

## **First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls Phase Two Work Plan**

### **Introduction**

Phase One of the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) provided wide ranging and bold recommendations with the aim of creating a fairer Scotland. These recommendations have, largely, been accepted by the Scottish Government (in some cases restraints around devolved powers or engagement of other bodies, prevents immediate or full acceptance of recommendations). Phase Two NACWG will hold Scottish Government to account by scrutinising the extent of recommendation delivery and ensuring that implementation is making a genuine difference for women and girls from the most marginalised backgrounds in Scotland. By doing so, we ensure accountability, but at the same time will support Scottish Government, local authorities, public bodies and others to deliver for women and girls more effectively.

Taking into consideration our remit and Terms of Conditions, we will undertake three annual cycles to scrutinise NACWG recommendation implementation. At the end of each annual cycle we will report to the First Minister. We will approach our model of operation in an agile manner and build in continuous improvement based on learnings. We are keen to refine our model and share it, as a model of good practice.

- **At the heart of our model is scrutiny – what we are calling the accountability process - and supporting this will be a participation panel of women focused on the lived experience of marginalised women and girls.**
- **Our public engagement will continue and be aligned to our core strategy.**
- **The Circle will be encouraged to take inspiration from the package of recommendations that they helped to develop and make change in their organisations and networks. We will be inviting the Circle to share the progress that is being made, so that we can showcase good practice.**
- **We will evaluate our model and integrate continuous improvement.**

At the end of Phase Two we expect to be in a position to analyse the success of the package of recommendations that Phase One developed, and advise the First Minister whether any further work is required.

## **The Accountability Process**

The NACWG will take a thematic approach to recommendation scrutiny which will support stronger accountability and policy coherence, and the recommendations that we will concentrate on in the first focus of scrutiny is explored towards the end of this document.

The NACWG will scrutinise recommendation implementation, supported by the lived experience panel of women and girls. The NACWG may consult further expertise and they may undertake research, if they feel that is necessary.

The NACWG will engage with Scottish Government senior leaders throughout this process (including Ministers, Permanent Secretary, Director Generals) and officials accountable and responsible for recommendation implementation. Each theme will culminate with a meeting with senior leaders and officials to discuss recommendation implementation, followed by a debrief with senior leaders only. Theming the NACWG recommendations will ensure an emphasis on coherence is central to our model - policy coherence being a core feature of Phase One's activity and recommendations of 2019. Senior leadership engaging with the process will enrich this coherence and enable frank and open conversation about good practice identified as well as any issues and barriers.

As per the refreshed remit, the NACWG will also consider exploring current issues exacerbating girls' and women's inequality. Given the current climate that we find ourselves in we anticipate that the cost-of-living crisis will be the other key topic for the first year of Phase Two activity. The cost of living crisis will disproportionately affect women and families and our instinct at the point of publication of this work plan is that this will be a timely topic for us to explore with Scottish Government. Exactly what the focus will be for this non-recommendation topic (and any future ones) will be for our participation panel to help design with us.

## **The Participation Panel**

It is important to the NACWG that the accountability and scrutiny work is wider than Council members. A lived experience panel will therefore be convened with women and girls from a range of community groups across Scotland, who have less access to power, opportunity and influence, but see directly the consequences of policy design and implementation that does not meet their needs. The design of the participation methods will be for the group to develop themselves however, it is anticipated that it may include:

- Evidence gathering directly from the group's lived expertise;
- Evidence gathering through community research methods, to reach out to marginalised women and girls' experiences; and
- Requests for information, evidence and data on cost-of-living support policy interventions, changes or impacts from Scottish Government policy areas.

There will be a procurement process to source a contract to support and deliver this service, including facilitation and capacity building support for all participation methods. Once in place the panel's work will contribute to the NACWG accountability process – we anticipate this being in place by the second half of the NACWG's first cycle. The lived expertise group may wish to hold other events, seek more information from officials or present directly to the First Minister, and they will be supported to do so, if they choose.

