



Women's
Policy Group NI

NI COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan

Recommendations:

**Department for Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs**

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Abstract

This report contains evidence and recommendations specific to the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; taken from the NI COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan, which was published by the Women's Policy Group in July 2020.

The Feminist Recovery Plan highlights the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, particularly its effects on rural women, and sets out recommendations for action.

Some of the recommendations in this summary will also be relevant for other NI Departments, as well as the UK Government. Although the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will not have direct responsibility for all issues raised in this report, we believe these should be brought to the attention of the Department, as an inter-departmental approach is essential to effectively tackling them.



Women's Policy Group NI COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan: Overview

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented challenge across the UK. It has put in sharp focus the value and importance of care work, paid and unpaid, and highlighted the essential nature of often precarious and almost always low paid retail work. Women undertake the majority of this work, and women will bear a particular brunt of this crisis; economically, socially and in terms of health. In this way, the current crisis affects men and women differently, and in many cases deepens the inequalities women experience on an everyday basis. These inequalities, along with key solutions, were highlighted in a [Women's Manifesto](#) issued by the WPG in preparation for the general election in December 2019. These solutions remain central for a long-term response, but the developing crisis has put a number of issues in sharp focus for urgent emergency action.

The WPG Feminist Recovery Plan analyses the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in Northern Ireland in terms of economic justice, health, social justice and cultural inequality. In addition to this, implications of Brexit and the need for a Bill of Rights will be examined, and an analysis of international best practice case studies will be done. The plan uses a mix of political and economic policy-making recommendations to advocate for a feminist recovery to COVID-19, with the aim of not only avoiding deepening gender inequalities through recovery planning, but also tackling the gendered inequalities that already exist in our society. The WPG is calling on decision-makers across the UK to take action to ensure a gender-sensitive crisis response as we transition from crisis response to recovery. We recognise that some issues highlighted in the full WPG Feminist Recovery Plan will be of a devolved nature for the Northern Ireland Assembly, others will be issues that require Westminster intervention.

Women's Policy Group NI

Women's Policy Group (WPG) NI: Introduction

This paper has been created by the [Women's Policy Group Northern Ireland](#) (WPG). The WPG is a platform for women working in policy and advocacy roles in different organisations to share their work and speak with a collective voice on key issues. It is made up of women from trade unions, grassroots women's organisations, women's networks, feminist campaigning organisations, LGBT+ organisations, migrant groups, support service providers, NGOs, human rights and equality organisations and individuals. Over the years this important network has ensured there is good communication between politicians, policy makers and women's organisations on the ground. The WPG represents all women of Northern Ireland and we use our group expertise to lobby to influence the development and implementation of policies affecting women.

The WPG is endorsed as a voice that represents all women of Northern Ireland on a policy level. This group has collective expertise on protected characteristics and focus on identifying the intersectional needs of all women. The WPG membership is broad and has a deep understanding of how best to approach the impact COVID-19 is having on women in Northern Ireland.



Please note, not all member organisations of the Women's Policy Group have specific policy positions on all the areas covered throughout the Feminist Recovery Plan. Therefore, individual experts from each of the organisations below contributed to the sections that cover their own areas expertise.

The Feminist Recovery Plan was prepared by:

Rachel Powell (Women's Resource and Development Agency)
Elaine Crory (Women's Resource and Development Agency)
Jonna Monaghan (Northern Ireland Women's European Platform)
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Louise Coyle (Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network)
Clare Moore (Irish Congress of Trade Unions)
Geraldine Alexander (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance)
Helen Flynn (Human Rights Consortium)
Helen Crickard (Reclaim the Agenda)
Gráinne Teggart (Amnesty International UK)
Emma Osbourne (Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland)
Aisha O'Reilly (Politics Plus)
Karen Sweeney (Women's Support Network)
Jacqui McLoughlin (Women's Forum NI)

The content of this Plan is supplemented by additional WPG COVID-19 research and the WPG Women's Manifesto 2019 which was written and supported by the following organisations:

Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA)
Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)
Transgender NI (Trans NI)
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Northern Ireland Committee
Reclaim the Night (RTN) Belfast
Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)
Politics Plus
Belfast Feminist Network (BFN)
HERe NI
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)
Reclaim the Agenda (RTA)
Alliance for Choice
Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland
Women's Support Network (WSN)
DemocraShe
Raise Your Voice (RYV)

Based on the evidence outlined in each section of the Plan, recommendations will be made for gender-responsive budgeting and policy-making to both the NI Assembly and UK governments. The Feminist Recovery plan advocates for a feminist recovery to COVID-19, with the aim of not only avoiding deepening gender inequalities through recovery planning, but also tackling the gendered inequalities that already exist in our society.



