

Scottish Women's Convention response
to the UK Government's Call for
Evidence on:

Equality Law



June 2025

Premise

The UK Government released the following Call for Evidence, to understand barriers to opportunity faced by certain groups and how these barriers can be overcome. Respondents were asked to consider issues such as pay discrimination, combined discrimination and workplace harassment, with the aim being to create a more equitable environment for all peoples.

Women's experiences have been centred throughout, with a particular focus on the experiences of ethnic minority groups and disabled people. Views gathered will directly influence the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, asking respondents to consider existing equality legislation and possible equality law reform.



The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC)

The SWC is funded to engage with women across Scotland to ensure that their views are represented in policy and decision-making processes. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at Scottish, UK and international levels.

The SWC gathers information using different methods, including roadshows, thematic conferences, surveys, and both in-person and online roundtable events. This submission presents the views of a range of women, reflecting their opinions, ideas and lived experience. Working together with many other equalities organisations and community groups, we use our broad network to ensure that women from a range of backgrounds are heard and acknowledged. We are continually reviewing innovative ways of engaging with women and developing our trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice to support vital contributions from as many women as possible.

Our Response

What evidence is there on the prevalence of pay discrimination on the basis of race, disability and sex in England, Scotland and Wales?

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) exists to gather the experiences and views of women living in Scotland, relaying information collected to decision-makers at a national and international level. Through a mixture of roundtable discussions and surveys, the SWC Team travels the length and breadth of Scotland, to understand the variety of experiences had by women.

With regards to pay, it is widely understood that the discrepancies in pay between men and women is largely a result of structural inequality. Strongly held patriarchal attitudes, which prioritise women's role as primary carers for children and elderly parents, prevent women from achieving their full potential in the workplace. Women regularly point to the idea of "juggling" professional and personal lives, with this same burden not placed on the shoulders of men colleagues or partners. Instead, they must take on part-time work, resulting in poorer pay and conditions, further entrenching structural disadvantage, as well as the disadvantage faced by children. The SWC investigated the impact of poverty on women in late 2024, finding that while women's poverty rates are currently unacceptable within Scotland, the poverty of mothers and grandmothers actively contributes to the poverty experienced by children¹. Our work concluded that poverty underlines the experiences of too many individuals across Scotland, with actions to tackle women's disadvantage being key to improving overall societal outcomes.

Furthermore, throughout conversations surrounding work, women have provided countless examples whereby current and/or prospective employers have actively discriminated against them as a result of personal characteristics. This discrimination is rooted in deeply held misogynistic mentalities, with women's advancement being oppressed. Through a mixture of intimidating boys' club attitudes and sexual assault, women and girl's experiences of workplaces across Scotland can be incredibly negative. Women have expressed a sense of exhaustion and fear when speaking with the SWC about employment, stating that while misogynistic behaviour has been discussed more openly across society, this has not translated into workplace policy². In cases where women feel unsafe, they are unlikely to remain within the employment market, again, pushing too many valuable workers to the side and worsening the gender pay gap.

- "It's really intimidating. Even if you're in a room with male peers, they start to form a boys' club before you get into the room."
- "I'm a mechanical engineer, and I've been doing this for over 30 years, and I'm normally one of the only...women in the design department, and it's always the

¹ Scottish Women's Convention. (2024). The Impact of Poverty on Women. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/poverty-full-report-2024.pdf>

² Scottish Women's Convention. (2023). Misogyny in Scotland. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/misogyny-report-june-2023-final.pdf>

case where I'm having to prove myself, even though I'm way better than the rest! It's only because it's an old boys club"

This misogyny appears to vary by sector however, women working in the STEM industries appear to be more likely to experience workplace harassment. SWC work surrounding women in STEM found this to be the case for many workers, with women employees being denied promotions and advancement opportunities. Women provided blatant examples of misogynistic mentalities, particularly surrounding childcare responsibilities and maternity leave.

The reluctance of superiors to cater to the childcare needs of women, pushes many to exit industries, despite the STEM sector greatly requiring a diversity of outlooks. This closely links with SWC findings surrounding childcare in Scotland. Our work highlighted that the 1140 hours of free childcare for children aged 3 and 4, provided by the Scottish Government, is insufficient for women's needs. While this has been helpful for many families, women stated that the lack of flexibility and choice provided greatly limits their ability to take on full-time work or return to work³.

