



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

CONVENER'S WELCOME

Women's rights and wellbeing continue to be undermined in Scotland, with marginalised communities most affected. In 2024, Engender's work for women's rights and equality continued amidst the deepening cost of living crisis. At the start of the new year, we are bearing witness to the rise of far-right politics and rhetoric both at home and abroad. The global fight for women's reproductive rights has never been more important, and we're working to ensure women in Scotland have the access to modernised abortion care that they deserve.

We continue to be passionate intersectional feminists, anchoring our work in the experiences of women in all their diversity. This passion inspires our advocacy and engagement with decision-makers, community organisations, and women nationwide, shaping our policy research, reports, and briefings.

As we look ahead to Scottish local and national elections in 2026 and 2027, we're continuing our work to mainstream gender equality, campaigning for change to women's representation in parliament and researching candidate assessment processes. Our work to embed primary prevention of violence against women in all areas of public policy is ongoing, alongside calling for action on social security and the housing emergency, both of which deeply impact women.

The Engender team have also collaborated with partners to create campaigns and events on issues including financial inequality, diversity within the Scottish media and barriers to inclusion and accessibility. Throughout the year, the Equal Media and Culture Centre, based at Engender, has continued to work with partners to call for improved representation and action on equality in Scotland's media and culture.

We couldn't push for these changes without the support of Engender's members and everyone we've worked with over the past year. We're grateful to all who support our work and commitment to intersectional feminism – we look forward with hope for another year of working for women's equality.

In Sisterhood, Lucy Mulvagh, Convener

ENGENDER'S WORK FOR INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST POLICYMAKING

Engender works to shed light on gender inequality in Scotland. Through policy, analysis and research we provide recommendations for enhancing women's access to resources, empowerment and safety. Our approach covers a wide range of policy issues, including those that impact women specifically and broader issues where a greater understanding is needed of the differential ways women experience and are impacted by policy decisions and design.

There have been significant changes in the political landscape in the last 12 months, including changes in First Minister and at Cabinet level, as well as a change in government at UK level. We have worked to establish relationships with new Ministers and Scottish MPs and have undertaken targeted campaigning at key moments in the political cycle including Programme for Government and the Budget.

Women's **reproductive rights** and **access to abortion healthcare** have been key areas of focus, and we've been pleased to see the **Buffer Zones** bill come into effect after years of effective campaigning. In May 2024, we launched our report, **Outdated, harmful and never in the public interest – The urgent need to modernise Scotland's abortion law and prevent prosecutions**. This research sets out in detail the limitations and outdated nature of the current legal framework governing abortion in Scotland. As prosecutions have been brought against women in England, to rising protest, we have worked throughout the year with women's equality and human rights organisations to lead the call for the **decriminalisation of abortion in Scotland**. We were pleased to have our call for the creation of an **expert working group on decriminalisation** accepted by the Scottish Government and to now be feeding into this.

A key priority for Engender is to secure a much-improved approach to gender and equalities mainstreaming, specifically how government and services across Scotland integrate gender and intersectional inequality in their day-to-day work.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is one of the primary legal tools we have to ensure that women's perspectives and experiences are considered in decision making and the design of services. However, we know that it is not working as it should and have advocated this year for its reform. We have made the case for urgent improvement in the operation of PSED to Ministers and MSPs and critiqued the lack of action in recent years. We have also engaged with Parliament to secure greater scrutiny of Scottish Government's work on PSED. The need for an enhanced PSED has become more pressing following the deferment of the **Human Rights Bill** which had promised to incorporate the CEDAW Convention into Scots law and would have contributed to gender mainstreaming.

This year we also undertook lobbying around the **National Outcomes Framework** including making the case for a standalone outcome on gender equality that would underpin improved integration across all Scottish Government work. We also held a place on the **First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls** and have contributed to its work to improve gender and equalities mainstreaming.