Economic Justice Pillar

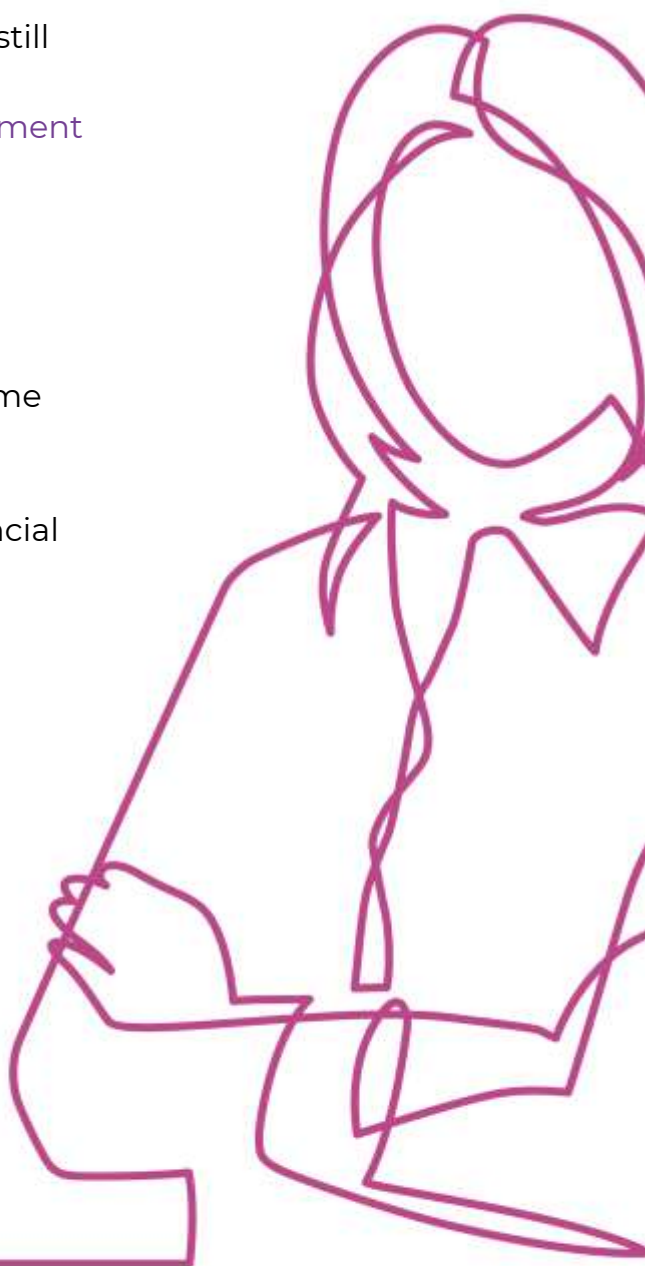


Rural Women

Gender inequality is amplified for women in rural areas due to Access Poverty.¹ The accessibility of education, training, work and childcare provision and the cost and availability of public transport are factors in determining women's participation; particularly in rural areas.² Women in NI remain under-represented in public and political life³ and rural women's participation in public and political life is further hindered by geography and distance from decision making spaces.

Even within the wider women's sector, rural women still need a stronger voice and increased Government funding.⁴ A recent report found that 98.7% of Government funding for service delivery to women's groups went towards urban groups, compared with 1.3% for rural groups.⁵ NIRWN is the only dedicated rural women's network and provides the regional rural element of support to women through the Regional Support for Women in Disadvantaged and Rural Areas Programme (funded by DAERA Rural Affairs Programmes). An independent Evaluation of this Consortium work⁶ concluded that rural women needed additional financial support in this Programme:

“The rural investment in proportional terms is not sufficient to animate and build critical mass versus urban interests (circa 20% of staff resources in the Consortium are linked to rural delivery i.e. two 25 hour posts in NIRWN) which is out of step with the proportion of rural dwellers in NI”



¹ DAERA (2016) Public [Consultation](#) on TRPSI Framework

² NIRWN (2015) 'Rural Women's [Manifesto](#): Rural Women Speak'

³ NI Assembly (2014) [Briefing Paper](#) 'Women and Public Appointments in NI'

⁴ Evaluation of the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (Final Report, June 2015) [Unpublished]

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

As a result of no Executive in place for three years this has never been redressed. It is imperative that proposed future budgets; Programme for government and policy recovery planning is assessed for rural impacts to ensure the inequity of Government resourcing does not continue. **NI Government funding support for the work of the only dedicated regional service to support rural women in their communities (NIRWN) is now 13% of what it was in 2007.**

In the context of Covid-19, older people are more likely to require critical care and/or die as a result of a coronavirus infection.⁷ Rural areas typically have a population distribution skewed to older people compared to urban areas.⁸ There are also more older women than men as women have a longer average life span. UK Government advice, which mirrors that in many other European countries, is that those aged over 70 should socially isolate, making them dependent on others to collect shopping and medical prescriptions. This will disproportionately impact rural areas through the availability of ('grey') labour for businesses, social enterprises and volunteer work and through the impact of their reduced expenditure on goods and services from local businesses ('grey pound').

