



Programme for Government

· WOMEN'S VOICES ·
· REPRESENTED ·

THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CONVENTION
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Introduction

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded by the Scottish Government to consult with as wide a range of women as possible. We gather lived experiences and feed them into the policy making process, pushing for equality to be at the heart of the political and legislative agendas.

We are committed to truly representing the broad range of women's experiences across Scotland. By engaging with women from different backgrounds, our aim is to raise the voices of underrepresented women and ensure their perspectives are taken into consideration.

Over the past year, the SWC has made numerous contributions to Scottish Government consultations and calls for evidence. We are pleased that several of our recommendations have been taken on board in this year's Programme for Government, but there are still many women's experiences that are not reflected in current policy.

This document provides an overview of the key pledges set out in the Scottish Government's 2021-2022 Programme for Government alongside women's views, highlighting the real impact on women's and our fight for equality.





Foreword: Agnes Tolmie, SWC Chair

At the SWC, we have continued working throughout the pandemic to gather women's voices and ensure they are always key to decision-making processes. As an organisation, we pride ourselves on working directly with women to represent their experiences, particularly those who are so often overlooked.

These are the ones who stand to lose the most, and who policymakers and politicians desperately need to understand.

More than anything, the pandemic has highlighted the inequalities that already existed within our society. Women have been disproportionately impacted economically and socially, which shows just how precarious and discriminatory our safety nets are. There is much uncertainty about what is still to come, but one thing we are sure of is that women must be at the heart of recovery as tackling systemic inequality cannot be put off any longer.

I would like to thank all the women who have trusted us to share their experiences and voices, especially while we have been unable to meet in person. The SWC will continue to do all we can to increase representation for women and work towards decision-making processes at all levels that truly reflect the make-up of women in Scotland and their lived experiences.

Health & Care

Women make up the vast majority of workers in the social care sector and take on the bulk of unpaid caring responsibilities for children, relatives, and other people within their communities. However, their contributions to society are grossly undervalued, and their own health needs are often overlooked or disregarded.

Health



Programme for Government:

- Increase frontline health spending by 20% and primary care funding by 25% over this Parliament.
- An NHS Recovery Plan to invest £29 million into procedures that were delayed by the pandemic.
- Invest £10 billion over the next decade to replace and refurbish Scotland's health facilities, including a new network of National Treatment Centres for elective care.
- An £8 million support package for health and social care workers' mental health.
- Increase direct mental health investment by at least 25% over this Parliament.
- Tackle the drugs death emergency by investing £250 million over this Parliament.

Health



What women told the SWC:

Women are concerned about capacity and lack of co-ordination across services.

“The services are already overwhelmed and they’re just going to be even more overwhelmed in the future.”

“Being passed around between different people may exacerbate someone’s problems, keep having to tell their story again and again to access services they need.”

“We are silent on the issue of postcode inequalities. We know there are people in some areas who do not have any facilities.”

“You’re passed from pillar to post and, out of sheer frustration, people just hang up.”

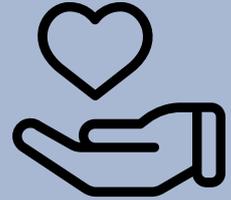
The Government pays lip-service to health workers, but what they actually need is to be paid a better wage.

“The infrastructure of the buildings is important, but so is the infrastructure of the NHS staff. To create that change, you need to pay people what they’re worth.”

Women face many additional barriers in accessing healthcare and this must be addressed.

“Women experience medical gaslighting as a matter of course. It is a fight to be believed and get the right diagnosis, often for years or even decades.”

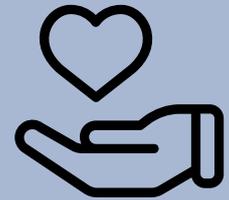
Care



Programme for Government:

- Bring forward legislation to establish the new National Care Service.
- Increase investment in social care by at least 25% over this Parliament.
- Bring Free Personal Nursing Care rates in line with the National Care Home Contract.
- Provide additional funding to enhance breaks for unpaid carers.
- Allocating half of all frontline health spend to community health services, ensuring people get care in a way that best suits them.
- Make an extra payment of Carer's Allowance Supplement this year and launch the new Scottish Carer's Assistance.

