



Response to the Equality Statement of the Scottish Draft Budget 2015-2016

December 2014

The SWC has consulted with women throughout Scotland using numerous communication channels including roadshows and thematic events, surveys, Geographical Information Groups (GIGs) and conferences.

Our response to the Equality Statement of the Scottish Draft Budget for 2015-16 is informed by the voices of women who have participated in SWC activities. The main focus of our work during 2014 has been the referendum on Scotland's future, and the sort of country women want to see regardless of the outcome of the vote.

Although some issues are specific to certain geographical areas, in the main, women throughout Scotland have concerns and opinions concerning key services such as childcare, education, transport, health, employment, housing and education.

Introduction

The SWC welcomes the Equality Statement which accompanies the 2015-16 Draft Budget. The recognition by the Scottish Government of the impact of spending decisions on various equality strands is extremely important.

The SWC also welcomes a number of the Bills proposed by the First Minister in her recent Programme for Government statement, as well as the establishment of a 50/50 gender balance in the new Scottish Cabinet. This sends the clear message that the Scottish Government is committed to the advancement and attainment of gender equality.

The findings of the Smith Commission on the devolution of further powers to Scotland have also been welcomed. The SWC is keen to be involved in further consultation on these powers, ensuring that any gender implications are taken into account and that none of the new powers have a detrimental impact on women.

Scotland's Budget continues to be set against the backdrop of a challenging economic climate. The SWC is aware that the Government must focus on measures to accelerate economic growth and recovery. The SWC believes that a strong focus on the gender considerations of proposed spending will go some way to making this happen. This response will examine all points which have been raised by women throughout Scotland at SWC events.



Chapter 2: Health and Wellbeing

“The previously announced Integration Fund will increase from £120 million to £173.5 million. This will support the development and delivery of new models of care in local areas, looking at innovative ways of supporting frontline professionals dealing with the challenges of multimorbidity, an ageing population, poverty and rurality.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 14

This commitment is welcomed by the SWC, particularly the recognition of the challenges faced in rural areas. The geography of rural Scotland can cause significant inconsistencies in health and social care provision. Hospitals, and other services, including mental health care as well as GP and dental provision have all been reduced at a local level. Services are being centralised to main towns and too many community services have been withdrawn. This is of particular concern to women, who are often the main users of healthcare amenities.

The integration of health and social care has the potential to be extremely important both for those who receive and provide care in Scotland. However, it is vital that the principles underpinning those new policies do not have any adverse gender impacts, particularly on rural women, for whom accessing services can be extremely difficult.

Transport is seen as both limited and expensive in rural Scotland. A lack of accessible and reliable public transport often results in women purchasing cars, which they cannot afford. The geography of Scotland requires a stronger, more integrated public transport system, particularly with regards to timetabling, access and provision. Public transport concentrates on journeys to and from main centres and is not focused on the requirements of rural communities. Women travelling into towns often are often restricted in attending appointments, going shopping etc due to poor service provision.

Patient transport is heavily relied upon, however it is described as *“patchy and inconsistent”*. Due to poor public transport links, patient transport is essential for those requiring hospital treatment. Access to medical provision using this service, however, often results in delays, long journeys and, in some cases, an overnight stay away from home. Patient transport provision is viewed as inconvenient for women in work or in need of childcare.

“Hospital transport is adequate but it is a 60 mile round trip (Dumfries and Galloway). There is an Ayrshire hospital a 32-mile round trip which cannot be accessed due to a lack of cohesion between different NHS Boards.”

There also needs to be a recognition of the complex interrelating issues such as poverty and rurality, and the impact that these can have on women.



“There will be new funding of £5.5 million to open the Scottish Independent Living Fund to new users in 2015-16. This will ... support the rights of disabled people in Scotland by enabling severely disabled people and people with long-term conditions to live independently.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 14

This is a positive step in assisting those people who wish to remain in their homes in being able to do so. However, it is vital to ensure that there is no further burden put on carers, the majority of whom are women.

Those who work in the care sector are already struggling to be able to provide the levels of care they want to. This is often due to the need for them to visit a certain amount of people in a day, as opposed to being able to spend time with the – often vulnerable - people they care for. The majority of informal caring is done by women and this can have a serious impact on their physical and mental health. Many women are also involved in ‘sandwich care’, where they are looking after both elderly parents and grandchildren.