As labour relocates to a home working context, rural areas will suffer disproportionately from inferior access to high quality broadband.⁹ This weakness will also affect homeschooling during closures and be exacerbated by concurrent demands for limited available bandwidth (data transfer capacity) among multiple household members.¹⁰

Throughout the EU, women are predominantly responsible for childcare¹¹ and home schooling is likely to have gendered implications within families. Female rural entrepreneurs and women who have undertaken farm diversification initiatives have often done so to fit around their other childcare and caring responsibilities.¹² Maintaining these businesses while undertaking additional COVID-19 caring roles will be a challenge. These gendered effects could mean differential access to household assets that can be used to buffer the effects of the coronavirus on firms.

⁷ Wu, Z. and McGoogan, J. M. (2020) '[Characteristics of and Important Lessons from the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Outbreak in China](#)' JAMA Network, Vol. 323, pp 1239–1242.

⁸ Eurostat (2017) '[Eurostat. Statistics on Rural Areas in the EU](#)' Eurostat: Brussels, Belgium, 2017.

⁹ Commission for Rural Communities (2013) '[Rural Micro-Businesses: What Makes Some Thrive in a Challenging Economic Climate?](#)'

¹⁰ Phillipson, J., Gorton, M., Turner, R., et. al. (2020) '[The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Implications for Rural Economies](#)'

¹¹ Erhel, C. and Guergoat-Larivière, M. (2013) '[Labour Market Regimes, Family Policies, and Women's Behavior in the EU](#)' Feminist Economics, Vol. 19, pp 76–109.

¹² Shortall, S. et. al. (2017) '[Women in Farming and the Agriculture Sector](#)' Scottish Government: Social Research.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the trajectory of rural development has changed, and so must we, in order to help rural entrepreneurs cope with economic stresses amid the pandemic. The added difficulty NI faces is that, as a result of Brexit, we will no longer have access to EU Rural Development funding and policy development, and we have no indigenous rural development policy of our own. This development has been halted to prioritise dealing with the pandemic but the timeline for the Protocol¹³ implementation remains unchanged.

Whilst the rural voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector is adept at balancing social, economic and environmental needs, it has been heavily stretched in the years leading up to the pandemic and now faces even more challenges.¹⁴ There is a need for governments to view organisations in this sector in a similar light to private and public businesses and employees, providing financial support to sustain their viability. These demands need external support, but the VCSE sector often falls between business, charity and household policy frameworks.¹⁵

COVID-19 has demonstrated the imperative for community capacity building and support through the rural VCSE sector, to allow it to help individuals, households and communities during the pandemic and recovery. This is the opportune time to increase rural women's participation in the digital economy, including digital marketing and digital trade. Of course, this means that the necessary enablers must first be addressed, such as increasing digital identification for rural small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to allow new ways of securing collateral and credit histories.



¹³ UK Government (2019) [Northern Ireland Protocol](#)

¹⁴ Milbourne, L. and Cushman, M. (2015) '[Complying, Transforming or Resisting in the New Austerity? Realigning Social Welfare and Independent Action among English Voluntary Organisations.](#)' *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 44, pp 463–485.

¹⁵ Agapitova, N., Sanchez, B., and Tinsley, E. (2017) '[Government Support to the Social Enterprise Sector: Comparative Review of Policy Frameworks and Tools.](#)' The World Bank: Washington, DC, USA.

With the social distancing phenomena, the era of gathering rural people in groups for capacity building will end. Development organisations should adapt to ICT-based capacity building. This includes providing digital, virtual, and mobile-based business training, coaching, and mentoring related to economic recovery, digital marketing and communication channels, and overall digital financial literacy.

Despite making up 40% of all women in Northern Ireland, rural women receive just 1.3% of all government funding set aside for women.

Summary of Recommendations:

- * Proposed budgets, PfG and policy recovery plans take account of rural needs.
- * Historic underinvestment in rural women is recognised and efforts made to redress when future resourcing is being planned.
- * Recognition that all Government Departments have a responsibility to deliver for rural women, not only DAERA.
- * Rural women are engaged in future rural development policy planning and development.
- * Rural women have dedicated rural development resourcing that takes account of gender differentials and COVID-19 impacts.
- * NI continues post Brexit to learn from EU policy development and innovation in order to replicate what is advantageous to NI.

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- * NI Executive work quickly on ensuring we have a future Rural Development policy that supports vibrant, gender equal, rural communities.
- * Government to view organisations in this sector in a similar light to private and public businesses and employees, providing financial support to sustain their viability.
- * Resourcing and support for rural community capacity building to aid COVID-19 recovery and sustainability.
- * Rural business support initiatives are required.
- * Rural childcare solutions need to be created to support rural women business owners and workers as we move forward.
- * Increase rural women's participation in the digital economy, including digital marketing and digital trade.
- * Increase digital identification for rural SMEs to allow innovative ways of securing collateral and credit histories.
- * This includes providing digital, virtual, and mobile-based business training, coaching, and mentoring related to economic recovery, digital marketing and communication channels, and overall digital financial literacy.