Care



What women told the SWC:

**A National Care Service should take marketisation away from the care of people.
Care should be people-centred, not about money.**

“ We cannot talk about care without listening to the people that use these services. They have an important role in sharing the way they experience care and having their voices heard. We must stand alongside these people. ”

“ I care for others and do voluntary work as well as being someone who has received care. When you're in that position, your vulnerability is exposed, your voice is minimised, and your opinions are no longer important. When I'm ill, I'm not heard. ”

Women should be valued for their unpaid caring responsibilities to those in their family & community, including children, grandchildren, parents, friends and neighbours.

“ Older women have been left to pick up the pieces where services fail, and they're not looking after themselves. It's an absolute mess and it has to be addressed. ”

“ When I look at home carers, I see people who prop up so many families, often with complex needs, and they keep these families strong and secure. We need to start thinking about care as part of the economic recovery. ”

Jobs & Social Security.

We know that women have been hit hardest by the pandemic in terms of job losses and loss of income. Women are more likely to be in lower-paid precarious jobs, and single mothers in particular are more likely to be experiencing in-work poverty. To reconcile these inequalities, women's lived experiences need to be central to the design of social security.

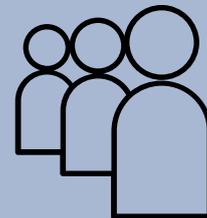
Jobs



Programme for Government:

- Pilot a 4-day working week, supported by a £10 million fund for participating companies.
- Make payment of the real living wage to all employees a condition of public sector grants by summer 2022.
- Invest an additional £500 million for green jobs of the future – including £20 million through the National Transition Training Fund, and up to a further £20 million for those affected by long term unemployment, this year.
- Make up for the opportunities lost to young people during the pandemic with a Young Person’s Guarantee, providing at least 24,000 new and enhanced opportunities.
- Launch the £20 million Rural Entrepreneur Fund, providing grants to support the rural economy by relocating or creating 2000 new businesses.

Jobs



What women told the SWC:

“ In Scotland, a lot of people just don't trust that their job's not just going to be taken away from them like it was in the past when areas of shipbuilding or car manufacturing just went with no thought for the people losing their jobs. People have been used to getting let down.”

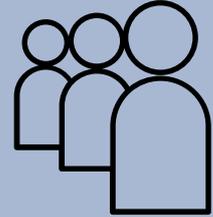
“ Green jobs are still dominated by men and we need more opportunities and feasible pathways into these jobs for women.”

“ When young people leave university and there are no jobs, the pressure is still on their parents. Our children are still our children, so we support them, but how can we afford to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table?”

Shifts towards flexible working have been beneficial for women, especially disabled women and mothers who have faced barriers to conventional workplaces.

“ However, we need to consider the impacts of homeworking on women living with domestic abuse and insure we are not regressing to confining women to the home.”

Social Security



Programme for Government:

- Begin work on a Minimum Income Guarantee.
- Provide immediate support to children and young people through Scottish Child Payment bridging payments of £520 in both 2021 and 2022.
- Extend the Scottish Child Payment to children under 16 by the end of 2022 and double it to £20 per week per child as quickly as possible thereafter.
- Deliver a package of support to tackle the cost of the school day, including providing digital devices, free school trips, and expanding free school meals.
- Build a system of wraparound school age childcare, offering care before and after school and in the holidays, which will be free to families on the lowest incomes.
- Work to expand funded early learning and childcare for children aged 1 and 2, starting with low-income households within this Parliament.

Social Security



What women told the SWC:

While many women will benefit from efforts to tackle child poverty, there are concerns that other groups of underrepresented women will continue to lose out.

I feel that older people are often forgotten... I think they hope we die before we are due any money. They know we are likely to try and get on with it due to our pride, and I think they bank on that, so we do not claim benefits.

Able bodied people see disabled people as an inconvenience at times and we have to shout so hard to have our needs met.

