

Women and Caring

Participants took part in this workshop on women and caring exploring a range of issues including poverty, isolation and fair work.

Poverty

- Cap on earnings keep women in poverty trap – can't take a well-paid job/lose benefits
- New Social Security Benefits – transition/not taking account of the situation women are in – especially single parents/loss of income from male parent if they have left/system set up to fail women

Expectations that women will be main caregivers

- Limited progress since last year
- Young female carers – assumed they take on the caring role – choice is taken out of this/should be no assumption that carers need to do this
- Lack of choice of how many hours to care
- Should look at the redistribution of care – men/women
 - What measures/leverages
 - Attract more men into caring jobs/roles
 - Gender pay gap also relates to women in relationships giving up work to care
- Sometimes the family make the assumption that the woman will provide care.

Isolation and BME carers

- Minority Ethnic women – very isolated
 - Culture/language barriers
 - Very limited support – need better awareness training – assessment process not appropriate
 - Experiencing isolation/lack of confidence

Impact on women of relationship breakdowns

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 - Not enough to say situation is 'taken into account'
 - Need stronger legislation
- In divorce/separations – Law does not take account of disabled children in relationships

Work and care

- Women tend to disproportionately give up work to care
 - Pension/income implications
 - Violation of human rights – women as the carer is normalised
 - Women not getting the benefit of working
 - Long term emotional/physical/financial impact
- Fair work e.g. looking at paid care workforce too
- Supporting women in work
 - Increase in provision at home
 - Replacement care to enable women to work
 - Employment gap from caring

- Accessing support back into work
 - Flexibility/carers leave is needed
 - If people want to work – rather than aim that
 - The Scottish Government should:
 - Support carers to return to work, women returners programme, look at NI contributions to meet state pension requirements
 - need to keep women in employment and not devalue the women who have been caring
 - Links back to valuing paid caring roles
- Carer friendly employers/Carer Positive is important to enable carers to stay in employment.

Education

- Impact on women giving up university courses
- Carers Allowance rules – would lose benefits if take up courses

Carers Health and Wellbeing

- Need a national policy/accountability at carers health/support
- Needs recognised as a major health issue
- Possibly introduce an annual health check – link to GP contract
 - Practice nurse could check, BP, Smoking etc., feed into care package, impact of menopause
- Need a holistic health management approach
- Social isolation – peer support, work can be helpful but can also cut women off from external support. Caring means experiencing isolation/lack of confidence