A Feminist Green Economy

The NI Executive commitments to 'tackle climate change head on with a strategy to address the immediate and longer-term impacts of climate change' in the New Decade, New Approach agreement¹⁶ must be met from a perspective that will support tackling gender inequality.

The recommendations included in the WPG COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan would support the NI Executive in meeting the requirements set out in New Decade, New Approach, whilst applying a gender lens to support a care economy and gender equality in any new green economy. **Commitments made by the NI Executive include:**

- The Executive's strategies to reduce carbon emissions will be reviewed in light of the Paris Climate Change Accord and the climate crisis.
- A new Energy Strategy will set ambitious targets and actions for a fair and just transition to a zero carbon society.
- The Executive should bring forward a Climate Change Act to give environmental targets a strong legal underpinning.
- The Executive will establish an Independent Environmental Protection Agency to oversee this work and ensure targets are met.
- The Economic Strategy will support clean and inclusive growth and create jobs as part of a Green New Deal.
- The Executive will create a plan to eliminate plastic pollution.
- RHI will be closed down and replaced by a scheme that effectively cuts carbon emissions.



¹⁶ [New Decade, New Approach Agreement](#) (2020), p.8

In particular, the WPG would like to make reference to aims for a “fair and just transition” alongside the Economic Strategy that will “support clean and inclusive growth and create jobs as part of a Green New Deal.” The Women’s Policy Group NI endorses the UK Women’s Budget Group and Women’s Environmental Network paper for the WBG Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy, ‘Towards a Feminist Green New Deal for the UK.’¹⁷ This paper looks at a Green New Deal from an intersectional feminist perspective,¹⁸ and it is an approach that the WPG would endorse for Northern Ireland in relation to our economic recovery and the NI Executive’s aims for tackling climate change. The paper outlines some key points regarding what a Feminist Green New Deal should aim to achieve:

- Redressing economic and social disadvantages faced by women,
- Changing social norms of gender at home and at work to share and value care,
- Increasing women’s representation in all aspects of public life and decision-making,
- Ending violence against women and girls.

*The WPG would add that in the context of Northern Ireland, the need for women’s involvement in peacebuilding processes should also be a priority, as set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.*¹⁹

¹⁷ Cohen, M. and MacGregor, S. (2020), ‘[Towards a Feminist Green New Deal for the UK: A Paper for the WBG Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy](#)’, UK Women’s Budget Group and Women’s Environmental Network

¹⁸ Taking an intersectional feminist approach means taking into consideration the various ways in which different aspects of a woman’s social identity can overlap and compound the nature and severity of gender discrimination

she faces. For example, women from minority ethnic backgrounds will experience gender discrimination differently than white women; with issues of racial inequality and gender inequality overlapping and compounding one another. More information on this can be found [here](#).

¹⁹ United Nations (2000) Security Council: [Resolution 1325](#) (UNSCR 1325), Women, Peace and Security.

The lockdown exposed the severe impact of governmental decisions to neglect public services on our society, with many existing socio-economic inequalities being exacerbated during the lockdown. The need for basic levels of income, access to food, childcare, a fully functioning health service, education, changing considerations of “low-skilled” work to essential work, recognising the importance of unpaid care, digital poverty, holiday hunger, access to the internet and many more factors have been the topic of a lot of conversations in recent months.

Now, more than ever, it is necessary to reassess our economic decision making and recent history of severely under-resourced public goods, as part of a Green New Deal for Northern Ireland. NI would not have been able to cope without those working in the areas above, and it is necessary to recognise this undervalued work; redistribute care responsibilities and reduce levels of harm to our social, health, economic and environmental infrastructures.



Summary of Recommendations:

- * Co-designing social infrastructure at a local level with the needs of women taken into account,
- * Taking the differing transport needs of women with caring responsibilities into account when creating transport plans; particularly given issues in Northern Ireland of inadequate rural public transport and the fact that women are more likely to rely on public transport.
- * Provide subsidies and other incentives, including paid education leave, to support women, particularly low-income and BAME women, in accessing training and development programmes in high-skilled work in a new green economy,
- * Provide subsidies and other incentives to those working in jobs at high risk of being replaced by automaton, particularly as women are at much higher risk of this,
- * Encourage women and girls into male-dominated green sectors that are encouraged through a Northern Ireland Green New Deal.