### **The Circle**

The Circle were an important aspect of Phase One and provided insight on the development of recommendations. During Phase Two we are looking to the Circle to take inspiration from the recommendations and to make change within their organisations and networks. We already built the foundations for this during Phase One, encouraging Circle members to pledge their support. During Phase Two we will build on this activity and explore in more detail the action being taken forward, what measures and review are in place and what the outcomes are. The NACWG will showcase this action and will annually come together to celebrate achievements and share learning.

This activity will provide a source of evidence of the success of Phase One's development of the Circle and further encourage gender equality culture change activities to take place across Scotland.

### **Public Engagement**

Public engagement will be refocused to align to the NACWG themes. We will explore in more detail the intention of the recommendations and the work of the NACWG and participation panel, as well as showcasing the good practice from Circle members.

### **Wider Engagement with Chairs of Other Key Working Groups**

Phase One NACWG identified policy coherence as a key issue with regard to improving gender equality and explored this in detail in 2019. Also during this time they engaged with groups that work with Scottish Government to explore how gender sensitivity was applied to their work.

Having clear coherence is key to ensuring effective policy making and Phase Two NACWG wish to continue with this activity and explore further. The objectives are to continue to understand the detail of any activity; to offer expert advice and assist in strengthening the consideration of gender with their work; and to help promote coherence in this space. Key activity will include relationship building, communication, and identifying opportunities to

meet with Chairs of targeted groups, with the NACWG, the First Minister and any other relevant Ministers.

### **NACWG Phase Two Evaluation**

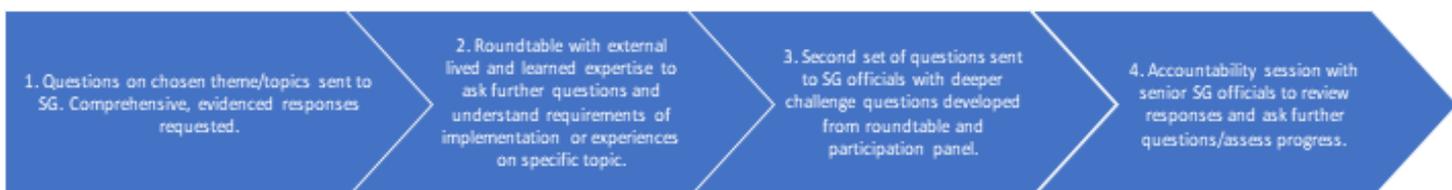
It is important to the NACWG to build a robust model of scrutiny as recommendations from Phase One are implemented and the NACWG are keen to be able to share a model of good practice. There will be a procurement process to source a contract to evaluate all aspects of the Phase Two model. This will happen annually and will both feed into building in improvements going forward, as well as providing a robust evaluation of this scrutiny model.

### **The First Focus of Scrutiny**

Our first annual cycle will be from August 2022 to August 2023 and during this time we anticipate being able to go through two cycles of accountability processes. At the end of this first year we will review and consider whether any further cycles or general improvements to our model can be built in to subsequent years.

At the end of each accountability cycle a briefing on findings and ways forward will be created and presented to the First Minister for information. A report on the year will be created and published in September 2023.

A visual representation of our model:



## **The First Set of Recommendations we will Scrutinise:**

**1. Senior officials group (2019):** we recommend the creation of a senior officials and leaders group with the express purpose of ensuring intersectional gender competent policy coherence across Scottish Government's policy development and have a role in ensuring the consistent application of EQIAs across policy-making by also acting as a review panel, should the competence of an EQIA be questioned. Our preference would be for this group to include external members. This will ensure that policy development does not inadvertently undermine equality between women and men, or boys and girls, while pursuing other positive outcomes. This group will look to any learnings and follow a similar model to the recently established Scottish Government Directors' Child Poverty Group.

