



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL
AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Comments on the Fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland

April 2009

ENGENDER is a women's organisation based in Scotland and working on a feminist, anti-sexist agenda. Our aim is to make visible the impact of sexism on women, men, children, society and our social, cultural, economic, and political development. We do this by making the causes and impact of women's inequality visible, promoting gender equality in policy and practice and increasing women's power and influence. Our policy priorities are Women's poverty, Violence against women and Women's representation in decision-making.

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Executive Summary

We believe that it is extremely important to use the UN mechanisms for the advancement of women to express our views in an international arena and have contributed to CEDAW and CSW. This is our first submission to the ECOSOC Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We have consulted individual and organisational members to identify key areas in which we would like to see greater progress. We are commenting on the Covenant General Framework and Articles 2 (2), 3, 6, 9,11,12. Key questions are included in the text.

1. The Scottish Government is a devolved primary legislature within the UK. Currently, the profile of equality issues and analysis in the Scottish budget documents is minimal. It is essential for the Government to empower the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to use its powers to work for effective realisation of rights to equality and human rights within its role as the national body charged with that remit.
2. The Gender Equality Duty (GED) is still new, but already is to be repealed and drawn into a Single Equality Duty, under the UK Government proposals for the Single Equality Bill. This Single Equality Duty must be drawn to drive more substantive equality.
3. The Modern Apprenticeship scheme is one example of the manifestation of occupational segregation within the Scottish labour market. The question of who is accountable for taking this forward is key given the clear evidence base for action.
4. The 2008 index of women in positions of authority and influence in Scotland shows an emerging trend of reversal or stalled progress, with only a few significant increases. It is vital that the Government should demonstrate real commitment to closing the power gap, with true representation for ALL groups of women.
5. According to the Department for Work and Pension's own statistics, at least one in five women in the United Kingdom live in poverty. Career breaks, low pay and/or caring responsibilities mean that over 4.3 million women pensioners across the UK have failed to build up sufficient National Insurance (NI) contributions to qualify for the full basic state pension. The Government must consider introducing changes retrospectively to reforms planned for 2010 that will not help current women pensioners or reduce the sharp differences in entitlement between people reaching pension age before that date.
6. Current government strategy – with its focus on work as the key route out of poverty – is only partially effective. The Government needs to include a focus within Workforce Plus and the Employability Learning Network to recognise and address that women are amongst the most disadvantaged in the labour market in terms of low pay, insecurity, discrimination and family unfriendly practice.
7. It is vitally important for Government to recognise the role of carers in society in terms of health care planning. They should demonstrate their commitment to supporting carers through considering options such as, introducing a campaign targeted at general practitioners, a nation-wide public information campaign and a respite and short breaks awareness campaign.

I. GENERAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH THE COVENANT IS IMPLEMENTED

Scottish government Budget process

Gender budget analysis and the provision of resources for the advancement of women have been a core component of national government actions to promote mainstreaming in directions from the UN since the Beijing Global Platform for Action, and repeatedly endorsed by ECOSOC, firstly through ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, and in subsequent reports, reviews and resolutions through ECOSOC and CSW, including most recently the 52nd session of the CSW in 2008¹.

As noted in review reports presented to and commissioned by ECOSOC over the last 12 years, national government actions (globally) have not met the UN standards. The Scottish Government is a devolved primary legislature within the UK, with a spending budget of some £33billion. The first policy commitment to “equality proof the Scottish Budget” was given in the Scottish Executive *Equality Strategy* 2000. This Strategy has not been reviewed or renewed since 2001.

The internal mechanism established to support a cross-government approach to mainstreaming equality in the Scottish Government budgetary process, the “Equality Proofing Budgets Policy Advisory Group”, has met three times since the end of 2006². The budgets presented by the current Scottish Government since 2007 have not been subject to Equality Impact Assessment, despite the requirements of Public Sector Duties on gender, race and disability equality, pressure from the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament, and the Scottish Women’s Budget Group (SWBG), ENGENDER and other social partners. Currently the profile of equality issues and analysis in the Scottish budget documents is minimal.