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- * Broaden definitions of 'green jobs' beyond construction and technology to incorporate the care sector as an already existing low carbon, high compensate sector that is increasingly neglected,
- * Ensure that all green jobs in Northern Ireland include a real living wage, are securely contracted, ethically procured and unionised,
- * Balance recommendations for greater food self-reliance with recognition of the gendered, unpaid and low-paid labour involved in producing and providing food, particularly as Northern Ireland may be disproportionately impacted by different food standards to Great Britain post-Brexit,
- * Supporting and developing sustainable small businesses that reduce domestic work through mass preparation and distribution of locally grown food.
- * Promoting economic, ecological and carbon education campaigns for schools and the wider public, adequately funded through a Climate Change Act and within the Programme for Government,
- * Ensure equality impact assessments of all environmental policies and ensure consultation on policies with groups representing various genders, races and classes within civil society,
- * Make socio-economic equality of protected characteristics a key goal of any new green new deal framework and ensure co-design of planning and policies with the Women's Sector,
- * Promote a cultural shift towards valuing care as a key part of the infrastructure of the environment and economy.
- * Support the introduction of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland,
- * Promote trade justice within supply chains and create ethical procurement guidelines in line with the above recommendations.



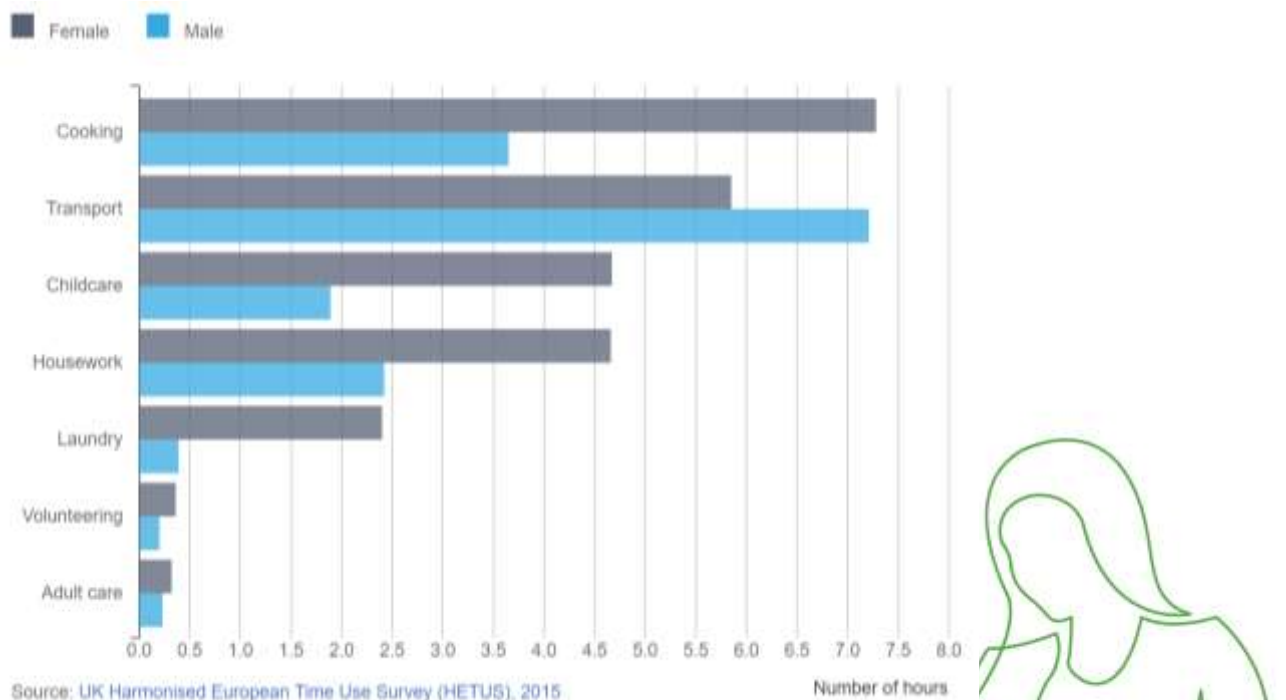
The following sections from the Economic Justice Pillar have been included in this report as the WPG is calling for these issues to be regarded by all Departments as a part of essential infrastructure; and should therefore be brought to the attention of the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Gender Segregated Labour Markets and Care Work

Substantive gender segregation remains in the labour market with men continuing to dominate in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing and construction, and women continuing to dominate in public administration, education and health. The same is true in terms of occupational segregation – both men and women continue to dominate in occupations that have traditionally been associated with them.

Care-giving has been identified as one factor influencing occupational segregation with women and lone parents choosing occupations allowing sufficient flexibility to balance the demands of care-giving. This may have a potential impact on the sustainability of employment, with women and lone parents having to consider pay and career progression with flexibility in employment.²⁰

Figure 8: Unpaid Care Work Differentials for Men and Women in the UK



²⁰ Equality Commission Northern Ireland (ECNI) (2018) '[Key Inequalities in Employment](#)' Summary Report.

When looking specifically at Northern Ireland, women are more likely than men to be forced out of the labour market by unpaid, domestic work or caring responsibilities, and 69% of carers are women.