- "There doesn't seem to be enough pre-school nursery places for the amount of children requiring them. On paper it looks great, '30 free hours' [a week], but some nurseries do not offer these hours at times that are flexible with parents' working patterns."
- "[Where I live] there is just a significant shortage of private nurseries and childminders offering year-round care and spaces for under 3s, so much so, people are often asking to go on a waiting list prior to falling pregnant."
- "The combination of flexible work for parents and flexible childcare that could be such a game changer for families. Being able to have that time to do drop-offs and pickups and those kinds of things really make such a huge, huge difference for people."

Taking maternity leave was also viewed as a significant issue for women in STEM. Some women explained that as a result of STEM sectors advancing at quick rates, time away from work could significantly limit a woman's potential for promotion. Alternatively, women aged between 25 and 40 explained that through misogynistic mentalities, even in instances where they were not pregnant or had no intention to become pregnant, they experienced discrimination. Women stated that they had experienced open questioning surrounding their likelihood to leave work to have children, with this contributing to their reduced success at work³. This reflects a wider societal issue, in that employers do not view women as equal to men colleagues – the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that a third of private sector employers felt that it was "reasonable" to ask women about their plans to have children during recruitment processes⁴. Unfortunately, blatant discrimination such as this remains a continued consideration for women throughout

³ Scottish Women's Convention. (2023). STEMinism: What Needs to Change to Keep Women in STEM. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/stem-conference-report-2023.pdf>

⁴ Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2018). Pregnancy and Maternity Discrimination Research Findings. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/business/pregnancy-and-maternity-discrimination-research-findings>

their professional journey. We would therefore suggest that pay discrimination remains a significant issue across Scottish workplaces, for a myriad of reasons, with misogyny acting as a basis for most discriminatory practice.

- “...I’m at that age, I mean I don’t want kids, but because of my age and gender, I will be discriminated against for job opportunities...I’ve heard of it happening...they were actually hiring for a maternity leave role, and they didn’t want to go with the woman, because they thought she would maybe go on maternity leave herself, so they’d have to find another replacement.”
- “...I realised recently that I would rather focus on my career than have children, but like it’s weird that you make that choice. Like it makes you realise that you have to decide between the two, you can’t have both, and I mean I wouldn’t want to but it’s quite strange really that it’s that bad.”

What evidence is there as to the effectiveness of existing measures in England, Scotland and Wales in reducing pay discrimination on the basis of race, disability and sex.

As stated in the outset of the Equality Law Call for Evidence, current legislation has not effectively eradicated pay discrimination across the UK. While progress has been made in this area, further change is required to enable full realisation of equal pay levels.

Within a Scottish context, women do not experience pay equality, but it can be said that significant progress has been made in this area: the gender pay gap in Scotland is 2.2% for full-time employees compared to 7% in the UK as a whole⁵. It can be suggested that this progress has been enabled within Scotland as a result of the policy framework which is outlined by both the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Equality Act 2010 at a UK-level. However, the varying approaches taken by the Scottish Government and UK Government in recent years has likely contributed to this change.

The Scottish Government has placed major emphasis on the reduction of inequalities throughout legislation, utilising a National Performance Framework (NPF) to enable change⁶. To meet the aims outlined in the NPF within the current parliamentary term, the Scottish Government introduced the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan in 2021⁷. This Action Plan clearly outlines the benefits to the Scottish economy if women and men are paid and treated equally, providing tangible methods to meet aims. Sadly, the Action Plan has not resulted in equal pay in Scotland, most likely as a result of engrained societal prejudice and a lack of full engagement across workplaces. We would also note that much Scottish data lacks full disaggregation, resulting in limited picture of employee make-up. Yet, it would be inadvisable for the UK Government to discount

⁵ Scottish Government. (2025). Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: 2024. Available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings-2024/pages/gender-pay-gap/>

⁶ Scottish Government. (2024). National Performance Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/national-performance-framework/?via=https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

⁷ Scottish Government. (2021). A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2019/03/fairer-scotland-women-gender-pay-gap-action-plan/documents/fairer-scotland-women-gender-pay-gap-action-plan/fairer-scotland-women-gender-pay-gap-action-plan/govscot%3Adocument/fairer-scotland-women-gender-pay-gap-action-plan.pdf>

plans outlined by the Scottish Government entirely, as some progress has been made in Scottish workplaces, providing a blueprint for wider UK planning.