“An additional £4.4 million will support the continuing expansion of the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) programme across Scotland ... supporting at least 2,000 families at any one time. Teenage first time mothers, mainly within deprived communities, will continue to be targeted.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 15

The SWC fully supports the expansion of the FNP. The importance of personal care and intensive support for teenage mothers from deprived communities cannot be underestimated. The FNP was previously considered to be something of a “*postcode lottery*”, benefitting only young women in certain areas. Its expansion will ensure that this care is more widespread.

While it is undoubtedly positive that by the end of 2015 there will be at least one FNP team in each NHS Board area, the workload of those teams, plus the geography of Scotland must be taken into account. Just like the care sector, the majority of those who work in maternity care services are women. One FNP team covering an area the size of, for example, NHS Highlands and Islands, will mean a significant workload over a remote, rural and super sparse area of the country. It is therefore vital that the needs of the local area are taken into account when allocating a FNP to each NHS Board.



“A new Teenage Pregnancy and Young Parent strategy will seek to invigorate activity and focus in this area in order to tackle the inequalities gap that is apparent in teenage pregnancy rates between the most and least affluent areas in Scotland. The strategy will work to reduce the stigma that can be experienced by young mothers and father and support young parents to achieve positive outcomes for themselves and their children.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 16

Scotland has a higher rate of teenage pregnancy than most other Western European countries. The rate of teenage pregnancy among young women under 16 in the most deprived areas was five times the rate for those under 16 who lived in the least deprived areas. The number of pregnancies which ended in delivery among young women living in the most deprived areas of Scotland was ten times higher than for those living in the least deprived.

The establishment of a strategy, as recommended by the Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee in its Inquiry into Teenage Pregnancy, is an extremely important step and one which is welcomed by the SWC. The significant inequalities gap between rates of teenage pregnancy must be looked into and addressed. Any policy which aims to improve the lives of young women in Scotland is extremely positive.



Chapter 3: Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners Rights

“There is no change in the overall equality budget so investment will continue to be directed towards frontline support to communities, tackling inequality...”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 18

While there is no change in the overall equality budget, the Scottish Government must ensure that resources and support are going where they are most needed. Economic reforms, including a complete overhaul of the welfare benefit system by the UK Coalition Government, are having an adverse impact on women.

Services which offer advice and support to those affected by these measures are *“stretched to breaking point”*. Staff are struggling to meet demand and many are off sick with work related stress. The majority of workers in this type of employment are women, who are attempting to assist claimants as much as possible against a backdrop of cuts to staff and resources.



“According to the 2012 Scottish Health Survey, 70% of Scottish children aged 2-15 years (73% of boys and 68% of girls) met the physical activity recommendations. Overall, teenage girls stand out as having particularly low levels of both sport participation and physical activity.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 19

In October 2013 the SWC held an event for women entitled ‘A False Sense of Perfection’, at which approximately 100 young women, aged 16-25, from throughout Scotland came together. Through speakers and workshops, attendees had the opportunity to discuss topics such as sexting; attitudes towards sex, relationships and pornography; the link between the exploitation of workers, student debt, and the normalisation of women becoming escorts/prostitutes; and attitudes around sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

Young women today are subject to so many different pressures - whether it is from friends, parents, teachers, the media and even strangers. They are expected to succeed in education, find a good job, be *“pretty, gorgeous or stunning”* and fit in with what is seen as ‘normal’. These pressures can have a hugely negative impact on how young women see themselves and how they think others see them.

Women’s worth is too often determined by their physical and sexual attractiveness, as well as the ability to attract a man. Very little attention is paid to their abilities, and in some instances those abilities can be actively discouraged. The pressure they are under to conform to certain ideals can mean activities like sport, either within or outwith the school setting, are not seen as desirable pastimes.

“My friends didn’t think I should continue with my swimming because I would get really broad shoulders and my chest wouldn’t grow. It got to the stage where all the girls just stopped playing sports and started watching the boys do it instead. It was considered better to be the girlfriend of a guy who plays sports than someone who plays a sport.”

When those ideals are combined with so many objectifying comments and images of idealised beauty (most of which are unrealistic or unattainable), the result can be toxic.

The Scottish Government must recognise that body image and the perception of women is one of the key factors affecting young women’s participation in sporting activities. It is, therefore, important that this is explored further.