In addition to our work on a Human Rights Bill for Scotland, we also continue to use the international human rights framework to push for change. We have fed into the shadow reporting process for the **UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**. As the independent examination of the UK by the **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee** approaches in 2026, we are planning for a programme of engagement with women across Scotland that will feed into our reporting and help shape our work in years to come.

Given the scale of the impact the **cost of living crisis** has had on women in recent years, we have undertaken a broad programme of work on **women's financial insecurity and poverty**. This has included working with a range of partners on issues including the financial pressures on carers, the connections between domestic violence and financial insecurity, and women's experiences of debt. We have advocated for policy changes including split payments of Universal Credit, a national 'fund to leave' for those experiencing abuse, an end to the two-child

limit and improved assistance for carers. Engender has also contributed to the Expert Group on a **Minium Income Guarantee** that will report in early 2026. We have made the case for significant improvements to the **National Strategy for Economic Transformation** which currently does not take account of how the disproportionate burden of care that women carry impacts their experiences of the economy, limiting their access to resources.

The impact of **housing and homelessness** policy on women is often poorly understood. We took the opportunity this year to work with partners including Shelter, launching a joint briefing that was picked up widely; to raise awareness of the need for greater focus on the specific ways women are impacted by the housing emergency and homelessness.

Our work on health has continued to evolve in the last 12 months. We have built on the work we started in 2023 in our report on women's experiences of maternity services during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our focus has also turned to the future of the **Women's Health Plan**, which is due for renewal in 2025. We participated in the Women's Health Plan Implementation Programme Board throughout the year and have lobbied in various fora for expansion of the plan and greater investment in its delivery. We remain part of a coalition of organisations that have core participant status to the **Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry (SCI)** and submitted an extensive written witness statement detailing the evidence we collated throughout the pandemic on its impact on women.

This year, we have developed briefings, evidence and analysis on the following areas:

Safe Access Zones for Abortion Services | Scotland's Housing Bill | Women's Housing and Homelessness | Women's Equal Representation | The Public Sector Equality Duty in Scotland | The Women's Health Plan | Decriminalisation of Abortion | National Performance Framework Outcomes | Electoral Reform | Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls | Primary Prevention of VAWG and Transport | The Scottish Budget | Culture and Arts funding | The Programme for Government | The UK General Election | International Women's Day

All of these are available on Engender's website.

Boards and advisory bodies that Engender sat on:

First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls | the Equally Safe in Practice Advisory Group | the Joint Strategic Board of Equally Safe | Gender-Based Violence and Learning Disability Working Group | Primary Prevention Expert Group | Homelessness Policy Network | Abortion Rights Scotland steering group | Abortion Expert Group Rep and Advisory Group for the Scottish Government | the Human Rights Bill Advisory Board | Civil Society Working Group on Incorporation in Scotland | the Carers Benefit Advisory Group | Five Family Payments Reference Group | Social Security Scotland Operational Reference Group | the Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security | The United Kingdom Joint Committee on Women | End Child Poverty Coalition | Minimum Income Guarantee Steering Group | Women's Health Plan Implementation Programme Board | the Write to End Violence Against Women Awards | Centenary Action Group 'Women Count' Steering Group | Equality and Human Rights Forum - Mental Health Strategy | Programme Team for Scottish Universities Insight Institute Pass the Mic Project | Equal Representation Coalition | COSLA Barriers to Elected Office group

ENGENDER'S DEVELOPMENT WORK

Equal Media And Culture Centre (EMCC)

This year has seen exciting developments in our work to promote research, monitoring and advocacy for gender equality in the creative and media sectors in Scotland. The EMCC Advisory Group which includes representatives from Scottish Women's Aid, Glasgow Women's Library, the Musicians' Union and Pass the Mic, continued to meet quarterly, while two new staff members were recruited.

In July 2024, we conducted new research, in collaboration with Pass the Mic and the University of Strathclyde, monitoring the media representation of women of colour during the General Election news cycle. The study successfully monitored nearly 8,000 stories published by Scottish media outlets for a four-week period and found that women of colour remain under-represented in media coverage, only making up 1.5% of people in Scottish stories about the election; a decrease from the 2021 study on the Scottish Parliament election.

