



Value for Money and Money for Values: Making the national budget work for women

National Women's Council of Ireland Pre-Budget 2018 Submission

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1973, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) is the leading national women's membership organisation in Ireland. NWCI seeks full equality between men and women and we draw our mandate from a membership of over 180 groups and organisations across a diversity of backgrounds, sectors and locations. We also have a growing, committed individual membership.

This submission is one element of a three-part pre-budget policy process, which also involves a substantive submission made to the Department of Social Protection and a set of detailed letters to the Ministers for Health, Justice and Equality, Rural and Community Affairs and Housing, Planning, and Local Government. An addendum to this submission will list all recommendations made in those letters.

The five priorities areas set forth in this submission are done so on the basis of their pressing nature, and opportunities that have arisen over recent months that indicate the potential for substantive change.

NWCI's Budget 2018 priorities are: embedding gender budgeting into the Irish budgetary process, closing the gender pension gap, addressing violence against women, increased investment in State-subsidised childcare and rebuilding the women's sector.

CONTEXT

Budget 2017 involved some promising budgetary developments for Ireland following a period of recession and austerity. It appeared that calls to reverse cutbacks, invest in services and staff, and to maintain at least a 2:1 split between public spending increases and tax reductions were being heeded. The introduction of long overdue State subsidised childcare was a breakthrough moment for women's equality. It was apparent there were glaring gaps in progress, however, and that significantly more was needed to address the devastating impacts of the previous decade.

The Irish economy, according to the government's Summer Economic Statement (SES) 2017, is growing at a healthy pace. Unemployment rates are down; labour market participation has risen and projected economic growth of 4.3 per cent in 2017. Budget 2018 is an opportunity to build on the progress, to enhance new budgetary processes and place women and equality at the centre of the collection, distribution and redistribution of resources. The publication of the National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG) 2017-2020 provides government with a solid stepping stone to significantly improve women's advancement in Irish society.

NWCI has commended the statement in the Programme for Partnership Government (PFPG) that "economic repair must now be complemented by social repair". It is exactly this sentiment that prompts us to call on the government not to fritter money away on populist give-aways; rather spend it on carers, on domestic violence services, on the women who built this country and are entering into retirement with lower pensions than their male counterparts, penalised for the invaluable contribution they've made to society by caring for their children and their family.

Women across Ireland support the government's ambition to improve resilience in the economy, underpinned by the principles of value-for-money, effectiveness and sustainability. In order for this to happen, however, it must be done in a manner that benefits women and men equally and prioritises those who have been hit hardest by recession and austerity.

CHOICES

Budget 2018's economy must benefit women and men equally

Austerity measures, combined with gender-blind policy-making and budgeting, have had a disproportionate economic and social impact on women in Ireland. According to the most recent CSO figures, the gender pay gap widened from 12.6% in 2006 to 14.4% in 2012, while the gender pension gap widened from 35% in 2010 to 37% in 2012. ESRI research has shown that women in couples suffered a 14 per cent loss in income during the recession compared

to 9 per cent for menⁱ. A majority of low paid part time workers are women. 11 per cent of female workers are underemployed, compared to 6 per cent of working men.

The median equivalised real disposable income rate rose by almost 7% for men and only 4.7% for women from 2014-2015. Equally, women's mean disposable income remains below men's. A 2016 NERI report found that, of the approximate 70,000 workers on the minimum wage in Ireland, 73% are women.

Budget 2018 must prioritise those who have been hit hardest by recession and austerity

TASC's *Winners and Losers? Equality Lessons for Budget 2012* report found that women are concentrated in the lower income groups and changes to taxes and social welfare issues that disproportionately impact on low-income groups can also be expected to disproportionately impact on women. The Department of Social Protection's social impact assessment of the main welfare and direct taxation measures in Budget 2015 found the 'smallest gain in the bottom quintile'.

According to the most recent SILC findings, the rate of consistent poverty dropped among men between 2014 and 2015, but rose slightly among women. Already vulnerable groups have suffered some of the worst impacts with 58% of lone parents, mostly women, experiencing deprivation and 22% in consistent poverty ratesⁱⁱ.