Research from Carers NI shows that Northern Ireland's carers save the economy £4.6 billion per year;²¹ whilst unpaid carers across all the UK provide social care worth £57 billion per year.²²

The burden on women to provide the majority of unpaid care in society has increased significantly in the context of COVID-19. What has become clear, is that care work, which is predominantly undertaken by women and girls, is central to the functions of every economy; yet it is still treated as a private issue and undervalued as contributors to economies.

As a result, when the income of men and women across occupations ranging from the lowest hourly paid to the highest hourly paid is examined, it is apparent that women dominate in the low paid occupations. What is more, across the vast majority of occupations there remains a substantive gender pay gap, with women continuing to earn less pay per hour than men. This gender pay gap is likely to worsen due to the economic impact of COVID-19, which not only has negative consequences for women, but the economy as a whole.

Findings from the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report 2020 highlight the strong correlation between a country's gender gap and its economic performance. The WEF argue that this economic evidence 'highlights the message to policy-makers that countries that want to remain competitive and inclusive will need to make gender equality a critical part of their nation's human capital development.'²³



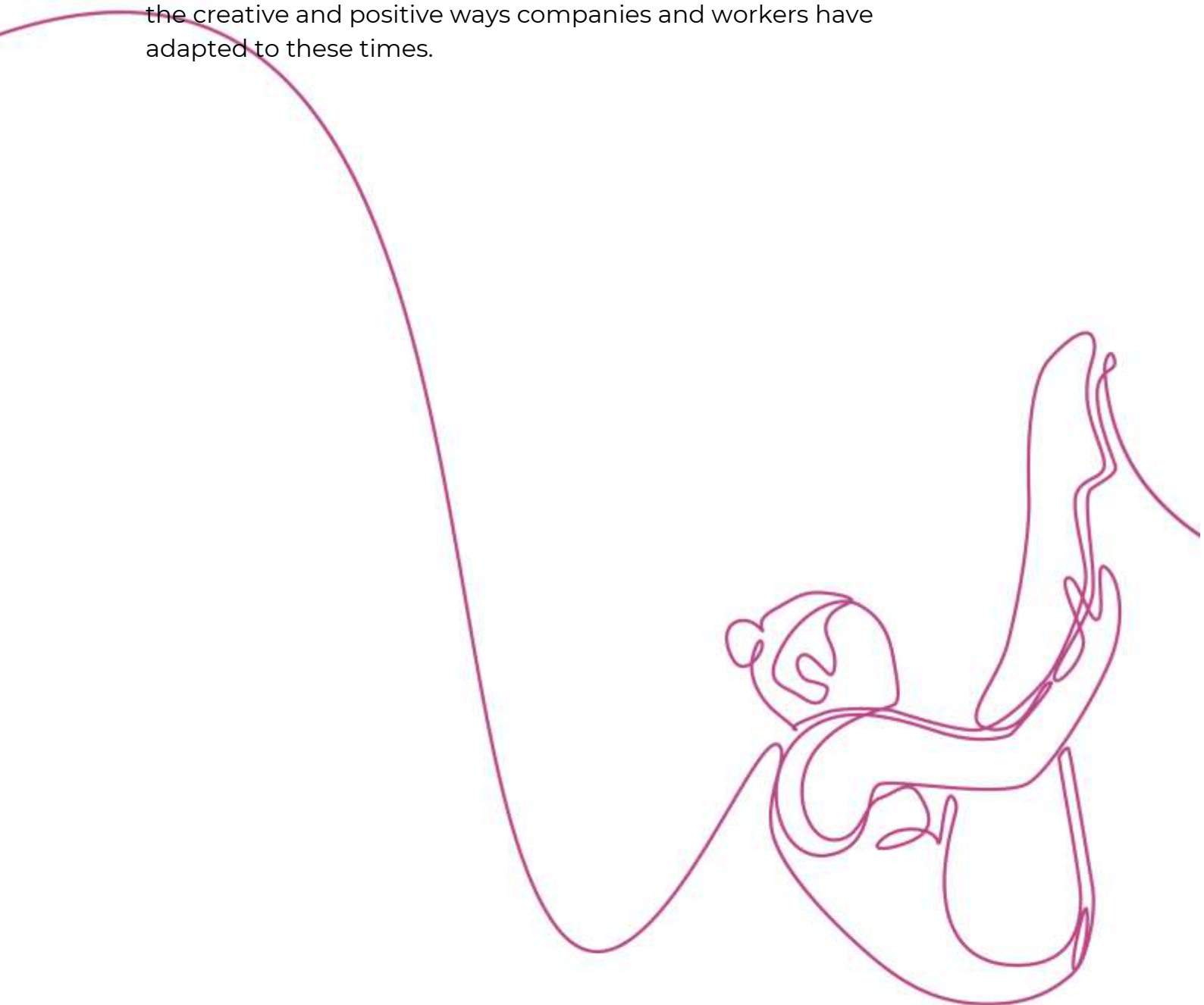
²¹ Carers NI (2015) '[NI Carers save government £4.6 billion a year](#)'; see also: Carers NI (2017) '[State of Caring 2017](#)'

²² Office for National Statistics (2017), '[Unpaid carers provide social care worth £57 billion](#)'

²³ World Economic Forum (2020) 'Mind the 100 Year Gap', [Global Gender Gap Report 2020](#), p.33.