“Over £4 million will be invested in the sportscotland institute of sport and £2 million in Scotland’s wider sporting infrastructure to ensure an accessible network of quality sports facilities.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 19

A wider sporting infrastructure is undoubtedly a positive thing, however, accessibility is extremely important. Any facility must be able to be reached by public transport, which is used, in the main, by women. It must also be open at times which suit a range of people, i.e. not only in the evenings, when women will struggle to attend classes and activities due to a lack of childcare and restricted public transport. Facilities must also be accessible to those who live outwith main population centres. It is vital that the remote, rural and super sparse nature of much of Scotland is recognised.



Chapter 4: Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth

“SUMMARY POINTS FROM EBS 2014-15

Explore the extension of economic models to disaggregate employment within different sectors by gender and pay and ensure that women’s position is comprehensively reflected in economic policies and strategies.

In the immediate future, we (the Scottish Government) are bringing together an evidence base in relation to women’s economic position in Scotland with a view to examining the potential for maximising economic opportunities for women in the Scottish economy.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 27/28

The issue of women’s economic participation is discussed at each and every event held by the SWC throughout the country. The complex issues attached to women’s involvement in the Labour Market cannot be underestimated.

Employment

The economic downturn has resulted in severe cuts to public and voluntary sector jobs, in which women predominate. Posts are being reduced from full-time to part-time or job-share. Women face taking a cut in hours, wages and associated benefits, or becoming unemployed altogether. While part-time hours – and, by consequence, underemployment – are not desirable, they are often the only real option for many women throughout Scotland.

“I’m so aware of the impact of cuts and redundancies but to tell you the truth I’m not going to complain about the changes – I’m just glad I still have a job.”

The current economic climate has also contributed to a vast number of redundancies in the private sector. Jobs at the lower end of the scale, where women predominate, have been the first to go. This contributes not only to unemployment, but also underemployment for women. Many have been employed in the same workplace for a number of years and it is very difficult for them to find work elsewhere due to a lack of formal qualifications. They also face significant barriers in accessing training and up-skilling, as well as issues around confidence. More needs to be done to support these workers.

Women continue to be clustered into roles in what is known as the ‘5c’s’ – catering, cleaning, caring, cashiering and clerical. These jobs offer low wages and little in the way of training, development and progression. This type of employment is often part-time.

Women undertake the majority of part-time work in Scotland. For some this is an informed choice, however for many others it is the only option available. Family and caring responsibilities and poor public transport mean that part-time work is often the most feasible means of employment. Low wages are common and can result in women taking on two or three jobs in order to make ends meet.

“I was a bank manager in a town approximately 30 miles away from where I live before I had my second baby. Travelling there every day plus the cost of childcare meant it was not worth my while to go back. I now work part-time at weekends. It’s crazy how my family are better off now with the help of tax credits than me working 6 days a week as a bank manager.”

Income Assistance

Many women who work on a part-time basis rely on the money they receive from welfare benefits in order to ‘top up’ their incomes. For example tax credits are used to cover childcare costs or small amounts of housing and/or council tax benefit.

Working hours thresholds for tax credit entitlement are increasing. Lone parents must work at least 16 hours per week. For couples, joint working hours need to be at least 24 per week with one person working at least 16 hours per week. In a couple where only one person is working, that person must be working 24 hours a week.

These changes are causing concern as employers may be unwilling or unable to increase working hours where necessary. Women will therefore be forced to engage in more part-time work and face additional childcare and transport costs.

If infrastructure was put in place to enable women to undertake more hours, and a living wage was paid, there would be less reliance on welfare benefits. More economic activity also means increased Income Tax and National Insurance contributions which would be better overall for the economy.

Much of the shift work carried out by women is done on a part-time basis. This can create a number of issues, most often with regards to childcare. There is very little provision in Scotland which caters for those who work before 0730 and after 1800. If and when it is available, this type of private childcare is very expensive. Shift work can also raise issues around temporary and zero hours contracts and agency work. These are all insecure forms of employment and tend to be predominant in areas of what is traditionally seen as 'women's work', such as cleaning, catering and customer service.

Redundancies across both the public and private sectors have resulted in many women applying for full time jobs with lower wages and lower skill requirements, or jobs comparable to their previous. Many of these, however, are on a part-time or short-term, temporary contractual basis.

"I have an 18 hour post with a Local Authority which started as temporary in 2010. I was then interviewed and gained this post on a permanent basis. In August I was seconded into a 36 hour temporary post (due to end in June 2013) however if this isn't extended I will only have my 18 hour permanent post. This prospect is both scary and confusing."

