shape decision-making, policies and practice to make sure that everyone has what they need to live well and have their freedoms and dignity protected.

We welcome the positive steps that Scotland has taken, and is taking, to protect and fulfil human rights. However, as organisations that work with and for individuals and communities whose human rights are at risk and infringed upon every day, we are writing to urge you to prioritise actions that end human rights violations.

We highlight two significant national developments that will be important in coming months and years:

- **Implementation of our international human rights**

Since 1998, the Human Rights Act has placed a duty on all public authorities to comply with human rights, including taking positive steps to protect civil and political rights in all that they do.

Scotland is now on a journey to bring more of our international human rights closer to home. The incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC) into Scots law is the most important step forward for children and young people's rights. The Scottish Government's commitment to build on this, to incorporate economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR) and human rights treaties for particular groups (CEDAW, ICERD and UNCRPD) is very important for all those that we work with. Together, these treaties as part of our law in Scotland will provide the foundation and direction to drive a human rights culture across government and

all public authorities. It will mean that no one will be ignored, and no one will be left behind. It will mean that people whose voices are often not heard are empowered to know and claim these human rights.

A healthy environment underpins all of these human rights. A safe climate, clean air, safe water, healthy and sustainably produced food, biodiversity and non-toxic environments in which to live, work, study and play are essential. We know however, that too many of us and particularly those in communities most affected by poverty, live with the impacts of environmental damage contributing to health inequalities. We strongly welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to also make this right to a healthy environment foundational in our law.

**We emphasise that we do not need to wait for these laws to be passed and commenced to be clear about our human rights – these are already set out at an international level and have been agreed to by the UK.**

**We also emphasise that it is not enough to pass these laws - it is important that public authorities now take steps to prepare to fully implement them in practice.**

This will require important actions such as closing gaps in the evidence and data collected so that it is clear who is missing out on rights. This will require new ways of listening to those who are most marginalised and acting on their advice. This will mean champions for human rights in every department of every public authority, together with every staff member being clear about what it means for them to take a rights-based approach. Budgets, work plans, training programmes, job descriptions, and more, will need to change to reflect human rights priorities.

- **SNAP 2 – Scotland's second National Human Rights Action Plan**

After substantial engagement with stakeholders and communities, the second SNAP action plan has been published ([www.snaprights.info](http://www.snaprights.info)). It contains an ambitious set of 54 proposed actions that need to be delivered collaboratively, with careful consideration about phasing and resourcing. SNAP requires active commitment and participation from a wide range of public authorities, as well as government, civil society and individual rights-holders to make it work. In the coming weeks, we know there will be discussion with all SNAP 2 delivery stakeholders as to priorities and resourcing. We urge you to demonstrate your commitment to human rights by being ready to engage fully in this process and in the planning and delivery of actions.

We know that driving forward progress on human rights is no small task. We have copied this letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP to highlight the need for all of the resourcing and support needed for human rights implementation across Scotland. We also know that fulfilling human rights requires all of us to play our full part. We assure you of our active support, challenge and engagement to make sure that this happens, and we will be looking to see the

steps that your public authority will take to do your part in the coming weeks and months ahead.

Yours,

Mhairi Snowden, Human Rights Consortium Scotland

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

Cathy McCulloch, Children's Parliament

Tim Hopkins, Equality Network

Vic Valentine, Scottish Trans

Maureen Martin, Edinburgh Development Group

Maggie Lennon, Bridges Programmes

Shivali Fifield, Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland

Emma Hutton, JustRight Scotland

Sam Smith, C-Change Scotland

Maria Jose Pavez Larrea, Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC)

Agnies Tolmie, Scottish Women's Convention

Sara Redmond, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Alison Bavidge, Scottish Association of Social Work

Colin Lee, CEMVO Scotland

Carolyn Sawers, Corra Foundation

Jess McQuail, Just Fair

Michelle Cook, Inclusion Scotland

Jonathan Senker, VoiceAbility

Clare MacGillivray, Making Rights Real

Cc. Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP