



George don't fritter money away on pre-election give-aways, spend it on carers, teachers and homes instead

Ahead of the last budget before the election tomorrow the UK and Scottish Women's Budget Groups are calling on the Chancellor not to fritter money away on pre-election give-aways but to spend it on social infrastructure - carers, teachers and homes - instead.

Calling on the Chancellor, Claire Annesley from the WBG said:

"Women have fared extremely badly under the government's austerity programme. They have faced a 'triple jeopardy' losing out due to cuts to public services, being forced from their jobs in the public sector and having their pockets hit hardest due to cuts and freezes of social security.

"Women make up the bulk of public sector employees so the slashing of public sector jobs has forced many women out of secure employment into low waged work with as many as one in four women now earning below the living wage. (1) This is of particular concern in local government where women make up 75% of employees. Local government has had the worst budget cuts of all the government departments and these cuts will continue for years to come.

Polly Trenow of WBG commented:

"Women are more likely to rely on social security (on average it makes up twice as much of women's income than men's) so the freezing and uprating below inflation of these benefits has hurt women (especially lone parents and single pensioners) more than men, with 66% of these changes coming from women's pockets. Female lone parents have lost 16% of their living standards (their cash income plus the value of income in-kind as public services received) since 2010 and female single pensioner have lost 12%. (3)

"Despite recovery, the economic situation for women is still bleak. Although women's employment rate is at its highest, it is still 10% below men's. It is also important to ask what type of jobs are women getting? Since 2008 we have seen the amount of self employed women increase by 38% for women and for 8% for men. People working part-time 'involuntarily' has almost doubled since January 2008 and women account for 57% of those jobs (and for 74% of all part-time jobs). (4)

Angela O'Hagan, Member of the WBG Management Committee and Convenor of the Scottish Women's Budget Group, added

"The concessions by the UK government in the last five years have been on raises to the personal tax allowance as policy which has done little to help the poorest in our society (mainly women) who do not earn enough (if at all) to be taxed in the first place.

"Other government spending has gone on physical infrastructure but the Women's Budget Groups have consistently argued that while necessary, it is vital that spending on physical infrastructure

Pre-Budget statement from Women's Budget Groups

should be matched with spending on social infrastructure - more and better paid staff in hospitals, schools and care centres - which is just as important for the long term health of the country.

"For their last budget we hope the Coalition will not fritter money away on pre-election give-aways such as rises in the personal tax allowance or cutting fuel and beer duty (which disproportionately benefit men) but instead use this money to revert damaging austerity policies such as the bedroom tax, weekly benefit cap and cuts in social care funding."

In advance of the general election, the Women's Budget Group and the Scottish Women's Budget Group are calling for 'Plan F' - a feminist economic strategy for a caring and sustainable economy which benefits the majority not the wealthy minority and reverses the damage done by austerity. Plan F offers a sustainable economic strategy that puts the wellbeing of people first. Investment in social care and social infrastructure is not a drain on the country's resources - it's the bedrock of a sustainable economy for the 21st century. (5)

(1) The Changing Labour Market 2, The Fawcett Society <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/The-Changing-Labour-Market-2.pdf>

(2) wage gap figures (2014 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) - ONS

(3) Employment figures are for changes up to Oct-Dec (last quarter) of 2014 (most recent data available) - all from ONS Labour Force Survey

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(5) Women's Budget Group, Plan F - <http://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/PLAN-F-2015.pdf>

The UK Women's Budget Group and the Scottish Women's Budget Group are independent of government and political parties. They produce analysis of government spending plans, budgets and policies to promote a better understanding of the impact of government decision making on women and to improve the quality of that decision making so that public resources are allocated for the benefit of all. Further information is available at www.wbg.org.uk and www.swbg.org.uk.

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