

Hidden Lives: our response to a new report on destitution in Scotland

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Scottish Women's Aid welcomes the [Equality and Human Rights Committee Hidden-Lives Report. We were pleased to be able to provide evidence](#) to the Committee and to have been able to support their meeting with women with direct experience of these issues.

The report found that "destitution is largely hidden in plain sight"; analysis that we very much agree with.

Women with insecure immigration status who experience domestic abuse often experience specific patterns of abuse, such as domestic servitude, not being allowed to learn English, or work outside the home. This control and abuse can make women invisible, and this makes it especially important that their voices and experiences are listened to by decision makers.

It is clear to us that more work must be done to find out the scale and nature of destitution in Scotland, and that work must be done to create a coordinated approach to addressing this problem. We are encouraged that this report makes these very recommendations and we are pleased to support them.

- When it comes to destitution and domestic abuse, we endorse the specific recommendations made in the report that address the entrapment destitution and exploitation of women and children. These include that:
- The Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to enable all women to access safe refuge accommodation, regardless of their entitlement to housing benefit, immigration status, or access to public funds.
- The Scottish Government to negotiate with the UK Government to extend the scope of the Destitute Domestic Violence concession so that it includes all women with insecure immigration status, including asylum seekers, until they return to their countries of origin.
- The Scottish Government to consider creating a destitution fund to mitigate the impact of restrictions on access to public funds for those with insecure immigration status and European Economic Area migrant women experiencing domestic abuse.

We welcome this report and we urge the Scottish Parliament to take the opportunity to unite around its recommendations.