



Engender Parliamentary Briefing: International Women's Day 2019

BALANCE FOR BETTER

1. Engender as a feminist organisation

Engender works to give effect to women's equality and rights at local, national and international level, increase women's access to power, safety, and resources, and to make visible the impact of sexism on women, men and society. With over 25 years' experience in gendered policy and advocacy, we are ambitious in our desires to build a Scotland which secures equality for all women, and which works collaboratively with international and Scottish partners.

This briefing outlines some of the key areas of Engender's work on the persistent inequality that women still experience in Scotland.

2. International Women's Day 2019

This year's International Women's Day adopts the theme of **#BalanceForBetter** and provides an opportunity to reflect on both the ways in which structural gender inequality continues to constrain women's lives in Scotland, and the political will and action needed to tackle it. Women still carry out the majority of unpaid care and household labour as a result of traditional gender roles. This is one of the factors underpinning the fact that women are still chronically under-represented in elected office and public life, including leadership of private companies, public bodies, and in academia.¹

GENDER EQUALITY IN SCOTLAND IN 2019

1. Welfare reform and economic inequality

It is estimated that **86% of the cumulative impact of UK 'welfare reform' and public services service cuts will come from women's budgets by 2020.**² Other research has

¹ Engender (2017) Sex and Power

² Women's Budget Group (2016) The impact on women of the 2016 Budget: Women paying for the Chancellor's tax cuts

demonstrated that Universal Credit operates as “discrimination by design”³ due to its disproportionately negative impact on women’s income and access to resources, and the UN Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty described it as “so sexist” it may as well have been compiled by “a group of misogynists in a room”. The introduction of the ‘family cap’ and the ‘rape clause’ have amounted to state intrusion into women’s reproductive choices which undermine their autonomy and can re-traumatise women by forcing them to disclose that one of their children was conceived as a result of rape.

Alongside fellow national women’s organisations **we’ve consistently argued for the UC household payment to be split automatically at application**⁴ and for entitlements relating to children to be allocated to the main carer⁵ in order to ensure women have an independent income and financial autonomy, which somewhat mitigates the risk of financial abuse. While we welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment to gender mainstreaming through the new social security system and agency through the principle of equality and non-discrimination in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018, we continue to push for measures which meaningfully address the egregious reduction of women’s incomes, especially those facing multiple inequalities who have been even more affected.⁶

2. The Gender Pay Gap

Women in Scotland earn an average of 14% less than men, a figure which rises to 30% for part time workers.⁷ The pay gap is a result of multiple overlapping factors such as occupational segregation and the economic undervaluation of stereotypical female work; the disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and reproductive and domestic labour; and discrimination in pay systems. 63% of workers on poverty wages in Scotland are women,⁸ many of whom are clustered in low-skilled, precarious and/or part-time work.

Alongside Close the Gap, we’ve been developing recommendations for Scotland’s first ever **Gender Pay Gap Strategy**, which will be ambitious, require collaboration across a wide range of actors, and boldly tackle some of the intransigent structural issues at the heart of the pay gap.

³<http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/something-needs-saying-about-universal-credit-and-women-%E2%80%93-it-discrimination-design>

⁴ Engender (2016) Gender Matters in Social Security: Individual Payments of Universal Credit

⁵ Engender (2015) Securing Women’s Futures

⁶ Engender (2015) Securing Women’s Futures

⁷ ONS *Annual Survey for Hours and Earnings 2018*, For more information about to pay gap, see Close the Gap (2018) Everything you wanted to know about the gender pay gap but were afraid to ask

⁸ Scottish Parliament Information Centre (2017) The Living wage: facts and figures 2017 43

3. Violence against women

Men's violence against women and girls is perpetrated at epidemic levels in Scotland.⁹ Reported instances of rape and attempted rape increased by 99% between 2010/11 and 2017/18,¹⁰ and police recorded 59,541 calls related to domestic abuse in 2017-18, an increase of 1% compared to the previous year.¹¹ Disabled women's rights are violated at even more acute levels, with studies indicating that 73% of disabled women have experienced domestic abuse and 43% have been sexually assaulted.¹²

