



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice

Via email only

4 October 2024

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Scottish Legal Aid Board funding

On behalf of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee I am writing to highlight concerns that have been expressed to us by Shelter Scotland, with regards to delays to Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) funding and the uncertainty this creates.

These concerns were initially set out in a [letter to the Committee](#) in May. The letter identifies the difficulties in forward planning faced by organisations such as Shelter Scotland due to confirmation of SLAB funding arriving “later and later in the financial year”. The letter explains:

“Internal decisions around staffing have to be made at the end of the financial year, which has unfortunately resulted in some projects in the sector having to close due to uncertainty over future funding.”

The letter goes on to observe how, at a time when housing emergencies have been declared, other legal projects may have “no option but to cease service delivery” which will result in the loss of support to people in realising their housing rights.

I recently met with representatives of Shelter Scotland to further discuss their concerns in my capacity as Committee Convener. During the discussion they told me they were extremely concerned about the lack of any commitment to date that funding will be renewed in March 2025 and explained the adverse impact of the uncertainty this creates, including:

- Whether they and similar such providers will be in a position to deliver continuity of advice to people who most need it (for example, they noted that already large areas of Tayside and the Borders are not otherwise covered)
- Having to anticipate winding down caseloads in advance of a project closing, in order not to be in conflict with their obligations to the client and the court

Contact: Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.
Email EHRCJ.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

- The loss of specialist skills and advice (“brain drain”) from projects
- Clients being denied access to justice and being pushed further into poverty and an increased risk of homelessness.

In light of the Scottish Government’s stated priorities in, for example, tackling child poverty, the Committee would welcome an update from the Scottish Government on continuity of the funding stream in the immediate (post-March 2025) and longer term.

Yours sincerely

Karen Adam MSP
Convener