



## **Close the Gap response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026**

**September 2021**

Close the Gap is Scotland's policy advocacy organisation working on women's labour market participation. We have been working with policymakers, employers and employees for 20 years to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's labour market inequality.

### **1. Introduction**

The Scottish Government's Every Child, Every Chance: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018 – 2022 explicitly recognises that women's poverty is inextricably interlinked with child poverty. It adopts a strong focus on the need to advance women's labour market equality including engaging with sectors, such as tourism and hospitality, in which women's low pay is a concern; tackling the gender pay gap; and providing for more flexible working opportunities. The economic and employment impacts of COVID-19 have underscored the need for Scottish Government to maintain this strong focus on women's low pay and labour market equality in the next Child Poverty Delivery Plan. As a result of the pandemic, women who were already struggling are now under enormous financial pressure, being pushed into further and deeper poverty. The Scottish Government should seek to build on the current actions, ensuring that the new Delivery Plan is ambitious, gender competent and reflective of the current context.

Children's access to resources, safety and wellbeing cannot be divorced from the circumstances of their mothers. Achieving Scotland's child poverty targets requires urgent and concentrated action to eradicate poverty and inequality experienced by women. A gender-blind focus on household income masks women's specific experiences of poverty and insecurity. While the Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022 recognises this explicitly, action on the gender pay gap, social security and providing sufficient accessible childcare has not been adequately prioritised. Ultimately, unless the Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 prioritises interventions to advance women's equality and secure women's incomes, Scotland will fail to meet child poverty targets.

Close the Gap welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on the Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026. In line with Close the Gap's expertise, our submission focuses on policies related to the Delivery Plan's emphasis on income from employment.

## 2. The links between women’s poverty and child poverty

Women’s poverty is directly tied to child poverty, and women’s economic and labour market inequality is therefore a key cause of child poverty. Women’s incomes remain a critical factor in child poverty with evidence showing that where women’s disposable income is reduced, spending on children decreases.<sup>1</sup> Action to address women’s labour market inequality and ensure women receive adequate financial support through the social security system are therefore key priorities in tackling child poverty.

Gendered patterns of care are entrenched and have been slow to disrupt, in part due to the outdated presumption that care is a product of inherently “female” traits and preferences, leading to a subsequent failure to recognise and value care skills.<sup>2</sup> The most recently available time-use data for pre-pandemic Scotland shows that women in opposite sex couples were undertaking approximately 68% of the housework and 68% of the childcare.<sup>3</sup> The unequal distribution of unpaid work remains a key cause of the gender pay gap in Scotland<sup>4</sup> and evidence shows that traditional domestic division of labour continues to shape the management of poverty at the household level.<sup>5</sup> As the pandemic disrupted informal and formal childcare, schooling and social care, gendered patterns of unpaid care were exacerbated further.<sup>6</sup> Evidence from the Institute of Fiscal Studies shows that women with caring responsibilities have reduced their paid working hours substantially, and by more than their male counterparts.<sup>7</sup>

Women also tend to be “poverty managers” and will often shield their families from poverty by going without food, clothing or warmth themselves. As a result, women can feel the effects of poverty more acutely, impacting their physical and mental health.<sup>8</sup> In addition to carrying the main responsibility for household budgeting with inadequate material resources, women often face barriers to accessing community support including inaccessible services and inadequate public transport.<sup>9</sup>

## 3. Women, work and poverty

Poverty in Scotland is gendered. Women are more likely to be in poverty than men; women are more likely to experience in-work poverty; women find it harder to escape poverty and are more likely to experience persistent poverty than men. This is reflected

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<sup>1</sup> CPAG (2012) Ending child poverty by 2020. Available at [https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Ending-child-poverty-by-2020-progress-made-lessons-learned-0612\\_0.pdf](https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Ending-child-poverty-by-2020-progress-made-lessons-learned-0612_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Emily Thomson (2020) *Gender & Inclusive Growth: Inclusive Growth and its potential to improve gender equality*, Close the Gap and Engender available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-and-Inclusive-Growth---Making-inclusive-growth-work-for-women-in-Scotland.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Wishart R, Dunatchik A, Speight S, Mayer M (2019) *Changing patterns in parental time use in the UK*. NatCen. Available at: [http://natcen.ac.uk/media/1722408/Parental\\_time\\_use\\_report.pdf](http://natcen.ac.uk/media/1722408/Parental_time_use_report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Close the Gap (2021) *Gender Pay Gap Statistics*

<sup>5</sup> Women’s Budget Group (2005) *Women’s and Children’s Poverty: Making the links*

<sup>6</sup> C. Hupkau and B. Petrongolo (2020) *Work, care and gender during the Covid-19 Crisis*

<sup>7</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020) *How are Mothers and fathers balancing work and family life under lockdown?*

<sup>8</sup> Women’s Budget Group (2005) *Women’s and Children’s Poverty: Making the links*

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022 which highlights “conclusive evidence that poverty and gender are inextricably linked.”

Women’s experiences of poverty are directly linked to their experiences of the labour market. Women comprise the majority of low paid workers in Scotland and the gender pay gap is a key factor in women’s higher levels of poverty. Work that is seen as “women’s work”, such as cleaning, care and retail, is systematically undervalued in the labour market because this work is done by women. This results in the low pay associated with those jobs and sectors and has lifelong impacts for women including less access to assets and resources, higher levels of debt, and mental health problems caused by financial insecurity.

Women are more likely than men to have caring responsibilities and therefore face the additional pressure of finding work that allows them to balance earning with caring. This sees women further concentrated into low paid and insecure work, as most part-time work is found in the lowest paid jobs and sectors, often leading to women working below their skill level. Research from Living Wage Scotland found that women in part-time work stand to benefit the most from Living Wage accreditation.<sup>10</sup>

Women with caring responsibilities, and single parents particularly, 91% of whom are women, are trapped in poverty by a range of factors including the prohibitive cost of childcare; lack of quality flexible working and part-time work jobs, with reliable hours; difficulties in accessing training and development opportunities; and generic employability programmes and a social security system that do not meet their needs. The Child Poverty Delivery Plan has a strong focus on work and earnings. However, in order to tackle child poverty, analysis of, and action on, work and earnings must be explicitly gendered. In line with the multiple, intersecting inequalities experienced by different groups of women, there is a particularly high risk of poverty among Black and minority ethnic (BME) women, disabled women, single parents, and refugee and asylum-seeking women.