Some women who currently work full time would prefer to work on a part time basis. They are often unable to do so, however, due to a lack of opportunity for this type of employment in the areas they work in.

Employers can make returning to work very difficult for women after maternity leave. Despite anti-discrimination legislation having been in place for a number of years, roles can be changed and lines of responsibility altered. Employees are entitled to ask for flexible working arrangements, however employers have the right to refuse such a request. The lack of flexibility shown by employers can lead to underemployment. This can be seriously damaging for a woman's earning potential, as well as having the knock on impact of diminishing skills and making career progression even more difficult.

Occupational Segregation

The glass ceiling undoubtedly still exists and progression within workplaces is often denied. This happens for a number of reasons, including women not being considered for promotion if they work part-time, if they are seen of being of 'child bearing age' or are unable to work longer hours than the standard 9am-5pm because of caring responsibilities etc.

“Women often find themselves stuck in the ‘marzipan layer’ at work – they have progressed to a certain level but are unable to be promoted to attain the ‘icing’ benefits worthy of their talents. In the main, this is due to child bearing and caring commitments.”

Older Women in the Workplace

In 2013 the SWC undertook a consultation on Older Women in Work. The three key findings were the lack of recognition of caring responsibilities undertaken by older women; rates of pay and ability, or lack of opportunity, to contribute to a pension scheme; and lack of training opportunities provide further disadvantages to older women. One of the questions asked during the consultation exercise was ‘how would you define an older woman?’. In some cases, women in their mid-thirties were self-defining as older due to the barriers they face in the workplace.

Older women often work in lower, poorer paid roles, including some middle management roles. Many have been employed in the same workplace for the majority of, if not all of, their working lives. Performance Management Improvement policies are often used and can result in older women being deemed unable to perform their duties. Older women are therefore being dismissed on capability issues, which is a much cheaper option for the employer. Job losses due to ‘natural wastage’ cost less than paying out voluntary or compulsory redundancy packages.

Many older women work reduced hours for various reasons, including caring for friends and relatives. With the ever increasing cost of childcare, reducing hours is done in an effort to support the younger generation of women workers.

Older women in the public sector are also faced with health issues in their day to day roles. Nurses, for example, are working longer than envisaged when starting their careers.

“It’s hard to keep up the same physical aspects of a role you’ve been doing for 30 years.”

Library assistants also experience problems, such as arthritis from kneeling on concrete floors, knee and feet inflammation, chronic pain and ongoing mobility issues.

“When you’re young you don’t think that what you are doing at work on a daily basis may result in major health issues later on in life.”



Chapter 5: Education and Lifelong Learning

“Since the last budget statement, the majority of the Employability and Skills budget, which includes the budget for Skills Development Scotland, has been transferred to the new Training, Youth and Women’s Employment Portfolio.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 30

The establishment of a Ministerial position with responsibility for Women’s Employment was an extremely significant step by the Scottish Government. The SWC wholeheartedly welcomed the recognition that women face different and additional barriers to employment, and that these need to be considered and tackled in order to advance equal participation in the Labour Market.

The SWC hopes that the recently created position of Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training will continue to place the same focus on women’s employment.



Chapter 6: Training, Youth and Women’s Employment

“... Recent investments in childcare and early learning will help to remove some barriers to labour market participation.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 34

“If employment is the route out of poverty and onto a better life, then childcare is the bridge.”

There is not enough accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare in Scotland. The SWC welcomed the provisions in the Children and Young People’s Act, which raised the number of early years funding hours for 3-4 year olds and vulnerable two year olds from 475 hours per year to 600 hours per year. However it must be recognised that while this attempt to improve things for families is a step in the right direction, it is not enough to remove any of the barriers to women’s labour market participation.

Those additional hours equate to sixteen minutes per day. They also do not take into account children under the age of three, or those over the age of five. The need for childcare does not stop when a child turns 5 and goes to school. The lack of after-school care in Scotland is a real issue, and one which is all too often forgotten when childcare is being discussed. The Act also makes no provisions for the working conditions of those employed in the childcare sector.

Flexibility in childcare, at present, comes at a price. Private nurseries tend to provide longer opening hours, often taking children in from 0730 and closing at 1800.

Local Authority nurseries, on the other hand, provide childcare in sessions, offering places either in the morning or the afternoon. Working patterns have changed, but the way in which children are looked after have not.

