

Castlemilk Roadshow

Report

**Mental
Health**

Childcare

**Low
Paid**

Disability

Work

**Social
Security**

**Public
Services**

Caring

**Equal
Pay**

Schools

**Welfare
Reform**

Friday, 6th September, 2019

www.scottishwomensconvention.org

**email: info@scottishwomensconvention.org
or call 0141 339 4797**



@swcwomen

or find us on



Introduction

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) held discussions at the Castlemilk Community Centre on Friday, 6th September, 2019, to discuss what matters to local women. A number of points were raised throughout the day which affect the area at both a local and national level.

This report is intended to showcase the real situations faced by women everyday in a unique setting for both local and national policymakers and encourage women at a primary level to become more involved. It seeks to extoll the advantages of qualitative evidence from people who are most acutely affected by policy decisions but who are often not part of the decision making process.

The SWC would like to extend a warm thanks to all the women who attended on the day.



6 Key Points from the Roadshow:

- ◆ **Problems surrounding the social security system.**
- ◆ **Crucial requirement for a major supermarket to the area.**
- ◆ **Closure of crucial services for the community.**
- ◆ **Lack of joined up support for housing issues.**
- ◆ **Excess of jobs offering precarious employment and zero hours contracts.**
- ◆ **Absence of early intervention for mental health problems.**

Social Security

Ongoing social security reforms over the past number of years have left many women at a disadvantage and facing severe poverty. The move to Universal Credit (UC) as well as the stress that sanctioning errors cause is seen as having a major impact.

Comments included:

- Problems with the digitalisation of social security. This works on the assumption that you can afford internet or are computer-literate.
- The adverse impact of mistaken sanctions with little leeway to correct these errors.
- Fears that many people are not understanding what UC is doing to people due to the news agenda being overtaken by Brexit.
- Applying for UC is seen as a humiliating experience with stigma attached where *“you are laid bare”* from the moment you walk in the door.
- The stress and delays in payment for women when there are changes in circumstances, such as leaving a partner due to domestic abuse.
- Sanctions being given for a range of reasons such as not being deemed in appropriate dress.
- A significant negative change in attitude over the past number of years towards those needing social security.
- The pressure that UC is having on people leading to a real impact on the community.

“It is not welfare reform, it’s welfare destruction.”

“It’s that humiliation and degradation, it’s just not worth it, some would rather just do without and not challenge it.”

“The Government are saying to someone – you have to be able to use a computer and online navigation before you are able to eat.”

Case Study: Job Centre Closures

Castlemilk Job Centre was due to be closed two years ago along with a range of others within the Glasgow area.

This would have led to individuals having to travel around 45 minutes to the next nearest Centre, meaning two different buses as well as transport costs. Not only does this affect those with limited funds, it also impacts on women with disabilities and those with children. Due to vigorous community campaigning, Castlemilk Job Centre remains open at present.

Cost of Food

As well as the struggle with high costs of living, the Castlemilk Community face the added burden of not having a major supermarket in the area. Campaigns have taken place throughout the past few years highlighting the need to access healthy food at low prices.

Comments included:

- Certain foodbanks are restricted in what they can offer and what days they can open.
- Food poverty is high in the area, mainly due to sanctions.
- The impact on children's school attendance and educational attainment due to a lack of healthy food options.
- High costs of living making it hard for women to make ends meet.
- The need for proper support in schools to deal with the pressure young children are under due to health and poverty issues.

"It is like going back to Victorian times."

"Being able to actually get fresh food and being treated with respect is key—it's about lifting someone's head up."

Case Study: Women Against Capitalism

A Castlemilk based, women-led collective, Women Against Capitalism was formed to stand against inequality. The organisation has led events and discussions on subjects such as period poverty, women's health and inaccessibility to a major supermarket for the Castlemilk area.

The collective also host Share and Care Events within the community where people are encouraged to come along, bring whatever they can and take what they need including hot food, toys and clothing.

Transport

Despite being part of the Glasgow area, Castlemilk suffers from a shortage of public transport options for locals. The high price of bus fares leave many on low incomes unable to afford to reach crucial services related to health and employment.

Comments from women:

- Public transport can have lengthy travel times even to towns nearby and local events due to routes that services take.
- The lack of competition means there is usually only one bus that can take you to certain amenities which may only run sporadically.
- The continuous rise in bus prices can make this type of travel an expensive option for those on low incomes.

"It's £4.70 for a day ticket, if you need to do this twice a week and you're struggling then you just can't afford to. This all adds up."