The government considers that Ireland is entering into a 'more mature phase' in the economy, that it is time to 'build on the recovery'. It promises to spread the fruits of recovery, stipulating that this spread will occur across 'different income groups', immediately excluding those most in need of increased resources achieved through a growing economy.

Its SES 2017 states that the root cause of the housing crisis is a lack of housing supply, and that addressing this is a priority for government. While the lack of housing supply is certainly the primary aggravating factor in the homelessness crisis, its root cause lies in pre-crisis prioritisation of higher and middle income earners over the most vulnerable, followed by a decade of austerity that left those most dependent on our public services and welfare system with no safety net at all.

The 2016 *Women's Homelessness in Europe* study found that almost two-thirds of families who are homeless in Ireland are headed by lone mothers aged in their 20s or 30s, who became homeless after losing privately rented housing. Ireland has one of the highest rates of female homelessness in Europe, the report states, with women comprising 42 per cent of the total adult homeless population in the State and 47 per cent in Dublin.

The number of women being sent to prison has significantly increased from 155 female committals in 1999ⁱⁱⁱ to 3,411 female committals in 2015. Traveller and Roma women remain among the most excluded groups in the country, with Traveller women's life expectancy over 11 years less than women in the settled population.

Budget 2018 must prioritise public spending over tax concessions

Despite naming 'the provision of world class public services' as a 'key goal of government', Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has begun to raise the prospect of spending cuts to public services to garner revenue for additional spending outside of the current fiscal space, while introducing tax cuts.

With regular references to the adoption of counter-cyclical policies in the government's pre-budget papers, progressive taxation measures should be the favoured course of action to ensure the economy does not 'overheat' and ensure government makes good on promises to increase public spending and increase payments made to pensioners and other people on social welfare.

TASC have identified a number of options in doing so, including reducing the standard Value Added Tax (VAT) rate and revising our corporate tax system, which they suggest is shifting from a key selling point to a liability and placing Ireland in danger of significant reputational damage.

Because women predominate in low paid, part-time jobs and take time out of work to undertake unpaid care responsibilities, they benefit less from cuts to income tax. Equally, women are worst affected by consumer taxes impacts on the poorest worst, with the Budget 2012 increase from 21% to 23% resulting in the poorest decile paying 30.64% of overall income in VAT compared to only 5.7% for the highest decile (Collins et al 2014 19). The addition to people's pockets resulting from a decrease in VAT will benefit local businesses and benefit Irish (and rural) businesses and thus the Irish economy.

As we build on the recovery achieved so far, it is imperative that government prioritises maintaining and increasing in public spending, within the €2bn expenditure envelope of the budget, over tax concessions. Any reductions undertaken should be in the form of progressive taxation that will benefit women and men equally. However, NWCI believes that tax concessions in Budget 2018 do not represent the most strategic use of public funds. Estimated costings published by the Taoiseach of higher rate of income tax by 1% of €283m, for example, almost equal the Department of Social Protection's estimated costings of backdating the Homemakers' Scheme and providing women with economic security and independence in their older years.

NWCI PRIORITIES FOR BUDGET 2018

Embed gender budgeting into the Irish budgetary process

Any sustainable economy must have inclusion, equality and care at its core. It necessitates a long term vision and multi-annual planning that is aimed at reducing unequal distribution of and access to resources. A more equal society is not an aspirational idea which might eventually be achieved through the overspill of a ‘trickle-down’ economy; rather it requires a transformative economic approach and dedicated resources. In order to achieve equality, however, we must act purposefully. It requires weighing and comparing the benefits and costs of policies that would or could promote women’s equality and then, importantly, taking action in response to that evaluation.

NWCI therefore warmly welcomed the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to gender and equality proof the budget process “as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights”.

