



The Scottish Women's Convention

Annual Update 2018



Scottish Women's Convention is funded by the Scottish Government

The Scottish Women's Convention aims to:

- Enable women to influence policy in Scotland
- Ensure that issues important to women are considered at all stages of the policy making process.

Development Manager's Report

This year has, once again, been full of activities promoting the SWC throughout Scotland.

- Roadshows in Stornoway, Dundee, Paisley and Kilmarnock ensured that local women were able to talk about important issues in a secure and friendly environment.
- Conferences focusing on Sexual Harassment, Women's Health and Homelessness & Housing empowered women to make a difference in their communities.

With planning underway for 2019, women will be encouraged to be involved and empowered at SWC events.

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Chair's Report

2018 has been another great year for the SWC. The organisation continues to engage with a breadth of women throughout Scotland.

Women need to be heard. They are the cornerstone of our communities and know what is needed at a local level.

Decision makers need to listen. Only by working together can women in Scotland be empowered at a local, national and international level.

Roadshows

This year's roadshow programme engaged with women throughout Scotland including Stornoway, Dundee, Paisley and Kilmarnock. Participants brought forth a range of issues that were impacting on women at both a national and local level including:

- The impact of welfare reforms and the roll out of Universal Credit
- Housing issues at a local level
- What could be improved in their local area; and
- Topical issues like women's representation, accessibility to services and sexual harassment.

Feedback was very positive with many women attending an SWC event for the first time. The use of the website and social media were the main ways in which women found out about events. Word of mouth and the passing on of information, however, were also successful ways of encouraging attendance.

International Women's Day

On Saturday 10 March, over 380 women from throughout Scotland attended the SWC International Women's Day celebrations in the Scottish Parliament. The theme was 'The Century of Our Vote'.

Speakers included Nicola Sturgeon MSP - First Minister of Scotland; Annie Hill - American Trade Unionist; Christina McKelvie MSP; Louise MacDonald, Advisory Council on Women and Girls; Sue John, Glasgow Women's Library. Talat Yaqoob (Women 50/50) and Sophi Tranchell (Divine Chocolate) joined the speakers for a panel discussion.

Attendees were invited to ask questions to the panel.

An evening reception, sponsored by Thompsons Solicitors followed the proceedings in the Debating Chamber. This allowed women the opportunity to network.

This annual event is very popular. Feedback confirms that women enjoy the Scottish Parliament building. It provides a unique, relaxed and informal meeting place to celebrate International Women's Day.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The priority theme for 2018 was - "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls". A report of the event is available from the SWC website.

The SWC continues to be actively involved with UK women's organisations as part of the CSW NGO Alliance and CSW NGO Core Group which meets with UK Government officials and politicians.

Conferences

Sexual Harassment

The SWC held an event at the Hilton Grosvenor on Saturday, 20 January focussing specifically on the subject of sexual harassment. Whilst the SWC has continuously heard from women across Scotland upon this subject, given the unfaltering flow of allegations that came to light from across the globe, the need for an event of this nature was apparent.

In holding this conference, the SWC wanted to identify key priorities for change directly from grassroots women who have knowledge and experience of the issue. As well as this, bringing together women from many different backgrounds to share stories and engage collectively is extremely important in conquering this endemic which has gone unchallenged within society for far too long.

Speakers provided an insight into their experiences of sexual harassment. Questions discussed on the day included

- What does sexual harassment mean to you?
- What needs to be done in order to challenge and tackle sexual harassment?

Women's Health

In order to focus on key areas of women's health, the SWC worked with health professionals to identify priorities - breast and cervical screening; mesh implants; thyroid health; mental health.

Prior to holding a conference, the organisation explored some of the main concerns around these five key areas. By holding local roundtables and launching an online survey, the SWC was able to engage informally with key stakeholders. Five roundtable discussions were held with various groups of women throughout Scotland.

A conference was held in Glasgow on Saturday 21 July to engage with women around health in Scotland. Information analysed from previous activities formed the basis for roundtable discussions. Speakers were women who had undergone diagnosis and treatment for major health concerns.

Feedback confirms that health is a major problem for women throughout Scotland. Some have indicated suggestions for change which may improve their healthcare experience while others are content with the service received.

Homelessness and Housing

The SWC is undertaking a programme of work to actively engage with women around housing and homelessness in Scotland. This will include hearing about the issues that contribute to these problems as well as exploring rural and urban concerns and priorities Homelessness and housing, as well as their causes and consequences, impact on women in acutely different ways due to ongoing gender inequality.

A conference to launch this work was held on Saturday 13 October 2018 to bring women together, to raise awareness about the issues around housing and homelessness and to start discussions around the topic.

Consultations

The Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee Call for Views: “The Impact of Leaving the European Union on Health and Social Care in Scotland”

The Scottish Parliament Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: “Inquiry into Sexual Harassment and Inappropriate Conduct at the Scottish Parliament”

The Scottish Government Consultation on Electoral Reform

Proposed Member’s Bill: Proposed Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-Restricted Sales) (Scotland) Bill

The Scottish Government Consultation: “Draft Regulations Making Provision in Relation to Social Security Appeals”

The Scottish Government: “Consultation on the Best Start Grant Regulations”

The Scottish Government Consultation: “Welfare Foods: A Consultation on Meeting the Needs of Children and Families in Scotland.”

The Scottish Government Consultation: “A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare”

National Council of Rural Advisors: A Rural Conversation: “Together We Can, Together We Will”

The Advertising Standards Authority Consultation: “Tackling Harmful Gender Stereotypes in Advertising”

United Nations Special Rapporteur “Interlinkages between Poverty and Human Rights in the United Kingdom”

The Scottish Parliament Social Security Committee Consultation: “Social Security and in Work Poverty”

Copies of reports from SWC roadshows, conferences and consultation responses are available to download from our website

www.scottishwomensconvention.org

Evidence Sessions

The SWC has been invited to attend a number of evidence sessions and steering groups. The organisation is also actively involved in Cross Party Groups around women’s Health, Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sectarianism.

Other Activities

Small, local roundtable discussions allow the SWC to engage with women who are often vulnerable or marginalised. These events, in partnership with local women's groups, allow those attending to have their views listened to and recorded as part of the consultation process.

Social media has continued to grow with Twitter and Facebook allowing the SWC to engage more stakeholders. This has proved invaluable to accessing new women to attend events.

Networking continues to be a key SWC activity. By engaging with local women, organisations, parliamentarians and decision makers, the organisation makes sure that the voices of those who attend events is heard by those who need to listen.

The SWC is working with the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) to raise awareness of the importance of women's issues.

Thank You!

The SWC extends thanks to:

- Thompsons Solicitors for sponsorship of IWD Evening Reception.
- Tunnocks
- MacKays Jam
- A Vogel Herbal Remedies
- Borders Biscuits
- Glasgow Taxis
- Walkers Shortbread
- Divine Chocolate
- Unite the Union (Finance and Legal)
- Staff at Hilton Grosvenor Hotel
- Wylie and Bisset, Chartered Accountants.
- Last, but not least, all of our volunteers and supporters who hand out bags, facilitate tables and take notes.

Your contribution is always greatly appreciated

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