What evidence is there regarding any potential barriers that individuals could face in making equal pay claims and approaches to address these barriers?

Through SWC investigations, we have identified multiple barriers to making equal pay claims for women across Scotland. When considering the prevalence of misogyny in society, women highlighted that within workplaces the continuation of 'boys' club' mentalities, often discouraged them from actively participating. Behaviour ranges from disparaging comments and microaggressions, to direct sexual assault/harassment. This 'boys' club' expanded out with working environments, with social activities acting as additions to meetings. Often these activities are held without women team members, preventing them from fully participating in decision-making processes. Through informal practice such as this, women are being actively disadvantaged within the workplace. It can therefore be suggested that organisations have a duty to tackle unhealthy work patterns, creating clear boundaries for all employees.

- "There was a refusal to move the time of an early morning meeting where I couldn't arrange childcare, but they managed to move it to accommodate lunchtime football training."
- "I think what's still really prevalent is the boys' club in workplaces. I work in politics and it's notoriously a space where men converse over their pints, and that's where decisions are made."

Furthermore, similar patterns can be witnessed across early years, with girls and young women feeling intimidated to take part in lessons as a direct result of misogynistic comments from boy classmates. Young women have emphasised the role of gender stereotypes as perpetuating old-fashioned ideals, which ultimately place the needs of men over women. This was witnessed as particularly harmful in environments which have traditionally been dominated by men, for example STEM subjects. Girls provided examples whereby they were intimidated in classroom environments and mocked for providing incorrect answers. Similarly, young women have also provided the SWC with situations of direct sexual assault within school environments. Unfortunately, many did not feel properly supported by education staff during reporting processes, with behaviour often dismissed as "boys being boys".

- "A maths class that's on, there are lots of boys in there, and girls in there have said that it's really intimidating to speak out, and the boys will belittle you for having equivocal knowledge."
- "There was a stage at school where the boys would...scoop your breasts and it was everywhere we turned; the teachers did nothing about it."
- "I was sexually harassed by boys at my school and...a teacher watched it happen on a bus once and didn't do anything. They don't really care."

Examples such as these, further the idea that creating a safe, collaborative space for women and girls to thrive is key. However, as a direct result of the aforementioned behaviours, they often feel pressured to remain silent over issues such as equal pay. To tackle this problem, women suggested the development of good quality reporting mechanisms against harassment and abuse. Additionally, they hoped for comprehensive equality training across workplaces and learning spaces, to ensure that the majority of the working population were aware of the barriers women and girls face. It can therefore be said that misogyny remains a significant issue across the public sphere, limiting women and girls' lives.

Alternatively, we would raise concern over current trade union membership levels. Across the UK, 22.4% of employees were trade union members in 2023, the second lowest level since records began in 1995. Within these figures, women continue to make up the majority of members – 3.5 million – however this number fell by 83,000 between 2022 and 2023. While this figure remains relatively high, there is a growing change in the average age of trade union members, reflecting a general move away from the trade union movement within the UK. It is stated that the likelihood of an employee being a trade union member increases with age, however the overall distribution has changed since 1995 – in 1995, those aged 35-49 were the most likely group to be a trade union member, but in 2023 it was those aged 50 and over⁸.

There is an observable reduction in younger people being involved in trade union activity across the UK, with this likely impacting women's ability to make equal pay claims. Having good access to effective trade union support throughout such claims is key in enabling proper accountability and process. If rates continue to drop, it can be argued that women may struggle to access appropriate advice throughout equal pay claims, discouraging them from entering the procedure. Positive change has been witnessed in Scotland more specifically, however. The Scottish Trades Union Congress found that the proportion of employees aged 16-34 in Scotland had risen by 12% between 2022 and 2023⁹. We would therefore ask the UK Government to consider how it can effectively work alongside trade unions across the country, empowering a new generation of trade unionists as can be witnessed in Scotland.