Ireland’s budgetary process has long faced criticism for its opaque and complex nature. Recent reform aimed at providing for greater parliamentary participation and transparency is to be welcomed. Gender and equality budgeting processes aligns neatly with the evidence-based policies and multi-annual, performance-oriented budget approaches adopted by Ireland in 2012. Gender budgeting does not require a new or additional budget. Rather, it involves changes to fiscal policy and administrative changes to expenditure tracking and monitoring systems.

It does not bind the government to any particular budget decision. But it does refocus the emphasis onto the effect of budgets not just on the economy but on people. Examining the equality outcomes of expenditure and revenue policies provides us full understanding of the economic experience of women and men in Ireland, in all their diversity, ensuring greater transparency and accountability.

The IMF, the World Bank, the OECD, the UN and EU institutions have all promoted gender budgeting among member states. In addition to benefitting individuals, gender equality itself has been proven time and again to lead to more rapid growth, improved labour productivity, and a healthier and better educated society. There are clear and pressing imperatives for the government to act on its commitment to substantially embed gender proofing in Budget 2018.

NWCI recommends

- Publish a Gender Equality Statement, as is done in other European jurisdictions, alongside Budget 2018, setting out its equality objectives for the coming year.

- Resource training and capacity building on gender equality and gender budgeting within the civil and public service

Close the gender pension gap

Ireland's Gender Pension Gap has widened further to 37%. Both the PfPG and the NSWG 2017-2020 has rightly identified closing that gap as a priority. Gender-sensitive pension reform is a priority for NWCI and our members.

Women predominately rely on State Pensions to provide an income in their older years. Yet for a number of reasons, both historical and current, women continue to have less access to State Pensions than men. 84% of those receiving a full State contributory pension are men.

The Q4 2015 Quarterly National Household Survey found that "almost one in ten (9%) female workers expected their spouse/partner's occupational or personal pension to be their main source of retirement income, compared with 2% of males." Under the current system, women are hampered from building up sufficient contributions across both the private and public pension systems as a result of the pay gap, precarious and low-paid work, carrying out unpaid caring, and being excluded from the labour market for long periods over the course of their lives as a result of the prohibitive cost of childcare. Women who have worked on family farms and in family businesses also do not have social insurance coverage, which means that they are totally reliant on their husbands in older age.

The Homemakers' Scheme makes it easier for people who stop working for a period to take care of children or adults to qualify for pensions, the majority of whom are women. However, it has not been of equal benefit to all women as only those who took career breaks after 1994 are covered by this scheme. We recommend that the Homemaker's Scheme be applied retrospectively by the State immediately, in order to ensure equitable access to the state pension and benefit older women.

A key priority for Budget 2018 must be the long overdue delivery of 'Homemaker's Credit' or 'Care Credit', applicable for up to ten years and applied retrospectively back to 1973. This practical recognition of the social and economic contribution of care should also serve as a Re-Entry credit, ensuring that those looking to re-enter the workforce after a period spent caring can access training, educational or employment supports from their local Intreo office.

Rather than address these inequalities, we have allowed them to deepen in recent years by increasing contributory thresholds and even making it harder to purchase voluntary credits. Of the 36,000 people affected by these changes by June 2016, more than 62% were women.

A Universal Pension, independent of PRSI contributions, is the best way to support equality in older age and progress towards this goal must be initiated in 2018. In the interim, there are gaps and inequities in the first tier of our pension system which need urgent attention. This job of repair must be given greater priority than the introduction of any new or supplementary tier.

Budget 2018 should begin the progressive end to Marginal Rate Tax reliefs on Private Pensions as they have been shown to be ineffective and inequitable, with disproportionate benefit for higher earners. As women tend to be lower earners, these tax reliefs also widen rather than narrow the gender pension gap. The public monies saved should be redirected into the public pension system.

NWCI recommends

- Reverse 2012 changes to contributions bands for State Pension, at least until the TCA has been gender proofed and introduced.
- The Homemaker's Scheme should be applied retrospectively by the State immediately, in order to ensure equitable access to the state pension and benefit older women.
- Homemakers' Disregard should be replaced with credits, with the credit made applicable for up to ten years and applied retrospectively to 1973. This credit should also act as a Re-Entry Credit, ensuring that those looking to re-enter the workforce after a period spent caring can access training, educational or employment supports.
- Budget 2018 should initiate the introduction of universal pension and to phase it in over an agreed number of budgets.
- Begin the progressive end to marginal rate tax reliefs on private pensions.

