

THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CONVENTION

Scottish Budget

2020/2021

Priorities for Women



PRIORITIES FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) has consulted with individuals and women's organisations throughout Scotland on the key issues which impact on women. Women account for over 50% of the adult population in Scotland. It is vital that their voices are heard and listened to during the budgetary process. Whilst many of the key powers remain reserved to Westminster, there are a number of priorities which the Scottish Government should focus on to further women's equality.

Inequality exists throughout Scotland in both rural and urban areas. There are a wide range of reasons depending on location that continue to ensure that these issues exist. Narrowing the poverty gap and gender proofing all budget and legislative actions to ensure women's issues are at the forefront are key to addressing inequality. Priorities for the upcoming budgetary year must include the following:

- ◆ *Alleviation of austerity.*
- ◆ *Committing to ending child poverty.*
- ◆ *Encouraging and stimulating wage growth, particularly within the private sector.*
- ◆ *Further mitigation of the roll out of Universal Credit.*
- ◆ *Investment in social care.*
- ◆ *Crucial funding for local authority budgets to mitigate reductions in public services.*
- ◆ *Tackling the housing crisis including further investment into homelessness prevention.*

FINANCE, ECONOMY AND FAIR WORK

Tackling the Gender Pay Gap

Further commitments to tackle the gender pay gap at all levels should include resources for women's development and education. There needs to be recognition of the unpaid work that women undertake as well as an understanding of ongoing workforce segregation within Scotland. Resources should be committed to:

- ◆ Specific apprenticeship quotas for women in male dominated roles.
- ◆ Encouraging private companies to report on equal pay regardless of size, including training and resources as to how to collect this data.
- ◆ Public procurement to be accountable for the gender pay gap, national living wage and robust trade union representation.
- ◆ Increased bursaries to encourage women's uptake in employment including mentoring schemes in the most deprived communities.

Automation

Work with trade unions and the private sector on the threat of automation to deskilling jobs – particularly in areas where women dominate such as retail – and provide training and upskilling for those at risk.

Health and the Workplace

- ◆ Commit to rolling out menopause policies across the public sector and work with private companies to inform and share best practice of this.
- ◆ Follow the example of North Ayrshire Council to commit to a national domestic abuse policy for public sector workers.

Union Recognition

- ◆ Support for trade union representation in female dominated industries such as hospitality and the service sector.
- ◆ Resources to support worker's rights in the private sector such as the right to request flexible working/home working, etc.
- ◆ Working with employers in the private sector in Scotland to expand their packages of maternity and paternity pay as well as shared parental leave. This should include promotion of best practice within industrial sectors.
- ◆ Commit to the Proposed Protection of Workers (Scotland) Bill and work with employers and trade unions in the hospitality industry to protect staff from sexual harassment including national publicity campaigns and zero tolerance approaches.
- ◆ Work with the private sector to end age band discrimination in wages.

HEALTH AND SPORT

Women are key stakeholders in regards to health and social care services as both service users and employees. Failure to take into account significant gendered inequalities in health and social care augments and severely inhibits the expression of equality.

Recruitment

More resources targeted towards recruitment of staff is crucial. There are key concerns around the future of the NHS including austerity, privatisation and EU Withdrawal. This must have a definitively gendered edge including:

- ◆ Funding to encourage women specialists for genealogical conditions at first point of contact such as endometriosis.
- ◆ Targeted recruitment and bursaries for specialist doctors.
- ◆ Ensure appropriate gender balance at all levels of management and address the gender pay gap across all areas of NHS Scotland.
- ◆ Bursaries and targeted funding for recruitment to prevent costly agency hiring in NHS Scotland.

Resourcing

The most efficient and innovative use of resources is a must for our Health and Social Care Sector. An acute focus on health inequalities, and the impact of socioeconomic deprivation, is crucially needed with cross cutting support across Ministerial Departments to establish rapid and effective responses. This should be seen as an investment for the future and include:

- ◆ National campaigns around severe mental health issues and suicide.
- ◆ Resources targeted towards gender based violence health services.
- ◆ Additional resources and collaboration with workplaces in the private sector to encourage discussions around mental health in the workplace and best practice.
- ◆ Resources to ensure sustainable community care that allows individuals to stay in their own homes as long as possible.
- Increase in resources for breast and cancer screening, early detection and national campaigns to increase public knowledge.

Services and Planning

Services which provide crucial means of prevention, intervention and support must be available across Scotland 24/7. This has to encompass mental health services and those which are uniquely tailored to take account of women's issues in the realms of health and everything that falls within this scope. This should include:

- ◆ Robust support for addiction issues. This should be seen as a public health priority. It should focus on the expansion of treatment for women accessing addiction services and those in the criminal justice system.

