



**Written submission to Just Fair's call for evidence
to inform their 2025 report to:
the United Nations Committee on Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights**

As part of the seventh periodic review of the UK

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The Right to Adequate Clothing in the United Kingdom

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A. The Exclusion of the Right to Adequate Clothing from the 7th Periodic Review of the United Kingdom

1. The UK Government's 7th Periodic Report to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) does not address the right to adequate clothing explicitly.
 - a. Clothes are mentioned only in relation to the essential living needs of asylum seekers.¹
2. Previously, in 2022 the Right to Clothing Campaign has submitted evidence which
 - a. outlined the limited recognition of the problem of lack of access to adequate clothing in the United Kingdom,² and
 - b. outlined barriers to accessing adequate clothing in the United Kingdom and how these disproportionately impact some groups.³
3. The Pre-sessional Working Group submission on behalf of civil society in England and Wales to the CESCR 7th Review of the UK highlighted these issues by reference to this evidence.⁴
4. Following the submissions outlined in paragraphs 1 and 3, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN CESCR) produced a 'List of issues in relation to the seventh periodic report of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'.⁵ This list of issues contains no reference to clothing generally nor the right to adequate clothing.

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¹ UK Government 'The United Kingdom's 7th periodic report under the United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)' (2022) <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62861e2ed3bf7f1f46f9b6b2/icesrc-uk-7-periodic-report-may-2022.pdf> see paragraph 43 'In compliance with our statutory obligations, asylum seekers are provided with a comprehensive support package that usually consists of free accommodation and a weekly cash allowance to meet essential living needs, such as food, clothes etc'.

² Luke D. Graham 'Right to Clothing Campaign: Submission to Just Fair Call for Written Evidence' (2022) <https://justfair.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/6.-The-Right-to-Clothing-Campaign-Submission.pdf>

³ Luke D. Graham 'Right to Clothing Campaign: Second Submission to Just Fair Call for Written Evidence' (2022) <https://justfair.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Right-to-Clothing-Campaign-Second-Submission-to-Just-Fair-Call-for-Written-Evidence.pdf>

⁴ Kate Ewing 'Submission to UN Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights' (2023) Just Fair <https://justfair.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Just-Fair-Report-to-CESCR-PSWG-Jan-2023.pdf> paragraph 31.

⁵ UNCESCR 'List of issues in relation to the seventh periodic report of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' (2023) UN.Doc. E/C.12/GBR/Q/7 https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FGBR%2FQ%2F7&Lang=en

5. 'The United Kingdom's Response to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' List of Issues Report' also contains no reference to clothing generally or the right to adequate clothing.⁶
6. Thus, despite attempts by civil society organisations in the United Kingdom to highlight the need to examine the realisation of the right to adequate clothing both the UNCESCR and the UK Government have failed to do in the 7th Periodic Review.

B. A Failure to Monitor the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Clothing

7. Until 1991 the UNCESCR did monitor the implementation of this right. The pre-1991 reporting guidelines indicated that

'Information concerning the right to adequate clothing could include:

- (a) The principal laws, administrative regulations and collective agreements designed to promote the right to adequate clothing;
- (b) Measures taken, including specific programmes, to improve the methods of production and distribution of articles of clothing;
- (c) Scientific and technical methods used to achieve an adequate supply of articles of clothing;
- (d) The extent of participation in international co-operation contributing to the promotion of the right to adequate clothing'.⁷

8. The Revised General Guidelines (1991) removed any specific reference to the right to adequate clothing.⁸
9. This was not remedied by the updated guidelines of 2008, which again exclude the right to adequate clothing.⁹
10. Consequently, the lack of reference to the right to adequate clothing in the UK Government's report can be explained by the fact that it has adhered to the reporting guidelines.

C. The Need to Monitor the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Clothing in the United Kingdom

⁶ UK Government 'The United Kingdom's Response to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' List of Issues Report' (2024) UN.Doc. E/C.12/GBR/RQ/7 https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FGBR%2FRQ%2F7&Lang=en

⁷ UNCESCR 'General Guidelines Regarding the Form and Contents of Reports To Be Submitted By States Parties Under Articles 16 And 17 of The International Covenant On Economic, Social And Cultural Rights, In Accordance With The Programme Established By Economic And Social Council Resolution 1988 (LX)' (1987) UN Doc. E/C.12/1987/2 at 10.

⁸ UNCESCR 'Revised General Guidelines Regarding The Form And Contents Of Reports To Be Submitted By States Parties Under Articles 16 And 17 Of The International Covenant On Economic, Social And Cultural Rights' (1991) UN. Doc. E/C.12/1991/1. For an overview of the revision process see Luke D. Graham 'Reasserting the Right to Adequate Clothing in International Human Rights Law' (2024) 24 (1) *Human Rights Law Review* <https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngad039> pp. 6-7

⁹ CESCR 'Guidelines on Treaty-Specific Documents to be Submitted by States Parties Under Articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' (2008) UN.Doc. E/C.12/2008/2 at paras 42-54.

11. There has been a proliferation of non-government organisations providing clothing free of charge to those in need in the United Kingdom.¹⁰
12. This is indicative that individuals in the state party are struggling to realise the right to adequate clothing.
13. Lack of access to adequate clothing is one under-recognised facet of poverty in the United Kingdom.
14. This has many implications for the enjoyment of rights under the ICESCR.¹¹ The full extent of such implications is unknown. They will remain unknown until the UNCESCR deigns to monitor the implementation of the right to adequate clothing within the state party.
15. ‘The CESCR should begin to engage with the right to adequate clothing proactively and substantively within its practice. To do so, the CESCR should integrate the right to adequate clothing throughout its mandate in both reporting guidelines and concluding observations. This would reflect the CESCR’s early practice of seeking information from state parties as to how they are implementing the right. Towards this end, the treaty-specific reporting guidelines for the ICESCR should be updated to include the right to adequate clothing’.¹²

¹⁰ There are far too many such organisations to list here. See, however, the Right to Clothing Network which is working towards bringing these organisations together. <https://www.righttoclothing.org/network>

¹¹ For an overview of the instrumental role of adequate clothing in the realisation of human rights generally see Luke D. Graham ‘Reasserting the Right to Adequate Clothing in International Human Rights Law’ (2024) 24 (1) *Human Rights Law Review* <https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngad039> pp. 10-16.

¹² Luke D. Graham ‘Reasserting the Right to Adequate Clothing in International Human Rights Law’ (2024) 24 (1) *Human Rights Law Review* <https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngad039> pp. 17.