A further barrier experienced by women when attempting to make equal pay claims, is that of accessing legal aid. While legal aid should be provided for all Scottish citizens, many areas in Scotland, particularly remote and rural communities, lack sufficient provision. For example, the Isle of Orkney has only one legal aid solicitor as of 2025, compared to nine in 2000¹⁰. Similar issues have been raised throughout SWC Roadshow events, whereby essential services, such as legal aid, have been removed from rural

⁸ Department for Business and Trade. (2024). Trade Union Membership, UK 1995-2023: Statistical Bulletin. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/665db15a0c8f88e868d334b8/Trade_Union_Membership_UK_1995_to_2023_Statistical_Bulletin.pdf

⁹ Scottish Trades Union Congress. (2024). Young Workers Rise Up for Trade Unions. Available at: <https://www.stuc.org.uk/news/news/young-workers-rise-up-for-trade-unions/>

¹⁰ Pizarro-Escuit, T. (2025). More Equal Than Others: Legal Aid Crisis, Scots Law, Students and Inequity in Access to Justice. Available at: <https://www.lawscot.org.uk/members/journal-hub/articles/more-equal-than-others-legal-aid-crisis-scots-law-students-and-inequality-in-access-to-justice/>

communities due to increased centralisation¹¹. This has actively disadvantaged women, worsening general outcomes; some have been forced to remain in dangerously abusive relationships, others have been financially crippled through expensive legal costs. With women experiencing poor economic outcomes more generally, the additional price of raising a case against an employer will likely act as a significant barrier. This situation is likely to worsen as a result of the current cost of living crisis, with women reporting incredible rises to daily expenditure. We would therefore recommend a review of legal aid provision, considering how the UK Government can push for an increase in service levels, effectively protecting families.

- “[solicitors] are useless to be honest. The problem is that if the perpetrator gets to a solicitor first, then that may have been the only one for miles, so then they can’t work for both parties.”

What evidence is there on the prevalence of combined discrimination in England, Wales and Scotland?

We commend the UK Government on its focus on combined discrimination; whereby an individual’s multiple personal characteristics will result in varying levels of inequality. We would go on to suggest however, that disaggregated data across the UK is limited in relation to pay gap reporting.

While organisations have a legal responsibility to release gender pay gap reports, this often does not include information relating to race and/or disability. Gathering this additional data may result in further administrative fees and efforts across organisations, however it is vital in understanding the intersectional nature of women’s lives. Women do not exist as a homogenous group, resulting in a great variety of experiences. For example, Black, African, Caribbean or Black British women face significant disadvantage, including lower pay rates, when compared to white women colleagues. Further disaggregation also reveals that UK-born, Black, African, Caribbean or Black British workers, earn more than non-UK-born Black British employees, highlighting the variance of human experience throughout the country¹². Understanding this situation in more detail would likely be valuable for employers, and we would therefore suggest an increase in legal reporting mechanisms for organisations, aligning with reporting guidelines for sex.

What evidence is there on the prevalence of discrimination on the basis of a combination of protected characteristics that includes pregnancy and maternity and/or marriage and civil partnership in England, Wales and Scotland?

When discussing employment with women across Scotland, pregnancy and maternity experiences are often raised as contributors to poorer employment outcomes. Women

¹¹ Scottish Women’s Convention. (2025). Roadshows. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/roadshows/>

¹² Office for National Statistics. (2023). Ethnicity Pay Gaps, UK: 2012 to 2022. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2012to2022>

have provided countless examples of being overlooked for promotions as a result of becoming pregnant and taking maternity leave. This issue has been heavily investigated by the organisation Pregnant then Screwed, who have found that women commonly experience the 'motherhood penalty'. They have regularly reported on the impact becoming pregnant has on women's job prospects, estimating that 54,000 women a year lose their job for becoming pregnant and 390,000 working mums experience discrimination each year. Additionally, they have highlighted that less than 1% of victims take legal action against an employer and that a mother will be paid 33% less per hour than a man in an equivalent position by the time her child is 12 years old¹³.

It has been estimated that additional characteristics, such as race, also contribute to this situation, worsening outcomes for ethnic minority women. The Fawcett Society have found that women of Indian, Black African and Chinese heritage with children, have an employment rate of 11 percentage points lower than Indian, Black African and Chinese women without children¹⁴. A large contributor to this gap, is likely the disproportionate representation of ethnic minority women in low-paid work. Many take on unstable employment, including zero-hour contracts, as a result of continued discrimination within UK systems. It has been estimated that 6.8% of ethnic minority women are in zero-hour contracts, compared to 4% of white women¹⁵. Under current employment law, those defined as zero-contract 'workers' are not entitled to maternity leave and their access to Statutory Maternity Pay is reliant on specific conditions¹⁶. Consequently, there is a clear discrepancy in employment protections for ethnic minority women, actively contributing to equal pay in the UK. We would highly recommend the quick introduction of the Employment Rights Bill which aims to ban exploitative zero-hour contracts, considering how combined discrimination interacts with employment conditions.

