

Maryhill Roadshow

Report

**Mental
Health**

Childcare

**Low
Paid**

Disability

Work

**Social
Security**

**Public
Services**

Caring

**Equal
Pay**

Schools

**Welfare
Reform**

Friday, 13th September, 2019

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Introduction

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) held discussions at Maryhill Burgh Halls on Friday, 13th of September, 2019, to discuss what matters to local women. A number of points were raised throughout the day which affected 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:

- **Unaffordability of public transport.**
- **Rerouting of crucial bus services with little public consultation.**
- **The need for an increase in new social housing builds and upgrades to older ones.**
- **More education on the plight of refugees.**
- **Social security sanctioning due to distance to nearest Job Centre Plus**
- **Increase in foodbank usage and a lack of affordable, healthy options when buying food.**

Education

Schools within the area are seen as being good for students but are suffering from a number of issues outwith their control such as overcrowding and a lack of support staff.

Women's comments included:

- The compulsory testing of five year olds has led to teachers being extremely overworked and can potentially send the message to children who don't pass that they are not good enough when they simply may not be ready.
- Children with Additional Support Needs may be overlooked due to a shortage of specialist staff.
- The amount of work placed on teachers means many are working outwith their normal hours.
- The inaccessibility of childcare provision due to high costs.
- A need for longer term planning to deal with overcrowding in schools.

"Governments have been trying to fix the attainment gap for decades. It's not about just education, but the real effects of inequality."

"If a child has a particular need, expertise must be provided but it is all about expense and cost cutting these days."

Politics

Many within the community are seen as highly involved in terms of political engagement. The current political climate and heated debates have led to disillusionment however, with many voicing concerns that it is shifting focus away from important issues within communities.

Positions commented on included:

- Issues with women continuing to be under-represented at all levels of politics.
- Many individuals being unaware that they can go to their elected representatives for help and information.
- Difficulties in engaging with women due to the busy nature of their lives and the little time that they have available.
- The rise in online abuse puts many women off standing for a political position.
- Worries of a rising apathy towards voting and democratic undertakings in general.

"Many people do not read on past the headlines so are taking superficial news at face value."

"We used to think this was idle threats, the murder of Jo Cox showed how scary and real these threats are."

Poverty and Inequality

The perseverance of cuts to social security, precarious work and other issues have led to an increase in poverty. The ongoing stigma around accessing food and clothing banks have left many going without basic necessities.

Women voiced issues around:

- A need to increase signposting for women as to where to go for help with money issues.
- Concerns over a lack of access to basics forcing people to choose between having to eat or pay bills.
- An increase in the reliance on pay day loans due to delays with social security and a rise of in work poverty.
- Feelings of apathy where people are not challenging sanctions made due to *“exhaustion”* with the present system.
- A lack of thought or humanity in the way that the welfare system works leaving people in severe danger of poverty.
- The six week delay in Universal Credit causing real hardship and stress for claimants.

“Poverty must be the biggest issue facing this country. Things must change.”

“Some people have no money, their children have no shoes. How is this happening today?”

Employment

A major topic voiced at the event was the rise in use of zero hours contracts and automation. Women are often the most at risk of job loss in sectors where they predominate due to these threats. This coupled with a lack of collective bargaining in these particular sectors mean many women are forced to work either long hours or a number of different jobs just in order to get by.

Women reported:

- Worries that training policies have not been put in place to counteract the effects of automation on women’s employment.
- Concerns over EU Withdrawal on jobs and worker’s rights.
- Exploitation of workers with people being forced to work long shifts. Many do so without speaking up for fear of losing their job.
- Fears over the rise in State Pension Age for women with poor health who have worked in physically-demanding industries all their lives.

“Workplaces are forcing people to work long shifts which people do because they’re scared of losing their job.”

“It’s going back to the dark days of the 1980s in terms of employment.”

“Automation will have a huge effect. It sounds like science fiction so people don’t think it’s real. Look at the loss of huge industries such as printing and manufacturing.”

Housing

As is the case across Scotland, housing is seen as a major problem within the local community. Many are waiting lengthy periods in order to get affordable and appropriate homes whilst the rise in private rents has made this option unaffordable for many.