- ◆ Implementation of increased flexible appointments for evenings and weekends.
- ◆ Targeted funding for support groups around women's health and an increase in the number of Links Practitioners within Scotland.
- ◆ Direct funding for rural localities where accessibility may be an issue, including breast screening vans, etc.
- ◆ Community hubs, especially in less populated areas, where women can go to access information and support around health.
- ◆ Further resources for sexual health clinics and intervention to prevent the closure of local sexual health centres such as the Sandyford Services in Glasgow.

Preventative Agenda

An easily recognisable dialogue around health which brings forth an emphasis on investing in prevention in order to augment future potential health implications is crucial. With a rapidly aging population and the intensification of social care requirements, early detection and a clear prescribed preventative agenda around both physical and mental health must be adequately resourced. Policies should include:

- ◆ Reform of the social care sector to include sustainable infrastructure, flexible working and development opportunities.
- ◆ Easily accessible resources for diagnosis and treatment of women's health issues such as smear tests, menopause, etc.
- ◆ Increasing accessibility for information around both physical and mental health and options for dealing with these issues.
- ◆ Targeting resources towards strategic responses to heightened forms of social isolation within communities.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

Targeting direct funding for ELC and out of school care to women lower down on the income scale is crucial. Resources must take into account provision of quality infrastructure and education that is accessible for all children in order to narrow and ultimately eradicate inequality. This must take account of:

- ◆ Investing in the ELC workforce and working in collaboration with stakeholders to establish best practice around flexible working hours. This should support parents on precarious employment contracts.
- ◆ Commit to ensuring local publicly funded ELC and out of school care with a workforce that has opportunities for development, effective trade union representation and wages effectively uprated every year in real terms.
- ◆ Additional funding for access to speech therapists and other specialists in early years.

School Age Education

It is vital that investment in education is directed to the appropriate places to allow children to fulfil their maximum potential. Inequalities in the education system not only segregates children within the classroom and society but can act as a stoppage to children reaching their full ability.

- ◆ Further resources targeted towards the recruitment of more Additional Support Needs teachers.
- ◆ Extra funding and recruitment to deliver dedicated school guidance teachers and support workers, including those with a specialisation in young women's health.
- ◆ Education around consent, sexual violence and unsolicited images for all young people.

Attainment

The attainment gap remains disconnected from sustainable education that is equal and accessible for all children from the early years onto higher education. The current exclusivity of certain subjects and extracurricular activities due to costings leaves many children at a disadvantage.

- ◆ Investment in teacher recruitment to ensure all children receive a fair education with funding targeted to close the attainment gap and incentives for teachers going to schools in more deprived areas.
- ◆ Ensure college education and other forms are placed on the same footing as university education and recognised as such.
- ◆ Ensuring a nationalised strategy for heightened flexibility in Educational Maintenance Allowance for young carers.
- ◆ Funding for universal free school meals for all children of school age.
- ◆ Uprating the School Clothing Grant to ensure it is of equal footing in all Local Authority areas.

- ◆ Investing in maintenance grants for those from the most deprived communities going to university in fields where unpaid internships are common and where women are under represented.
- ◆ Introduce further commitments into the curriculum including teaching on finance, home economics and personal wellbeing.
- ◆ Continue to promote the Young Carer's Grant and put in place extra support services for young carers transitioning to further or higher education.
- ◆ Allocation of additional money to the Pupil Equity Fund.
- ◆ Resources for extra learning for teachers on the causes of poverty and how this may affect student's learning abilities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES

Housing and Homelessness

With the intensification of the housing crisis in both the private and social housing sector, all resources that can be invested into the area of housing must be. A specifically gendered look at housing issues must be considered in order to provide a thorough picture of where resources should be suitably allocated to alleviate some of the issues.

- ◆ A review of the current points based system for allocation of social housing to allow individual circumstances to be taken into consideration.
- ◆ Resources and local consultation to improve accessibility for those with disabilities.
- ◆ Satisfactory controls on rent increases.
- ◆ Introducing robust legislation around no fault evictions by landlords.
- ◆ Ensuring all social build homes have access to broadband and rural transport as a key duty.
- ◆ Recognition of the impact of hidden homelessness on women with a shared public duty across services for women accessing support.
- ◆ Resources towards women-only shelters used as temporary accommodation.
- ◆ Support for those experiencing domestic abuse in housing including taking into account their first preference for staying in the home rather than leaving.
- ◆ Resources towards support and advocacy for women dealing with housing issues including overcrowding.

Community Engagement

- ◆ Provide ring fenced funding for ESOL classes and those where English is not their first language.
- ◆ Extra funding for local government to offset cuts made in the last eight years.
- ◆ Investing in local community hubs where women can access information around their rights.

JUSTICE

Support and Prevention

Currently, the vast majority of women imprisoned within Scotland are on short term sentences for minor offences. Resources for women coming into contact with the justice system is crucial in order to foster a preventative and sympathetic system for women at all times be that as witnesses, defendants or being sentenced.