Local Authority provision still works on the notion that a woman will work on a part-time basis, a few mornings or afternoons a week in their local area, and the 16 hours and 20 minutes per week of funded provision will cover their childcare needs. The reality for many women is that they are in low paid, low skilled employment, on zero hours contracts or in uncertain shift patterns. The lack of wrap-around, flexible provision, makes it extremely difficult for these women to access childcare. As a result they rely heavily on assistance from friends and family. The lack of flexibility, coupled with their working patterns, means that their children are often missing out on the funded places they are entitled to.

Informal caring is becoming increasingly relied upon, with many women in the *“middle layer of caring, looking after both young grandchildren and elderly parents.”* This can have a detrimental effect on the physical and mental health of these women, many of whom continue to hold down part-time jobs.

The cost of childcare is a huge barrier for women accessing employment or increasing working hours. This is particularly the case for families with more than one child, a disabled child and lone parents.

Changes to working hours thresholds for tax credit entitlements will have a huge impact on women. There is a reliance by many upon the assistance they receive in order to be able to cover the cost of childcare.

“There are no guarantees my employer will increase my hours so I still qualify for tax credits. I need this money to pay for my childcare. If they can’t increase my hours I really don’t know how I will manage.”

Middle income families do not qualify for assistance with childcare costs. Sending a child to nursery takes *“a huge chunk”* out of household budgets, particularly if they have more than one child. Women often delay returning to work until their children are at school as it is the only financially viable option.

The childcare workforce, the overwhelming majority of whom are women, are too often forgotten about. The women are vastly underpaid and grossly undervalued by society. It is also important to recognise that there are often significant disparities in the way those employed in the private sector and those employed in the public sector are treated.

Workers in private nurseries are open to more exploitation than their Local Authority counterparts. They are often only paid the minimum wage, and the younger workers who are in training through a Modern Apprenticeship or college placement are paid less than that. These workplaces are, more often than not, non-unionised. Once the young women are fully qualified, they are let go in favour of a younger, cheaper trainee.

Conversely Local Authority childcare workers are in nurseries and pre-five centres which receive better funding, where they are able to join a trade union, and where the payment of the Living Wage is a real possibility. Regardless of the type of childcare provider they use, parents should be assured that the women who are looking after their children are subject to the same working conditions, are well paid, and given the recognition they deserve for the vital work that they do.

It is, therefore, vital that the Scottish Government monitors the implementation of its recent investments in childcare and early learning in order to ensure that children, parents and childcare workers are not being adversely affected by the legislation.



“The Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce has produced its final report and the recommendations highlight a number of challenges around the participation of women, minority ethnic groups, disabled people and care leavers on Modern Apprenticeships.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 34

“2015-16 will see the first stages of an expansion of the MA programme to 30,000 starts per year by 2020. In building towards this, the SDS will look to increase participation among the groups highlighted by the Commission.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 35

The Scottish Government is to be commended for its commitment to a target of at least 25,000 new starts in Modern Apprenticeships each year. Despite this, there is significant gender imbalance in the apprenticeships undertaken. Statistics published in June 2014 by Skills Development Scotland show that women continue to predominate in traditionally ‘female roles’, such as Business and Administration, Customer Service, Hairdressing and Barbering, Health and Social Care, Hospitality, and Travel Services. Of the 100 available MA frameworks, 19 had no female trainees, whereas 0 had no male trainees. Women were seriously underrepresented in what are considered traditionally ‘male’ roles, more often than not making up less than 10% of apprenticeships in, for example, Construction, IT and Telecommunications and Plumbing.

The Modern Apprenticeship scheme could be an excellent way to tackle occupational segregation. There are, however, limited opportunities in many areas of the country. Young women are seldom offered information through careers advice and are therefore unaware of the opportunities available to them. Careers in subjects such as engineering tend to be pursued through an academic route, i.e. a university degree; however that option is not suitable for all. Many young women are missing out as a result.

While the Scottish Government are clear on their commitment to youth unemployment, more needs to be done in order to make young women aware of the possibilities available to them through Modern Apprenticeships, particularly in non-traditional roles.

Chapter 7: Justice and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

“The SPS has committed £1 million to train staff working with young people in prisons and a further £400,000 to enhance the skills of staff who support the families of prisoners, the largest proportion of which are likely to be those from disadvantaged communities. SPS is building a new regional unit for women offenders at HMP Edinburgh at a total cost of £20 million (with £14 million committed in 2015-16) which will enable women from the East of Scotland to be located closer to their families and communities.