These trends have been exacerbated by the pandemic. It is therefore critical that the Scottish Government prioritise action to tackle women’s in-work poverty in order to deliver on child poverty targets. Women are more likely to work in a shut-down sector, such as hospitality and retail; women have borne the brunt of the increase in childcare and care for adults in the home, making it difficult to do paid work; women accounted for the majority of furloughed staff from July 2020 to April 2021; and women are more likely to lose their jobs over the course of the recession.<sup>11</sup> COVID-19 job disruption has been especially acute for low-paid women, BME women and young women. This is

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<sup>10</sup> Jones, Gareth (2019) ‘Women benefit from living wage expansion’, *Third Force News*, available at <https://tfn.scot/news/women-benefit-from-living-wage-expansion>

<sup>11</sup> Close the Gap (2021) *One Year On: How COVID-19 is impacting women’s employment in Scotland* available at [https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1617267711\\_One-Year-On--How-COVID-19-is-impacting-womens-employment-in-Scotland.pdf](https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1617267711_One-Year-On--How-COVID-19-is-impacting-womens-employment-in-Scotland.pdf)

significant as these groups of women are identified as being at particular risk of poverty in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan. COVID-19 has therefore placed these women, and their children, at even greater risk of poverty, adding to a growing child poverty crisis.

#### **4. Answers to consultation questions**

##### **a) What's currently working well, and what should the Scottish Government and partners continue to do or do more of?**

###### Action on the gender pay gap

While the current Delivery Plan's emphasis on the gender pay gap is welcome, the actions are narrowly focused. The Plan committed to:

- requiring listed public authorities in Scotland with more than 20 employees to publish their gender pay gap every two years;
- delivery of women returners programmes; and
- work to tackle occupational segregation through the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education and Training Strategy and Skills Development Scotland's Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships.

Research by Close the Gap on public bodies' compliance with the public sector equality duty in 2019 found that a third of Scottish public bodies did not publish their gender pay gap and almost two-thirds of public bodies which had reported a gender pay gap did not publish equality outcomes or actions to address the causes of their gender pay gap. There has been extremely limited progress in addressing occupational segregation in Modern Apprenticeship frameworks<sup>12</sup>, and women's wider under-representation in STEM-related sectors.

Since the publication of the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government published *A Fairer Scotland for Women*<sup>13</sup>, Scotland's first Gender Pay Gap Action Plan. Close the Gap welcomed the breadth of ambition set out in the plan, published in 2019, which recognises that the causes of the pay gap reach far beyond the workplace. We also welcomed the recent refresh of the plan's actions to ensure that action on the pay gap was reflective of the current COVID context.<sup>14</sup> As tackling the gender pay gap and child poverty are intertwined ambitions, the next Child Poverty Delivery Plan should take account of the actions in the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan. While the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan is a solid starting point for tackling women's labour market equality, further action is required, particularly on specific measures to address women's low pay.

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<sup>12</sup> Close the Gap (2021) *A gender review of Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's youth unemployment strategy* available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/A-gender-review-of-Developing-the-Young-Workforce--Scotlands-youth-unemployment-strategy.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Scottish Government (2019) *A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan*

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Government (2020) *Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland: The Government's Programme for Scotland 2020-2021*

## Improving the provision of affordable, flexible and accessible childcare

The Child Poverty Delivery Plan highlighted the importance of, and committed to, expanded early learning and childcare provision. This focus is vital, as childcare is the most immediate barrier to women being able to work, study and train. The provision of high quality, flexible childcare is inconsistent in Scotland and the prohibitively high cost means that many women reduce their hours after having children, or leave their job altogether to do full-time childcare.

Maternal employment in the UK continues to lag significantly behind the best performers in the OECD.<sup>15</sup> The need to balance earning with caring means women are more likely to work part-time. This exacerbates women's concentration in low paid and insecure work, as most part-time work is found in the lowest paid jobs and sectors, making it difficult for women to combine their caring responsibility with a job that is commensurate with their skill level. The high cost of childcare also particularly affects women because the cost of childcare in an opposite sex household is often set against the woman's pay. Parents and carers of disabled children pay higher than average costs, and three-quarters have reduced their hours or left their job because of difficulties accessing appropriate childcare.<sup>16</sup> Childcare can also play an important role in local economic regeneration strategies in terms of dealing with area-based poverty through offering employment, providing opportunities for mothers to access the wider labour market, and improving the quality of provision for children in areas of deprivation.

Close the Gap welcomed the increase in the number of free hours of ELC to 1140 hours as a positive development in the provision of affordable, flexible childcare. However, the 1140 hours must be viewed as the starting point, rather than the end point, of reform. The 1140 entitlement also does not deliver sufficient funded hours to enable women to work full-time and the delivery of the funded entitlement at the local level is very often insufficiently flexible to meet the needs of women and their families.<sup>17</sup> To meet the needs of women and their families, the Delivery Plan should outline steps to deliver a funded entitlement of 50 hours for children aged 6 months onwards to enable women to work full-time if they need to or want to. Commitments in the Programme for Government around wraparound childcare and the expansion of free early learning and childcare to 1 and 2 year-olds are also welcome. These commitments should be early priorities for the Government within the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, in recognition of the importance of affordable and accessible childcare in meeting child poverty targets.