The Scottish Women’s Budget Group (SWBG) is a voluntary group of feminist women, in existence since 1999, and has successfully maintained a political focus and profile on the visibility of equality analysis of the budget process and programme content. Working with the support of ENGENDER and other NGOs, SWBG has consistently raised concerns on the absence of actions and outcomes and a demonstrable and active commitment to mainstreaming equality in the Scottish budget process. SWBG is regarded as a credible and authoritative voice (Gradus, 2005), and works effectively with members of the Scottish Parliament across all parties, and in concert with a wide range of social partners (see www.swbg.org.uk). SWBG and ENGENDER are deeply concerned at the lack of progress at both the Scottish and UK Government levels on gender budget analysis as an action for national governments proposed by the UN.

¹ Including: ECOSOC WOM/1679, Agreed Conclusions and Press release 13 March 2008; CSW Report on 52nd session; Resolution 2005/31; Resolution E/2004/INF/2/Add.2 ECOSOC 2004 Coordination Segment, Issues Papers; E/2004/CRP.4, “Mainstreaming Gender perspectives at the intergovernmental level”, Note by Secretariat; Resolution 1999/17; E/2000/57 “Assessment of progress...”, Report of Secretary-General; E/CN.17/1997/2/Add.2.

² Scottish Government website, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/18507/13477>

Gender Equality Duty

The introduction of the Gender Equality Duty (GED) in the UK offers significant potential in addressing structural inequality and institutional practices which can contribute to discrimination and unequal practices and outcomes. The GED is still new, but already is to be repealed and drawn into a Single Equality Duty, under the UK government proposals for the Single Equality Bill. This raises a number of specific concerns around the visibility of gender equality in practice and legal imperative. The current implementation and exercise of the ministerial duties in Scotland is weak, as the specific objectives have not been issued, 18 months into the action period. This gives rise to concerns as to the potency of the ministerial duties to be included in new legislation and the strength of political will in supporting effective exercise of these duties and implementation of Public Sector Duties generally.

Evidence of gender analysis in current Scottish Government policy platforms, including the Government Economic Strategy (2007), National Performance Framework (Scottish Budget and Spending Plans 2007), Skill Strategy (2009), Government Economic Recovery Programme (2009), and Anti-poverty Framework (2008) is limited. The declared position of the Scottish Government is not to direct public bodies on specific actions to promote equality. This has resulted in an absence of gender analysis and impact assessment from public sector financial and service planning reform, and performance management measures, such as the Single Outcome Agreements, and the Scottish Budget.

Moving into an era of the Single Equality Bill with provisions for a Single Equality Duty, there is a number of key issues for scrutiny and monitoring, including:

- gender outcomes from single equality schemes
- visibility of gender in legislative and policy developments at all levels of governance, including public bodies, local authorities, EHRC, Scottish Government and Westminster Government.

Members of the CEDAW Committee of the UN in 2008 expressed their concern about the visibility of gender within the remit and operations of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)³. These concerns are increasingly apposite with the introduction of a single equalities approach in the public sector duties. The EHRC must be empowered to use its powers as a regulator to enforce compliance, and to work for effective realisation of rights to equality and human rights within its role as the national body charged with that remit.

Key questions

- 1 How will the Government empower the EHRC to use its powers as a regulator to enforce compliance, and to work for effective realisation of rights to equality and human rights within its role as the national body charged with that remit?**
- 2 How can the Single Equality Duty be drawn to drive more substantive equality, given the Gender Equality Duty's clear weakness in leveraging action on a well-evidenced and significant gender inequality?**

³ CEDAW/C/SR.843, CEDAW/C/SR.844

II. ISSUES RELATING TO THE GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT (Arts. 1-5)

Article 2, paragraph 2 – Non-discrimination

3. Racial, ethnic and national minorities

People belonging to racial, ethnic and national minorities continue to experience discrimination in the fields of employment, housing, health and education and law. After the McPherson Report (*The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, Cm 4262-I, 1999), the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 gave public authorities a statutory general duty to promote race equality. The aim of the general duty is to make promoting race equality central to the way public authorities work, including schools. The general duty says that the body must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. After nearly ten years it has not made much impact in eradicating such discrimination. The state needs to address the institutional discrimination within these establishments and also within the law enforcement and the crown. Discrimination prevails throughout institutional systems.