SPS has committed £648,000 to provide a specialist team to support the needs of women offenders.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 40

The SWC welcomes recognition by the Scottish Government that there are real differences between the needs of male and female offenders. The establishment of a unit for women at HMP Edinburgh is a positive step, particularly following the findings of the Commission on Women Offenders that HMPYOI Cornton Vale is not fit for purpose.

It is hoped that the Scottish Government will continue to place focus on the rehabilitation of women offenders and the use of alternatives to custody.

“Too many women are given custodial sentences in cases where they pose no threat to the community. Family responsibilities of those who are awaiting sentence should be taken into account. Imprisoning a women for recurrent non-payment of fines does not give justice, either for society as a whole, or for the children the woman may be trying to support.”

It is vital than women who are given custodial sentences are able to be as involved in the lives of their children as possible. The new unit at HMP Edinburgh, and any subsequent similar facilities, should make women’s interaction and involvement with their children’s home life, education and other activities a top priority.

Given the prison population in Scotland is mostly made up of men, then in most cases it will be women who are left at home to support the family, whether they are mothers, daughters, or partners/wives. The training which will enhance the skills of staff working with the families of prisoners must take into account specific gender considerations with regards to both the families home lives and also their ability to access the prison for visits. This should include public transport and childcare arrangements, as well as the woman’s working and/or caring commitments.



Chapter 9: Rural Affairs and the Environment

“Rural communities experience a higher rate of out-migration than urban areas as young people look for employment and opportunities elsewhere and so tend to have an ageing population. Funding such as the New Entrants Scheme for the establishment of young male and female farmers is vital in assisting young people, and encouraging young women in particular, to make agriculture an attractive career.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 45

“The Next Generation Digital Fund which aims to improve rural connectivity for individuals, households and businesses has increased by £8.2 million from 2014-15.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 46

Due to the rural nature of Scotland’s geography, there is a distinct lack of investment in employment opportunities within the regions. Tourism is a major attraction with women often relying on part-time seasonal or low paid work in this sector. Some women establish their own businesses relying on local support and networking to promote their enterprise.

The public sector is a major employer within rural Scotland. The current loss of public sector jobs is having a detrimental impact on rural communities, in particular the women employed to provide necessary local services.

“The public sector employs 40% of workers in this region, the majority of these are women. It stands to reason we will be the most likely to feel the repercussions of policy decisions.”

High speed broadband connections are not available in many rural areas. Small, remote businesses with poor transport links need to rely on internet services to promote and conduct business activities. Some areas of rural Scotland have no access to broadband resulting in restricted business opportunities. In areas where internet services are provided, an absence of internet provider competition results in rural communities enjoying less competitive tariffs than those in urban areas.

“Lack of high speed broadband limits so many social and business opportunities. Slow internet connection stops people working from home and being able to shop online.”

Poor or non-existent internet provision also impedes access to education and employment opportunities for women. Online application forms are invited by employers and academic institutions attracting applicants. Distance learning, home study and accredited workplace training are all curtailed for women by a lack of reliable, affordable and accessible internet services.

“Lack of high speed broadband is also a major disadvantage in terms of applying for jobs, with more and more organisations accepting online applications only”

Young women who wish to pursue non-academic careers are often unable to do so in rural areas due to lack of opportunity and support.

“More needs to be done to encourage girls into non-traditional careers – we expect renewables to become an important employment sector, and there are incentives for young women to get into agriculture, but girls at the local secondary school are not taking up technical subjects in order to gain a share of the opportunities being created. The lack of infrastructure in rural areas doesn’t help either.”



Chapter 9: Culture and External Affairs

“The increase in funding for External Affairs will enable on-going international development activities which seek to build upon historic and contemporary relationships that exist between Scotland and the developing world. A range of specific equality projects covering health, education, renewable energy, civic governance and economic development are supported by the International Development Fund. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are Millennium Development Goals in their own right. They are also critical to the delivery on other key development goals, including education and health. We are confident that by placing equality at the heart of our development work, our funding will have the greatest impact on those who experience disadvantage, such as women and children.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 52

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. Every year, representatives of Member States gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

Prior to the 58th Session of CSW in 2014, the theme of which was *“Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls”*, the SWC prepared a report regarding Scotland’s progress on the Millennium Development Goals. Representatives from the SWC attended side and parallel events at CSW in New York, which focused on a variety of topics relating to the MDGs.