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<sup>15</sup> Campbell, Jim, Prof Diane Elson and Prof Ailsa McKay (2013) *The Economic Case for Investing in High Quality Childcare and Early Years Education*, Women in Scotland's Economy Research Centre

<sup>16</sup> *UK Parliament (2014) Report of the parliamentary inquiry into childcare for disabled children*

<sup>17</sup> Audit Scotland (2018) *Early Learning and Childcare*

## Utilising Scotland's social security powers to tackle poverty

The passing of the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 gave the Scottish Parliament new powers around social security.<sup>18</sup> Close the Gap have welcomed early action, including the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment. However, it is important that the Scottish Government continue to utilise the full powers at their disposal to tackle poverty in Scotland. Close the Gap is a member of the End Child Poverty Coalition which has called for the Scottish Government to commit to doubling the Scottish Child Payment in this year's budget.<sup>19</sup> This call was endorsed by a wide coalition of civil society organisations, trade unions, faith leaders, and community groups. In addition, all of the political parties represented in the Scottish Parliament have supported the doubling of the Scottish Child Payment. It is therefore very disappointing that the Scottish Government did not respond to this wide consensus and commit to doubling the payment immediately within the recently published Programme for Government. This failure to take urgent action makes it extremely difficult for the Scottish Government to meet child poverty targets. Evidence highlights that doubling the Scottish Child Payment now is the single most impactful action that could be taken to help meet the interim child poverty targets in 2023. Without action to double the payment in the upcoming budget, more mothers and their children will be pulled into poverty. Under the current roll-out plan and value, the Scottish Child Payment will reduce poverty in Scotland by between 2 and 3 percentage points. This could leave child poverty rates as high as 26% in 2023/24, when the interim target, enshrined in legislation for that year is 18%.<sup>20</sup>

### **b) Are there policies, actions or approaches that the Scottish Government and partners should stop doing or need to do differently?**

#### Flexible Workforce Development Fund

One of the key actions within the work and earnings section of the current plan is the delivery of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF). The Child Poverty Delivery Plan states "we expect that around a third of those benefitting from FWDF will be parents – although it may be a higher share than that, given the FWDF focus on low pay sectors, which are more likely to be dominated by women. We will monitor and evaluate the Fund to check its impacts on parents." In reality, the guidance for employers and colleges which accompanies the FWDF has insufficient focus on gender equality to ensure that women's in-work progression is a core aim of the Fund. Guidance has vague commitments to employers affording "due consideration to other specific groups in their workforce where training could bring disproportionately positive benefits" and ensuring colleges are "mindful of their responsibilities to advance equality

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<sup>18</sup> Poverty Alliance (2021) *A Scotland for All of Us*

<sup>19</sup> Poverty Alliance (2021) "Do the right thing and double the Scottish Child Payment now" civil society coalition tells First Minister' available at <https://www.povertyalliance.org/do-the-right-thing-and-double-the-scottish-child-payment-now-civil-society-coalition-tells-first-minister/>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

and reduce discrimination under the public sector equality duty.<sup>21</sup> Close the Gap's experience of working with employers highlights that when guidance on gender equality lacks specificity, it does not result in change.

There is no evidence that the FWDF is addressing the barriers women experience to in-work training and development or tackling women's in-work poverty. Publicly available evaluation data on the FWDF contains limited gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data and there is no mention of participants with caring responsibilities. Evidence shows that women are less likely to have access to training, particularly women working in low-paid part-time jobs<sup>22</sup>, less likely to undertake training that will enable them to progress or secure a pay rise, and more likely to have to do training in their own time and to contribute towards the cost.<sup>23</sup> Generic employability and skills programmes replicate gendered patterns of skills acquisition and employment, ultimately entrenching occupational segregation and widening the gender pay gap. As tackling the barriers to women's progression were not explicitly considered in the design of the FWDF, the programme is unlikely to be an effective mechanism for tackling women's in-work poverty. A wider range of upskilling and reskilling interventions which have been explicitly designed to promote women's in-work progression are therefore necessary. Considering the lack of evidence around the impact of the FWDF on child poverty, it would be insufficient to replicate actions relating to the programme within the next Plan.

### Gender-competent employability support

Generic employability programmes replicate gendered patterns of skills acquisition and employment, entrenching occupational segregation and widening the gender pay gap. Mainstream employability programmes routinely do not take account of women's caring roles and fail to acknowledge that women's readiness to work will be impacted by these caring roles.<sup>24</sup> The job-matching approaches adopted within these programmes are often inappropriate as women are funnelled into low-paid, inflexible jobs such as retail, which they inevitably leave as a result of these roles being incompatible with their caring responsibilities and the wider realities of women's lives. Occupational segregation is a cause and a consequence of women's inequality in employment, acting as a barrier to women's progression in the workplace, and cementing women's in-work poverty.

In particular, mainstream employability programmes do not meet the needs of low-income single parents, which places additional pressure on specialist programmes such as the Parental Employability Fund to deliver for this particular group. The Social

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<sup>21</sup> Flexible Workforce Development Guidance 2021-22 available at

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance\\_sfcgd142021/FWDF\\_Guidance\\_2021-22\\_-\\_Levy.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcgd142021/FWDF_Guidance_2021-22_-_Levy.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (2016) *Inquiry into the gender pay gap*

<sup>23</sup> Aldrige, Fiona and Corin Egglestone, (2015) *Learning, Skills and Progression at Work: Analysis from the 2015 adult participation in learning survey*, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

<sup>24</sup> Engender (2016) *Unblocking the pipeline: Gender and Employability in Scotland*



Renewal Advisory Board noted that current programme funding for the Parental Employment Support Fund is “insufficient to make progress needed to meet Scotland’s statutory targets on child poverty”. The Advisory Board subsequently recommended significant increases in funding for the Parental Employment Support Fund and called for an offer of employment support for those in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment. In addition to better funding for specialist support, mainstream programmes should be more tailored for women with caring responsibilities, especially single mothers. This should include promoting high-quality flexible working opportunities, providing better access to childcare support, and covering travel costs in order to allow more women to access these services.<sup>25</sup> This support is necessary to meet the needs of women living in poverty.

### Gendering fair work

The Child Poverty Delivery Plan acknowledges the importance of fair work, pointing to the fact the majority of families in poverty already include someone in work. However, while fair work is a flagship policy for the Scottish Government, it is not well-gendered. The Scottish Government’s Fair Work Action Plan is characterised by a lack of gender analysis and it also does not make use of gender-disaggregated data<sup>26</sup>. While links are made to the Scottish Government’s Gender Pay Gap Action Plan, gender is not mentioned in the Fair Work Action Plan actions. During the pandemic, the visibility given to gender equality within fair work has also been limited, with neither the joint statement on fair work nor the refreshed fair work principles having a focus on gender equality.

