

Womanifesto for Independence

Women for Independence's National Committee committed to developing a Womanifesto for Independence, with human rights at its heart. Women for Independence is a member of the Human Rights Consortium Scotland and a proud signatory of the Scottish Declaration on Human Rights. Human Rights are Women's Rights – and these rights underpin everything we write in this document.



Womanifesto for Independence

In composing this Womanifesto we have followed Women for Independence's principles **Listen First, find out what matters to women, do politics differently.**

We invited women from across Scotland to National Council meetings (pre-pandemic) and we held meetings in Inverness, Galashiels, Dundee, Edinburgh, Stirling and Glasgow. Many of the draft recommendations were approved at Annual General Meetings and have since been updated.

Whilst all the issues addressed are interconnected, we have focused on five overarching areas:

- **Human rights**
- **Health and wellbeing**
- **The economy**
- **Food and the environment**
- **Immigration**

This work is not finished – we still have work to do with you on developing other key policy areas, such as criminal justice, professional and skills development, housing and homelessness, power, pay and pensions, education and transport.

But we wanted to share our work so far, in the hope that it sparks **curiosity, conversations, deliberation and debate.**

Enjoy – and most of all – start meeting and talking. We have a referendum to win.

Yours for Scotland
Women for Independence
National Committee
June 2021



Aims of Women for Independence

Membership and meetings

National Committee members

Each section acknowledges the progress we have made so far and sets out our aspirations for the future in an independent Scotland. We also call on action in specific areas now, where we have devolved powers to act. As we write, we know our Parliament's devolved powers are under threat.

Every section has a link to additional information to enable you to explore and examine each topic. We hope together we can keep the conversations going and through continuing to be respectful, inclusive and welcoming, all of us can develop our thinking about the power, role, contribution and wellbeing of women in our future nation.

Womanifesto for Independence is seeking whole system change, applying a gendered lens to all that we do to create a gender-just, inclusive society, now and into an independent Scotland.

There is nothing that happens in our society that does not require a gendered approach. We agree that independence is not only inevitable but essential to allow these changes to take place.

We need the full range of powers available to any self-respecting, independent nation and we are all part of that change. The presumption of a truly equal society makes life better for us all.



Human rights

Human Rights are Women's Rights

Women for Independence is committed to securing a future independent Scotland which is a more equal and socially just nation. Women for Independence wants to live in a country with human rights and dignity at its core, through the legislation it passes, the public services it delivers and the institutions it supports.

“ We want to live in a Scotland where

- Women and girls are not just aware of their rights - they value and defend them
- We understand that human rights are not finite, and that by extending rights to others, we do not diminish the rights we ourselves have
- Women and girls have rights to inhabit public and online spaces without experiencing or being exposed to intimidation, bullying, violence or the threat of violence and have recourse to the law if these rights are breached
- Women and girls who have experienced domestic and sexual abuse are treated with respect and dignity when reporting such crimes and can expect to be treated fairly
- Misogynistic behaviour is unacceptable and no longer tolerated ”



We ask for action now on

- We ask the Scottish Government to undertake a national consultation and education programme to ensure the women of Scotland both understand and value their rights, and the protections they offer.
- Ensuring that all women and children engaging with the criminal and civil justice systems, especially survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, are treated with respect and dignity and provided with equal access to legal and support services, wherever they live in Scotland and whatever their immigration status
- Recognising that the manufacture, distribution and exchange of violent sexualised images of women and children is a public health crisis
- Improving the safety of women engaged in prostitution and providing greater support for women seeking to exit prostitution

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What we welcome

The Scotland Act 1998 requires the Scottish Parliament to pass legislation which is compliant with the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). In 2019 the Scottish Government established a National Task Force for Human Rights Leadership. In March 2021, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was incorporated into Scots Law. At the time of writing this was yet to receive Royal Assent.

We look forward to the Scottish Parliament elected in May 2021 incorporating the following conventions into Scots Law:

- The International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- The International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- The Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD)

Human rights in law, policy and practice must never be reduced nor regressed for any individual, group, community or sector of the population.

Health and wellbeing

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“ We want to live in a Scotland where

- Wellbeing is central to the management of our economy, where both paid and unpaid work are valued, and the many caring roles undertaken by women and men are recognised and rewarded
- Our social security system treats women and girls with dignity, fairness and respect and the interconnectedness of poverty and ill health is recognised
- Sexual health and relationship education, including informed consent, are seen as part of public health and available to all women and girls throughout their lives
- The stigma, cultural and social barriers that prevent women and girls accessing healthcare and support have been addressed
- Equal access to harassment-free, modern, standardised abortion services is ensured and abortion must be decriminalised - abortion is part of health care provision
- Women are offered flexible, personalised and empowering approaches to childbirth options in locally based, accessible maternity, premature and neo-natal units
- Women are fully supported during pregnancy and following birth, including support with breastfeeding
- The Healthy Working Lives programme is delivered across Scotland with greater recognition and accommodation of the need for more flexible working patterns to accommodate caring responsibilities, pregnancy, conception treatments and menopause
- Maternity pay is properly funded, and as many men as women take up parental and carer leave
- Well Women services provide more holistic services and support for women by increasing access to counselling services, flexible social prescribing and other non-medicalised treatments