What evidence is there on effective steps or specific issues that employers should take into account when trying to reduce/prevent sexual harassment in the workplace?

In Scotland, it has been estimated that more than 50% of women had experienced sexual harassment at work, with instances most common in low-paid work and traditionally men-dominated industries¹⁷. The prevalence of such abuse is largely contributed to continued misogyny throughout the public sphere. Unfortunately, many of these experiences will not be reflected in crime statistics, with women being reluctant to openly discuss their assault/harassment. This is likely due to fear of reprisal, losing work, or being viewed differently by co-workers.

¹³ Pregnant Then Screwed. (2025). About Pregnant Then Screwed. Available at: <https://pregnantthenscrewed.com/about-maternity-discrimination/>

¹⁴ Fawcett Society. (2023). The Ethnicity Motherhood Pay Penalty. Available at: <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=2700108d-d095-4ba6-8830-48f4abcb9785>

¹⁵ Trades Union Congress. (2023). BME Women Far More Likely to be on Zero-Hours Contracts. Available at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/bme-women-far-more-likely-be-zero-hours-contracts>

¹⁶ Maternity Action. (2025). Zero Hours Contracts – Maternity and Parental Rights. Available at: <https://maternityaction.org.uk/advice/zero-hours-contracts-maternity-and-parental-rights/>

¹⁷ Scottish Trades Union Congress. (2024). Sexual Harassment at Work 'Endemic' Says STUC. Available at: <https://www.stuc.org.uk/news/news/sexual-harassment-at-work-endemic-says-stuc/>

This stigma remains a significant barrier for many women when reporting sexual assault or harassment. When considering how to effectively reduce/prevent sexual harassment, it is key to have proper reporting mechanisms in place which are openly discussed and promoted by employers. Women have stated that when reporting is unclear, this contributes to ideas that they should remain silent or “just get on” with their work. Women are consistently silenced throughout their lives from a young age, with societal attitudes contributing to this mentality. We would therefore suggest legislative practice which enforces reporting across workplaces, including for women in low-paid, insecure employment. At this point we would note our disappointment in the dropping at a Scottish level of the Misogyny Bill, with women proposing that through a widescale societal approach to misogyny, abusive behaviour could be effectively tackled¹⁸. Returning to reporting mechanisms however, we propose that these must be handled through a trauma-informed approach. By considering the influence of trauma in women's experiences, employers can safely protect and support survivors, promoting positive workplace behaviours.

What evidence is there of other effective interventions that the government should consider to address the problem of workplace sexual harassment?

While sexual assault and harassment remain significant issues across the UK, including Scotland, the Scottish Government have outlined a clear widespread approach to reducing levels. Through the Equally Safe strategy, violence against women and girls is strongly condemned, viewed as a major societal issue which requires early intervention. Workplaces specifically are mentioned, with the strategy outlining a commitment to improving and implementing trauma-informed practice throughout workplace policies. These approaches also embed gender analysis, considering the additional risks women face within the workplace, with regards to sexual assault and violence. A significant focus has been placed on upskilling current employees, enabling a wider range of professionals to feel empowered to call out inappropriate behaviour, while minimising the risk of criminal behaviour¹⁹.

We would highlight however, that the majority of the Equally Safe programme is based in schools, as a result of the high emphasis on prevention. While workplaces are mentioned, they are not the direct focus of the work, limiting assessments of its effectiveness within the employment sector. Yet, it could be valuable for the UK Government to consider how learning from this project can be effectively utilised within workplaces. In particular, we would focus attention on the ‘whole school’ approach taken, which asks all sectors to consider how violence against women and girls negatively impacts society at large.

¹⁸ Scottish Women's Convention. (2023). Misogyny in Scotland. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/misogyny-report-june-2023-final.pdf>

¹⁹ Scottish Government. (2025). Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): Equally Safe Strategy. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/violence-against-women-and-girls/equally-safe-strategy/>

What evidence is there on the effectiveness of the duty in Scotland and Wales and its voluntary adoption by some public authorities in England?