When I ask for things, I'm either the wrong age group, or because I'm not a single parent and I've not got kids, it rules me out and I can't get benefits. I'm very much in the middle of not being able to access a lot of things.

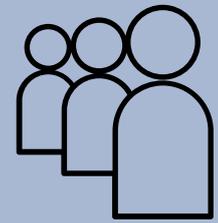
More needs to be done to tackle the stigma around social security, and UBI could help.

There is a stigma attached that you are claiming something which you are not entitled to and that they will come and take it off you at any time even though you are entitled to it. All the negativity makes you feel like a scrounger and puts you off applying.

There isn't that stigma of people who are unworthy with UBI.

I would like UBI because it sets a better baseline for human rights. We have the right not to starve. We have the right not to be destitute. For women specifically it would mean greater freedom to leave abusers and to leave jobs where there is sexual harassment.

Social Security



What women told the SWC:

We need to end means testing and exclusions if we genuinely want to end child poverty.

“ The Scottish Child Payment and the travel pass are not available to children from families with no recourse to public funds... The women who are excluded from support for their children are the ones that bear the brunt. The Scottish Government has the power to make a new benefit and it is not good enough. ”

“ Giving somebody a one-off child payment, yes it helps in the short-term, but we've got to look more holistically at getting people out of poverty. ”

“ There has been a real stigma against parents for years, especially single parents. Lots of personal questions are asked. ”

“ It should be for all, not just those on the lowest income. Some women have several children; it would be a shame if they didn't get money for them. ”

“ A lot of grandparents give up work so their children can keep working. We need to look at childcare more broadly and supporting whoever is taking on childcare. ”

Climate Change

With the COP26 conference taking place in Glasgow this November, climate change is an incredibly pertinent issue.

However, the gendered nature of this topic is often overlooked. Women are more likely to experience the negative effects of climate change, yet we are still not being given enough representation in decision-making processes

Climate Change

Programme for Government:



- Play our part to support a world-changing deal at COP26 in Glasgow.
- Build a net zero economy that is fair for all, publishing Just Transition plans for every sector and region.
- Invest at least £1.8 billion over this Parliament in converting homes and buildings to low or zero emission heating.
- Make offshore wind central to the delivery of emissions reduction targets.
- Introduce a Natural Environment Bill, putting in place key legislative changes and statutory targets to restore and protect nature.
- Publish plans by Summer 2022 for making at least three Carbon Neutral Islands by 2040, creating jobs and protecting our island environments.

Climate Change



What women told the SWC:

Women felt that they are underrepresented in climate decision-making, and very few knew of any women that were attending COP26.

“If you don’t see yourself represented in something as big as that, you’re not going to feel engaged.”

Women are already seeing the impacts of climate change in Scotland and want action.

“I live on the north coast, and I can see there are so many fewer seabirds, whales and dolphins going past, definitely.”

“The term ‘climate change’ implies that it’s the climate that is changing... I would be calling it an irreversible, manmade climate emergency.”

“I’m a bit scared, I’m a lot scared actually... we really need to take action now.”

Climate Change



What Women told the SWC:

Many are already making lifestyle changes, support extending the environmental agenda, and have ideas for how the Government can do more. One suggestion was if you want to sustain an interest, people will have to be incentivised to do it. They have to see it is of benefit to them.

“ I think it would be a wonderful idea if in every school there was a particular person who has a lot of knowledge about what’s happening with the climate, and that they have a brief to do outreach with parents. ”

“ I’m sure one step in countering climate change can be encouraging creating green spaces among more built up communities. ”

“ There are so many holiday houses, and they don’t have recycling bins. The visitors want to use them and do the recycling, but the people who own the holiday houses don’t care and don’t supply it. ”

“ Wind farms are definitely not spoiling the landscape. We definitely need it, and we need to embrace it. ”

“ I think trying to work more collaboratively & putting all those expertise together to tackle the climate emergency together, and reminding people that everybody has a role to play no matter what sector they’re in. ”

“ That’s where the government needs to step up, in making things affordable. They need to make it the default, so people aren’t having to actively try to be greener. There need to be laws in place... and it needs to be built into our everyday lives. ”

Infrastructure

Many women are denied opportunities in our society because of digital exclusion, expensive public transport and a lack of affordable housing. Basic systems need to be accessible to all, but real investment is required to empower women at the heart of our communities all across Scotland.