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We ask for action now on

- Promoting midwifery as a professional career with greater investment in recruitment and training
- Increasing research spending into women specific health, such as contraception, menopause, reproductive health, neo and post-natal health and wellbeing, as well as women specific conditions like endometriosis, amenorrhea, cervical and uterine cancer
- Launching a national campaign to increase awareness of the impact of the menopause, improving employment practices and rights and campaigning for the right to a dedicated menopause nurse
- Taking action to address the severe body image pressures being placed on women and girls, including social media practices such as sexting, up-skirting and sexually related blackmail
- Improving mental health support for women suffering post-natal depression, including the provision of locally accessible mother and baby units
- Strengthening the Scottish Female Genital Mutilation strategy
- Ensuring no further increase to the pension age and bridging the pension gap



What we welcome

We know that women hold up half the sky. We imagined a Scotland where happiness, kindness and compassion were cultivated and thriving. This requires a complete system change and our health and wellbeing overlaps with all the other sections in this Womanifesto.

Women for Independence regard poverty and violence against women and girls as public health issues. We are hugely proud that Scotland has legislated against coercive control and we aspire to a Scotland where there is no male violence against us or each other.

We recognise the correlation between ill health and poverty, and we acknowledge the steps taken by the Scottish Government to address poverty in Scotland by mitigating the impact of the Bedroom Tax, Universal Credit and Food Banks.

We welcome the provision of free prescriptions, free personal and nursing care, free tuition, the extension of free bus travel and the work being done to establish a Scottish Social Security system built on rights, dignity and respect.

We also welcome the ending of Period Poverty (one of our earlier campaigns) and the introduction of Best Start Grant, Best Start Foods, the Young Carer Grant, the Scottish Child Payment, investment in the Carer's Allowance and the expansion of free early learning and childcare provision.

In drafting these principles, we engaged with a diverse group of women, including trans women, and explored how we could build an equal, gender-just, inclusive and healthy society, with wellbeing at its heart. Issues of rurality informed our thinking, with the discrepancy of access in remote and rural areas being repeatedly raised as an issue.

We also acknowledge the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 across our communities and the weight of caring and childcare responsibilities placed on women, whose working lives were more vulnerable and at risk.

The economy

Women (and children) in Scotland are statistically more likely than men to be poor. Labour market practices around equal pay, part-time work, job security together with unpaid work, social security system, pension rights, childcare costs and the taxation system all contribute to this outcome.

At least 59% of carers are women. 74% of Carer's Allowance claimants are women and women are twice as likely to give up paid work in order to provide care than men. We know that lifting women out of poverty lifts children and families out of poverty.

“ We want to live in a Scotland where

- Our economy delivers for women and children at least as well as it does for men
- The working week has been shortened, flexible working is normal and the Scottish government's economic framework reflects and values women's unpaid work
- As many women as men are entrepreneurs, business owners and directors and business leaders in their field as well as in the board room
- All government and local authority budgets are equality impact assessed prior to approval and again prior to implementation
- Women's caring roles are accommodated into every element of employment
- Women continue to lead the majority of our social enterprises, paying the real living wage and employing thousands of people

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We ask for action now on

- Consulting with and involving the Scottish Women's Budget Group, Engender, Close the Gap, and other feminist economic experts in the development and evaluation of universal basic income options
- Ensuring economic policy making is gender competent and officials and politicians are trained in gender budget analysis
- Investing in child care and early education as human infrastructure, recognising publicly provided child care delivery as a children's human rights issue as well as a mechanism for transforming women's participation in economic and public life.
- Setting targets and dates for how economic policy will lift women and children out of poverty, improve their economic independence, and close the gender pay gap
- Working across government to remove benefits traps for women, meet the needs of disabled women, of minority ethnic women, of older women
- Ensuring Scotland's National Investment Bank demonstrates its gender competence
- Addressing forces driving women in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine) from these professions and increase flow of young women into STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics)

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What we welcome

We acknowledge the steps taken by the Scottish Government to mitigate the impact of Universal Credit through Scottish Choices and protection from the Bedroom Tax, as well as the Scottish Child Payment.

The Scottish Government's "Every Child, Every Chance: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022" is well gendered, responds to links between children's poverty and women's poverty, especially poverty for single mothers.

We welcome that "A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan" published in March 2019, was developed in collaboration with gender experts and is innovative and practical.

Women for Independence recognise that women's poverty is a consequence of a highly discriminatory economic system, which has historically privileged male interests. The evidence of the need for change surrounds us. It is time for us to control our own economy.