- Ethnic minority people are more likely to be discriminated in employment regardless of the high standard of education they may have. There is no progression route for them in employment within the mainstream organisations.
- The pay gap is greater within the ethnic minority sector than the mainstream organisations; the ethnic minorities are still segregated and treated less favourably.
- Little effort has been made to provide good housing: people still have to wait for years on local authority waiting lists for housing appropriate to family size or extended family culture.
- The education system still lets the ethnic minority communities down: children still under-achieve due to lack of support from teachers, especially in secondary schools and especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi children.

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4. There seems to be little awareness of the Covenant, its provisions and their application amongst the public at large. We are not aware of any specific measures taken by the State party to increase general awareness of the Covenant. "Policies come down from the state but they are not implemented. Consultation happens, but there is no monitoring process. It is, to an extent, a paper exercise."

(Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructures in Scotland (BEMIS))

Since the Discrimination Law Review, there have been no race case convictions in Scotland. However, the police have been recording complaints on the ground of race and taking them seriously. (BEMIS)

Key questions

- 3 **With the forthcoming Single Equality Act, what is the Government's commitment to closing the power gap, with true representation for all groups of women, including ethnic minority women, disabled women, working class women, lesbians, transgender and bisexual women (LTGB) and women of all ages and faiths?**

4 What safeguards are being put in place for LGTB people as the UK integrates religion and belief into the Equality and Human Rights legislation?

Article 3 - Equal rights of men and women

8. (Comments also relate to Article 6 – The right to work)

Gender pay gap

Scotland currently has a gender pay gap of 14 per cent, if the hourly pay of full-time women is compared to that of men. For part-time women the gap is significantly larger, with the hourly pay 33 per cent less than that of full-time men⁴.

Within Scotland, concern around equal pay has been focused in a number of areas. These include Single Status, which is attempting to redress equal value issues within local government on a zero-cost basis. The Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament concentrated its scrutiny of Budget 2009/10 on this issue and heard evidence from the Equality and Human Rights Commission and other gender experts⁵ as well as Audit Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities⁶.

Many of the recent formal investigations carried out by the Equal Opportunities Commission have also related to the gender pay gap, including an investigation into the low pay and undervaluation of Classroom Assistants⁷, the experiences of black and minority ethnic women in the labour market⁸, and the vertical discrimination experienced by women lawyers⁹.

The report of the Women and Work Commission, *Shaping a Fairer Future*¹⁰, rehearsed the causes underpinning the gender pay gap. Although there are differences between the Scottish, English and Welsh labour markets, the causes of the pay gap are very similar across the UK¹¹. However, the possible solutions to the causes are rendered different by the devolution settlements in Scotland and Wales and for this reason there was disappointment that the Women and Work Commission did not contain a representative from Scotland.

⁴ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2008)

⁵ [Link to report of September 30 2008](#)

⁶ [Link to official report](#)

⁷ [Classroom Assistants GFI reference](#)

⁸ [Moving on up GFI reference](#)

⁹ [Lawyers vert seg reference](#)

¹⁰ Women and Work Commission (2006) *Shaping a Fairer Future* London: Department of Trade and Industry

¹¹ Olsen, W., and S. Walby (2004) *Modelling Gender Pay Gaps* Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

- Recommendations for action by the UK Government and non-departmental public bodies (NDPB) were made by the Women and Work Commission around: vertical and horizontal occupational segregation; balancing work and family life; undervaluation of women's work and poverty; and equal pay structures.
- The largest number of recommendations referred to horizontal occupational segregation and balancing work and family life, with few recommendations around tackling structural pay discrimination. The report included the discussions that the Women and Work Commission had around the benefits and costs of introducing mandatory pay audits and its reasons for declining to recommend that these be introduced.
- Eleven of the 40 recommendations specifically called for a Scottish response, as they related to matters devolved to the Scottish administration by the Scotland Act (1998). The cause of the pay gap that the Scottish Government and public bodies in Scotland arguably have most influence over, other than as employers, is occupational segregation. This is because education and lifelong learning are devolved matters.

