

Scottish Women's Convention
response to the Scottish
Government's consultation on:

Vision for Kinship Care



February 2026

Premise

This response is submitted by our organisation to ensure that women's experiences are reflected in the development of the Scottish Government's Vision for Kinship Care programme and its commitment to The Promise and children's rights.

The Scottish Government's objective is to ensure that kinship families receive consistent financial, practical and emotional support, and that children growing up in kinship care experience stability, dignity and equality in entitlements.

From the perspective of a women's organisation, the Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute recognising that kinship care is overwhelmingly provided by women and is closely connected to wider issues of gender equality, poverty and unpaid care.



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.

Questions

1. What do you like about it, and what would you change? Are there aspects that feel unclear, unrealistic, or missing?

We broadly support the vision, particularly its emphasis on children’s rights, stability, and family-based care, as well as its alignment with Scotland’s commitment to The Promise¹. Recognising kinship care as central to Scotland’s care system reflects the reality that kinship care is now the most common placement type for children requiring care in Scotland, accounting for approximately 35% of placements¹.

We particularly welcome the framing of kinship care as warranting dignity, respect and partnership. However, we believe the vision would be strengthened by explicitly recognising the gendered nature of kinship care. The majority of kinship carers are women, often grandmothers or other female relatives, who assume caregiving responsibilities often at short notice and in the context of crisis².

The Scottish Women’s Convention (SWC) has consistently highlighted that women’s unpaid caring roles contribute to economic disadvantage, poverty, and reduced employment opportunities. Kinship care policy must therefore be integrated with wider gender equality and anti-poverty strategies.^{3,4}

“Women continue to undertake the vast majority of unpaid caring responsibilities, often at significant personal, financial and emotional cost to themselves.”⁵

Our recommendations would be to include explicit recognition of women kinship carers as a priority group and embed gender-responsive policy commitments.

Overall, the Scottish Women’s Convention believes that the proposed vision is strong in its objectives but would benefit from clearer commitments around financial equality, employment protection, and mental health support.

¹ Scottish Government *Recognising and supporting Kinship Care* [Recognising and supporting kinship care - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot)

² Carers UK *State of Caring: Experience of Female Unpaid Carers (2024)* [final-state-of-caring-2024-iwd-brief.pdf](#)

³ Scottish Women’s Convention *Scottish Carer’s Assistance Consultation Response* [scottish-carers-assistance-consultation.pdf](#)

⁴ Scottish Women’s Convention *The Impact of Poverty on Women* [Poverty Full Report 2024](#)

⁵ Scottish Women’s Convention *Scottish Carer’s Assistance Consultation Response* [scottish-carers-assistance-consultation.pdf](#)

2. Does the Scottish Offer to Kinship Families (Section 6) include the kinds of support that would make the biggest difference for kinship families?

The proposed offer contains many of the right elements including financial assistance, advice, and wellbeing support. However, the scale and consistency of delivery will determine whether it makes a meaningful difference to women.

Financial insecurity remains one of the most significant pressures facing kinship families. Evidence shows that kinship carers experience higher rates of poverty and financial strain, with inconsistent financial support across local authorities⁶ The SWC's research on poverty found that rising living costs are disproportionately impacting women, particularly lone women and older women.

One of the women we spoke to stated:

“Caring responsibilities have completely changed my financial position. I had to give up work and there was no safety net.”⁷

If the offer is to make the biggest difference, it must:

- Establish a national minimum financial allowance for kinship carers
- Ensure parity with foster care allowances where care responsibilities are comparable to these
- Expand access to Scottish Carer's Assistance and Carer's Allowance Supplement
- Clear national guidance to avoid a 'postcode lottery.'

Without consistent national financial guarantees, the offer risks reinforcing inequality rather than reducing it.

3. What feels most important to you, and is there anything missing?

The most important priorities to us would be:

- Financial security
- Mental health and trauma-informed support
- Employment protection and economic recognition of care

Kinship care often arises following family emergencies and trauma, parental substance use, or other crisis situations. Carers, predominantly women, take on complex emotional and behavioural support roles in addition to basic responsibilities⁶. Specialist mental health services and accessible counselling must be core elements of the vision and be deeply embedded from the outset.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Scottish Women's Convention *The Impact of Poverty on Women* [Poverty Full Report 2024](#)

In addition, women kinship carers frequently reduce working hours or leave employment entirely⁸⁹. The long-term consequences for state and workplace pension security, savings, and independence could be significant¹⁰.

We believe the offer could be missing:

- A clear commitment to paid kinship leave
- Stronger employment protections and flexible working rights
- Formal recognition of kinship caring as a distinct caregiving status within employment and equality frameworks
- National respite guarantees

The SWC has emphasised within many of our publications that women's unpaid caring roles are directly linked to economic inequality¹¹.

4. Are there supports you currently struggle to access that should be prioritised nationally?

Yes. Across Scotland, the women we have spoken to have reported difficulties in accessing:¹²

- Consistent financial support and clearer information on financial entitlement
- Mental health services for both carers and children
- Legal advice regarding guardianship and permanence orders
- Respite care and support

Access often varies significantly between local authorities. A national framework must ensure that support is not based on geographical location and should be consistent across Scotland.

We also urge the prioritisation of:

- Intersectional support recognising disability, ethnicity, rural isolation and age
- Data collection disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, disability and income

It would be important to note, that women from marginalised communities may face additional barriers in navigating systems and accessing entitlements¹³.

⁸ Carers UK *State of Caring: Experience of Female Unpaid Carers (2024)* [final-state-of-caring-2024-iwd-brief.pdf](#)

⁹ Scottish Women's Convention *The Impact of Poverty on Women* [Poverty Full Report 2024](#)

¹⁰ Scottish Women's Convention *Scottish Carer's Assistance Consultation Response* [scottish-carers-assistance-consultation.pdf](#)

¹¹ Scottish Women's Convention *Scottish Carer's Assistance Consultation Response* [scottish-carers-assistance-consultation.pdf](#)

¹² Kinship (UK) *Handle with Care* ([kinship.org.uk](#))

¹³ Scottish Government *Keeping the Promise: Health & Wellbeing Evidence Review* [Keeping the Promise - health and wellbeing of care experienced children and young people: longitudinal quantitative evidence review - gov.scot](#)

¹⁴ Scottish Women's Convention *Scottish Carer's Assistance Consultation Response* [scottish-carers-assistance-consultation.pdf](#)

5. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the vision or offer for kinship care?

From the women we have spoken to it has been recognised that kinship care is not only a children's policy issue but also a gender equality issue.

Women help sustain Scotland's kinship care system through unpaid, often invisible work. Any national vision must therefore align with Scotland's wider gender equality and anti-poverty strategies.

As the Scottish Women's Convention has stated:

“If women's caring roles are not properly recognised and resourced, inequality will continue to widen.”¹⁴

We support the direction of the vision but urge the Scottish Government to embed gender-responsive implementation at every stage. Recognising and resourcing the women who sustain kinship care is essential not only for children's wellbeing but for the entire social justice system in Scotland.

Conclusion

The SWC is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on Vision for Kindship Care. 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.

For further information or to share your views, please contact:

Email - info@scottishwomensconvention.org

Telephone - 0141 339 4797

Website – www.scottishwomensconvention.org

Facebook, X & Instagram - @SWCwomen

Scottish Women's Convention is a charitable company limited by guarantee. Registered in Scotland No. SC0327308. Registered office The Albany Centre, 2nd Floor, 44 Ashley Street. Glasgow G3 6DS.
The Scottish Women's Convention is a Charity Registered in Scotland, No. SC0398525