Transport

Programme for Government:



- A green transport revolution - removing most diesel buses from public transport by the end of 2023, reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030, decarbonising Scotland's railways by 2035, and phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030.
- Provide nationwide free bus travel for people under 22 from 31 January 2022.
- Bring ScotRail services into the public ownership.
- Provide more active travel opportunities, reducing emissions and keeping people healthy – and increasing spending on active travel in 2024 25 to at least £320m or 10% of the total transport budget. In our first 100 days we've already established 12-month pilot projects to deliver free bikes to school-age children who cannot afford them to inform how we roll the scheme out nationally.

Transport



What Women told the SWC:

The ways women travel and use public transport need to be better reflected in policy.

“ A lot of the housing schemes they’re building now are just houses. If we were building more communities where there were shops and schools and amenities, there would not be a need for so much transport. ”

“ In Finland, they stopped putting money into roads and started putting money into pavements... Women use pavements more as they tend to walk places, going the shops or taking the kids to school, rather than taking the car. They saved millions with this approach, so we need to think about how women move within communities. ”

“ I think transport should be in the public’s hands. We’ve now got free transport for under 21s, but why not for mothers and children? ”

“ I am disabled so rely on my car. But before COVID, I had a travel card so that I could go all over Scotland with a carer. I just think maybe slowly it could be expanded so that everyone could get lower cost transport. ”

“ It is expensive if you look at a family going out, for an all-day pass for all of them it is expensive so you can understand why they would rather go out in the car. ”

Housing



Programme for Government:

- Deliver 110,000 affordable homes across Scotland by 2032, with at least 70% in the social rented sector and 10% in our remote, rural and island communities.
- Invest an additional £50 million to tackle homelessness.
- Improve standards and rights across all housing tenures, publishing a new Rented Sector Strategy by the end of the year and bringing forward legislation to implement an effective system of rent controls before the end of this Parliament.
- Develop 20-minute neighbourhoods and invest in town centres.
- £325 million Place Based Investment Programme, supporting community led regeneration.

Housing



What women told the SWC:

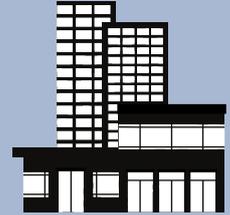
“ Why should all the experimentation on what might work, with heating systems or fabric first, be done on the people in social housing who can least afford for something to go wrong? It’s very expensive because it’s experimental, so why should the people on low incomes who pay rents have to be the ones who basically pilot this. It’s unfair. ”

“ Ending homelessness in Scotland isn’t just about people who have homelessness rights, it’s about everybody in Scotland. ”

“ Access to housing is a human rights issue but are we having a human approach to this? What is the level of engagement with women who have lived experiences of homelessness, finding out what’s important to them and what can help them? ”

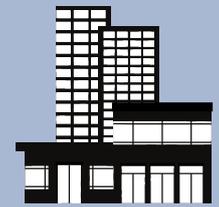
Infrastructure

Programme for Government:



- Tackle the digital divide by improving access to superfast broadband and bringing 4G to rural and island communities and extending the Connecting Scotland programme to get 300,000 households online by March 2026.
- Invest over £33 billion over the course of this Parliament in the National Infrastructure Mission, including £1 billion in the Scottish National Investment Bank.
- £10 million to tackle isolation and loneliness over this parliamentary term.
- Take forward a Community Wealth Building Bill in this Parliament, helping create and protect jobs and enabling greater community and third sector ownership of assets.
- Provide a one-off fund of up to £1.25 million to help libraries re open and stay open, particularly in areas of deprivation.

Infrastructure



What women told the SWC:

Many older women in particular are suffering from isolation and loneliness and want more to be done to rebuild supportive and empowered communities.

“There are some really strong, active women who are now scared to go back out there, and it’s quite worrying that they’ve basically just been ignored and left behind.”

