

Close the Gap
Annual Review 2019 - 2020



Introduction

It's almost hard to remember what life was like before Covid-19. The pandemic has had an unprecedented effect on the way we live. Women's lives are more difficult as the impacts of the pandemic mirror and magnify the structural inequalities they face when engaging with the labour market. Women are the vast majority of Scotland's key workers, yet they are routinely undervalued, underpaid and underprotected. Women in low-paid work, Black and minoritised women and young women have been particularly affected because of the sectors in which they work. School and nursery closures has meant that many women have had to struggle with the increase in childcare and having to supervise home learning, while also being expected to do their job at the same time. Close the Gap has worked to highlight the gendered effects of the pandemic on the labour market, and advocate that policy responses must ensure that women's labour market inequality isn't deepened. The pandemic has highlighted the critical points where action is needed to advance women's equality at work including occupational segregation, undervaluation, women's in-work poverty and violence against women. Close the Gap will continue to advocate for change in these areas and on all causes of the gender pay gap, so that women's equality in the labour market can be realised.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Ritchie Allan', is enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Anna Ritchie Allan
Executive Director

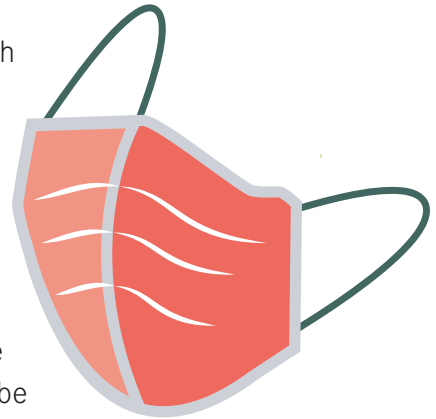


Responding to Covid-19

Much of Close the Gap's policy advocacy work has been focused on identifying the impacts of Covid-19 on women's employment, and working at pace to influence policy responses to avoid exacerbating women's labour market inequality.

Disproportionate Disruption

We published a report, *Disproportionate Disruption*, which highlighted the disproportionate negative impacts on women's employment caused by the pandemic. The analysis shows that occupational segregation is a major contributing factor, with women more likely to be furloughed and to work in a shut down sector; less likely to be able to do their job from home creating additional risks to job retention, financial security and their health; they are more likely to be made redundant and be affected by future underemployment; and more likely to be responsible for the increase in unpaid childcare, supervision of home learning, and unpaid care for adults. We used this paper to advocate Scottish Government take gendered approach to labour market policymaking and skills interventions.



Gender and economic recovery

Close the Gap worked with Engender to develop nine principles for a gender equal economic recovery. The principles, which were endorsed by national women's and single parent organisations, describe features of an economy that works for women as well as men. Close the Gap and Engender also worked with Emily Thomson from the Wise Centre for Economic Justice at Glasgow Caledonian University to publish a literature review on gender and inclusive growth.

Influencing policy responses to Covid-19

Close the Gap has provided evidence and analysis to inform and critique equality impact assessment on various policies responding to Covid-19 including around childcare, school and nursery closures, skills initiatives, and guidance for employers. We participate in the implementation group for the Young Person's Guarantee, Scottish Government's flagship initiative to address youth unemployment, and work to ensure that young women's experiences



of the labour market, including during Covid-19, are recognised in designing and implementing the Guarantee. We have advocated for action on women's low pay in the Addressing Low Income Policy Circle of the Social Renewal Advisory Board. Close the Gap undertook a review of sectoral guidance for employers on

returning to work, and delivered capacity building for Scottish Government officials on gender-sensitive guidance for employers. We also have worked to highlight the lack of financial security for women gig economy workers; the gender impact of the revoking of the statutory roll-out of the funded childcare entitlement; and access to furlough for women with caring roles.

Supporting employers in their response to Covid-19

Women's employment has been significantly affected by Covid-19 in a range of key ways. Ensuring that employers understand how to mitigate the impacts, and support women in their workforce, is necessary to avoid worsening women's labour market inequality. We have developed resources and capacity building to support employers in identifying the action they need to take including:

- Equally Safe at Work guidance for local authorities on supporting women workers during Covid-19.
- Think Business, Think Equality guidance for SME employers on supporting female staff affected by domestic abuse during Covid-19.
- Close Your Pay Gap guidance for large companies on supporting women at work during the pandemic.

We also worked with sector bodies and representatives to build capacity in public sector employers on the gendered dimensions of Covid-19, and how to support women at work.





Policy advocacy work with policymakers, employers and other stakeholders working around the labour market

In spite of the pressures of Covid-19, this year we have also progressed existing policy advocacy priorities to support the delivery of our strategic objectives.

Black and minoritised women's equality at work

In 2019, Close the Gap published research, *Still Not Visible*, on Black and minoritised women's employment. This year, we have developed this work to focus on solutions to the barriers experienced by Black and minoritised women. We held an event to test actions for employers with Black and minoritised women to ensure efficacy, and to provide a space for women to identify solutions based on their lived experience. The output of the event will inform the development of guidance for employers.