Since the publication of the last Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government launched the Fair Work First initiative which aims to improve employment practice by applying fair work criteria to grants, other funding and contracts being awarded by and across the public sector “where it is relevant to do so”. The criteria includes “action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace”. The melding of a specific requirement on the pay gap with a more generic ask on a diverse and inclusive workplace diminishes the effectiveness of the criterion. It dilutes the original intention of the requirement to take action on the pay gap, and will very likely confuse employers. In Close the Gap’s experience, employers respond to specificity not generic asks on diversity and inclusion. The Fair Work First guidance also lacks the detail that is needed to enable employers to take action on women’s equality at work. A focus on generic equality and diversity for all does not benefit any women or any other protected group.

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<sup>25</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021) *Freeing Low-Income Single Parents from In-work Poverty’s Grip*

<sup>26</sup> Close the Gap (2019) *Close the Gap briefing for Scottish Government debate: Fair Work Action Plan* available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-briefing-for-Scottish-Government-Debate---Fair-Work-Action-Plan.pdf>



The Scottish Government recently announced that it will consult on a requirement for fair work conditions to be applied to the scoring criteria for all public sector grants, where it is proportionate and relevant to do so. Close the Gap would strongly welcome increased conditionality attached to public sector grants. Scottish Government and public bodies should also make better use of public procurement to lever improved employment practice, specifically taking action on the gender pay gap. In particular, the current review of the public sector equality duty needs to recognise that the procurement duty has resulted in no meaningful change in women's equality at work. The recasting of the Scottish specific duties should include a more effective way to use public procurement powers to advance women's workplace equality. The Social Renewal Advisory Board made a similar call for Scottish Government, and the wider public sector to attach Fair Work criteria to all grants, contracts and funding as standard, unless it can be specifically demonstrated that there is a reason not to do so.<sup>27</sup>

The strong focus on fair work should be maintained in the next Child Poverty Delivery Plan Scottish Government, however, gender equality should be better integrated. It should also be explicit how fair work for women will be realised, and the actions that will deliver this.

### Gender and inclusive growth

Close the Gap has welcomed Scottish Government's prioritisation of inclusive growth and believes that it has the potential to advance women's labour market equality and a more equal distribution of the benefits of growth and investment. However, gender is largely absent from Scottish Government's approach to inclusive growth. Last year, Close the Gap and Engender published *Gender and Inclusive Growth*<sup>28</sup>, written by feminist economist Emily Thomson, which assesses the opportunities for the inclusive growth agenda to deliver a marked improvement in gender equality. This report critiques current approaches to inclusive growth for a failure to recognise the realities of women's lives. In Scotland's Economic Strategy, the promotion of gender equality is presented as a key feature of tackling inequality in Scotland and offers the potential for enhancing a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. However, the opportunity to embed gender equality within Scotland's inclusive growth approach has not been fully realised.

Inclusive growth means investing in a care economy. Care is as essential to our economy as bricks, steel, and fibre optic cable. Spending on childcare and care should be viewed as infrastructure investment as it is an enabler of paid work, but also supports the

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<sup>27</sup> Social Renewal Advisory Board (2021) *If not now, when? Social Renewal Advisory Board*

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/not-now-social-renewal-advisory-board-report-january-2021/documents/>

<sup>28</sup> Emily Thomson (2020) *Gender & Inclusive Growth: Inclusive Growth and its potential to improve gender equality*, Close the Gap and Engender available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender-and-Inclusive-Growth---Making-inclusive-growth-work-for-women-in-Scotland.pdf>

realisation of women's equality and rights, and children's rights.<sup>29</sup> It is of particular economic and social benefit to the poorest families, including those headed by single mothers.<sup>30</sup> Designating childcare and social care as key sectors would drive the policy focus and allocation of resources necessary to grow these sectors, and address the systemic undervaluation of "women's work" by reorientating strategic focus to women's position in the economy, as workers and as carers.

In developing the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, Scottish Government must recognise that the potential of the current inclusive growth approach to reduce gender inequality and address women's poverty is limited. The current approach focuses on paid employment, underpinned by a traditional macroeconomic framework, with limited consideration of the undervaluation of female dominated work, occupational segregation, and the devaluation of the reproductive economy. It remains somewhat unclear as to how inclusive growth will be operationalised, and current conceptualisations are unlikely to facilitate the economic shift necessary to deliver on Scotland's child poverty targets.

#### Extension of the real Living Wage to female-dominated sectors

The Child Poverty Delivery Plan includes actions to engage with sectors such as tourism, retail and hospitality where women's low pay is a concern. In outlining that these sectors have a critical role to play in tackling child poverty, the plan recognises that the payment of the real Living Wage in female-dominated sectors is necessary to lift women and their children out of poverty. However, over the implementation period, there has been little progress to increase the coverage of the living wage in low-paid, female-dominated sectors.

Women continue to account for 60% of workers earning less than the Living Wage and there is low-coverage of the Living Wage in female-dominated sectors including retail, care and hospitality. Four in ten of those working in retail and wholesale are paid less than the real Living Wage<sup>31</sup> and 80% of people working in hospitality reported that they were already struggling with their finances before going into lockdown.<sup>32</sup> Recent analysis from the STUC concluded that almost half (43%) of the Scottish social care workforce are being paid less than the real Living Wage, compared to less than a fifth (17%) for workers across the Scottish economy.<sup>33</sup> Improving rates of pay in these sectors is an

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<sup>29</sup> See: De Henau J, Himmelweit S, Lapniewska Z, Perrons D (2016) Investing in the Care Economy: A gender analysis of employment stimulus in seven OECD countries. International Trade Union Confederation. Available at: [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/care\\_economy\\_en.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/care_economy_en.pdf) and Lapniewska Z (2016) Growth, Equality and Employment: Investing in Childcare in Scotland. WiSE Research Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University. Available at: <https://www.gcu.ac.uk/wise/media/gcalwebv2/theuniversity/centresprojects/wise/98178%20WiSE%20BREFING%20PAPE R%204%20August.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Women's Budget Group (2020) 2020 WBG Briefing: Childcare and gender. Available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/uk-policy-briefings/2019-wbg-briefing-childcare-and-gender/>

<sup>31</sup> Resolution Foundation (2020) *Risky Business: Economic impacts of the Coronavirus crisis on different groups of workers*

<sup>32</sup> IPPR (2020) *COVID-19: What's the outlook for Scotland's workforce*

<sup>33</sup> Williams, Martin (2020) 'Half of Scotland's care workers paid less than Real Living Wage', *The Herald*, 2 May 2020, available at <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18421934.half-scotlands-care-workers-paid-less-real-living-wage/>

important starting point in increasing women’s earnings and tackling the undervaluation of “women’s work”.