The Scottish Executive (now the Scottish Government) responded to *Shaping a Fairer Future* with indications of activity that the Scottish Executive was taking forward under each recommendation¹². This paralleled the response from the UK Department for Communities and Local Government¹³.

The Scottish report echoed *Shaping a Fairer Future* in identifying horizontal occupational segregation as an issue that cuts across Ministerial portfolios. A cross-departmental group was identified as a mechanism for:

- a) Addressing the recommendations of the UK Women and Work Commission;
- b) Enabling the Executive [now Government] to prepare for the action planning aspect of the Gender Equality Duty;
- c) Continuing to address the recommendations of the Strategic Group on Women¹⁴; and
- d) Supporting the work of the Close the Gap partnership¹⁵.

¹² Scottish Executive (2006) *Scottish Executive Action to Implement the Women and Work Commission's Recommendations* Scottish Government website:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/154279/0041448.pdf>

¹³ Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) *Government Action Plan: Implementing the Women and Work Commission Recommendations* London: DCLG

¹⁴ In 2003, the Strategic Group on Women, a short-life group set up by the then Minister for Social Justice, produced a report which looked across a number of areas where it was felt targeted action was required to tackle gendered inequalities. Occupational segregation was one area included in the report.

¹⁵ Close the Gap is a partnership initiative that works with employers and employees to encourage and enable action to address the gender pay gap. Partners include the Scottish

This occupational segregation working group (OSWG) met through 2007 and 2008 and reported in 2008¹⁶. Although the group's term was bisected by a change of political administration in Scotland, it is nonetheless disappointing that the actions identified in the final report of the group did not include any substantive action by the Scottish Government or non-departmental public bodies, except for a marketing campaign to attract men into primary school teaching.

A particular focus of Scottish activity around occupational segregation has been the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. This scheme, on which in excess of £50m is spent annually in Scotland, is the key Government initiative for vocational education and training. For a significant number of school leavers it comprises an entry point to the labour market.

In September 2003 the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) began a general formal investigation (GFI) into the segregation of women and men in training at work. Preliminary research found "evidence of a gender split between the 'traditional' (male dominated) and 'non-traditional' (female dominated) frameworks."¹⁷

The participation rates for specific frameworks, as at April 2004, spoke starkly of entrenched gendered occupational segregation in those frameworks analysed, with the exception of ICT.

TABLE 1: MA PARTICIPATION IN SCOTLAND (April 2004) ¹⁸

| SECTOR | TOTAL (number) | TOTAL (male) | TOTAL (female) | % FEMALE |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------|
| Plumbing | 1238 | 1234 | 4 | 0.4% |
| Construction | 5848 | 5807 | 41 | 0.7% |
| Engineering | 2084 | 2034 | 50 | 2.4% |
| ICT | 310 | 156 | 154 | 49.7% |
| Childcare | 980 | 15 | 965 | 98.5% |

Although a number of recommendations was made by the EOC in terms of activity that the Scottish Executive, Scottish Enterprise, and Local Enterprise Companies should take forward to militate against gendered segregation, the then Scottish Executive focused its activity on the occupational segregation working group (OSWG). Before the OSWG was established, the EOC produced a progress report¹⁹ in 2006. This report reiterated the damaging effect of occupational segregation on the economy; the undervaluation of women's work and the fact of women's concentration in low paid and low status jobs;

Government, Scottish Enterprise, STUC, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

¹⁶ Macpherson, S., *Tackling Occupational Segregation in Scotland: A Report of Activities from the Scottish Government Cross-Directorate Occupational Segregation Working Group*. Edinburgh: Employment Research Institute

¹⁷ Thomson, E., McKay, A., Campbell, J., and M. Gillespie (2005) *Jobs for the Boys and the Girls: Promoting a Smart, Successful and Equal Scotland* Glasgow: EOC

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Equal Opportunities Commission (2006) *Occupational Segregation in Scotland: Progress Report* Glasgow: EOC

and the perpetuation of occupational segregation in the wider labour market. It further noted that the potential existed for the Modern Apprenticeship programme to challenge occupational segregation.