Other research commissioned included a follow-up report looking at the lived experiences of women working in Scottish cultural sectors and their experiences of Equality Diversity and Inclusion initiatives within their sectors, and a report on the gender and racial representation of filmmakers shortlisted for Glasgow Film Festival's annual Audience Award.

The EMCC continued to advocate for policy makers to consider structural gender inequality and to integrate gender budget analysis in Scottish cultural and media sectors. We submitted a response to the Scottish Parliament Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee's call for views on its Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2025-26, and sent an open letter to FM John Swinney and MSP Angus Robertson in response to the Scottish Government's handling of £6.6m in budgeted Grant-in-Aid funding to Creative Scotland. We also contributed to Engender's Parliamentary Briefing on the Scottish Budget, asking the Scottish Government to commit to their financial promises for the creative sector.

The EMCC's communications and profile-raising has developed significantly over the last year, with the hiring of a part-time Communications Officer. A monthly EMCC email newsletter was launched in June 2024, and we have improved our engagement on Instagram and Twitter/X. Our website continues to publish blogs with updates on our advocacy work and research work and the cultural and media sectors in Scotland.

Our network of partners in the media and cultural spheres continues to develop, and includes We Are Here Scotland, LEAP Sports, Migrant Women Press, Zero Tolerance and Culture Counts.

Equal Representation In Politics

Gender-equal representation in politics is essential to ensure that women's perspectives shape decision-making, creating better outcomes for women and all of society.

We have continued to work with political parties to ensure that internal processes and cultures enable women's success. In March, we launched a new chapter of our Equal Representation Toolkit focused on the process of candidate assessment. We have promoted this directly with party members at events including conferences, through an email campaign and on social media.

Deepening our understanding of the crucial role that political parties play as "gatekeepers" of representation has been a key focus this year. We have carried out a research project examining candidate selection processes in political parties, and women's experiences of participating in them. This involved a widely distributed survey aimed at women with candidacy experience, interviews and desk-research. Findings will be published in 2025.

Following conversations with stakeholders from the equal representation sector, government, political parties and academia we published the first phase of our work towards a theory of change for women's representation in Scotland in July 2024. Developed in partnership with Elect Her, the document outlines the barriers

to women's equal representation, the specific changes that are needed, and a narrative theory of change on how we achieve them.

In collaboration with the Delivering Equally Safe project at Engender, we have also begun work on a research project examining the widespread problem of violence against women, misogyny and everyday sexism in local councils. As well as capturing the experiences of women councillors, the research will consider the impact these experiences have on the policy development process.

Delivering Equally Safe

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world. Unfortunately, in Scotland, this violence continues to occur at endemic levels with devastating physical and psychological effect for women and girls. Primary prevention is the only way to eradicate VAWG once and for all. This means addressing the root cause of this violence, which is gender inequality.

Our Delivering Equally Safe project focuses on embedding this concept of primary prevention into all areas of public policy. In particular, this means developing policies that actively address inequality and promote women's safety.

This year, we have focused on supporting policymakers in achieving this approach in different areas of public policy, particularly those outside justice and equalities spaces, where work on VAWG is often siloed.

During last year's 16 Days of Activism, we published an overview of the need for primary prevention in public policy, which we sent to all MSPs along with our parliamentary briefing. We were also pleased to deliver a presentation to the Scottish Government's Ministerial Group on Equally Safe, discussing how Ministers can ensure they embed primary prevention in their respective portfolios.

In March, we hosted our "Primary Prevention in Policymaking" conference. This event brought together over 50 policymakers and policy professionals from different sectors and raised awareness of the importance of embedding primary

prevention into different policy areas. Workshops at the conference also provided attendees with practical knowledge and skills needed to achieve this in their work.

This event was well-received by attendees with many asking for further opportunities to collaborate on this work. As a result, we have started a research project to explore how primary prevention is being delivered in different sectors locally and what could be done to strengthen collaboration.