Food and the environment

“We want to live in a Scotland where

- Everyone can afford to give their children nutritious and tasty food – and healthy and nutritious food is affordable
- All workers in food, from farmers to waiting staff, earn the living wage
- Our public kitchens uses local food and cook from fresh
- Food and drink companies have to pay a fair-trade price for home grown produce
- Everyone who wants to grow some of her own food can get access to some land to do this
- We produce more of what we eat and eat more of what we produce
- We are restoring soil health and increasing soil carbon AND there will be more trees on farms locking up carbon and providing shade for livestock AND we have halved our use of antibiotics in livestock and pesticides in food
- When land changes hands, the potential owners have to show how they will manage the land for public good
- All children are educated about food citizenship and about how their food choices affect both the soil, their bodies and the planet
- Our cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry and treated kindly and humanely”



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We ask for action now on

- Incorporating the Right to Food into Scots Law
- Ensuring the retention of powers over farming subsidy and support within Scotland
- Supporting local authorities to work with their communities to ensure access to land for food growing purposes
- Incentivising local authorities to review their procurement measures to increase the level of fresh and local food available within the public kitchen
- Training farmers and land managers to make the just transition to organic and environmentally sustainable farming methods
- Re-engineering local food supply chains and infrastructure to ensure access to local, fresh, organic and affordable food
- Ensuring that all pupils are educated on how food affects the soil, our planet, our bodies and our health
- Protecting and improving farmed animal welfare standards and banning the export of live calves
- Ensuring workers in the food and farming sector are paid the living wage

What we welcome

Scotland was the first country in the UK to declare a Climate Emergency. Scotland has set world leading Climate Change targets, with a Scottish Government commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2045, with targets of 75% and 95% reductions by 2030 and 2040 respectively.

The Scottish Government is committed to the restoration of over 250,000 hectares of peatland. Fracking has been banned and there's a 18,000-hectares a year target for reforestation.

Our Land Reform (Scotland) Act continues to transform how we own, manage and access land across Scotland and hundreds of communities are taking control of rural and urban land with the support of the Scottish Land Fund. Regional Land Use Partnerships are now being established, recognising the importance of natural capital.

Women for Independence completely understand the indivisible link between the land, plants, animals, food and human health and the ways in which land use and food production impact on the environment. We understand that one third of emissions comes from the food system.

We understand that the history and pattern of land ownership and use in Scotland feeds its way through to how we eat, what we cook and our relationship with food.



Immigration

Managing our own border

An Independent Scotland will manage her own borders and her own immigration policies for the first time in over 300 years. Women for Independence recognises that this offers the Scottish government an opportunity to address immigration from a human rights and dignity perspective.

“We want to live in a Scotland where

- We welcome people from overseas, whether forced or voluntary migrants. We recognise the contribution they bring and support them to make that contribution
- We treat people with dignity and respect, irrespective of their immigration status
- We have an Asylum and Refugee system strictly in line with International Law, which doesn't seek to criminalise people exercising their legal rights to claim asylum
- We grant Indefinite Leave to Remain for Refugees in line with UN Convention on Refugees (UNHCR), reversing the UK policy of granting Leave to Remain for only 5 years
- We grant the right to family re-union to Unaccompanied Minors and all forced migrants who have been granted leave to remain and we extend that right to children who can prove familial relationships, even if these are not blood relations or share family DNA
- We grant Scottish Citizenship to all voluntary or forced migrants who have leave to remain after five years residency and to everyone born in Scotland irrespective of their parents' citizenship
- We ensure support services for refugee and asylum-seeking women are gender competent to reflect high prevalence of rape, sexual assault and trauma experienced by refugee and asylum-seeking women
- We have a welfare mechanism to support women who currently experience destitution and abuse as a result of having no recourse to public funds due to their immigration status

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We ask for action now on

- **Securing the devolution of power over immigration to the Scottish Parliament**
- **Introducing an Integration Bill incorporating the key rights and findings from the New Scots Strategy which introduces a statutory duty on the public sector to comply**
- **Creating a Commission for Integration and Migration**
- **Ensuring that every department in the Scottish Government instigates policy initiatives to match the main objectives and outcomes of the New Scots Strategy**
- **Improving and widening access to Higher Education for Refugees and Asylum seekers including a re-instatement of the policy to allow asylum seekers with relevant qualification to access Scottish Higher Education as home students and avoid overseas student fees**
- **Instigating an awareness raising campaign about the extension of the voting franchise for Scottish elections, which now confers on anyone from overseas resident in Scotland, and with leave to remain, the right to vote**

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What we welcome

We welcome the Scottish Government granting the vote to all refugees in the Scottish Parliament Elections 2021.

We acknowledge the work done by Cosla (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and all 32 Scottish local authorities to welcome Syrian refugees into their communities as part of the national Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme for Vulnerable People.

We applaud the development of the New Scots Strategy, Scotland's National Refugee Integration Strategy, which was renewed in 2018. The Strategy demonstrates a strong commitment to growing diverse and integrated communities across Scotland and takes a holistic approach to this work, recognising that integration begins from the first day someone arrives in our country.

We welcome the wide use of devolved powers to support the integration of asylum seekers, including access to free English Language class and the same access to health and secondary education opportunities as indigenous Scots. The ongoing funding for projects across Scotland to support this work is invaluable.