These included as Gender Based Violence as a Political Weapon; Addressing Widowhood as a Root Cause of Poverty Across the Generations Via the Post 2015 MDGs; Women's Role in Post Disaster Reconstruction and Recovery; and Rural Women on Challenges and Achievements towards MDGs for Women and Girls.

The SWC commends the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly with regards to the advancements made through the Goals on gender equality issues. There is, however, more work to be done going forward. While the overall aims of the MDGs have been achieved, there are underlying issues which need to be addressed.

- Although Scotland is a developed nation, many women are still living in conditions of poverty.
- Too many children are not eating three meals per day.
- Access to full and productive employment continues to be out of reach for many women, due to basic considerations such as childcare provision and decent public transport.
- Discrimination and barriers still exist within education and the perception of women in the media can have a significantly detrimental impact.

CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Described as an international bill of rights for women, it came into force on 3 September 1981 and has been ratified by 188 states. All States must report to the committee on the progress they have made in implementing CEDAW. Initial reports discussing the current picture of discrimination against women in the reporting states are required to specifically deal with each article of Convention within one year of ratifying CEDAW. States are typically required to provide periodic reports every four years, but if the committee is concerned about the situation in that state they can request a report at any time.

In 2013, the Scottish CEDAW Shadow Report Forum – a partnership of women’s organisations from throughout Scotland – produced a Shadow Report. This ensured that the experiences and views of women in Scotland were represented and explored during the examination of the UK Government’s Report to the CEDAW Examining Committee.

The report reflected the voices of women throughout Scotland. This was achieved using networks, knowledge of subject areas and the voices of a wide range of women. It contained valuable information from and about diverse groups of women from various geographical locations throughout Scotland.

The SWC has worked with a variety of women’s organisations throughout Scotland to raise awareness of the MDGs, as well as CSW and CEDAW overall, however it would be extremely beneficial if the Scottish Government also worked to raise awareness of the purpose of these international obligations, as well as responsibilities resulting from them.



Chapter 10 - Infrastructure, Investment and Cities

“The Scottish Government has, for the second year in a row, set aside £35 million to compensate Local Authorities for the cost of the bedroom tax.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 55

The mitigation of the impact of the bedroom tax by the Scottish Government is to be welcomed. The tax has been one of the biggest causes of concern for women.

“The bedroom tax and housing policy is contributing to the erosion of communities.”

The introduction of the bedroom tax, whereby those in receipt of housing benefit will have a certain amount deducted if they are deemed to have a ‘spare’ bedroom, is considered to be an *“absolute disgrace”*. It is affecting people throughout Scotland and arrears are building up as a result. The tax is having a particular impact on disabled people, who are subject to significant cuts in the money they receive. They often need an extra room to accommodate a carer and are very worried that they may lose part of their housing benefit at a time when other benefits are also being cut.

“It’s just another poll tax, made by people who will never be affected by it.”

In many Local Authority areas, there are a number of empty properties which could be used to accommodate more social housing tenants. The majority of these, however, have two or three bedrooms. There are very few single occupancy homes available, which means that residents have no choice but to pay the money for having a ‘spare’ room.

“I have seen the waiting list to get a one bedroom house. There are just none available. I am disabled and need to be on the bottom floor. Getting this type of property is virtually impossible.”

In rural areas, there is a real shortage of Local Authority housing. Families are often placed in accommodation that is larger than they require, simply because it is all that is available. At the time, it was more economical to build larger properties rather than one bedroom homes and now *“there’s a real backlash from that”*.



“A significant reduction in ferry fares on 14 routes will be achieved by increasing the budget for the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) by £4 million to cover the roll-out of the scheme to the remaining ferry routes on the West Coast and Clyde network in October 2015.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 56

The rolling out of the RET scheme to those ferry routes which it does not presently cover is an extremely positive budgetary decision. Those living on island communities rely on ferry services to access employment, education, childcare, shopping and social activities. Restricted access to all of these for women due to expensive fares creates additional barriers for women entering the labour market, attending college and much more.



“The draft housing and regeneration budget includes new investment of £125 million, which will be invested in a package of measures with a strong focus on social housing, benefitting equality groups and lower income households who are over-represented in the social housing sector.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 56

There is a critical need for more affordable, appropriate housing in Scotland. This is particularly the case in the social housing sector, where families often live in unsuitable accommodation - many are overcrowded, or are forced to move away from family and support networks due to lack of availability.