**2. Equality and human rights directorate and Centres of expertise within directorates (2019):** to integrate an intersectional gendered approach into policy making the Scottish Government needs to substantially scale up its mainstreaming work. To provide the necessary levers to lead the change required, we recommend that the current Equality Unit should be scaled up to a standalone Directorate. To support and embed this wider focus on mainstreaming we would also like to see the establishment of a parallel programme on mainstreaming gender equality that will have "Centres of Expertise" created in all Scottish Government Directorates, on intersectional gender competence, responsible for leading and ensuring minimum levels of knowledge and analytical capability on gender in their Directorates, and therefore across all civil servants, in what can sometimes be a transient workforce. The intended outcome of these three key aspects will be the advancement of equality and reduction of discrimination for all women and girls in all areas across the government (including transport, justice, environment, employment, health or education policy, etc.).

**3. Policy makers national standards (2019):** we recommend the creation of "Policy-makers National Standards" to support quality standards and accountability on intersectional gender competence in policy-making, with a requirement that all policy and analytical staff will adhere to it. The National Standards will include a level of knowledge and skill that will enable officials to carry out intersectional gender analysis as part of policy development. Gender competence should be integrated into the performance management framework of civil servants, and annual reviews should discuss how individuals have taken a gendered approach to their work. There will be an expectation that staff will then have continuing professional development in this area to enable them to continually design policy (regardless of the policy portfolio being worked on) which improves the lives of women and girls; in particular those women and girls furthest away from access to opportunity and influence.

**4. Annual statement to parliament (2019):** we recognise the importance of the Scottish Parliament and its committees in scrutinising law and policy-making. We recommend Scottish Ministers deliver an Annual Statement, followed by a debate, on Gender Policy Coherence to the Scottish Parliament. This annual report would cover the work that Scottish Government is undertaking to:

- Deliver its change programme on intersectional gender mainstreaming;
- Demonstrate how work on gender equality is being aligned with the budget process for Scotland;
- Incorporate appropriate engagement with different groups of women and girls into key pieces of policy-making;
- Develop/implement “The Policy-makers National Standards” and the activity of the senior leaders’ group on gender policy mainstreaming and coherence; and
- Develop gender equality efforts in the business community, including but not restricted to, an update on the impact and progress of the Business Pledge, improvements to tackle the gender pay gap and what engagement is taking place with business/industry representative bodies to embed gender equality in a more strategic and coherent way.

**5. Scottish approach to service design (2018):** embed gender sensitive approaches in all work relating to programmes developed through the new Scottish Government ‘Scottish Approach to Service Design’ model.

**6. Gender Sensitive PfGs (2018):** As well as establishing and delivering a successful operating working model, 2018 has also been significant for the NACWG with our proposal for inclusion in the Scottish Government’s Programme for Government (PfG) 2019 being accepted, with a commitment that the Scottish Government would put in place a robust system to ensure that the next and PfGs going forward are gender sensitive. Put simply, this means that gender will be considered in the conception of policy, prior to the Equality Impact Assessment considerations as policy is developed.

**7. Resourcing intersectional data (2019):** we recommend adequate resourcing to enable the collection and analysis of robust intersectional data.

**8. PSED Review (2020):** we call on the Scottish Government as part of the current review of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) regulations in Scotland to place additional specific duties on listed Public Bodies to:

- Gather and use intersectional data, including employment and service user data, to advance equality between protected groups, including men and women;
- Integrate intersectional gender budget analysis into their budget setting procedures.

We believe this recommendation would support the creation of a systemic intersectional gender architecture by enhancing the gender mainstreaming impact of the PSED with all public bodies in Scotland. We also call on COSLA to consider its role in relation to this recommendation and how it might constructively facilitate deeper engagement across all spheres of government and local policymaking relating to the scrutiny of ensuring that the rights of all women and girls in Scotland are realised. Local implementation and the necessary conditions are vital to deliver increased equality for diverse women, e.g. disabled women and those in social care.

**9. Gender budgeting and intersectionality (2020):** we call on the Scottish Government to integrate intersectional gender budget analysis into the Scottish Budget process, and to give this a statutory footing.