The EOC observed that take-up rates had not improved since the first phase of research and, in their gendered analysis of the pay rates of apprentices, noted that for those age 17 in 2003, working full-time and in jobs with skill seekers or modern apprenticeships, men earned an average of £115 per week (after deductions), women earned £80. This represents a 31% gender pay gap. The pay gap for those age 17 working full-time and in jobs with no associated training programme is 13%.

Although the establishment of the OSWG was a very positive step, it ultimately made no recommendations around the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme. This lack of substantive action was echoed in the gender equality scheme (GES) of the Scottish Government²⁰, produced as part of the Scottish Government's work to comply with the Gender Equality Duty, which contains no actions around Modern Apprenticeships within its action plan. Similarly, Skills Development Scotland, a non-departmental body that is fully accountable to Scottish Ministers and which has operational responsibility for Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), also has no substantive actions around MAs within its own equality scheme²¹. Its single equality scheme²² indicates that MAs will be equality impact assessed in 2009, but contains no other analysis, detail or information.

The Modern Apprenticeship scheme is one example of the manifestation of occupational segregation within the Scottish labour market. However, it is significant because the evidence base for action is overwhelming and yet very little action has been taken forward. No other single cause of the gender pay gap has attracted such sustained focus from statutory Commissions, the Scottish Government, trade unions, and non-governmental organisations promoting gender equality in recent years. Nor is any single cause of the gender pay gap almost solely within the ambit of public sector bodies, to which the Gender Equality Duty applies. It is a matter of significant concern, then, that substantive action to address gender inequality within the Modern Apprenticeship scheme has been neither planned nor implemented. (*CtheG*)

Key questions

5 Who is accountable for the lack of action on Modern Apprenticeships, given the clear evidence base for action?

See also key question 2 above: How can the Single Equality Duty be drawn to drive more substantive equality, given the Gender Equality Duty's clear weakness in leveraging action on a well-evidenced and significant gender inequality?

²⁰ Scottish Government (2007) *Gender Equality Scheme 2008 – 2011* Edinburgh: Scottish Government (online) <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/227413/0061507.pdf>

²¹ Skills Development Scotland (2008) *Equality Scheme – Interim 2008* Glasgow: Skills Development Scotland

²² Public bodies can elect to meet the requirement on them to publish gender, race and disability equality schemes by publishing one single scheme that incorporates a response to each of the public sector duties and meets each duty's specific requirements.

9. The fifth annual index of women in positions of authority and influence in Scotland shows the trend that is emerging is one of reversal or stalled progress, with only a few significant increases. (EHRC, 2008)

In three of the 14 categories, there are fewer women holding top posts as Members of the Scottish Parliament 34.1% (down from 38.8% 2006/7), public appointments 32.4% (down from 34.7% 2006/7) and senior police officers 7.4% (down from 10.7% 2006/7).

In another seven categories, the number of women remains unchanged since the 2007 index. These are local authority council leaders 18.8%, Members of Parliament for Scottish Constituencies 13.6%, Scottish Members of the European Parliament 28.6%, Judges of the Court of Session 11.8%, local authority chief executives 12.5%, university principals 21.4% and health service chief executives 23.8%.

Women's representation has increased in just four areas, Ministers in the Scottish Parliament 31.3% (up from 27.8% 2006/7), head teachers in secondary schools 25.9% (up from 23.3% 2006/7), further education college principals 29.5% (up from 27.3% 2006/7) and trade union general secretaries or equivalent 20.6% (up from 18.6% 2006/7).

Looking back over the full five years since *Sex and Power* was published, Scotland has made slow progress and in some cases has seen stagnation. This lack of progress is depressing given the aspirations that women held for political representation in a devolved Scotland. However, we do welcome the recent (2008) publication of the Scottish Commissioner for Public Appointments' *Diversity Strategy*.