Scotland's violence against women strategy, Equally Safe,¹³ adopts a feminist analysis of men's violence by making explicit the link between VAWG and women's inequality. However, realising its ambitions will require bold action and collaboration between the women's sector, Scottish Government, and public bodies. Although Scotland will implement its new, world-leading,¹⁴ Domestic Abuse law on 1 April, women and children experiencing domestic abuse can rarely access competent, affordable, and timely legal services. This gap is exacerbated by cuts to funding for support services (over 80% of local organisations across Scotland have seen yet another year of cuts or standstill funding).¹⁵

In 2016 more than half (53%) of women in Great Britain had experienced some form of harassment within the last month.¹⁶ Online misogyny has also increased dramatically in recent years, with 21% of women polled in the UK reporting having experienced online abuse or harassment at least once.¹⁷ Engender has been engaging with the Scottish Government's Consultation on Hate Crime, as well as the earlier Independent Review of Hate Crime by Lord Bracadale, to demonstrate that there is a **need to reflect the profound impact that misogynistic harassment has on women's autonomy, wellbeing, safety, and freedom of expression, by developing a standalone piece of legislation to tackle egregious misogynistic hate crime.**

4. Women and Public Space

Women navigate public space in a different way to men due to pre-existing gender inequalities which dictate how women use different public services and buildings. For

⁹ Scottish Government (2017) Equally Safe: A delivery plan for Scotland's strategy to prevent VAWG

¹⁰ Scottish Government (2018) Recorded crime in Scotland, 2017-18

¹¹ Scottish Government (2018) Domestic Abuse Recorded By The Police In Scotland, 2017-18

¹² Wise Women (2015) Daisy project: violence against disabled women survey; Balderston (2013) Victimised again? Intersectionality and injustice in disabled women's lives after hate crime and rape; ONS (2018) Women most at risk of experiencing partner abuse in England and Wales: years ending March 2015 to 2017

¹³ Scottish Government (2016) Equally Safe: national strategy

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/feb/01/scotland-set-to-pass-gold-standard-domestic-abuse-law>

¹⁵ Scottish Women's Aid, Funding Survey, 2016-2017.

¹⁶ <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/latest-news/three-in-four-women-uk-world-harassed-in-last-month>

¹⁷ Amnesty International (2017) Toxic Twitter - Women's Experiences Of Violence And Abuse On Twitter

example, women rely more on public transport, are more likely to ‘trip-chain’¹⁸ their journeys due to caring responsibilities and working patterns and are increasingly balancing journeys for work and childcare.¹⁹

The design of our urban spaces does not reflect women’s experiences, rooted in their exclusion from public life. This includes considering safety and lighting, inadequate public toilets and separation between employment opportunities, particularly those better paid, and the residential areas and services women have traditionally been confined to by gendered domestic roles. None of the seven Scottish Government documents on planning strategy mention gender or women.²⁰ **Engender has been pushing for amendments to the Planning Bill which would require local planning officials to consider women’s needs and use of public space when creating development plans.** This would contribute to better gender mainstreaming²¹ throughout planning and the built environment, in order to enable women to more easily participate in public space activities.

5. Health inequalities

Women’s experiences of accessing healthcare continue to be different from men’s in Scotland, and women’s particular needs are often relatively invisible in health service design and delivery. Sexist assumptions about women contribute to systemic failures in care. For example, endometriosis affects 1 in 10 women of reproductive age and is the second most common gynaecological condition in the UK, yet diagnosis takes an average of 7.5 years.²² Mental health is an aspect of health policy which is also poorly gendered, with the Scottish Government’s Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 mentioning women only three times.²³

There is a need for improved intersectional evidence regarding women’s experiences of pregnancy and birth in order to understand the impacts of barriers to broader aspects of physical and mental health. Our report *Our Bodies Our Rights*, published in November 2018, highlighted failures across policy and services to give effect to disabled women’s rights, including that many disabled women were not able to access cervical screening at their GP surgery, that consent and autonomy concerning reproduction (including forced sterilisation, access to abortion, and decisions regarding contraception) is in many cases not sought or bypassed, and that there is an absence of perinatal and maternal support for disabled women including childbirth, breastfeeding, menstruation and childcare. Services must substantively improve their

¹⁸ At its most basic level, a chained trip includes a stop on the way to another destination, and is used to describe indirect journeys for multiple purposes as part of a single period of travel.

¹⁹ Fawcett Society (2016) *Parents, work and care: Striking the balance*. London: Fawcett Society.