Summary of Recommendations:

- * Monitor gender parity in the professions of the future.
- * Sustainably fund the women's sector, particularly rural women.
- * Develop a human-centred, green, sustainable and inclusive recovery (recognising care work as a key sustainable industry with a full return on investment) that harnesses the potential of new technologies to create decent jobs for all and takes advantage of the creative and positive ways companies and workers have adapted to these times.



Social Justice Pillar



Politics, Public Life, Peacebuilding & Decision Making

As the impact of COVID-19 is deeply gendered, a rights-based approach and gender post-conflict analysis of the Northern Irish context must therefore be at the centre of the COVID-19 response and recovery process. The Women, Peace and Security Agenda provides an essential framework for analysing and responding to COVID-19, and the structures, policies and guidance contained in the agenda should be applied to the COVID-19 response in Northern Ireland.

In the context of COVID-19 recovery planning, it is imperative that women are included in decision making across all departments in Northern Ireland. Already, we have seen recovery planning take place with little to no consultation with the women's sector, who have been consistently producing evidence of the disproportionate impact COVID-19 is having on women.

COVID-19 is exacerbating existing inequalities, and women's equality cannot be de-prioritised due to COVID-19 response planning. **Rather, gender equality should be embedded within all governmental decision-making relating to COVID-19**, health, the economy, infrastructure, budgets, the Programme for Government and more. Worryingly, the New Decade, New Approach agreement did not mention women at all, and already we have seen the impact of women's participation being absent from emergency response planning.

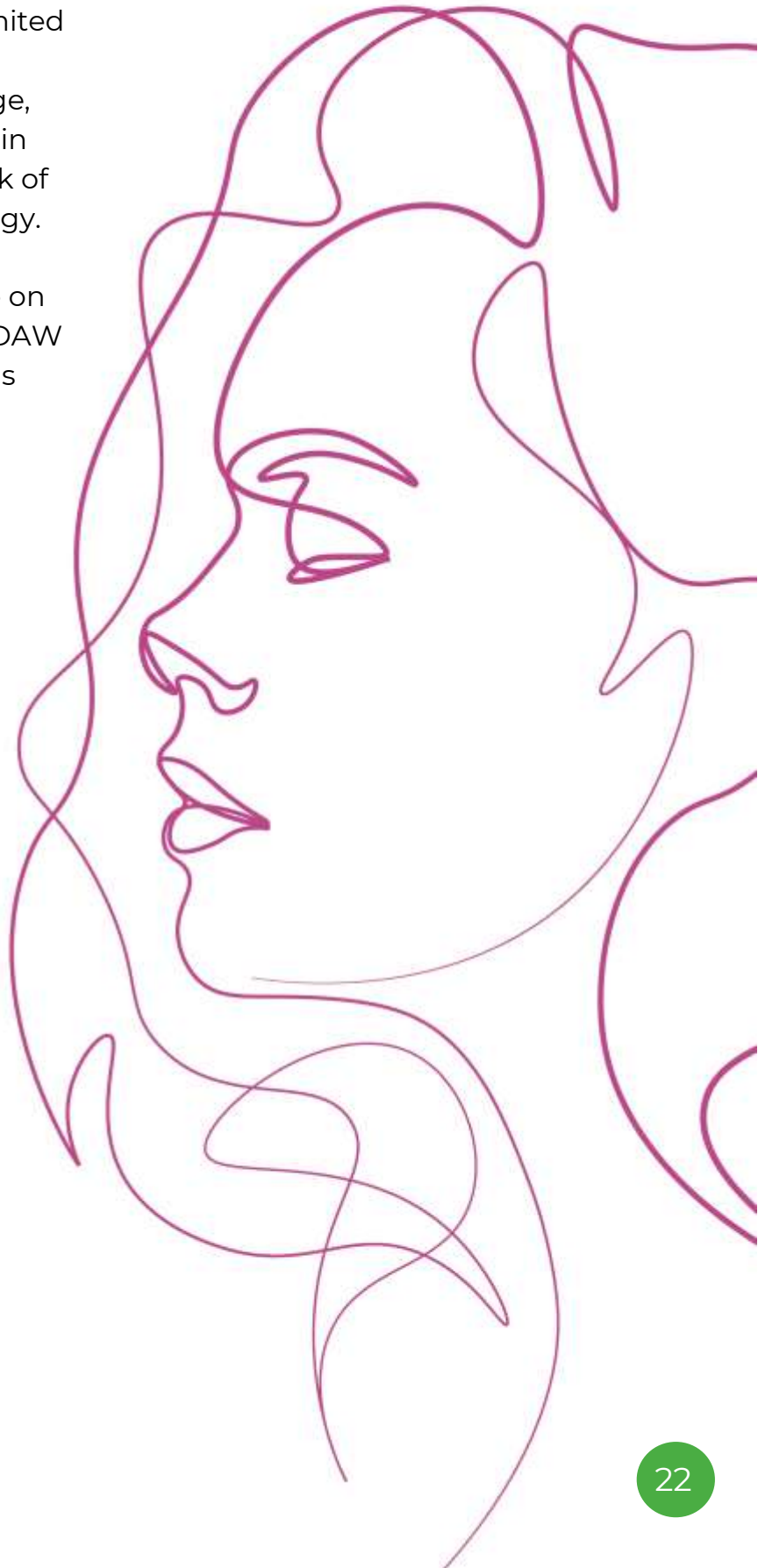
Summary of Recommendations:

- * Ensure women's groups are adequately represented in all departmental COVID-19 recovery planning procedures.
- * Ensure the women's sector is consulted with and included in the co-design of all departmental strategies and the Programme for Government.

Digital Divide and Access Poverty

Access to digital technologies is still limited in Northern Ireland, primarily due to uneven broadband access and coverage, especially in rural areas. Many women, in particular older women, also report lack of skills and confidence in using technology. Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) hosted a conference on CEDAW in January 2020, featuring CEDAW Committee vice chair Nicole Ameline as keynote speaker.

In her keynote, Mme Ameline highlighted the gender aspects of the digital divide and emphasised that women and girls need to be fully engaged in the development of technology, including artificial intelligence. Mme Ameline emphasised the risks of artificial intelligence, as [current evidence indicates algorithms are male oriented and often produce discriminatory results for women](#) in all spheres of life, from assessing eligibility for loans or credit cards to accessing social protection. This is also true when it comes to the use of facial recognition technologies (where it is allowed) as women are more likely to be misidentified.



The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the gendered impact of the digital divide, with reports of mothers struggling to support their children's education on mobile phones, and teenagers scrambling to complete schoolwork on mobiles or a single family laptop. Older women are among the groups least likely to be digitally connected and computer literate, although efforts were made to address this particularly during the pandemic. Newcomer, asylum seeking and refugee families also face challenges in accessing affordable internet services, which are critical for them to maintain contact with their extended families and through this, support their health and wellbeing.²⁴

It is also important to note that digital literacy and poverty among vulnerable sections of our community is likely to be a barrier to the effectiveness of contact tracing apps. This includes, though is not exclusive to, the elderly and those with irregular immigration status. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the potential of technology in connecting people and also in providing support services, and these advantages should be shared out among all of society.

Summary of Recommendations:

- * Strengthen access to high quality broadband services across Northern Ireland.
- * Work with telecommunications providers to ensure access to affordable broadband services.
- * Work with the women's sector to ensure women have the appropriate skills to benefit from digital services and communications technologies.
- * Ensure women, including women end users, are engaged in development of digital technologies and services, including artificial intelligence and assistive technologies.



²⁴ See the [Participation and Practice of Rights \(PPR\) campaign](#) 'Internet Access for All' with 670 signatures [as of 07.01.21]

Conclusion

The Feminist Recovery plan provides a roadmap to recovery that will address gender inequality in Northern Ireland. This plan has been created by experts working in women's rights, LGBT+ sector, human rights, trade unions, campaigning organisations, rural groups NGOs and more. This plan provides significant evidence under the multiple pillars, including:

1. Economic Justice Pillar
2. Health Pillar
3. Social Justice Pillar
4. Cultural Pillar
5. Brexit and a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland
6. International Best Practice

Experts have provided evidence under each pillar of this plan and our recommendations are clear - the recovery from COVID-19 cannot come on the backs of women. If the recommendations throughout this plan are taken on board, significant progress will have been made to tackle deep gender inequality in Northern Ireland.

Further Information

The evidence and recommendations included in this report are department-specific and have been specifically developed for the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The full WPG Feminist Recovery Plan can be accessed [here](#), which includes more detail on the issues raised in this report and further recommendations for other NI departments, the NI Executive and the UK Government.

*For questions or queries regarding the WPG
Feminist Recovery Plan, please contact:*

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Snapshot

Although the Feminist Recovery Plan was published in July 2020, as of February 2021, the majority of issues highlighted in the Plan are yet to be addressed. **It is crucial that the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs works with other NI Departments to tackle the issues raised in this report.**

As a matter of urgency, the Department should:

- * Ensure rural women have dedicated rural development resourcing that takes account of gender differentials and COVID-19 impacts.
- * Create rural childcare solutions to support rural women business owners and workers.
- * Develop a Green New Deal for Northern Ireland that is met from the perspective of tackling gender inequality.
- * Ensure that proposed budgets, the Programme for Government and policy recovery plans take account of rural needs.
- * Engage with rural women in future rural development policy planning and development.
- * Design and implement a Rural Development policy that supports vibrant, gender equal, rural communities.

**Women's
Policy Group NI**

February 2021