The Delivery Plan also committed to improving pay in the early learning and childcare sector with an action to ensure all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement are paid at least the Living Wage. In practice this means that the Living Wage is only paid for those particular hours that a worker is delivering the funded entitlement, and their remaining hours may be paid at a lesser rate. This piecemeal step is insufficient to tackle in-work poverty in the ELC sector. Across the sector many practitioners are paid less than the Living Wage. It is estimated that around 80% of ELC practitioners and 50% of supervisors in private and third sector partner settings are paid below the Living Wage.<sup>34</sup> The forthcoming Delivery Plan should include a commitment to ensure the national funding model enables private and third sector ELC providers in partner settings to pay the Living Wage to all ELC staff, not just those delivering the funded entitlement, with a more ambitious target around pay to set thereafter.

**c) What new policies, actions or approaches should the Scottish Government consider implementing?**

Facilitating a gender-sensitive economic recovery

Women and men had different levels of economic wellbeing before COVID-19, and this has been deepened by the crisis. The principle of equality and non-discrimination must be core to economic recovery. Scottish Government must not implement a recovery plan that merely facilitates a return to the status quo, cementing women’s labour market and economic inequality. Instead, Scottish Government’s COVID recovery strategy should focus on rebuilding and transforming the economy to realise women’s equality in the labour market, and in wider society.

Despite evidence on the profoundly gendered nature of the crisis, the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery report is not gendered with the impacts on women’s employment and the substantial increase in women’s unpaid work only receiving a peripheral mention. Its analysis does not integrate these gendered issues and nor are they reflected in the recommendations it has produced.<sup>35</sup> Without mitigation, actions for a recovery based on AGER’s report will worsen women’s economic position, and widen income and wealth gaps.<sup>36</sup> We urge Scottish Government to take a gendered approach to the COVID Recovery Strategy and the Strategy for Economic Transformation to prioritise action on women’s labour inequality that will also reduce child poverty.

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<sup>34</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2018) *Skills investment plan for Scotland’s early learning and childcare sector*

<sup>35</sup> Close the Gap and Engender (2020) *Engender and Close the Gap response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery Report* available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-and-Engender-response-to-the-AGER.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

The Social Renewal Advisory Board (SRAB) make a number of recommendations that would assist in addressing women's and child poverty including focusing fair work action on the groups most impacted by the pandemic, including women; setting aside a proportion of the Green Jobs Fund for women; addressing occupational segregation; and delivering 50 hours per week of funded childcare. If Scotland's economic recovery is to promote women's economic equality and tackle child poverty, these actions should be taken forward as a priority.

Close the Gap and Engender published *Gender and Economic Recovery* in 2020 which sets out nine principles for a gender-sensitive economic recovery.<sup>37</sup> The principles describe features of an economy that works for women as well as men, and develops Scotland's existing commitment to inclusive growth so that women are not left behind. The principles range from specifying that gender-sensitive inclusive growth is about the pattern of growth and not its rate, to stipulating that unpaid domestic and care work needs to be recognised, reduced, and redistributed from the household to the state by an increase of accessible, good quality childcare and social care. These principles should also be utilised in designing actions which promote a gender-sensitive economic recovery.

#### A focus on priority families requires an intersectional approach

The current Delivery Plan's focus on family groups at greatest risk of poverty, including lone parents, families with a disabled adult or child, young mothers, minority ethnic families, families with a child under one, and larger families, enables a targeting of resources to programmes and interventions that will have the greatest impact. However, this also requires an intersectional approach to policymaking. While there will be variations in these family groups around needs and priorities, it is important to note that each priority family is not a homogenous group. Women's experiences of inequality are not universal, but rather shaped by their multiple identities. While there are commonalities experienced by all women at work, disabled women<sup>38</sup>, BME women<sup>39</sup>, lesbian, bisexual and trans women<sup>40</sup>, refugee women<sup>41</sup>, young women<sup>42</sup>, and older women<sup>43</sup> experience different, multiple barriers to participation in the labour market, and to progression within their occupation. An intersectional approach is therefore crucial to understanding the complexities of women's lives and it is important that policy design and delivery considers the needs of marginalised women. Within the current Delivery Plan, there is only a passing mention of intersectionality, and the lack of an

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<sup>37</sup> Close the Gap and Engender (2020) *Gender and Economic Recovery*

<sup>38</sup> Close the Gap (2018) *Response to the Scottish Government Consultation on Increasing the Employment of Disabled People in the Public Sector*

<sup>39</sup> Close the Gap (2019) *Still Not Visible: Black and Minority Ethnic Women's Experiences of Employment in Scotland*

<sup>40</sup> Stonewall (2014) *The Double-Glazed Glass Ceiling: Lesbians in the workplace* and House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (December 2015) *Transgender equality*

<sup>41</sup> Scottish Refugee Council (2014) *One Step Closer*

<sup>42</sup> YWCA Scotland (2016) *Status of Young Women in Scotland*

<sup>43</sup> Scottish Commission on Older Women (2015) *Older Women and Work: Looking to the future*

intersectional approach is evident in the Plan’s analysis and actions. Although the language around intersectionality is becoming more prominent, this is not reflected in policy development, or in employer practice, with little meaningful focus on the needs of different groups of women.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for the current plan points to addressing structural issues around disability and race through A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People, the Race Equality Framework and the Race Equality Action Plan. However, these policy frameworks are not well-gendered and do not afford sufficient focus to the experiences of disabled women and BME women outlined in section 2 of this response. It is impossible to address poverty for these priority groups without adopting an intersectional approach to action on labour market inequalities. Moreover, gender-blind approaches to tackling poverty for these groups may reinforce women’s poverty and labour market inequality. The next Child Poverty Delivery Plan must be intersectional in its analysis and actions if it is to address poverty for women who are in the priority family groups.

