



## LISTEN TO WOMEN

### The Scottish Women's Convention Poverty Manifesto 2010

The SWC manifesto has been drafted to stimulate discussion on how we address gender inequality and empower women in Scotland. Women are much more likely to be lone parents or carers and struggle to balance caring responsibilities with employment. The SWC manifesto sets out a number of key policy demands. Tackling deep-seated inequalities requires robust mechanisms to ensure that gender equality becomes a priority in policy-making across Westminster and Holyrood.

The Scottish Women's Convention is funded by the Scottish Government to support the women's agenda in Scotland. It is an independent body with its own staff. Through policy groups, events, roundtable discussions and consultations the SWC provides a systematic way for women's voices to be included in policy development work.

Poverty in Scotland has a female face. This stark fact can be clearly seen in the high rates of poverty amongst women who are lone parents<sup>1</sup>. Over half (53%) of all lone mother households are poor. Older, single women have a 24% chance of living in poverty<sup>2</sup>. The combination of racism and sexism makes Black and Minority Ethnic women particularly vulnerable to poverty<sup>3</sup>. Many of the issues raised cut across Westminster and Holyrood policy agendas – this manifesto is therefore important to politicians in both Parliaments.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.poverty.org.uk/05/index.shtml](http://www.poverty.org.uk/05/index.shtml)

<sup>2</sup> [www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=22](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=22)

<sup>3</sup> [www.poverty.org.uk/reports/ethnicity%20findings.pdf](http://www.poverty.org.uk/reports/ethnicity%20findings.pdf)

## CHILDCARE

### Women's top priorities:

Sufficient accessible, affordable, high quality, flexible childcare to meet families needs.

Properly subsidised childcare provision that leaves parents with a minimal and manageable contribution to pay.

A fund created by central Government for local authorities to draw on in order to protect at risk childcare places.

Childcare is a key issue for any strategy to eradicate child poverty. A universal national childcare service would ensure life enhancing experiences for children; tackle child poverty and achieve gender equality with fulfilling work and home lives for parents.

**Goal:** to ensure that women in Scotland have access to high quality, affordable, accessible childcare

## CARING

### Women's top priorities:

Support to be made available to provide greater flexibility for women to manage the demands of work and caring responsibilities.

Kinship carers to be given the same status and payments as foster carers.

Greater resources for those who take on caring responsibilities.

Women in Scotland are primarily responsible for care work, which is often unpaid and undervalued in society. Women who provide support through unpaid caring often have to balance this with work, and many are living below average income thresholds.

**Goal:** to recognise the value of the women who undertake unpaid caring roles in Scotland

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### Women's top priorities:

Careers advice to focus on opening up wider career options for women.

Greater flexibility in student funding provision to encourage more women to access education.

Accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare or funding for childcare, available for all women who wish to pursue education.

Women emerging from education with little or no qualifications are streamed into jobs offering low wages and limited prospects. Young women are guided towards traditionally 'female jobs' and are offered little or no information on pursuing what are seen as traditionally 'male' jobs.

**Goal:** to break down the barriers faced by women experiencing poverty when accessing education

## EMPLOYMENT

### Women's top priorities:

An end to pay discrimination and a requirement that all organisations audit their pay for bias and discrimination.

The introduction of a Living Wage based on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'Minimum Income Standard' which will help women workers be lifted out of poverty.

The right to request flexible working to be extended to the day employment begins.

Women are excessively affected by the economic downturn. Low paid, low skilled jobs, in which women predominate, are more susceptible to redundancy and women who undertake these jobs are less likely to have savings therefore are at risk of immediate poverty as a result of unemployment.

**Goal:** to ensure that women, who wish to, have access to high quality flexible employment

## WELFARE BENEFITS

### Women's top priorities:

A welfare system which gives decent protection for those unable to undertake paid work due to caring responsibilities.

Out of work benefits to be reviewed to ensure they provide a safety net to prevent women from living in poverty.

Make welfare benefits in Scotland, suitable for Scotland.

Women are more likely to rely on means tested benefits than men. Research shows that women in both lone and two parent families carry the main strain of making ends meet on an inadequate income

**Goal:** end women and children's poverty

## HOUSING

### Women's top priorities:

Social housing provision should be of a quality and availability so that it becomes a real solution to housing poverty.

Housing benefit administration should be streamlined to ensure processing does not result in acute conditions of poverty.

Resources to promote community based renewal to remove disadvantage and deprivation.

Housing is fundamental in shaping a family's life. Inadequate housing, living in temporary accommodation or homelessness can multiply deprivation and exclusion faced by women and children.

**Goal:** ensure that women are housed in homes that are practical, affordable and secure and offer environments that contribute to overall wellbeing

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