Comments focused around:

- A need for new social housing builds for local residents.
- Concerns that older homes are below standard with issues such as dampness prevalent in many buildings.
- The continuous increase in rents.
- Difficulties that young people have getting onto the property ladder plus the large deposits that are needed.
- Problems with limited housing options mean women suffering domestic abuse may have to move out of the area in order to gain accommodation. This may lead to social isolation and has the potential to push them back to abusive partners.

“If you are young, on a limited income and paying extortionate rent, how do you even begin to think about owning your own home? It’s impossible.”

Violence Against Women and Children

Despite the increased publicity around sexual harassment following the #MeToo Movement, this behaviour still continues. Violence against women and children continues still goes on.

Topics covered included:

- Worries if issues around consent are being communicated effectively enough to young women.
- The ongoing threat of workplace harassment leaving many women feeling threatened in their job or limited for promotion if they do not submit to such behaviours.
- The need for men to be educated about issues from a young age regarding consent and communication.
- Women continue to be blamed for men’s sexual assaults and harassment.
- Fears on the mental health impact that the pressure placed on women to act in a certain way brings.

“Women have to be careful and think ahead, it’s a huge symbol of inequality.”

“We need the confidence as women to be able to say no. You feel threatened. Many are taken advantage of.”

“Blame is always placed on the women, it’s always women’s fault. It’s all about men with power.”

Health

There was much praise around local health centres and initiatives in the Maryhill area. There is still difficulties, however, in accessing treatment and appointments due to lengthy waiting times for procedures.

Comments from women included:

- Positive recognition that medical research centred around women's issues such as the menopause is finally being recognised.
- The continuing stigma around period poverty. The positive developments in Scotland, however, were noted and welcomed.
- Social isolation and its effect on communities. This was seen as a particular problem for older women and single mothers.
- Worries over what the impact of Brexit will be on the NHS in terms of medicine shortages and staff resources.

"If you want a preventative health strategy it can't just be the health department, it has to encompass everything."

"People cannot wake up 24/7 with those terrible feelings you get from mental health and not feel the need to do something."

Drug Use

Much of the discussions at the event centred around increasing drug use and addiction. Solutions need to be adapted to recognise the inequalities within society and ensure people are afforded opportunities and not just stereotyped.

Women discussed:

- The idea that the current systematic procedures in place are quick fix solutions which make for very little real change.
- A lack of focus at present on commercially exploited women through the drugs trade.
- The increase in "designer" drug use for many people where the danger cannot be controlled.
- A need to look at the success of models implemented in countries such as Portugal when dealing with this issue.
- More focus needs to be given to long term solutions around drugs rather than seeing them within the scope of a five year electoral cycle for politicians and policy makers.
- A need for political parties to have a fixed policy concerning drug treatment which focuses on health rather than criminal justice.

"It's poverty that is the problem. We need a huge change in public policy."

"It's awful when people use words like 'junkie' - that's someone's child."

"We need to save our young people from dying."

"If you are at a low point and offered drugs of course you will take them."

Transport

Transport is seen as a major issue within the community. The cost of public transport excludes many from going to places and accessing services. The closest Job Centre to the Maryhill area is situated forty minutes away by public transport. Transport costs are not refunded.

Women noted:

- The benefits of the National Concessionary Card Scheme. Not only do these provide solutions for social isolation, but also help environmental causes.
- The need for joined up approaches to transport that take into account social security, employment opportunities and health.
- The rerouting of crucial bus services is a real cause for concern. Buses that used to provide access to local amenities for older citizens and those with mobility issues have changed.
- A lack of transport in the evening with lengthy waits between buses during later hours for women.

“If transport was free, everybody would use it and people would take their children places. Public transport used to be a public service.”

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

- An increase in local shops and healthy food provision rather than bigger supermarkets who have a monopoly on the area.
- Improvements in transport led by public consultation.
- An increase in help for those having to deal with social security and delays to Universal Credit.
- More education on the plight of refugees.
- More affordable community based services for local residents and awareness raising of engagement events with the community.

These findings will be used to feed into a wider Glasgow Area Report concerning issues for women at both a local and national level. The Scottish Women’s Convention would like to give warm thanks to women who participated in the engagement process.

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.

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