#### Tackling the undervaluation of women’s work

Work that is seen as “women’s work”, such as cleaning, care and retail, is systematically undervalued in the labour market because this work is done by women. The concept of undervaluation underpins gendered experiences of low pay, occupational segregation and the gender pay gap.<sup>44</sup> In economics, the undervaluation of “women’s work” means there is evidence of lower returns to women’s productive characteristics.<sup>45</sup> Practically, this means that women will receive lower pay from investing in education or from their own work experience.

The extension of Living Wage coverage in undervalued female-dominated jobs and sectors is an important starting point in addressing women’s low pay. However, the Living Wage is not a panacea for undervaluation as it does not address the crux of the low pay problem, which is that this work is undervalued because it is mostly women who do the work. Increasing the wages associated with these roles alone will be insufficient to better recognise the status and skills of the workforce. The undervaluation of women’s work in Scotland is recognised in both the Child Poverty Delivery Plan and *A Fairer Scotland for Women*,<sup>46</sup> but the Plans contain no specific actions to address it. The Scottish Government has recently commissioned research to gather evidence on the international mechanisms to revalue women’s low-paid work in sectors such as social care, early learning and childcare, retail, and cleaning. The findings and recommendations of this research should be taken into account in developing the next Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

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<sup>44</sup> Grimshaw, Damien and Jill Rubery (2007) *Undervaluing Women’s Work*, Equal Opportunities Commission

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Scottish Government (2020) *A Fairer Scotland for Women*

COVID-19 has illuminated the critical role “women’s work” in sectors such as care, childcare, nursing and retail plays in Scotland’s economy. Although these workers are essential to a successful pandemic response, they are undervalued, underpaid, and under-protected.<sup>47</sup> The creation of a National Care Service provides an important opportunity to improve the quality of care services in Scotland, while also improving job quality and raising the status of paid care work. The vision for social care reform must recognise that many of the challenges identified with the system, and particularly the workforce challenges, are a cause and consequence of gender inequality.<sup>48</sup> The EqIA for the 2018-2022 delivery plan noted that specific policies listed in the Delivery Plan could contribute towards addressing increasing the value of care to society, but little progress has been made in this area. The next Child Poverty Delivery Plan should include action to addressing the undervaluation of the care workforce as part of the development of the National Care Service. This should include developing gender-competent minimum standards of employment; undertaking a national job evaluation exercise to address the gendered undervaluation of social care work; utilising state wage-setting power to address low-pay; and establishing sectoral bargaining arrangements which includes pay, and terms and conditions in the sector.

#### Tackling occupational segregation

Occupational segregation is one of the key causes of women’s poverty and the gender pay gap, and it remains an entrenched problem on which there has been very little progress. Women are concentrated in low-paid, undervalued jobs and sectors, putting women and their children at greater risk of poverty. For example, women account for 84% of those employed in caring, leisure and other service occupations but only 9% of skilled trade occupations in the Scottish labour market. The “glass ceiling” also means women are under-represented in senior positions in the vast majority of workplaces, and comprise only 39% of managers, directors or senior officials in the Scottish labour market.

The bulk of current work to tackle occupational segregation comprises supply-side programmes which are heavily focused on getting more girls and women into STEM. This focus was replicated within the last Delivery Plan, with a focus on addressing women’s under-representation in STEM through the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education and Training Strategy and Skills Development Scotland’s Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships. There has been no work to address the inherent undervaluation of female-dominated work, such as care. Overall, activity has been piecemeal, and has not brought about meaningful change.

In the context of COVID-19, occupational segregation has been a key contributing factor in the gendered experiences of job disruption. The economic impact of COVID-19 has

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<sup>47</sup> Close the Gap and Engender (2020) *Gender and Economic Recovery*

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

varied by sector which, because of occupational segregation, means that the impact will not be equally shared by women and men. Women's over-representation in low-paid, lower-skilled service sector jobs has made them particularly susceptible to furlough, involuntary reduction of working hours and also places them at greater risk of redundancy over the course of the recession. Close the Gap has called for a commitment to establish an occupational segregation commission which focuses on adopting a strategic approach to addressing occupational segregation across the Scottish labour market. This would be a helpful action to be included in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

#### Gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data

Gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data is data that is broken down by sex, so that it is possible to compare and contrast differences between men and women. However, it is not merely about counting women and men, but also about utilising statistics and other information that adequately reflect gendered differences and inequalities in the situation of women and men.<sup>49</sup> In the context of women's employment, an example of gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data would not only present women's employment rate but also use data that reflects why women's experiences of employment are different from men's including, for instance, women's greater responsibility for unpaid care. Gender-sensitive analysis and use of evidence must consider the gendered differences in women's and men's lives.

The Delivery Plan sets out proposed indicators that are to be disaggregated by sex where possible. However, progress update reports, provided on an annual basis, have not included this breakdown and accompanying statistical publications contain marginal gender-disaggregated data. Within the Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government acknowledge that "wider social structures and power relations mean that we cannot simply assume that women share the same access to resources, whether from paid work or from social security as men when they are in the same household. This can lead to hidden poverty within households, which may also affect children." The EqIA for the Delivery Plan also notes that "analysis on income and household income from normal sources does not allow effective disaggregation of gender, apart from in households where there is only one adult. This is an area where we will look to improve income data to be able to further evidence trends." As yet, there does not appear to have been significant progress in addressing this data gap, and we would strongly urge the Scottish Government to include actions in the next plan around improving access to gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data on poverty.