Our Delivering Equally Safe project continues to be supported by an Expert Group on Primary Prevention, which meets throughout the year to discuss the direction of this work.

ENGENDER'S COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WORK

Throughout the past year, Engender has held a number of online events to highlight key issues for women's equality and foreground the need for feminist policymaking in Scotland. We've brought decision-makers, Engender members and activists together for sessions on the ongoing housing emergency, diversity and the media, the cost of living crisis and primary prevention of violence against women and girls.

We have engaged with political parties at their party conferences to highlight Engender's work, with students via a Feminist Fair and virtually as we plan our CEDAW consultation workshops. Across International Women's Day, in line with the theme #InspireInclusion, we worked with guest writers to highlight their inclusive feminist work within their communities, including ORSAS (Orkney Rape and Sexual Assault Service), AMINA (The Muslim Women's Resource Centre) and Amanda Amaeshi, feminist campaigner and activist.

Engender's blog has continued to host news, updates and opinion pieces. Our content explored issues including decriminalisation of abortion in Scotland, why sex and gender are not included within hate crime legislation in Scotland, the General Election, equal representation of women in politics, reforming social security to fight women's poverty and a co-authored piece with AMINA on The Rwanda Scheme and women's safety. We also launched '8 Steps Towards Women's Equality in Scotland' as we looked ahead to the Programme for Government 2024. Our commissioning pot to pay for guest contributions continues to see us increase the range and diversity of voices represented.

We've also featured in a range of radio interviews and opinion pieces in the press this year, covering topics such as violence against women, poverty, the housing emergency, International Women's Day and political representation. Our community on social media has grown and allows us to follow and contribute to key feminist debates. We've seen great growth across LinkedIn and Instagram

and have launched a range of new video content highlighting key campaigns. We've seen membership growth and retention and are delighted to welcome new members in the year ahead.

You can follow us [@engender-scot](#) to see news and information about our work.

Thanks to those organisations with whom we've worked this year:

Scottish Government | Public Health Scotland | COSLA | Equality and Human Rights Commission | Scottish Human Rights Commission | Innovo Law | Close the Gap | Scottish Women's Aid | Rape Crisis Scotland | Zero Tolerance | EQUATE Scotland | Women 5050 | Equality Network | Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights | CEMVO | LGBT Youth Scotland | Stonewall Scotland | LGBT Health and Wellbeing | Inclusion Scotland | People First | Glasgow Women's Library | Scottish Commission for Learning Disability | National Library of Scotland | Poverty Alliance | Citizen's Advice Scotland | Child Poverty Action Group | Shelter Scotland | Living Rent | Crisis | Housing Options Scotland | CaCHE | Aberlour | Ubuntu Women Shelter | StepChange UK | Saheliya | The Young Women's Movement | Edinburgh University | Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre | Scottish Trans Alliance | Scottish Youth Parliament | Scottish Women's Budget Group | First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls | Glasgow Caledonian University | Human Rights Consortium Scotland | Amnesty Scotland | The Fawcett Society | Women's Equality Network Wales | Northern Ireland Women's Platform | ElectHer | the ALLIANCE | the STUC | Strathclyde University | Sustrans Scotland | The Women's Support Project | Dundee International Women's Centre | Glasgow Disability Alliance | One Parent Families Scotland | Abortion Rights Scotland | Back Off Scotland | BPAS | Humanist Society | NUS Scotland | Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists | Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland | Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health | Coalition of Carers in Scotland | Carers Scotland | Carer's Trust Scotland | MECOPP | Scottish Women's Rights Centre | JustRight Scotland | Centenary Action Group | The Jo Cox Foundation | The Improvement Service | Pass the Mic | Women in Journalism Scotland | National Union of Journalists | University of Exeter | Stellar Quines | Glasgow University | We Are Here Scotland | Culture Collective | The Association of Journalism Education | The Musician's Union | The International Magazine Centre | Scottish Women in Sport | Edinburgh Art Festival | Scottish Documentary Institute | Creative Scotland | STV | BBC Scotland

