



*The Scottish Women's
Convention*

*Scottish Parliament
Elections 2021*

What Women Want

Housing

Ensuring safe accommodation for women that accounts for their unique personal experiences is of the utmost priority. Recognition of the challenges faced by women in accessing housing must be a key policy pledge of the next Scottish Government.

- An increase in funding for women to access help for housing costs, including the Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Accounting for issues such as Council Tax and rent arrears for women who have suffered financial abuse.
- Strategies that make use of existing housing stock, empty homes and buildings.
- Easier and more accessible processes for tenants to appeal rent rises within the private rented sector.
- Expansion of women focused services with an emphasis on housing support.
- Work to tackle the health inequalities faced by homeless women with complex needs, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increased funding and resources for homeless organisations for women.

Childcare

Moving away from a one size fits all approach for the delivery of successful childcare is crucial to women's equality. This should be accounted for within the ongoing expansion of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) with an emphasis on local knowledge and lived experience.

- A commitment to high-quality working conditions for staff within the childcare sector, including working benefits, recognition of trade union representation and collective bargaining that adheres to Fair Work Principles.
- Actively promoting adaptability and flexibility for childcare in collaboration with women's working and educational needs, particularly for lone parents.
- Joined up approaches to children's wellbeing with particular regards to socio-economic inequalities, Additional Support Needs and poverty-related issues such as food accessibility and dietary requirements.

Social Security

Cuts to social security assistance at a reserved level have led to further increases in poverty and inequality for women. The new Scottish Social Security System must aim to ensure women and their families do not face further hardship and works to promote equality.

- All new forms of assistance brought in through the Scottish Government to account for women's inequality in the design and implementation of new benefits.
- Enshrining the human right to food into Scots law.
- Placing emphasis on the need for greater food security for many families living in poverty, including a commitment to universal strategies such as free school meals.
- Social security responses to account for the cost of living as well as inflationary and employment issues with appropriate safeguards in place for those at high risk of poverty.
- A commitment to evaluating the use of Universal Basic Income as a means of bolstering the economy post-lockdown and the equality impact of this.
- Increased funding for advocacy organisations to ensure women are aware of their rights around the social security appeals process and other financial issues.
- Prioritising the roll out of future assistance for those most in need to make sure access is available as soon as possible.

Environment

Women have continued to vocalise the pressing importance of focusing on climate strategies as a major pledge of any new government. This should foster in-depth consultation with women's own expertise in relation to their communities and climate change.

- The incorporation of women's voices into climate change policies to ensure all new legislation does not have unintended consequences for women's inequality.
- A further emphasis on community driven work that incorporates local organisations into planning for net-zero emissions to provide the most effective action plans at a local level.
- Recognition of the gendered impact of climate change, ensuring planning and subsequent recommendations are both green and recognised as opportunities for equality.

Health

Ensuring high quality physical and mental health treatment which recognises the personalised experiences of women is key for positive health outcomes. This is crucial for equality regarding women's own health and reproductive rights.

- Encouraging uptake and recruitment of Community Link Workers.
- Increasing the use of community hubs in less populated areas where women can go to access information and support around health.
- Improved access to language interpreters for women where English is not a first language.
- A commitment to increase awareness of women's reproductive health from menstruation to menopause.
- Further publicity around mental health issues and where to access support, including a focus on preventative and early intervention solutions for women.
- A commitment to the continued use of early medical abortion at home where this is clinically appropriate.
- Accessible treatment for those with addiction that encompasses all issues, including mental health and adverse childhood experiences.
- Targeted strategies and responses to heightened forms of social isolation within communities.

Employment

Whilst recognising that employment is a reserved matter, any future Scottish Government should use all the levers it possesses to work with employers within Scotland, including the Fair Work Framework, to acknowledge women's working rights.

- A commitment to work with businesses and trade unions to further promote the real living wage across all sectors.
- Designated return to work and retraining programmes that account for all age groups, including older women and digital skills abilities.
- A digital skills drive that focuses on the pandemic's impact on those with little or no access to technology during the current lockdown.
- A wider range of bursaries and scholarship options for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to be able to study long term career goals.
- Additional educational funding for careers advisors in schools.
- Increased awareness and targeted funding for the under-representation of women in specific sectors, including STEM and construction.

Social Care

Social care in Scotland has been undervalued for far too long. Of the 200, 000 people who work in social care, women make up 85% of this number. These women have been at the frontline throughout the pandemic, continuing to do their jobs under immense pressure and risk.

- Greater value placed financially and as a society on the social care sector. This includes recognising the labour that is undertaken by workers within this profession.
- Increased guidance around Self Directed Support, including providing training for those employed through this form of assistance.
- Engagement with the wider social care workforce, including BAEM workers, to understand their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic in social care.
- A commitment to review the ways in which minoritised communities' access social care services and the barriers that may be in place to this.
- Greater protection of social care worker's rights and sick pay through the Fair Work Framework.

End Violence against Women & Girls

One of the major areas that women feel must be tackled as a priority is Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). It is imperative that any future government works to implement effective preventative measures to combat this pressing issue alongside stringent safeguards for women affected by this violence in whatever form it takes..

- Assurance that community-based initiatives can continue to provide support for women's services, including Violence Against Women organisations.
- A commitment that national policies cover both physical and non-physical points of domestic abuse to publicise the widespread form this violence can take.
- Further support for women with no recourse to public funds experiencing domestic abuse.
- Increased funding for financial redress for victims of domestic violence including monetary grants that may help women in such situations.
- Increased funding for the legal aid system to address women's lack of financial means where they currently do not qualify for legal help.

The Scottish Women's Convention

Thank You

Thank you to all the women who shared their views with the SWC and contributed to our work.

SWC CONTACT DETAILS

**2nd Floor, The Albany Centre
44 Ashley Street, Glasgow
G3 6DS**

Tel: 0141 339 4797

Please note our staff are working from home in current circumstances.

www.scottishwomensconvention.org

Facebook, Instagram & Twitter: @SWCWomen

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