“I don’t want to have to live in a two bedroom flat with my two kids, but I know there are no bigger properties available round about this area. I rely on my family and friends, who live nearby, for childcare so that I can go out to work. If I had to move outwith the area, I would have to get a bus to drop my kids off, get another bus to work, and then do a similar journey at night. It would make me going out to work completely pointless and I don’t want that.”

There is also a stigma attached to those who live in social housing which can have a detrimental impact on women and their families. This needs to be challenged.

“Social housing used to be the norm in Scotland, but the introduction of right to buy meant that the best houses were bought and those who needed accommodation were placed in less desirable areas. Living in a ‘council house’ became an insult, something to be ashamed of, instead of a normal, decent way of living.”

The Help to Buy (Scotland) scheme is welcomed by women, as it allows many to be able to consider purchasing a home, which they would be otherwise unable to do this without the assistance provided by this scheme. However, the availability of this type of housing, particularly in rural areas, is often scarce. The Scottish Government must ensure that appropriate properties are built in all areas of the country, so that as many families as possible are able to benefit from taking part in the scheme.



“Summary Points from EBS 2014-15:

We will work with our partners and a range of organisations in Scotland to develop our analysis and understanding of the impacts of welfare reforms, with a view to targeting our mitigation efforts.”

Equality Statement: Scottish Draft Budget 2015-16; Page 57

“The Welfare Reform measures are a financial assault on women. All of the cuts are impacting on women more than men due to the inequalities we are exposed to in the first place.”

The introduction of a new system of welfare is having a particularly detrimental impact on women.

Universal Credit (UC) will replace a range of benefits currently in existence. It will be available both to those out of work and those in work on low incomes. Applications will be made online and the claimant must manage their claim through an online account. The benefit will be paid to claimants on a monthly basis, in arrears.

Individuals must take responsibility for completing their online benefits applications. Consideration has not been given, however, to those who do not have access to a computer or are not computer literate. Advice and support agency funding cuts have resulted in many services unable to assist vulnerable individuals.

Local Jobcentres, in the past, provided a ‘one stop shop’ where claimants could speak with advisors, complete forms and seek advice. Under the proposed changes, this will no longer be an option.

“You can’t even apply for a job in a Jobcentre any more. You have to use a computer, and if you don’t have one, then you’ll have to go the library or an internet cafe. I don’t feel at all comfortable filling out the most personal details about my life in such an open space. I’m also struggling to see what the purpose of the Jobcentre is now. It must be so frustrating for the staff.”

The Act creates sanctions for those who do not comply with ‘work related requirements’. Those who fail ‘for no good reason’ to undertake work preparation requirements will have their benefits stopped. The Act does not, however, define what will be considered a ‘good reason’. Women have commented on the positive report recently published by the Welfare Reform Committee of the Scottish Parliament on benefit sanctions, ‘*Tough Love or Tough Luck*’.

“The findings of this report really do reflect what life is like for those subject to unfair and often unfounded benefit sanctions. Women shouldn’t be losing out on money because they cannot get childcare or there’s no transport where they live.”



Conclusions

Gender considerations must be made in every area of Scottish Government budgets. Women are more likely to:

- Use a wide range of health services;
- Undertake unpaid caring roles;
- Be adversely affected by the impacts of the UK Coalition Government's Welfare Reform measures;
- As young women, face pressures around body image;
- Be negatively or inappropriately portrayed in the media;
- Face significant barriers in entering, sustaining and progressing in education and employment;
- Be steered towards traditional career paths through participation in Modern Apprenticeships and further education;
- Bear the brunt of childcare responsibilities;
- Be sentenced harshly and face barriers in the criminal justice system; and
- Be adversely affected by living in remote, rural and super sparse areas of Scotland.

Without a full and measured analysis of the impact of public spending, the economic position and wellbeing of women will be undermined. The contribution made by women to the economy, both in paid and unpaid roles, must be recognised and valued.



The Scottish Women's Convention

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded by the Scottish Government to consult with women in Scotland to influence public policy. The organisation was set up in 2003 to enable grassroots women to discuss issues relevant to them. Since its inception the SWC has engaged with a wide range of women throughout the country.

The SWC undertakes an annual series of 'roadshows' throughout Scotland. These events are unique. Women are given an opportunity to express their opinions or concerns, in their local area, on issues which directly affect them. Locations from the Shetland Islands to Dumfries have been visited. All information gathered from the women informs SWC responses to Scottish and UK Government consultations. This process ensures that women's voices are heard at the heart of the decision making process.