Eliminate Violence Against Women

The Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2020 and Object Five of the National Women's Strategy 2017-2020 to combat violence against women, jointly recognise that too many women experience violence, particularly in intimate relationships, and send a strong message that a multi-faceted approach to combating violence against women is now at the forefront of the Government's agenda.

The programme of work undertaken by the Department of Justice and Equality in tackling Violence Against Women in recent years is to be commended. Ireland's signing of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), was a crucial step in paving the way for key legislation and policy decisions that would have a significant impact on how Violence

Against Women is perceived and addressed in Irish society. The introduction of new sexual offences legislation, the drafting of a Domestic Violence Bill, and the roll out of a new national awareness campaign on Violence Against Women are all extremely positive measures. However at least 1 in 5 women will experience physical and/or sexual violence, the problem is structural, cultural and results on too many occasions in the horrendous deaths of women. Physical, sexual and psychological violence and abuse brings devastation to women's and children's lives and impacts on all sectors of society.

Budget 2018 can build on achievements to date and provides an opportunity to introduce critical and necessary measures that can make a positive difference to providing safety and protection for women and strengthening the state response.

NWCI recommends

- Invest in updating and establishing appropriate data collection technology within the state sector and to conduct qualitative data surveys in line with the Istanbul Convention gold standard data collection.
- Ring-fencing of resources to fund and provide mandatory and high quality training, in conjunction with specialist services, to the Gardaí, and the staff of TUSA, Health services (especially A&E and maternity) and local community organisations which are often the first and vital point of contact. This training should include material on the fluid, complex and interrelated nature of the specific needs of women and children victims of violence, and should also address unconscious bias to help avoid stereotypical thinking in relation to some groups of women with specific needs.
- Establish a National Network of Child Contact Centres which incorporate a domestic violence risk assessment framework and, as appropriate, safety planning, in order to contribute to meeting the safety and psychological needs of women and children experiencing domestic violence, and provide adequate funding for a Guardian Ad Litem.
- Abolish the Habitual Residence Condition for victims of domestic violence seeking benefits.
- Increasing investment to match the requirements of the Istanbul Convention to ensure frontline services can meet the needs of women and their children, such as the provision on one refuge place per 10,000 population and lobby on their behalf must also be a priority in Budget 2018.
- Provide funding for the 24/7 Free phone National Helpline.
- Increase funding for District Courts and/or fund new specialised DV courts, to ameliorate waiting times and court facilities.
- Increase Rent Supplements caps to address the housing crisis, which has a huge impact on women and children escaping violence.
- Continued investment in the Awareness Campaign on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

Childcare and Early Years

The provision of high quality affordable early years and childcare for out of school hours is critical for women's equality and participation in all sectors of society. In 2004 NWCi recommended a model of publicly funded childcare. The model includes subsidisation of early years and afterschool, capped fees and accompanied by a parallel system of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave. Budget 2017 was a landmark budget with the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, which saw the first step to achieving publicly subsidised universal childcare in Ireland. Sustained investment is now required in Budget 2018 and subsequent Budgets in order to fully realise this goal and ensure that all children, parents and the childcare workforce can experience a high quality model of childcare on par with most other European countries. Priority must now be placed on ensuring the initiation of the scheme continues at pace and that services are resourced, particularly community based services so as to ensure that they have the capacity to both meet the requirements of the scheme and provide a high quality service.

In addition the reality is that the ECEC sector remains in a sustainability crisis with the majority of the childcare workforce, predominately women, reliant on low wage contracts. The responsibility for pay and conditions needs to be clearly taken on by the state and a sustainable pay structure needs to be adopted. This is a major strategic challenge as the sector's ability to deliver a quality publicly model of childcare dependant on a qualified professional workforce.

