



Statement to Smith Commission

The Scottish Women's Budget Group believes in greater equality for women and men in Scotland. We believe this is possible if the political will exists to make equality a central goal of all public policy and any constitutional arrangements.

Greater gender equality is possible when public resources are distributed and allocated specifically to drive forward this agenda and not to perpetuate existing inequalities and disadvantage. Since the early days of devolution, SWBG have campaigned for gender analysis in the Scottish Budget process and the formulation of more gender equal outcomes from public spending in Scotland.

Women need financial autonomy, social and political independence, and freedom from assumptions based on traditional roles and stereotypes. Real independence for women will come from putting equality between women and men at the heart of how public resources are collected and distributed. These concerns need to be at the heart of proposals for devolving further taxation powers to Scotland, in the welfare and social protection provisions proposed, and in how revenue is to be raised and returned to Scotland.

Changes to institutional structures and political processes, additional powers, and decisions across all areas of public policy present key opportunities to build-in gender equality from the outset. Until now formal proposals for either independence or more devolved powers lack breadth and substance when it comes to women's equality. Political parties and campaign groups on all sides need to make clear their commitment to women's financial, social and political equality.

SWBG urge members of the Smith Commission to ensure that robust gender analysis informs their deliberations and in consideration of proposals from all contributors. Specific areas that SWBG wish to see further devolution and progressive action to advance women's inequality and address gender inequality include

- gender analysis and gender impact analysis of all proposals generated by the Smith Commission
- taxation measures must be fair and progressive, based on individuals and not the household

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- taxation measures beyond income tax must be considered, with land tax, VAT, and other revenue sources opened up to further devolution on a progressive and non-discriminatory way
- public spending proposals and programmes must be formulated to promote greater equality of opportunity and not restrict individuals based on stereotypical assumptions
- public spending on childcare and other forms of care as well as the prevention of gender based violence must be regarded as public goods and as contributing to women's equality and independence
- welfare and social protection measures must support women's financial and social independence. Current proposals to devolve welfare transfers, including Housing Benefit, must be carefully re-examined to ensure the administration of Housing Benefit from Scotland
- the discredited Universal Credit Scheme has repeatedly been challenged on the basis that the process will reinforce household inequalities. SWBG oppose the introduction of Universal Credit in Scotland
- further devolution of welfare must be as a social protection system that values and protects the wellbeing of women and men over the lifetime
- the realities of women's lives, including their role in unpaid care and reproductive labour, must be reflected in economic modelling and women must be actively included in economic policy making. SWBG notes with dismay the over-representation of men from political parties on the Smith Commission, actions which reinforce the need for gender competence in policymaking and economic leadership groups
- spending on skills and economic development must be gender-sensitive, to ensure that training programmes like the modern apprenticeship programme do not disadvantage girls and women; and wage policy, including the living wage, should be developed to address the undervaluation of women's paid work
- the administration and resourcing of Employment Tribunals (ET) must be devolved to Scotland to halt the denial of access to justice for women. Since the introduction of fees there has been an 83% drop in claims of sex discrimination to ET in Scotland, many of them in relation to pregnancy and maternity discrimination. Vulnerable women who have lost income and employment are subject to further disadvantage and discrimination under these measures.
- Effective and robust equality legislation and the resources to manage and deliver a fair and accessible justice system are essential components of a fair and progressive devolution settlement. Provisions for advancing equality and protecting women and men from

discrimination in employment and in combining work and family life, for example, should be included in the further devolution of powers. SWBG supports the call from other equality organisations in Scotland in calling for further devolution of equalities legislation and related employment legislation.

Since 1999, Scotland has made progress towards equality analysis in the Scottish Budget process, with important developments under successive governments. The Scottish Government has produced an Equality Statement on the Draft Budget as part of the budget process since 2009. It is the only government within the UK to do so and has attracted considerable interest from elsewhere in the UK and Europe.

SWBG believes that this progress to date shows what is possible when governments and decision makers in political institutions make gender equality part of their thinking and rationale. In the context of the independence debate, there are strong proposals on childcare and there is significant progress on the transformative approach of linking childcare – and other forms of care – to economic infrastructure as well as family needs.