It can be said that public authorities in Scotland currently hold a good understanding of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), with legal obligations clearly outlined and adhered to an extent. However, we would argue that this understanding lacks depth, reducing the effectiveness of the PSED. This limited understanding is fuelled through poor resourcing of equality issues, with equalities viewed as an addition to service design and delivery rather than being embedded throughout.

Ultimately, this is the result of decreased commitments from decision-makers, with a widespread cultural change being required in response. It is groups such as women who are negatively impacted through this limited delivery. Women continuously face discrimination throughout their lives as outlined throughout our response to this call for evidence, with the PSED not necessarily translating to improved outcomes. We would therefore argue that to effectively counter this issue, public authorities should be provided with comprehensive training and effective resources to enable the PSED process. This must go alongside a wider commitment across public authorities to the PSED, with the PSED being considered throughout the development of policy.

Additionally, the PSED's role as a key accountability measure cannot be ignored. Through the functionality of the PSED, decision-making bodies should be held to certain standards, creating equitable processes. However, women have highlighted that as a result of poor resourcing and a lack of knowledge surrounding the PSED, this accountability mechanism is failing. The importance of accountability has been regularly raised by women in Scotland, with many feeling that policy decisions often do not result in tangible actions. They have therefore promoted improved consideration of the PSED across statutory bodies, with a clear focus on accountability.

- “[the local authority] change the services to suit whatever staff they have in place, and they don’t consider that changing that will impact the women and families...I think the problem is the lack of proper regulation and accountability.”
- “...it’s about a paradigm shift...we need to have having these conversations about how [disadvantage] is reported; accountability is really important, it’s not about doing more, it’s about doing better.”

What evidence is there about effective approaches public authorities can take to giving proactive, high quality and informed consideration to reducing the inequalities that result from socioeconomic disadvantage?

After extensive work considering poverty in Scotland, the SWC calls for the acknowledgement of women's poverty as a contributor to poorer outcomes for society

as a whole²⁰. Women's poverty can be closely linked to children's poverty as a result of the role women take as primary carers for children. In cases where women have poor access to good quality employment and social security availability is low, women and their families suffer needlessly.

There is some acknowledgement by the Scottish Government that a gendered lens is required when considering anti-poverty work, however. Through their continued focus on children's poverty, six key at risk groups have been identified including, lone-parent families, minority ethnic families, families with a disabled adult or child, families with a mother aged under 25, families with a child under, and families with three or more children²¹. Additionally, the Scottish Government have introduced the Scottish Child Payment, which provides an individual a weekly payment of £27.15 per child under the age of 16 years of age²².

It has been recognised by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that the approach taken by the Scottish Government has reduced child poverty to a higher level compared to UK-levels more generally²³. This links with arguments made by anti-poverty advocates that "no strings attached" monetary payments is key to eradicating poverty levels. Advocates go on to explain that anti-poverty work requires a shift in narrative, viewing poverty as a structural issue, caused by patriarchal institutions and discrimination²⁴. We would therefore call for the UK Government to take a similar approach, accepting that current systems maintain poverty, rather than viewing employment as the sole solution to the issue of poverty.

²⁰ Scottish Women's Convention. (2024). The Impact of Poverty on Women. Available at:

<https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/poverty-full-report-2024.pdf>

²¹ Scottish Government. (2025). Poverty and Social Justice: Child Poverty. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/poverty-and-social-justice/child-poverty/>

²² Scottish Government. (2022). Scottish Child Payment: How it Works. Available at: <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment>

²³ Joseph Rowntree Foundation. (2024). Poverty in Scotland. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/poverty-in-scotland-2024>

²⁴ Scottish Women's Convention. (2024). Conference Report: The Impact of Poverty on Women. Available at: <https://www.scottishwomensconvention.org/resources/poverty-conference-final-report.pdf>

Conclusion

Having listened to women, our three key recommendations on this topic are:

- Encourage trade union activities to improve conditions throughout workplaces.
- Increase the number of legal reporting mechanisms, aligning with reporting guidelines for sex.
- Enact the Employment Rights Bill to ban exploitative zero-hour contracts.

The SWC is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the UK Government's Call for Evidence on **Equality Law**. As an organisation, we will continue to work with women from across Scotland to gather voices and experiences relating to this topic and its effects on women's equality.

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