

# Annual Update 2024



***The Scottish Women's Convention***

# ABOUT SWC

## OUR MAIN OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- Consult with women and use their voices as part of the engagement process.
- Ensure all policy and decision-making authorities take women's equality into account.
- Recognise and highlight the potential impacts policies have on women.
- Promote the needs of different groups of women.
- Actively pursue solutions which look to achieve equality for women.

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It has been a busy year for the SWC Team, with our key focus to reach as many women as possible across the country through our Conferences, Roadshows and Roundtables. These activities have highlighted the continued need for women's voices to permeate throughout government decision-making.

Women's stories have exemplified the lived realities of poverty, healthcare inequalities and the continued disparate experiences of working mothers across employment. Despite these enduring inequities, we are continually reassured by the women we meet that the future of Scotland's communities is secured, through women's hard work and commitment.

The SWC Team look forward to the upcoming year, to engage with women and ensure that their voices are included across decision-making processes.

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Agnes Tolmie, SWC Chair



## SWC BOARD

Agnes Tolmie, Chair  
Suzanne Conlin  
Sarah Cumming  
Patricia Donnelly  
Mary Ewen  
Margaret Lance  
Girijamba Polubothu  
Caroline Thomson



## SWC TEAM

Susan McKellar  
Manager  
Jenna McGhie  
Events & Policy Advisor  
Eilidh Young  
Policy & Events Advisor

# OUR VOLUNTEERS

The work of the SWC would not be possible without the continued support and engagement from our wonderful volunteers. Our volunteer network is made up of 17 women from a wide range of ages and diverse backgrounds bringing together a variety of perspectives and experiences, that continually strengthen the SWC.

Throughout the year, we have carried out engagement sessions with our volunteers and on the 19th of July we held our annual Volunteer Day. The purpose of this event was to ensure that all volunteers had the knowledge and skills needed to effectively contribute during SWC events. Volunteers were also provided with an opportunity to socialise and connect with fellow volunteers, SWC Board and staff. The SWC will continue to support our volunteers, acknowledging the key role they play in activities and we thank them for their invaluable assistance.

**"I feel very welcome, heard and acknowledged as a volunteer. I enjoy it very much"**

**"...it is a fantastic bunch of women and I love being at conferences to gain more knowledge and understanding. It's great to engage with women from all around."**

**"It was a fantastic day. I felt so valued and important to the SWC."**

**"Volunteer Sessions are a great addition to the schedule allowing all volunteers to meet, renew their commitment and get updates."**



**If you are interested in becoming involved in our volunteer network, please get in touch at [info@scottishwomensconvention.org](mailto:info@scottishwomensconvention.org)**



# CONFERENCES

Over the year we have hosted multiple conferences on a range of subjects. These areas of interest were selected to align with the wants of women in Scotland, with a focus on direct impact and lived experience.

## What Should Childcare Look Like in Scotland?

In February 2024, we hosted a conference focusing on women's experiences of childcare in Scotland, where women heard from expert speakers. We hoped that this event would unveil new strategies to improve childcare provision across the country, with women stating that they wanted increased availability and reduced costs.

**"Always great information, and very good speakers."**

**"The feedback...during the Q&A was very insightful...I felt I could empathise with what they were saying and didn't feel alone."**

## How Can We Make Transport Work for Women in Scotland?

Poor transport has been raised as a considerable barrier to women's societal participation. To understand this issue in more detail, we held a conference in May, which asked attendees to consider what they would like to see change with regards to Scottish transport infrastructure. Those who attended explained that they would like reduced transport costs and improved accessibility.

## Women's Mental Health: Improving Experiences in Scotland

Women's mental health has continued to worsen in recent years, with isolation and anxiety levels increasing. The SWC carried out a conference which aimed to understand this growing issue, as well as what women would like to see change across mental healthcare provision in Scotland. Key themes arose as a result of discussions, such as the need for community resources and third sector funding.