Supporting parents to care is also fundamental in the early years of children's lives. This year the introduction of paternity leave was an important step to recognising the role of the fathers and the need to achieve a greater distribution of care between women and men. Providing parents with choices regarding care should be an essential component of our early years infrastructure. Currently Ireland is an outlier in the EU by not providing paid parental leave which makes it very difficult for most parents to avail of for any lengthy period.

NWCI recommends

- Increase investment in the Affordable Childcare Scheme to:
 - ensure full roll out by September 2018 and increase the coverage of the universal aspect of the scheme.
 - allow for an increase in the numbers of hours providers can offer.
 - allow for administration requirements and non-contact time
- Initiate roll out of an agreed national salary scale for the childcare workforce.
- Identify a model for future capping of childcare fees.

- Introduce 6 months paid parental leave and Benefit to commence after maternity leave, on a phased basis so that parents can have greater choices in the first year of a child's life.

Advance women's leadership and participation in decision-making

The National Women's Council of Ireland welcomes the commitments in the NSWG to commission an independent review of the representation levels of women in governance and senior management of companies in Ireland and of existing measures to promote women's representation.

We also welcome the NSWG commitment to develop a package of measures to promote greater representation of women on corporate boards and in the senior management of companies. Budget 2018 must ensure these commitments are sufficiently funded.

NWCI and our members have, throughout the recent period of austerity, consistently voiced concerns that significant cuts to funding sources and recent reforms to funding structures are contributing to a prolonged process of dismantling the sector. Core to this belief has been the replacement of hitherto grant-aided funding for community development groups and voluntary organisations with tendering processes that have forced projects to compete against each other to remain in operation, resulting in the destabilisation of the sector and undermining of communities' social, cultural and economic progress. The community development sector, including local women's community groups, should not be subject to commissioning processes that impose centrally pre-determined programmes and targets, but funded under specific grant agreements.

Sufficient resources must be made available to women's community organisations, such as the National Collective Community-Based Women's Networks (NCCWN), which manages 17 women's projects nationally. Equally, resources must be ring-fenced to build capacity among local authority staff and members of Local Community Development Committees to develop policies and programmes that respond effectively to the particular needs of women and men.

NWCI recommends

- Increase funding to the NWCI, which is recognised by Government as a key body which puts forward women's concerns and perspectives.
- Resource the commissioning of an independent review of women's representation in governance and senior management in Ireland.

- Resource the implementation of a national action plan to promote greater representation of women on corporate boards and in the senior management of companies.
- Designate specific budget line within each department for delivery of gender equality commitments National Strategy for Women and Girls.
- Introduce a specific national multi-annual grant-aid scheme for women’s community organisations whose main target group are women experiencing disadvantage. This could be done through increasing the DJE Scheme to Support Women and expanding eligibility of this programme to women’s community-based groups across the country. Funding for NCCWN and other women’s community-based groups should be restored to pre-austerity levels.
- Actively embed social and gender equality clauses and conditions, as well as specific monitoring measures into all public spending contracts, including with the community and voluntary and local development sectors. Such clauses and conditions do not preclude the need for dedicated resources for programmes and supports targeted specifically at marginalised and disadvantaged women.

ADDENDUM

1. NWCI Budget 2018 recommendations to Government Ministers

Minister for Health

RECOMMENDATION 1: Ring-fence funding for the development and implementation of a Women's Health Action Plan

The *National Strategy for Women and Girls* commits to the development of a Women's Health Action Plan.^{iv} The different experiences of health among women and men are not reflected in general health policy. At present, there is no overarching women's health strategy, with the current focus on women's health centred on specific healthcare areas, primarily via the *National Maternity Strategy*. In 2016, the Government launched the *National Men's Health Action Plan 2017-2021* to respond to men's particular health needs.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Adopt gender-budgeting for the Departmental budget process and gender-proof all health policies and services

- *Draft a gender budget statement alongside the Departmental budget.*
- *Establish and resource a gender mainstreaming unit within the Department of Health to oversee and implement the HSE Gender Mainstreaming Framework^v across the health services*

RECOMMENDATION 3: Commence implementation of reforms to achieve a universal single-tier health and social care system

- *Establish a Sláinte Implementation Office in the Department of the Taoiseach to progress implementation of the Oireachtas cross-party ten year strategy for health and social care.*
- *Establish a funding stream to support the move to single-tier health system, including increasing system capacity, expanding entitlements and reducing out-of-pocket payments.*

RECOMMENDATION 4: Resource implementation of the National Maternity Strategy, including ring-fenced funding to recruit additional midwives.