- ◆ Investment in preventative measures for women while in prison. This will ensure that adequate support is in place once they leave.
- ◆ Ending short sentences and use of remand with the money going into preventative approaches.
- ◆ Investment in youth offender services.
- ◆ Education around legislation such as The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act at a national level.
- ◆ Legal aid resources to help women on the lowest incomes.
- ◆ Resources to commit collaborative approaches to offenders including public health and education within the criminal justice system.

Recruitment and training in justice

- ◆ Widening the scope for further training for the police service to spot and act on gender related crimes including domestic abuse, FGM and sexual exploitation.
- ◆ A commitment to additional training to ensure police are aware of hate-aggravated crimes including homophobia and religiously aggravated offences.
- ◆ Extra resources for community police officers.
- ◆ Funding for the recruitment of prison officers and support workers in prison with sufficient training in mental health and preventative work.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND OLDER PEOPLE

Austerity

The roll out of food banks, increase in homelessness and exacerbation of health issues have all been defined by a decade of austerity and welfare cuts. Excessive cuts from Westminster have led not only to a crisis in public services but when coupled with ongoing welfare reforms have seen many women being pushed further into poverty. It is of the utmost importance that the Scottish Government mitigates the worst effects of this.

Food Poverty

- ◆ Increased measures to augment against food insecurity and food banks including local community based supermarkets.
- ◆ Funding targeted towards impoverished communities to ensure uptake of healthy and nutritious food.

Social Security Scotland

- ◆ Further nationalised campaigns around Social Security Scotland to ensure all citizens see social security as built on dignity and respect.
- ◆ Investment in food initiatives during school holiday periods.
- ◆ Increasing accessibility to other forms of information for funds such as the Scottish Welfare Fund and the School Clothing Grant.
- ◆ Expand the definition of those that are eligible for Carer's Supplement and uprate payments for individuals who are caring for multiple persons.
- ◆ Commit to increasing local housing allowance to ensure it is adequate and proportionate by area.
- ◆ Ensuring the Best Start Grant is uprated in line with inflation annually.

Universal Credit (UC)

- ◆ Greater collaborative working between personal GP surgeries and Job Centres in order for assessment processes to be as smooth and as timely as possible for women.
- ◆ Commit to subsidise the five week delay in Universal Credit payments.
- ◆ Work with landlords to provide a non-discriminatory approach to those seeking private lets whilst on Universal Credit.
- ◆ Further resources into tackling the single household payment element of UC.

Older Women

- ◆ Further resources to tackle social isolation of older women, particularly in rural areas where there is inadequate public transport.
- ◆ Investment in older women's skills to ensure a career return where wished.
- ◆ Commit to ensuring upskilling for older women where qualifications may be lacking.
- ◆ Continue to highlight the effect of the increase in State Pension Age for women.
- ◆ Publicity and campaigns around older women's health.

RURAL ECONOMY

Rural Challenges

Defining the interlinking between gendered poverty and rurality is extremely important in identifying and supporting women in local communities. Obstacles are often doubly hard in areas where structural inequality is pervasive, but resources are not adequately used to navigate or take into account the unique struggles of the geographical area. Investment for non-urban areas must take into account:

- ◆ More investment in broadband connectivity and infrastructure in rural areas.
- ◆ Work with the rural economy to support tourism directed at more deprived areas.
- ◆ Commit to further funding for women entrepreneurs of social enterprises and rural businesses to empower, mentor and support.
- ◆ Increasing funding for consultations and partnerships in rural areas to gain local experiences and knowledge of the challenges of particular localities.
- ◆ Commit to reforming measurements of rural poverty such as car ownership which often does not tell the truth about low incomes in areas where private transport is essential.
- ◆ Further resources for rural and island areas to empower communities to take land into public ownership and provide funds for crofting plots for first time buyers. This has the potential to make the case for young people to stay in less populated communities.

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

Women are disproportionately impacted where obstacles to transport access manifest themselves. Ensuring that future strategies and investment within Scotland's transport system takes account of the inequality that women still face in all areas of life is crucial. Producing vibrant and sustainable policies where women feel empowered to access transport at both a public and private level within society are paramount.

- ◆ Improved public transport services with a strong recognition of those working unsociable hours.
- ◆ Resources for Local Authorities to look at bringing local buses back into public ownership.
- ◆ Targeting public transport to new social housing developments which often lack facilities.
- ◆ Clear access to information around bus passes and travel grants for those who need it most.
- ◆ Funding for local public consultation meetings to gather women's views on optimum utilisation of transport within the area.
- ◆ Working with the private sector to ensure collaborative working between different forms of public transport.
- ◆ Funding for previously cut local bus services in consultation with communities.

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded by the Scottish Government to consult with women in Scotland to influence public policy. The organisation was set up in 2003 to enable grassroots women to discuss issues relevant to them. Since its inception the SWC has engaged with a wide range of women throughout the country.

The SWC engages 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.



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