“I still feel down because I’m not able to do the things I always did. I’d been used to going out and making a life for myself, but now that’s gone.”

“This is the worst crisis since the Second World War. There was the blitz spirit then, but community seems to have been missing this time round.”

Digital exclusion is also having a huge effect on many women’s quality of life.

“Banks and post offices have been closing down and people are being forced to do things digitally. This loss of control and contact has a huge impact on mental health.”

“You get referred round the circle back into the web and, if you don’t have the digital skills, it’s a problem. You’re dealing with people you can’t reach. It’s very frustrating.”

Equalities & Human Rights

Women are not valued equally with men in Scotland. Many policies impact women differently, and disabled women, BAME women and LGBTQ+ women face yet further discrimination. There needs to be a commitment to challenging this

Equalities & Human Rights



Programme for Government:

- Advance legislative protections for people experiencing domestic abuse.
- £100 million over three years to support frontline services tackling violence against women and girls from school age onward.
- Ensure Scotland is a global leader in human rights through a new Human Rights Bill, incorporating four UN human rights treaties into Scots Law.
- Transform the way in which justice services are delivered, putting the voices of victims and a trauma-informed approach at the heart of Scottish justice.
- Bring forward the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill within the next year.

Equalities & Human Rights



What women told the SWC:

Women are frustrated that their input on equalities issues is often ignored, and believe more proactive engagement and dialogue with communities is needed to bring about real change.

“ Women have been asked, women have spoken out, they have shared their experiences about what they are facing, but I think the government has not listened, or maybe they have, but they have not responded in the way they need to. ”

“ Men are such experts on lots of things, and even when they're not experts, they are still so confident to talk rubbish. I know this is a generalisation, but it seems to me that women are better at conversations... You can't join in with somebody lecturing you. ”

“ If you can get community leaders on board, they are like gatekeepers. If we can get the message to them, then they will take the message to their communities. ”

“ [The Government] has taken so much information from us, but then they lose it or abandon it. My community is tired of doing consultations and it is time we held them accountable. There's no point asking somebody something if you're not going to take action about it. All the women are fed up. ”

Equalities & Human Rights



What women told the SWC:

Tackling inequality must be at the forefront of any recovery plan after the pandemic.

“ It’s about getting the Government to stop looking at everything in silos. There are so many systemic reasons why people are in poverty, and we need to look at how those pieces all fit together. ”

“ When we have a commitment to social justice, it is not just something we can switch off because of the pandemic. Many fights we had on our hands prior to COVID-19 are even more pressing now. ”

Equalities & Human Rights



What women told the SWC:

Tackling inequality There must be a cultural shift to address the endemic violence against women and girls.

“This is a universal thing. Show me a woman who hasn't been through that in some shape or form at some point in their life.”

“We need to look at the education of both sexes, to have respect and to not think they have to dominate.”

“We have got to a point where we are switching off from it because it's so normalised. It's not something that should be up for debate, because ultimately, living free from harassment is a fundamental human right.”

“How do we stop the process of reporting being more traumatising than what you've been through?”

International Policy



Programme for Government:

- Increase the International Development Fund from £10 million to £15 million.
- Continue to support our African partner countries with their response to COVID-19, including vital PPE through the NHS Scotland Global Citizenship Programme.
- Sustain the £1 million per year Humanitarian Emergency Fund, which this year includes funding to provide lifesaving assistance for the crisis in Afghanistan.
- Prepare to give the people of Scotland a fully informed choice on independence.

International Policy



What women told the SWC:

More should be done to support migrant and refugee women in Scotland.

“There is still a lot of stigma in the way we talk about asylum seekers and there is a lack of cultural understanding as to why women might be acting a certain way.”

“Destitution is a real problem that affects everyone with no recourse to public funds.”

Women are also worried about trafficking and the exploitation of migrant women, especially since their position has become so much more precarious after Brexit.

Thank you

Thank-you to all the women who have taken part in our discussions over the last year. The SWC will continue to represent women's voices in the policy-making process and hold the Scottish Government to account in relation to women's equality over the coming year.



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