NWCI welcomed the publication of the *National Maternity Strategy* in January 2016 and in particular the focus on more midwife-led services in local communities to facilitate choice

and continuity of care for women. This can only happen with considerable commitment to additional staffing resources; in particular the recruitment of additional midwives.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Resource women-centred approaches to health and wellbeing under the Healthy Ireland priority areas

In addition:

- *Recognising the effectiveness of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and behavioural interventions, make NRT available free of charge to all those enrolled in women-centred smoking cessation programmes*

RECOMMENDATION 6: Address the multiple inequalities (e.g., class, ethnicity, sexuality) faced by groups of women in policy and service planning, in particular:

- *Develop and fund a new National Traveller Health Action Plan to address the findings of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, as committed to in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-20^{vi}.*
- *Develop and fund primary healthcare projects with the Roma community to increase access to information on healthcare and uptake of services, as committed to in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-20^{vii}.*
- *Fully resource implementation of the forthcoming HSE Intercultural Health Strategy and provide dedicated resources to achieve good health outcomes for ethnic women and women living in Direct Provision in Ireland.*

RECOMMENDATION 7: Fund research into women's mental health to inform the review of 'A Vision for Change' and future development of mental health services

RECOMMENDATION 8: Resource establishment of an inter-departmental committee on female genital mutilation (FGM) to draw up a National Action Plan to combat FGM

- *Maintain funding for the Irish Family Planning Association specialist treatment service for women who have experienced FGM.*

RECOMMENDATION 9: Provide funding to prevent and treat diseases impacting women

- *Make DXA scans for osteoporosis widely available and free of charge.*
- *Ensure adequate budget is provided in the HSE Services Plan 2018 to enable the roll-out of BreastCheck to continue, and that the ring-fencing of funds is maintained.*
- *Continued investment in communications campaigns providing clear, easy-to-understand advice on the HPV vaccine to ensure increased uptake.*

Minister for Social Protection

(For NWCI's full pre-budget submission to the Department of Social Protection, please refer to our website. Below is an indication of recommendations made.)

RECOMMENDATION 1: End the limitation rule and promote administrative individualisation at first point of contact

RECOMMENDATION 2: Resource the extension of Jobseekers Transitional payment to Qualified Adults and other groups who may have partial availability.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Extend access to DSP childcare schemes to Qualified Adults.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Resource an in-depth gender analysis of activation and pension policy.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Resource the extension of ECCE hours from 15 to 20 per week and a move to year round contracts for workers.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Increase or maintain Child Benefit and Remove Habitual Residency Condition as a condition for access.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Reverse cuts to Income Disregard and ensure access to Income Disregard or Family Income Supplement for lone parents on Jobseekers Transitional payment.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Introduce specific measures to support lone parents with child under 18 on Jobseekers Allowance.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Increase Reduced Rate Pensions and Jobseekers Allowance for those under 26.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Increase Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit towards 2009 rates of €220.50 and €221.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Increase in Minimum Wage and an LPC focus on In-Work poverty