The publication of the Scottish Government's Gender Equality Index in December 2020 is an important starting point, and provides a centralised hub of gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data. However, the process of developing the Gender Equality Index also

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<sup>49</sup> Engender (2020) *COVID-19: Gathering and using data to ensure that the response integrates women's equality and rights* available at <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Covid-19-Gathering-and-using-data-to-ensure-that-the-response-integrates-womens-equality-and-rights.pdf>



highlighted many of the critical data gaps that continue to exist, including long-standing intersectional data gaps around the experiences of different groups of women. It is vital that policymakers and service designers utilise this resource and design data gathering systems that build upon the work of the Index in order to address data gaps that the Index has exposed. Within the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, there should be a commitment to addressing pre-existing data gaps and gather intersectional gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data for all of the Plan's actions, programmes and interventions to ensure that gender equality is core to the evaluation and monitoring of the future Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

### Improving access to flexible working

The Child Poverty Delivery Plan Progress Report, published in June 2021, states “while the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on working practices saw a surge in enforced working from home that enabled businesses to reconsider previous practices, beyond COVID-19 a strong social case can be made for normalising flexibility in quality jobs.” However, the extent to which workers across the labour market have enjoyed increased flexibility and home working during the pandemic can be overstated – particularly for workers in low-paid jobs.

COVID-19 has also illuminated who has access to different types of flexibility such as homeworking and hybrid working, with analysis highlighting a clear disparity in the ability of higher skilled and lower skilled workers to work from home. Less than one in ten of those in the bottom half of earners say they can work from home, compared with 50% of workers in the top half of earners.<sup>50</sup> This pattern is also gendered because the majority of low-paid workers are women. While there has been emphasis on the increase in homeworking during the pandemic, data from the TUC found that only around one-third of the UK workforce have been working from home, and over half have continued to work outside of the home. Evidence shows that, with the exception of home working, all forms of flexible working have reduced over the past year.<sup>51</sup> In Scotland, only 24% of jobs were advertised with flexible options by the end of 2020<sup>52</sup> and only one in six employees and employers in Scotland feel flexible working is the norm in their workplace.<sup>53</sup>

Women's disproportionate responsibility for care means that the lack of quality flexible working makes it difficult for them to balance work with family life.<sup>54</sup> Research shows that flexible working is particularly important for single parents, 91% of whom are women, with single parents reporting a lack of understanding from their employers

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<sup>50</sup> Resolution Foundation (2020) *Doing what it takes: Protecting firms and families from the economic impact of coronavirus*

<sup>51</sup> TUC (2020) *The Future of Flexible Working*

<sup>52</sup> Timewise (2020) *The Timewise Scottish Flexible Jobs Index 2020*

<sup>53</sup> Flexibility Works (2021) *Flex for life*

<sup>54</sup> Close the Gap (2020) *Flexible Working for All? The impact of the right to request regulations in Scotland*

around their experience of being the only carer.<sup>55</sup> The lack of flexibility offered within full-time employment across the labour market, but particularly in low-paid full-time work, is a barrier to women increasing both their hours and earnings. There are particular challenges for mothers of school-age children, especially single mothers, in covering school holidays while in full-time work. More flexible options that are compatible with longer working hours, for example term-time only and compressed hours, are less common in many types of low-paid work, and term time working in particular has reduced across Scotland's labour market.<sup>56</sup> These options would provide women with greater opportunities to increase their hours, while also being able to take care of children. Research by Resolution Foundation found that mothers in low to middle income groups, and those who are reliant on social security, were more likely to say that greater job flexibility and more suitable childcare would encourage them to extend their hours.<sup>57</sup> Currently, low-paid roles are more likely to be offered on part-time basis and are also more likely to have fixed working hours and locations which create barriers to progression for those who require flexibility.<sup>58</sup>

### Reliable working hours

Insufficient and unreliable hours and earnings are particularly pertinent issues for women in the Scottish labour market. The vast majority of part-time workers are women (75%) and just under half of employed women (41%) are working part-time, compared to just 13% of men.<sup>59</sup> Part-time work is negatively correlated with progression out of low-paid work<sup>60</sup> and part-time jobs are more than three times as likely to pay below the Living Wage than full-time roles.<sup>61</sup> Women's employment, particularly Black and minority ethnic women's employment,<sup>62</sup> is also becoming increasingly precarious, contributing to women's higher levels of in-work poverty.<sup>63</sup> Women engage with the gig economy in different ways to men, and are concentrated in stereotypically female, undervalued work such as care and cleaning. Three-quarters of women in the gig economy earned less than the taxable threshold, and two-thirds of women in the gig economy are also in other work.<sup>64</sup> Securing a reliable number of working hours which fit with school and available childcare provision is a particular challenge for single parents, especially as single parents are more likely to be concentrated in sectors such as retail

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021) *Freeing Low-Income Single Parents from In-work Poverty's Grip*

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Resolution Foundation (2012) *The Price of Motherhood: Women and part-time work*

<sup>58</sup> Timewise (2020) *The Timewise Scottish Flexible Jobs Index 2020*

<sup>59</sup> Close the Gap (2021) *Gender Pay Gap Statistics* available at

<https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Working-Paper-22---Gender-Pay-Gap-Statistics-2021.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> In-Work Progression Commission (2021) *Supporting Progression Out of Low-paid Work*

<sup>61</sup> Jones, Gareth (2019) 'Women benefit from living wage expansion', *Third Force News*, available at

<https://tfn.scot/news/women-benefit-from-living-wage-expansion>

<sup>62</sup> Trade Union Congress (2019) 'BME workers far more likely to be trapped in insecure work, TUC analysis reveals' available at <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/bme-workers-far-more-likely-to-be-trapped-insecure-work-tuc-analysis-reveals>

<sup>63</sup> Close the Gap (2018) *Women, Work and Poverty: What you need to know* available at

<https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/1---Women-work-and-poverty-what-you-need-to-know.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> RSA (2017) *Good Gigs: A fairer future for the UK's gig economy*

which are characterised by precarious and insecure work. These barriers ultimately contribute to women's concentration in low-paid jobs and sectors and reinforce the gendered nature of poverty in Scotland.

The campaign for Living Hours has highlighted the importance of reliable working hours which provide for a stable income. A fifth of workers in the UK experience work insecurity, and more than half of these workers earn less than the real Living Wage.<sup>65</sup> Research by the Living Wage Foundation<sup>66</sup> found that more than half (52%) of women in shift work are likely to receive less than a week's notice for working hours, shifts or work schedules. While equal numbers of men and women (26%) reported experiencing unexpected cancellations of shifts in the past 12 months, women were more likely than men to report receiving no payment when shifts were cancelled (29% compared to 20%).<sup>67</sup> This presents particular challenges for women in planning childcare around irregular shift patterns and also gives rise to the so-called "insecurity premium" which refers to the extra costs workers have to cover as a result of being called into work, such as last-minute childcare or transport costs. Tackling insecure work through the provision of reliable working hours should thus be prioritised in the next Child Poverty Delivery Plan. In the recently published Programme for Government, the Scottish Government committed their support to a Living Hours Campaign and specific actions to take forward this commitment should be included in the Delivery Plan.