A gender review of *Developing the Young Workforce*

Close the Gap conducted a review of *Developing the Young Workforce* (DYW), the seven-year strategy to address youth unemployment, to identify to what extent activity had advanced girls' and young women's equality. The findings were used to highlight specific challenge areas; to inform Scottish Government's review of DYW activity to date; and advocate for a targeted approach as Government considers its focus for the final stage of the strategy's implementation.

This resulted in Scottish Government committing to work with Close the Gap to develop a strategic approach to build gender competence in teachers and other education practitioners; ensure the review of DYW regional groups is informed by gender expertise; and that resources for teachers and career practitioners are gender-sensitive and include information on occupational segregation and gender stereotyping. We have also used the findings of the review to advocate for a gendered approach to the Young Person's Guarantee.

Women's in-work poverty

We have continued our strategic focus on women's in-work poverty and their concentration in low-paid, stereotypically female jobs. We have strengthened links with anti-poverty organisations, and delivered activity to highlight the gendered dimensions of in-work poverty.

We have also advocated for a gendered approach to policymaking and interventions on tackling low-paid work. We have been successful in influencing the development of the work of anti-poverty organisations so that it better reflects the gendered nature of poverty.



Participation in equality advisory groups and working groups

Staff continue to participate in a number of equality advisory groups and working groups, which enables us to influence and advocate for the gendering of policies around the labour market. Existing memberships include Scottish Government gender and Covid-19 working group, the Ministerial working group on the gender pay gap, Skills Development Scotland gender stakeholder group, Social Security Scotland advisory group, Scottish Enterprise inclusive growth advisory group, Audit Scotland equality advisory group, City of Glasgow College equality and

diversity group, and Education Scotland equality advisory group. We are members of the Gender Equality in Teaching and Learning Taskforce, Scottish Government's STEM strategy equality group, and the gender and health sub-group of the Women's Health Plan, and this year we also participated in the ethics and regulatory frameworks working group for the development of the artificial intelligence strategy. Close the Gap works with partner and stakeholder organisations to share learning and expertise around gender and the labour market. As part of this, we are members of the Equate Scotland steering group, and the advisory group of the joint Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance project, Equally Safe at School.

Other policy advocacy work with key stakeholders

A large component of Close the Gap's work is reactive policy advocacy work which may be focused on the development of a strategy or policy, and also includes responding to consultations, giving evidence to parliamentary committees, and briefing parliamentarians ahead of debates. This year, our reactive work has engaged with broad range of groups and policy areas:

- The development of Scotland's artificial intelligence strategy;
- Scottish Government's review of the public sector equality duty;
- Race equality, employment and skills;
- The National Taskforce on Human Rights Leadership;
- Social care;
- The Flexible Workforce Development Fund;
- Development of Scotland's gender index;
- Carer's leave; and
- Enhancing employment rights for survivors of domestic abuse.



Equally Safe At Work

Close the Gap has continued to develop the innovative employer accreditation programme, Equally Safe at Work, which has been piloted in seven councils across Scotland. The early adopter councils are Aberdeen City, Highland, Perth & Kinross, Midlothian, North Lanarkshire, Shetland Islands, and South Lanarkshire. A further 20 councils are engaged in a shadow group, a community of practice to share learning from the pilot.



Equally Safe at Work enables councils to deliver action that will advance gender equality at work, better support victim-survivors in the workplace, and prevent violence against women (VAW). Activities delivered by early adopter councils include:

- convening cross-departmental working groups to oversee the delivery of organisational action plans;
- producing internal and external leadership statements on VAW and work;
- delivering staff awareness raising work on gender equality and VAW, and Equally Safe at Work;

- developing improved data-gathering systems to improve the quantity and quality of gender-disaggregated data including staff experiences of VAW;
- reviewing and updating employment policies to ensure they are gender- and VAW-sensitive;
- gathering benchmark quantitative and qualitative data from staff on attitudes to, and experiences of, gender equality at work;
- delivering training to line managers on flexible working and VAW;
- disseminating Close the Gap guidance for line managers on VAW; and
- developing organisation-specific initiatives to address occupational segregation.



The pilot has demonstrated that accreditation programmes can lever action from employers on gender equality and VAW. Equally Safe at Work has generated a significant level of interest from not only councils, but also other public, private and third sector organisations. It has also produced a rich source of data on local

government women workers' experiences of gender equality at work, and VAW. Importantly this includes new data on the experiences of low-paid women, a group which is often missing from discourses on the pay gap.

Close the Gap would like to thank the early adopter councils for their continued commitment to Equally Safe at Work, advancing gender equality at work, and preventing VAW.

Enabling employers to tackle the gender pay gap

Close the Gap has continued to influence and enable employers to identify and tackle the inter-related causes of the gender pay gap.

Supporting private and third sector employers to report their gender pay gap

We've supported large employers obliged to report their gender pay gap information under the new UK regulations by promoting the use of our Close Your Pay Gap online tool. We have also provided direct support on pay gap reporting to individual employers. The UK Government did, however, suspend pay gap reporting in 2020 in response to Covid-19, a decision which itself risks exacerbating women's workplace equality by signalling that gender equality at work is not important during times of crisis.