Key question

- **See question 3 above: With the forthcoming Single Equality Act, what is the Government's commitment to closing the power gap, with true representation for all groups of women, including ethnic minority women, disabled women, working class women, lesbians, transgender and bisexual women (LTGB) and women of all ages and faiths?**

III. ISSUES RELATING TO THE SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT (Arts. 6-15)

Article 6 - The right to work

10. See comments on Article 3.8 above, Modern Apprenticeships.

Article 9 – The right to social security

16. See comments on Articles 11, 12 below.

18. Policy and practice addressing violence against women in Scotland has for the most part enjoyed cross-party support in Scotland since devolution, and the Scottish Partnership to Address Domestic Abuse and its policy product, the National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse (2000)²³ established the first national gendered definition of domestic abuse in the UK based on the principles agreed at the Beijing Platform for Action. The Scottish Government, working closely with the National Group on Violence Against Women, has broadened the Scottish national policy focus from domestic abuse only to the wider phenomenon of violence against women (VAW).

Consultation with Scottish NGOs working on VAW is planned to produce a mechanism for feeding in to European and international fora regarding Scottish progress.

Article 11 – The right to an adequate standard of living

22. The key measure of poverty used by Scottish, UK, and European governments considers relative income. Those with incomes below 60% of the UK median are considered to be poor as their incomes are so far from the norm that they face problems participating effectively in society. In 2006-07, relative poverty affected around 840,000 individuals – 17% of Scotland's population:

- 210,000 children
- 440,000 working age adults
- 180,000 pensioners – around 20% of all pensioners in Scotland.

Women's poverty

According to the Department for Work and Pension's own statistics, about one in five women in the United Kingdom live in poverty²⁴. This is a conservative figure because poverty is measured at the household rather than individual level.

The Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey found that women are 'more likely to be poor on all four dimensions of poverty (namely: lacking two or more necessities; earning below 60 per cent median income; subjective poverty; and receiving Income Support)²⁵.

Women's poverty is also affected by their diverse identities: For example, 20% of white women are living in poverty but the figures are 38% for Black women and 64% for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women²⁶.

Based on the latest available data, child and pensioner poverty in Scotland has fallen over the last decade while poverty among working age adults has remained the same²⁷.

²³ www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/law/stra-00.asp

²⁴ DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) (2007a) *Households Below Average Income 2005–06*. Available at www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2006/contents.asp

²⁵ Bradshaw, J., Finch, N., Kemp, P., Mayhew, E. and Williams, J. (2003) *Gender and Poverty in Britain*, Working Paper Series No. 6. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

²⁶ Fawcett Society and WBG (2006) *Response to Opportunity for All, the Seventh Annual Report for 2005 of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)*. London: Fawcett Society and WBG

²⁷ Peter Kenway, Tom MacInnes and Guy Palmer (2008) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Scotland 2008* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

Child poverty

In 1999 the then UK Prime Minister Tony Blair announced the historic aim of ending child poverty within a generation. The central objective of ensuring that children do not have to live in households with incomes below a certain level, relative to contemporary norms, has produced some specific target milestones. These are that the percentage of children in households with below 60 per cent median income should fall from its 1998/99 level by half by 2010 and to a minimal level (variously interpreted as between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of children) by 2020. The Scottish government has made clear its commitment this aim and after two decades of growth, child poverty has started to fall, although not fast enough to meet targets.

Certainly the child poverty rate in Scotland is now among the lowest in the UK, at 25%. The fall of one-fifth in the Scottish child poverty rate since the late 1990s is similar to that in Wales and the north of England and has remained at 25% for three years in a row. However, the reason why Scotland's performance exceeds that of Great Britain as a whole is that the fall in the other English regions has been negligible.

