

The Scottish Women's Convention

2025

ANNUAL UPDATE



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.

Agnes Tolmie, SWC Chair:

"I am proud to reflect on another year of meaningful engagement, advocacy and action. This year, we continued to evolve in the way we engage with women across Scotland, embracing new and innovative approaches to remove barriers and ensure more women can participate.

Our roadshows have taken us into communities; our conferences have featured powerful contributions from expert speakers representing marginalised groups, and our roundtables have deepened our understanding of multiple issues.

Earlier this year, the SWC shared the sad news of the sudden passing of our valued Board Member, Margaret Lance. A passionate advocate for women's rights, Margaret's unwavering positivity and dedication inspired hope for a more equitable future. Her loss is deeply felt by all of us, and she is greatly missed.

As we move forward, our focus remains clear: to represent and empower women from all backgrounds, ensuring their voices continue to shape Scotland's future."

SWC BOARD

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

SWC TEAM

Susan McKellar
Manager
Jenna McGhie
Events & Policy Advisor
Eileen Cawley
Policy & Events Advisor
Sophie Bradley-Elliott
Policy Support Advisor
Eilidh Young (left Sept)
Policy & Events Advisor

Women's Priorities

Annual Update
2025

This report brings together the voices and priorities of women across Scotland, shaped by lived experience and motivated by the release of the Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2025–26. To inform this analysis, the Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) conducted a national online survey and a series of targeted roundtable discussions, engaging women from a wide range of backgrounds and communities.

Through this engagement, six key themes emerged as areas of particular importance: **Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Justice, and Social Care**. The conversations provided rich insight into the challenges women face and the changes they want to see in public policy and service delivery.

The findings presented are grounded in real experiences and offer a clear direction for shaping a more inclusive and responsive Programme for Government.

Education

Strengthen support for children, through improved Additional Support Need provision and free school meals, while reintroducing practical life skills into the curriculum.

Employment

Prioritise childcare and flexible working conditions to remove key barriers preventing women from entering and remaining in work.

Health

Improve access to primary care and invest in research to better address women's health conditions.

Housing

Expand the availability of affordable social housing for rent and purchase, to combat housing insecurity among women and children.

Justice

Reform sentencing practices and strengthen the justice system's response to violence against women and girls.

Social Care

Enhance working conditions and pay for social care staff, to ensure the sector is valued and sustainable.



Conferences

Annual Update
2025

Over the year we have hosted conferences on a range of topics. Subjects were selected to align with the interests of women, incorporating lived experience.

Misogyny in Education

In January 2025, we aimed to understand the experiences of women and girls within Scottish education. This focused on rising reports of misogynistic behaviour towards educators and pupils, finding that this was a growing issue. Women called for improved learning about harmful gender stereotypes and better support for teachers.

Your Maternity Journey, Your Voice: Women's Experiences in Scotland

After multiple SWC Roadshows clearly highlighting a changing maternity care landscape in Scotland, we carried out a piece of work to understand women's experiences. This followed women from antenatal to postnatal care, with women reporting a lack of person-centred care. Ethnic minority women faced additional barriers to good quality care and it was generally reported that healthcare staff required significant resourcing.

Understanding the Prostitution Bill

This conference aimed to explore proposed legislation to criminalise the purchase of sex. It provided a platform for women to share their views, engage in roundtable discussions, and hear from expert speakers on prostitution as a form of violence against women and girls.

The Realities of Scottish Social Care for Women

We recently hosted a powerful and insightful event focused on women's lived experiences of navigating social care in Scotland. The day brought together a diverse group of attendees, including service users, professionals, and advocates, to share personal stories, engage in meaningful discussion, and explore the challenges and hopes within Scotland's social care landscape.

Women's Comments

"Very helpful and informative. Wouldn't have been able to attend if the crèche wasn't there."

"SWC always on point with their line-up and organisation."

"Thanks for all you do for all of the participants. I feel welcomed, valued and supported."

"Warm welcome; made to feel included and valued."

"SWC continue to encourage me with their well-run events and the calibre of speakers. Staff and volunteers consistently good at supporting participants."



International Women's Day

Annual Update
2025

On Saturday the 8th of March, the SWC invited 350 women to the Scottish Parliament to commemorate International Women's Day. The event was chaired by Presiding Officer, Alison Johnstone MSP, and focused on the theme, Women Say: Gie's Peace: a celebration of women's continued commitment to peace.

To promote the contributions of young women in Scotland, the SWC asked pupils of Our Lady's High School to consider the role of women in peace processes. This culminated in a group of pupils presenting their findings at the Parliament, with two pupils going on to share this with attendees in the Parliamentary Chamber.

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

Speakers

- Kate Forbes MSP, Deputy First Minister
- Baroness Harriet Harman
- Niamh Fagan, Our Lady's High School Pupil
- Daisy Dickson, Our Lady's High School Pupil
- Susan Morrison, Comedian



Roadshows & Roundtables

Annual Update
2025

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 facing women, 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.



SCAN HERE

Isle of Lewis

Isle of Harris

Greenock

Perth

North Ayrshire:
Largs
Millport

Alongside Roadshows, the SWC Team have carried out multiple online Roundtables and Blethers on a range of subjects.

Consultations

Annual Update
2025

Scottish Parliament

- Commissioner for Older People (Scotland) Bill
- Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Reviews (Scotland) Bill
- Financial Considerations When Leaving an Abusive Relationship
- Mitigation of the Two-Child Benefit Cap
- Operation of the Public Sector Equality Duty in Scotland
- Prevention of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill
- Prostitution (Offences and Support) (Scotland) Bill
- SSI to add "sex" as a characteristic to the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021

Scottish Government

- Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2026-31
- Draft Just Transition Plan for Transport
- Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Strategy
- Health: Long-Term Conditions Framework
- Palliative Care Matters for All
- Rural Delivery Plan

UK Parliament

- Community Cohesion
- Equality at Work: Paternity and Shared Parental Leave
- Misogyny – The Manosphere and Online Content

UK Government

- Equality Law
- Parental Leave and Pay Review
- Pathways to Work
- Third State Pension Age Review

Other Organisations

- Low Pay Commission - National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage Rates for 2026

The SWC Team have provided evidence across 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.



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.

**The Scottish Women's Convention
348 Argyle Street
Glasgow, G2 8LX**

**0141 339 4797
www.scottishwomensconvention.org
Facebook, X & Instagram: @SWCWomen**



The Scottish Women's Convention is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

Registered in Scotland No. SC0327308.

Registered office 348 Argyle Street, Glasgow, G2 8LX.

The Scottish Women's Convention is a Charity Registered in Scotland, No. SC0398525