Building capacity in employers to tackle sexual harassment

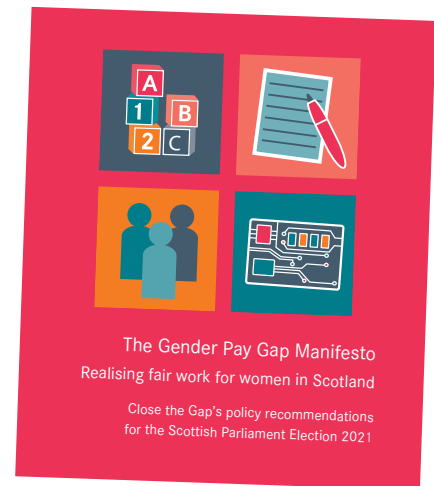
Close the Gap has continued to develop work to tackle sexual harassment in Scotland, as part of a project funded by the Rosa Fund for Women and Girls. Close the Gap is leading the project in Scotland, which is part of a wider collaborative initiative with gender equality organisations working in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scottish partners are Engender and Scottish Women's Rights Centre. Close the Gap is developing and piloting an Equally Safe at Work training resource for use in early adopter councils; and developing a Think Business, Think Equality resource on sexual harassment.



Parliamentary engagement

We've delivered a range of parliamentary engagement work this year. We worked with Engender to successfully influence the Scottish National Investment Bank Bill so that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are core to the legislation. Our joint work also means that the bank will be required to do an equal pay review, publish and report on a gender equality strategy, and publish intersectional gender-disaggregated data.

Our gender pay gap manifesto for the Scottish parliamentary elections was published and makes 14 calls to tackle the causes of the pay gap. This includes developing an action plan to address gender gaps in data used to develop skills policy; recognising childcare and social care as vital infrastructure by designating them key growth sectors; developing a strategic mechanism to build capacity on gender stereotyping and occupational segregation in the early learning and childcare workforce; action to address the undervaluation of “women’s work”; ensuring policy responses to automation are gendered; and delivering 50 hours of funded childcare.



This year, Close the Gap has also developed a range of briefings for parliamentary debates. These have covered a broad variety of topics including the expansion of funded childcare; Covid-19 and the economy; employment support; Universal Credit; Programme for Government; 16 Days of Action to Address VAW; promoting equality and human rights for minority ethnic people; artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies; the equal pay (information and claims) bill; a National Care Service; and recognising the importance of family caregivers.

Collaboration

Collaboration is core to Close the Gap's work, and we would like to thank the broad range of organisations we have worked with this year.

Engender • Rape Crisis Scotland • Scottish Women's Aid • Scottish Women's Rights Centre • Zero Tolerance • EQUATE Scotland • Work and Equalities Institute at University of Manchester • ALLIANCE • WISE Centre for Economic Justice • Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights • Scottish Minority Ethnic Women's Network • Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre • Improvement Service • COSLA • Aberdeen City Council • Highland Council • Perth & Kinross Council • Midlothian Council • North Lanarkshire Council • South Lanarkshire Council • Shetland Islands Council • Poverty Alliance • Living Wage Scotland • One Parent Families Scotland • Human Rights Consortium Scotland • Young Scot • Advance HE • University of Edinburgh • UK Women's Budget Group • Fawcett Society • Chwarae Teg • WEN Wales • Women's Resource and Development Agency • Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group



Infrastructure

Our board sets policy and objectives, and ensures good governance practice around management and financial stability. The board of trustees meet quarterly to provide governance and oversight to ensure the effective delivery of Close the Gap's strategic aim of women's labour market equality. Responsibility for operational activity is delegated to the Executive Director, who leads the staff team.

In 2020 we recruited two new trustees, Samantha Bedford and Polly Jones, who bring to the Close the Gap board a range of valuable skills and experience.

Our trustees are:

Nicole Busby, Convener
Samantha Bedford
Claire Fleming
Polly Jones

We would like give sincere thanks to Emma Ritch and Sue Domminney, who stepped down from the board this year, and whose time, commitment and skills contributed to Close the Gap's growth in recent years.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Scottish Government which provides core funding for Close the Gap and *Equally Safe at Work*, and the ROSA Fund for Women and Girls which funds our project on sexual harassment.



Staffing

This year, our dedicated staff team have worked hard to ensure that women's experiences of the labour market are visible during Covid-19, while also managing the personal impacts of Covid-19. We would like to thank our skilled staff team for their hard work during this time.

Anna Ritchie Allan
Executive Director

Lindsey Millen
Policy Manager

Ruth Boyle
Policy and Parliamentary Officer

Kelsey Smith
Programme Officer

Sarah Todd
Development Assistant

We're also delighted to continue our work with University of Manchester to support the PhD studentship of Joanna Wilson, whose work focuses on the gender pay gap in Scotland.

This year, we said goodbye to Sarah Todd who moved on, and we wish her well in her new role.



Close the Gap works in Scotland on women's labour market participation. We work with policymakers, employers and unions to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's inequality at work.

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Close the Gap (SCIO) (known as Close the Gap)
is a Scottish charity, SC046842.



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