## Impact of Poverty on Women

We know that women are disproportionately impacted by poverty in Scotland. As a result, the SWC carried out a project which aimed to encapsulate the impact of poverty on women. The project included a conference event, where attendees heard from expert speakers and took part in roundtable activities focusing on child poverty, food insecurity and health inequalities.

**"I like the semi-formal friendly atmosphere of the SWC...We need the warmth of women in all spheres of society and governance."**

**"Thank you for continuing to provide a safe platform for women...to respectfully discuss issues and be heard."**

**"SWC events are always inspiring and women centred. Great conference!"**

To read the above conference reports please scan here:

The Scottish Women's Convention



# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2024

On Saturday the 2nd of March, the SWC held their annual International Women's Day celebration at the Scottish Parliament. The event was chaired by Presiding Officer, Alison Johnstone, MSP, and the theme for the day was Inspiring Inclusion Through Human Rights: Women's Rights are Human Rights. Attendees heard from a range of speakers who highlighted why human rights are integral to the development of equality in Scotland.



## Speakers

**Shona Robison, MSP**

Former Deputy First Minister

**Mary Osei-Oppong,**

Chair- African Caribbean Women's Association

**Laura Boyd,**

STV Presenter

**Jesimiel Rivas,**

Drumchapel High School Pupil

**Julia Mattes,**

Our Lady's High School Pupil

**Maisie De Pellette,**

Our Lady's High School Pupil

As part of our celebration, we also carried out a competition asking participants to create a poem centred around the importance of human rights to women's equality. The winners were given the opportunity to read their poem aloud in the Chamber of Parliament and were presented with a printed copy at their school awards ceremony.

**Thank you to everyone who participated in our fantastic celebration of women.**

# ROADSHOWS & ROUNDTABLES

The SWC carry out Roadshows across the length and breadth of Scotland, aiming to gather the lived experience of women. We have heard of many issues, such as healthcare disparities, unequal access to transport and low housing availability.

To find out more about what women said at any of the locations we visited, check out our summary reports on our website or ask for a physical copy by phoning us at 0141 339 4749.

Isle of Skye

Wick

Inverness

Kyle of Lochalsh

Dundee

Dumfries

Alongside our Roadshows, the SWC Team have carried out multiple online Roundtables and Blethers on a range of subjects. Much of this work culminated in our Women's Priorities for 2024/25 document, providing insight into women's experiences.

See our website or contact us for more details.



To read the above Roadshow reports please scan here:

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# CONSULTATIONS

## Scottish Government

Democracy Matters

Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020

Ending Conversion Practices in Scotland

Islands Connectivity Plan: Strategic Approach and Vessels and Ports Plan

Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill

National Performance Framework – Inquiry into Proposed Outcomes

National Specification for the Care and Treatment of Eating Disorders in Scotland

New Model of Neonatal Intensive Care

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey Questionnaire Development

## Scottish Parliament

Housing (Scotland) Bill

National Care Service Bill (Stage 2)

Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

Social Security (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill – Your Views

Proposed Prostitution (Offences and Support) (Scotland) Bill

## UK Government

Drug Prevention Policies & Landscape Across the UK

Pornography Regulation, Legislation & Enforcement

Making Work Pay: Strengthening Statutory Sick Pay

## Other Organisations

GREVIO – Civil Society Consolidated Shadow Report to the Council of Europe

Low Pay Commission - National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage Rates for 2025

NHS Scotland – NHS Waiting Times Guidance: Equality Impact Assessment

Scottish Sentencing Council – Rape Offences

Alongside government consultations, the SWC Team have provided evidence across multiple Scottish Parliamentary Cross-Party Groups including:

- Commercial Sexual Exploitation
  - Human Trafficking
  - Islands
- Men's Violence Against Women and Children
  - Poverty
  - WASPI
- Wellbeing Economy
- Women's Health

The SWC also provide their expertise at the Mental Health Equalities and Human Rights Forum and to the National Alliance of Women's Organisations.

To read our consultation responses please scan here:

The Scottish Women's Convention







**Thank you to our wonderful volunteers, supporters, and the many women we have spoken to throughout the year. Your contribution to the SWC is invaluable and helps us work towards an equal Scotland.**

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