### Minimum Income Guarantee

The Scottish Government should commit to the adoption of a gender-sensitive Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) within the next Delivery Plan. As women are more likely to be in poverty, more likely to be in low-paid and insecure work, more likely to have unpaid caring responsibilities and more likely to be reliant on social security, women would disproportionately benefit from the introduction of a MIG. The introduction of a MIG therefore presents a real opportunity to address women's poverty in Scotland. However, in order for this potential to be realised, both the MIG and the minimum income standards which underpin this, must be gendered by design. A MIG needs to take account of the gendered barriers to fair work, intra-household resource allocation, women's unpaid caring roles, and women's experiences of men's violence.

Gender equality must be mainstreamed in the development of a MIG from the start, with consideration afforded to women's inequality in the labour market, including women's working hours, pay, and precarity. While the IPPR's report into the creation of a MIG gives some attention to gender equality, the report's analysis and modelling is insufficient to ensure that the Guarantee will be gender-sensitive. In Close the Gap's

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<sup>65</sup> Living Wage Foundation (2021) *The Insecurity Complex: Low-paid workers and the growth of insecure work*

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

response to the consultation on the MIG<sup>68</sup>, we outlined a number of features of a gender-sensitive MIG including:

- Tackling women's poverty, inequality and financial insecurity by being flexible enough to respond to women's increased likelihood of being in precarious work, part-time work and low-paid self-employment.
- Ensuring that modelling to determine minimum income standards recognises the gendered barriers women experience in increasing their working hours.
- Providing individual payments by default, as opposed to a single household payment or an opt-in system for individual payments, to respond to intra-household resource allocation, provide access to an independent income for women and prevent facilitating financial abuse.

### Victim-survivors of men's violence against women

Victim-survivors of men's violence against women, and their children, will especially benefit from action on the causes of women's poverty. Violence against women (VAW) is a cause and consequence of gender inequality, and poverty makes women more vulnerable to forms of VAW. Perpetrators of domestic abuse use a range of tactics, including financial and economic abuse, to assert or maintain control over victim-survivors and restrict access to money and resources. The vast majority of women (89%) affected by domestic abuse report that financial abuse was central to their experience. The extent of women's poverty, and therefore child poverty, is masked by household statistics, which wrongly assume an equal distribution of household income and ignore the impacts of financial abuse. Financial dependence and poverty are both primary risk factors that diminish women's resilience and can prevent women from leaving an abusive partner. This is a particular issue for women who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) as a result of their migration status.

VAW affects all aspects of women's lives, and the workplace is no exception. However, employer practice on supporting victim-survivors is generally poor. Where women are not supported at work, their ability to do their job, their options to progress, and their wider labour market outcomes are negatively affected. Many women who have been sexually harassed are prevented from moving into better paid jobs or pushed out of work altogether. Women in low-paid precarious work, who are reliant on shift allocation, are more likely to be exploited by perpetrators and less likely to report sexual harassment.<sup>69</sup> Women affected by other forms of VAW such as stalking, and rape and sexual assault routinely face a lack of support at work, which affects their performance, forces them to take time off work, often with minimal or no sick pay, and in some cases are also forced to leave their job. Issues with Universal Credit not meeting women's

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<sup>68</sup> Close the Gap (2021) *Response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on the Minimum Income Guarantee* available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-response-to-the-Scottish-Government-Consultation-on-the-Minimum-Income-Guarantee---September-2021.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> TUC (2016) *Still Just a Bit of Banter?* Available at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/still-just-bit-banter>

needs, including the five-week wait, exacerbate victim-survivors' risk of poverty if they are forced to leave their job. The lack of support for victim-survivors at work also contributes to women's higher levels of poverty and child poverty.

#### **d) What lessons from the COVID response could be applied to tackling child poverty in the future?**

Scottish Government's response to COVID-19 has been characterised by a lack of gender mainstreaming and poor EqlA processes. Close the Gap have been concerned about the quality of EqlAs being developed during COVID-19, with use of post-hoc EqlAs increasingly common and a number of EqlAs have deviated from the stated methodology. In addition, analysis relating to the economic and labour market impacts of the pandemic have not incorporated sufficient gender analysis, rendering women's specific experiences invisible.

Responding to the crisis in a way that advances women's equality necessitates gathering, analysing and using gender-sensitive evidence and gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data. Gender-sensitive evidence and data is also essential in enabling the monitoring and evaluation of policy responses.<sup>70</sup> The 2008 recession demonstrates that responses to economic crises that are not sufficiently gendered exacerbate, rather than alleviate, gender inequalities in the economy.<sup>71</sup> To date, responses to COVID-19 have not learned from the mistakes of the previous recession, as there has been insufficient focus applied to gender equality and the differing impacts of COVID-19 on women and men. Responses thus risk further exacerbating gender inequality, particularly in the labour market.

Gender mainstreaming requires political will and commitment, which has so far been lacking. In the development of the next Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government must meet its legal obligations to mainstream gender equality in policymaking, including in policymaking related to child poverty. This includes policy development, research, advocacy, legislation, resource allocation, and the planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects. The EqlA for the 2018-2022 Delivery Plan presented strong evidence on how child poverty relates to protected characteristics, but did not outline any actions or how any potential negative impacts will be mitigated. Instead, the EqlA points to the need for the development of specific EqlAs for each policy within the Plan. Close the Gap have seen no evidence of any subsequent EqlAs developed as part of the Delivery Plan.

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<sup>70</sup> Engender (2020) *COVID-19: Gathering and using data to ensure that the response integrates women's equality and rights* available at <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Covid-19-Gathering-and-using-data-to-ensure-that-the-response-integrates-womens-equality-and-rights.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Emily Thomson (2020) *Gender & Inclusive Growth: Inclusive Growth and its potential to improve gender equality*, Close the Gap and Engender