²⁰ Engender (2018) *Local Government And Communities Committee Planning (Scotland) Bill Parliamentary Briefing*

²¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-strategy-2017-2027/>

²² NICE (2017) *Endometriosis: diagnosis and management*

²³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-strategy-2017-2027/>

response to disabled women's needs for reproductive health and care services, including sex education for learning disabled women.²⁴

6. Representation of women in the media

The representation of women across the media commonly contributes to sexist ideas regarding the reinforcing of traditional gender roles and the objectification of women's bodies. Reporting of gendered violence continues to perpetrate myths around the 'causes' of violence which can encourage victim-blaming and seek justifications for perpetrators.²⁵

In addition to poor coverage women are also significantly under-represented in the media with an overwhelming lack of gender balance across all media platforms in the UK.²⁶ In 2017 every single major Scottish newspaper and national broadcaster was headed by a man, ultimate responsibility for content, production, and equality and diversity.²⁷ Engender works with academics, journalists, campaign groups and organisations through the **Gender Equal Media Scotland project to transform Scotland's media** - using research, events and campaigns to challenge sexism in the media and change gendered employment practices which still prevail across the sector.

7. The impact of unpaid care for women's social and economic equality

Much of the work done by women in Scotland remains unpaid and invisible. Women still perform the majority of caring, and recent Scottish Government data showed that housework is still overwhelmingly done by women.²⁸ Between 59%²⁹ and 70% of unpaid care is delivered by women in Scotland, worth approximately £10.8 billion to the economy per annum.³⁰ Furthermore, childcare in the UK is some of the most expensive in the world.³¹ As families usually set the cost of childcare against women's incomes, this has a profound effect on the perceived 'economic case' for women working outside the home, as well as on the family finances.

The impact of this disproportionate share of unpaid work on women's ability to participate in paid work, as well as other activities such as leisure and taking part in community and civic life, has major consequences for women's economic, political,

²⁴ Engender (2018) Our Bodies Our Rights

²⁵ Zero Tolerance The Write to End Violence Against Women Awards and media monitoring study (accessed 22/1/19)

²⁶ Global Media Monitoring Project (2015) Who makes the news?

²⁷ Engender (2017) Sex and power in Scotland 2017

²⁸ Scottish Government (2019) Time use survey 2014-2015: results for Scotland

²⁹ Scotland's Carers (Published: March 2015)

³⁰ Carers UK (2015) Valuing carers 2015

³¹ OECD (2017) Family Database: PF3.4 Childcare support

and social equality.³² **This year Engender is re-running our #MakingWorkVisible campaign to highlight the work - in all its forms - done by women in Scotland, by encouraging women to share accounts of their days on social media.**

8. Equal Representation

White, non-disabled men continue to hold most of Scotland's positions of power - 65% of current MSPs are men.³³ Scotland has regressed in the global rankings of women in parliament, from 4th place in 2003, to 30th place.³⁴ The picture is even starker at local government level, where in 2017 71% of councillors elected were men. Engender is part of the Equal Representation Coalition which seeks to improve diversity in public life in order to increase engagement and participation in elections and enrich policy decisions.³⁵

The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 represents a considerable step forward in terms of a gender representation objective for some public boards in Scotland. However, the exclusion of executive members of boards means that public bodies which oversee vital areas for women's rights, including health, social care and transport are exempt from the requirement. **We have called for the UK Government to devolve powers to introduce legislated quotas for the Scottish Parliament which would enable parliamentary quotas to boost women's representation at the highest level of decision-making.**

CONCLUSION

In order to bring about women's equality and rights in Scotland, we need to go further and faster to tackle the structural issues that have remained stubbornly unchanged for decades. That positive action has been taken by this and former Scottish Parliaments is undoubtedly true, but the time for bold action is now. We want to see women and girls in Scotland lead a good life, free from men's violence, from stereotyping about their capabilities and interests, and from the unfair burden of too much unpaid work. We need members of this Scottish Parliament to use the space open to them to focus on unpaid and invisible labour, gender-based violence and harassment, and the undervaluation of women's work.

³² <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/why-time-use-data-matters-gender-equality-and-why-it-s-hard-find>

³³ Engender (2018) Sex and Power

³⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018) Women in parliaments

³⁵ <https://www.equalrepresentation.scot/about/>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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ABOUT US

Engender is a membership organisation working on feminist agendas in Scotland and Europe, to increase women's power and influence and to make visible the impact of sexism on women, men and society. We provide support to individuals, organisations and institutions who seek to achieve gender equality and justice.