



# NI WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP

**NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP (NIWBG)  
RESPONSE TO *MEASURING EQUALITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND – A  
MONITORING DRAFT FRAMEWORK***

**Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

**Prepared by Alexandra Brennan (Coordinator) and Elizabeth Law (Member)**

**April 2022**

The Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group (NIWBG) is made up of organisations and individuals from the women's sector, trade union movement, academia and wider civil society in Northern Ireland, with the aim of implementing a gender equal economy. The members of the NIWBG scrutinise policy and budgetary matters with a gendered lens to bring attention to the different ways in which women and men are affected by government-level decision-making. It aims to provide policy- and budget-makers with policy analysis to secure substantive equality for women and men through the assessment of gender impact.

The NIWBG works with a range of organisations in Northern Ireland on devolved issues and with sister organisations in Wales, Scotland, England and the Republic of Ireland on East-West and North-South issues.

We hope that our response to the monitoring draft framework will be useful to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI).

If there are any questions or comments regarding the NIWBG's response, please direct them to the Coordinator for the NIWBG, Alexandra Brennan ([info@niwbg.org](mailto:info@niwbg.org)).

## ***Introduction***

The NIWBG would like to thank the ECNI for the opportunity to consider and respond to *Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland – A Monitoring Draft Framework*. In responding, the NIWBG expects that both the outcomes and the priority areas are determined by the policy priorities identified by the Commission and are centred in an equality and rights-based approach. Similarly, the NIWBG notes<sup>1</sup> that the Commission continues to highlight the need for robust disaggregated data. Both factors are essential to create a context for monitoring equality in Northern Ireland, determining the cause of inequality and enabling the development of evidence-based policy making that will eradicate those inequalities.

## ***Overarching Points***

The NIWBG welcomes the Commission's commitment to closing data gaps and to developing data disaggregated by equality grounds. Taking an intersectional approach and addressing the impact of additional equality characteristics on women and men is crucial in identifying and tackling inequalities. The Commission may find an additional external framework to be helpful in this. The indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>2</sup>, for example, provide an architecture which is intersectional, targeted and comprehensive, including new, enduring and challenging goals. The SDGs will be aligned with Commission priorities<sup>3</sup> and familiar to and accepted by officials<sup>4</sup> and NGOs.

Research for OFMDFM, *Gender Equality Indicators for Northern Ireland: A Discussion Document*<sup>5</sup> (2004) sets out many factors that remain relevant including importance of intersectionality, the role of qualitative research (particularly in explaining trends) and the need for accessibility. The research also offers international models of practice including Canada and the Republic of Ireland as well as the UN.

## ***Recommendations on Presented Framework***

The NIWBG recommends:

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<sup>1</sup> Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI). (2020). *Briefing Note on Need for Equality Data*. ([Briefing Note on Need for Equality Data](#))

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (UN). (2022). *Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. ([Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#))

<sup>3</sup> For instance, the SDGs include gender budgeting and rebalancing paid and unpaid care work.

<sup>4</sup> The UK has started the process of Voluntary National Reporting ([Voluntary National Review of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals](#)) in order to secure the Goals and Agenda 2030.

<sup>5</sup> Breitenbach, E. and Galligan, Y. (2004). *Gender Equality Indicators for Northern Ireland: A Discussion Document*. ([Gender Equality Indicators for Northern Ireland: A Discussion Document](#) OFMDFM)

## **Education**

- There should be an indicator that includes the data on completion of HE and FE study to support the pillar, 'There is equality of opportunity in education.'
- Further indicators should be added to the priority area, 'Access to curriculum and career paths,' as solely looking at the 'Percentage of children and young people choosing STEM and non-STEM subjects at secondary and tertiary level' would not adequately inform the ECNI on the priority area. We would recommend including indicators that look at mature students returning to education and social and structural barriers to accessing curriculum and career paths, for example.

## **Employment**

- Under the priority area, 'Access to Support to be able to work,' barriers to employment such as inaccessibility of transport and the digital divide should be included.
- The indicator, 'Proportion of people aged 16+ years in employment who feel their employer is flexible and supportive,' is welcomed, but it is important that an agreed definition of 'flexible' is provided. Work that is labelled 'flexible' may not be positive, such as zero-hour contracts, which are precarious and exploitative.

## **Participation in decision making**

- Under the priority area, 'Access to Participation in Public Life,' the NIWBG recommends that there is a measurement of the impact (the response from public authorities) of civil society participation in public policy decisions.

## **Access to health and social care**

- Population measures, such as mortality rates, should be included as indicators in this pillar to see the evidence beyond those who engage with the health and care services.
- Aside from purely technical measures, the Programme for Government indicator on social care services<sup>6</sup> is the only indicator recorded by the Measurement Annex as disaggregated by gender or any other Section 75 ground; disaggregation is crucial to

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<sup>6</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). (2019). *Indicator 9: Number of adults receiving social care services at home or self directed support for social care as a % of the total number of adults needing care.* ([https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/I9\\_Measurement\\_Annex\\_PfG\\_2016\\_2021\\_Number\\_adults\\_receiving\\_social\\_care\\_Dec2019.DOCX](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/I9_Measurement_Annex_PfG_2016_2021_Number_adults_receiving_social_care_Dec2019.DOCX))

identify both the cared for and the carers as well as distinguish between paid and unpaid care work.

### ***Housing***

- In light of impacts caused by factors such as global instability, Brexit and the ongoing global pandemic, the ECNI should reconsider the standard of living (poverty) indicators and look to include measures that recognise the limitations of 60% of median income.

### ***Communities***

- Data on post-conflict reconstruction should be included as an indicator in this pillar.
- Under the priority area, 'Freedom from Discrimination and Hate,' it is important to measure types of non-physical violence such as verbal, mental, economic, state, and digital violence, for example, under the definition of 'violent attacks.'

### ***Example Statement***

The example statement is useful in encouraging ideas and the NIWBG welcomes the provision of the example statement with this consultation. The NIWBG recommends further engagement as the framework and statements are developed.

In respect of the employment example used, the NIWBG would recommend inclusion of data on economic inactivity across the measures. For instance, care responsibilities are a key determinant of access to employment and better jobs as well as more jobs.

### ***Conclusion***

The NIWBG is happy to discuss any of the points in this submission and to contribute further as the Framework is developed.