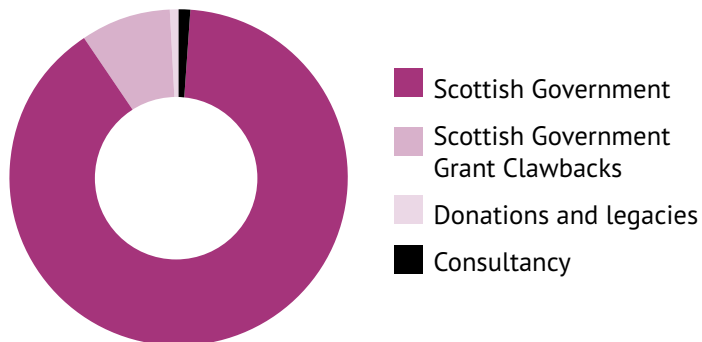
And our funders:

Scottish Government Equality and Human Rights Fund | Delivering Equally Safe | and all of the individual members and donors whose contributions help us carry out our work.

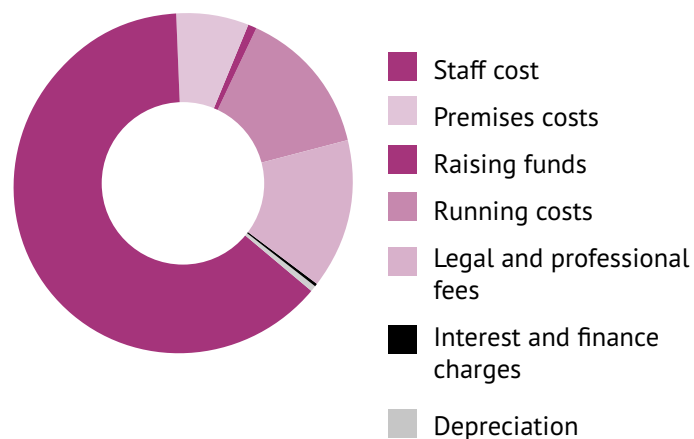
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

APRIL 2023– MARCH 2024

INCOME	
Donations and legacies	£8,395
Scottish Government	£617,142
Scottish Government Grant Clawbacks	(-£60,342)
Consultancy	£4,261
Total	£569,456



EXPENDITURE	
Staff cost	£379,359
Premises costs	£40,456
Raising funds	£6,275
Running costs	£83,744
Legal and professional fees	£85,740
Interest and finance charges	£1,641
Depreciation	£2,162
Total	£599,377



ENGENDER'S STAFF AT DECEMBER 2024

Catherine Murphy

Executive Director

Policy Team

Jill Wood

Policy Manager

Lucy Hughes

Policy and Parliamentary Manager

Development Team

Catriona Kirkpatrick

Head of Development

Katie Goh

Project Manager (Equal Media and Culture Centre)

Sharon Holland

Communications and Engagement Officer (Equal Media and Culture Centre)

Jessie Duncan

Development Officer (Equal Representation)

Hannah Brisbane

Delivering Equally Safe Policy Officer

Hadia Aslam

Administrator

Communications and Engagement Team

Jade Stein

Communications and Engagement Manager

Maxine Blane

Communications and Administrative Assistant

ENGENDER'S BOARD 2023-2024

Lucy Mulvagh (Convener)

Louise Brodie (Vice Convener & Treasurer)

Camila Cavalcante

Emily Hutchinson

Suzanne McLaughlin

Zara Kitson

Lucy Miller

Rachel Palma Randle

Iffat Shahnaz


Engender's board of directors is responsible for the governance and strategic direction of the organisation. Directors bring a vital range of skills and experiences to guide Engender, and support the staff in delivering the organisation's aims. The board usually meets five times a year, and directors are elected annually at Engender's Annual General Meeting.

We would like to thank all our board members for their contributions to Engender's work this year. We're extremely grateful to our departing board members Nighet Riaz and Lucy Miller for their time, leadership, and commitment over their terms.


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