By narrowly focusing on *child* poverty, the Government's anti-poverty policy has obscured the gender dimension of poverty. It is essential that the Government consider women and men's poverty in their own right, but especially given that women are still more likely than men to experience poverty in the UK (DWP, 2007). Moreover, despite the statutory Gender Equality Duty which came into effect in April 2007, a thorough gender analysis of the Government's anti-poverty policies has not yet taken place.

Pensioner poverty

The number of pensioners in poverty in Scotland has come down by more than 100,000 since the late 1990s. However with less than 12% of women receiving the full basic state pension and with a woman's average retirement income estimated at around 53% of a man's – many women find themselves at much greater risk of poverty in old age.

Career breaks, low pay and/or caring responsibilities mean that over 4.3 million women pensioners across the UK have failed to build up sufficient National Insurance (NI) contributions to qualify for the full basic state pension.

Reforms promised for 2010 should alleviate the position. The Government has decided that from 2010 everyone, male and female, can qualify for a full pension with NI contributions and credits of just 30 years. And it has now gone a step further by allowing many women to 'plug' gaps by allowing them to 'buy back' missing years.

This is all taking place against a background of women having to work potentially to age 68 to receive the pension their older sisters received at age 60.

Work as the route out of poverty

Current government strategy – with its focus on work as the key route out of poverty – is only partially effective.

- Half the children and working age adults living in poverty are living in households where an adult works.
 - Four out of ten (39%) of children in poverty are in single mother households.
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- A further three out of ten (29%) are in households where the father works full-time, but the mother is on low income or no income.
- In addition, statistics show that lone mothers are at double the risk of being in poverty as couples with children.

Low-paid workers are twice as likely to be female as male, and there are equal numbers of low-paid part-timers and low-paid full-timers. This is despite the fact that part-timers only make up a quarter of the workforce (in other words, the 'risk' of low pay among part-timers is three times that of full-timers).

Less well-known, but for policy purposes deserving of greater prominence, is the fact that just over a fifth of all low-paid workers are employed directly within the public sector.

The Scottish Government's *Solidarity* target makes the commitment to increase the share of income received by the poorest 30% of the population in Scotland by 2017.

This group contains:

- 1,500,000 individuals in 850,000 families;
- 370,000 children;
- 370,000 pensioners; and
- 760,000 people of working age.

In 2006-07, these households collectively received only 14% of Scotland's income, whereas the richest 30% received over half. Families in the three lowest income deciles had an average weekly income of around £220, whereas those in the highest three received around £630 per week.

Key questions

- 6 Will the Government consider ways of introducing changes retrospectively to help current women pensioners and to reduce the sharp differences in entitlement between people reaching pension age before and after the 2010 reforms?**
- 7 How will the Government include a focus within Workforce Plus and the Employability Learning Network to recognise and address that women are amongst the most disadvantaged in the labour market in terms of low pay, insecurity, discrimination and family unfriendly practice?**

Article 12 – The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

- 26.** Comments also refer to Article 9 above.

The following is input from an Edinburgh-based consultation with carers about caring policy. (*Open Space Day conference: Carers and caring, Edinburgh, March 09*)

Importance of the role of carers in society: Points for health care planning

- What value is placed on carers' role in society?

- Community support/networks needed for carers. Service delivery at local level; strategic development/vision at citywide/national level
- Need a national media national campaign about what and who are the carers. It is vital that people identify *themselves* as carers
- Be positive about caring while recognising carers' need for support. Engaging or requesting support is positive – not a sign of weakness or failure. Getting support is an achievement – people taking control of own lives

Top 6 Actions

- **Campaign targeted at general practitioners (GPs), single point of contact for carers' support** GP initial point of contact – links with health vital. Ensure GPs and other NHS staff undertake carer awareness training
- **Ensure public awareness of the role/duty local authorities have to them** Wide public information campaign. Use appropriate language – define “carer”
- **Respite and short breaks awareness campaign** – publicly funded. Action by local government, Scottish MPs, and support organisations
- **One-stop shop** for advice – lack of accessible information – should be easily found. Mobile phone access. Action by Care Commission
- **GP referral pathway** – GP referral pathway – dedicated NHS carer workers who will refer to *local* carer support organisations or projects.

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