Minister for Justice and Equality

RECOMMENDATION 1: Ring-fence resources to fund and provide mandatory and high quality training, in conjunction with specialist services, to the Gardaí, and the staff of Tulsa, often the first and vital point of contact. This training should include material on the fluid,

complex and interrelated nature of the specific needs of women victims of violence, and should also address unconscious bias to help avoid stereotypical thinking in relation to some groups of women with specific needs.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Establish a National Network of Contact Centres which incorporate a domestic violence risk assessment framework and, as appropriate, safety planning, in order to contribute to meeting the safety and psychological needs of women and children experiencing domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Increasing investment to match the requirements of the Istanbul Convention to ensure frontline services can meet the needs of women and their families and lobby on their behalf must also be a priority in Budget 2018. As well as continued investment in the Awareness Campaign on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Introduce a specific national multi-annual grant-aid scheme for women's community organisations who are working to increase women's equality. This could be done through increasing the Department of Justice and Equality Scheme to Support Women and expanding eligibility of this programme to women's community-based groups across the country. Restore NCCWN funding to pre-austerity levels.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Abolish financial contributions to civil legal aid for victims of domestic violence.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Adopt gender-budgeting for the Departmental budget process and gender-proof all health policies and services

- *Draft a gender budget statement alongside the Departmental budget.*

Minister for Rural and Community Development

RECOMMENDATION 1: Introduce a specific, sufficient and dedicated national funding line (administered nationally) to support independent community work at local level, which requires, inter alia, a strong and explicit focus on progressing equality for women and is based on the All-Ireland Standards for Community Work.^{viii}

RECOMMENDATION 2: Continue to support investment in support and capacity building initiatives for local government structures including Public Participation Networks and Local Community Development Committees to build gender equality and gender mainstreaming expertise.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Put forward a clear plan on how to achieve gender parity across all local decision making structures.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Ensure gender equality is embedded into all rural development policies and programmes.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Adopt gender-budgeting for the Departmental budget process and gender-proof all local government and local development policies and services

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government

RECOMMENDATION 1: Ring-fence resources to complete a nationally coordinated comprehensive gender audit across local alignment structures and programmes – including funding programmes and consultation processes – with a view to ensuring women’s and men’s differentiated needs are addressed in regional and local plans and to identify and address capacity building needs of local authority staff and members of LCDCs.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Fulfil its responsibilities to promote equality of women and men in carrying out its tasks and obligations in relation to public procurement and actively embed social and gender equality clauses and criteria into all public spending contracts and public programmes including specific monitoring measures

RECOMMENDATION 3: Develop a strategy and adequate supports to ensure that all local authorities implement the Human Rights and Equality Public sector Duty

RECOMMENDATION 4: Develop and fully resource a dedicated sub-strategy to address family homelessness that includes a target of supporting all families out of homelessness within six months and also providing a range of supports to address the detrimental impact on the children experiencing homelessness.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that ring fenced funding for preventative measures is protected and prioritised to slow and reduce the numbers of families becoming homeless. In conjunction with the Department of Employment and Social Protection, extend the successful homelessness prevention project carried out by Focus Ireland in the Dublin 15 area to other high risk areas.

2. End notes

ⁱ ESRI (2014) <https://www.esri.ie/publications/gender-impact-of-tax-and-benefit-changes-a-microsimulation-approach/>

ⁱⁱ CSO (2016)

ⁱⁱⁱ Inspector of Prisons (2013) *Interim Report on Dóchas Centre*, p.9

^{iv} Action 2.1 - Strengthen the partnership work with the National Women's Council of Ireland in identifying and implementing key actions to address the particular physical and mental health needs of women and girls in order to advance the integration of their needs into existing and emerging health strategies, policies and programmes through an action plan for women's health.

^v NWCI / HSE: Equal but Different: A Framework for Integrating Gender Equality into HSE Policy, Planning and Service Delivery. November 2012. Available at www.nwci.ie

^{vi} National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-20, Action 73: The Health Service Executive will develop and implement a detailed action plan, based on the findings of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, to continue to address the specific health needs of Travellers, using a social determinants approach.

^{vii} National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-20, Action 78: The Health Service Executive will develop primary healthcare projects for Roma based on the Traveller Primary Healthcare Project model and informed by the findings of the National Roma Needs Assessment for Roma in Ireland.

^{viii} NWCI endorses the definition of community development as put forward by Community Work Ireland in *Towards Standards for Quality Community Work: An All-Ireland Statement on Values, Principles and Work Standards*. <http://communityworkireland.ie/all-ireland-standards-for-community-work/>