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**Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice  
Committee,  
Scottish Parliament**

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**Asylum Right To Work – Pilot Proposal**

I am writing to share with you the recent publication of the Scottish Government's [Asylum Right to Work Pilot proposal](#), published in November 2024. This puts forward a model for a prospective pilot scheme which would test the impact of enabling people seeking asylum to have the right to work and meets a commitment within the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy Delivery Plan.

The development of the pilot proposal followed recommendations made in the Scottish Government's independent Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population (EAG) research report: [Asylum Seekers - extending the right to work: evaluation, analysis, and policy options](#).

A range of stakeholders were involved in shaping the pilot proposal during its development, including local authorities, employers and key third sector support organisations. It proposes taking as inclusive an approach as possible for a pilot, in order to generate the greatest possible breadth of learning while also focusing on the wellbeing and integration of pilot participants.

The pilot proposal is intended to test assumptions that enabling the right to work at an earlier stage will have a positive impact on pilot participants, their families and our communities by assisting their integration, enabling them to make a positive contribution to our economy, and reducing cost and demand on our public services. The proposed pilot seeks to trial a number of changes to current UK policy including allowing people awaiting a decision on their asylum claim to work from six rather than twelve months, for people to no longer be restricted to roles on the Immigration Salary List and to access flexible, wrap-around support, including employability and language learning.

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The proposal identifies a range of areas where collaboration with the UK Government would be required to agree mutually acceptable parameters and to enable people seeking asylum to participate. Given that asylum and migration are areas of reserved competence, I wrote to Angela Eagle MP, UK Minister for Border Security and Asylum, to ask that the Home Office work with us and partners to deliver the proposed pilot. Unfortunately, we received a response to this letter, dated 7 January, which stated that the Home Office were *'unable to commit to exploring feasibility of this proposal further at this time'*.

I am disappointed to not be able to progress development of the proposed pilot with UK Government, but still want to share this proposal, which I hope will be of interest to you. Scottish ministers and the stakeholders involved in the development of this proposal have been clear that the changes proposed as part of this pilot are essential for vulnerable people seeking asylum, and we are now seeking to build – and demonstrate to the UK Government – the broad consensus in support of changes to existing right to work policy. In particular changes to the length of time before someone can apply for permission to work and to remove the additional restriction to roles on the Immigration Salary List.

I would invite you to share this pilot proposal more widely and my officials would be happy to engage further on this topic if it is of interest to you.

**KAUKAB STEWART**

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