HEALTH

A lack of resources have placed major burdens on women. Closure of local services are taking a severe toll on many within the community. There are also difficulties in obtaining G.P. appointments for both physical and mental health issues. This can lead to dangerous circumstances where many are not getting the right help that they need.

Comments included:

- Cuts to services have resulted in many being moved or centralised.
- Low uptake for routine testing for women's health issues such as smear tests.
- A struggle for women to access their G.P. resulting in triage appointments where diagnosis's are given over the phone.
- Some women waiting weeks for the results of relatively straightforward procedures.
- Mental health "solutions" focused solely on prescription medication which can have a severe impact on those in the most vulnerable situations.
- A lack of awareness around suicide as well as a lack of intervention.
- Increases in drug use can often be put down to escapism from mental health issues, lack of prospects and bad financial situations.

"Appointments are like gold dust. It is a case of in the door and out of the door."

"Suicide is an epidemic. It's all related to a lack of prospects."

"You worry about the impact on the next generation that will have mental health issues."

Case Study: Closure of the Castlemilk Sandyford Clinic

The Castlemilk Sandyford Clinic was temporarily closed until April, however, it remains shut. Locals have argued that vital services were provided here, including drop in services and access to emergency contraception. This was especially beneficial for the young people within the area where they were supported by youth workers who had built up relationships in the community.

Locals have argued that the closure is really about centralisation of services and cutbacks. The Clinic was seen to be successful and worked for early intervention and engagement with the community. The next closest service is Govanhill which will mean money spent on public transport for residents.

EMPLOYMENT

Like other areas across Scotland, Castlemilk has seen a rise in workers forced to undertake precarious and zero hours contracts with little rights or trade union recognition. Many work long hours for little pay but do not speak out due to fear of job loss.

Women's comments included:

- Employers taking advantage of workers leading to many having few rights in the workplace.
- Many women not meeting statutory sick pay thresholds due to holding down a number of jobs.
- Claimant Commitments for those in receipt of Universal Credit can often make individual's feel they have to sign up to agreements they cannot keep in terms of employment, leading to sanctioning.
- For those working in the GIG economy but in receipt of Universal Credit, there is the added stress of changes to payments every month.
- The prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace, especially by customers for women in the hospitality industry.

"It is the younger generation that is getting penalised and being forced to work these contracts."

The system is geared towards the employer. For those working in the GIG economy, they can hardly afford to make ends meet."

HOUSING

Overcrowding has come across as a huge issue within the area. Despite a number of initiatives to build more homes in the community, many women are still struggling to gain housing. As a result, they are living in circumstances where overcrowding, expensive rent and bad conditions are common with little access to new accommodation.

Women noted:

- Many are suffering from rent arrears due to system administrative errors.
- Individuals are often placed in one housing category such as by medical need without taking into consideration overcrowding as well.
- Despite many new builds, locals are struggling to obtain accommodation.
- Elderly residents who have lived in their house for decades still have to bid for new accommodation within the area.
- A high chance of being placed in another area of Glasgow in temporary accommodation if presenting as homeless.
- There is a lot of temporary accommodation in the area but very little choice in terms of permanent homes.

- Women have to register separately for a house with each individual Housing Association in the area.
- Private letting has risen dramatically in the area with few homes for social housing for local residents.
- Housing Associations are under extreme pressure due to high rent arrears through Universal Credit payment delays.

“I opted for rent to be paid directly to my landlord when setting up my Universal Credit journal. It wasn’t put through properly for three months. I thought I would end up losing my house. It was so stressful.”

“Locals should not have to move out of the area for a house.”

“People are put through misery just to get decent housing. It doesn’t matter how much you shout and highlight how bad it is.”

What are the key priorities for women in your local area?

- A community hub where people can be signposted for advice and services.
- More shops locally for residents to access affordable and healthy food.
- Reopening of the Sandyford Castlemilk Sexual Health Clinic.
- Strategies to tackle low employment and low wages for women.
- More support services for mental health.
- Better resources to help with lengthy waiting times for GP surgeries.

The Scottish Women’s Convention would like to give warm thanks to women throughout who participated in the engagement process to ensure local voices and experiences are heard.

The Scottish Women’s Convention (SWC) is funded to engage with women throughout Scotland in order that their views might influence public policy.

This is achieved in a number of different ways - through roadshow, round table, conference and celebratory events. Following each event, a report is compiled and issued to women who attend and relevant policy and decision makers. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to Scottish and UK Government consultation papers.

Scottish Women’s Convention is a charitable company limited by guarantee. Registered in Scotland No. SC0327308. Registered office 2nd Floor, 44 Ashley Street, Glasgow G3 4DS. The Scottish Women’s Convention is a Charity registered in Scotland No. SC039852.

