



WRDA Stormont and Westminster Update – August 2021

## Summary

It should be noted that Westminster and Stormont are in the middle of their summer recess and therefore there is much less to report on than usual. However, despite this there has been a number of political developments surrounding the thematic issues highlighted within the [Women's Policy Group \(WPG\) Covid-19 Feminist Recovery Plan](#). This summary reflects Bills within both the Stormont and Westminster Executives, and policy consultations of the WPG & WRDA.

The issue of **violence against women and girls** featured prominently in legislation in both Stormont and Westminster. Naomi Long's Protection from Stalking Bill remains at Committee stage alongside the introduction of a Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims Bill. In Westminster there has been no movement on the Private Member's Bills in relation to Intimate Images (Offences) Bill and Unsolicited Explicit Images and Deepfake Pornography Bill – however, they remain ones to watch. This comes in light of international news this month that the Taliban have retaken 'governance' of Kabul and Afghanistan which has resulted in the stripping of many of the human rights advances made for women in the region. As feminist organisations we must do what we can in solidarity with the women there and amplify Afghan women's voices as much as possible.

The issue of **women's economic justice** remained prominent at Stormont and Westminster with legislation in relation to childcare, maternity protections, and increasing rights of parents to take absence in tragic circumstances such as miscarriages and bereavement. Further, the WPG & WRDA responses emphasise the importance of bringing a gendered lens to such economic policies and strategies to ensure that women benefit equally.

*This update has been put together by Courtney Girvin (WRDA volunteer)*

## Stormont

### Executive Bills – August 2021

Issue	Proposed by	Stage	Comments	Links to the feminist recovery plan
Protection from Stalking Bill	Naomi Long, Minister for Justice	Committee Stage	<p>A Bill to provide protection from threatening or abusive behaviours, and from stalking behaviours. This new legislation will have greater penalties and protections from stalking behaviour compared to current legislation.</p> <p>The introduction of stalking protection orders (SPOs) will enable the police to intervene prior to any conviction to address stalking behaviours before they become entrenched or escalate in severity, therefore, protecting victims when there is an immediate risk of harm. The Bill is divided into three parts. Part 1 creates the specific offence of stalking and creates the offence of threatening and abusive behaviour, which can be triggered by a single incident. Part 2 provides for the introduction of SPOs. Part 3 deals with the interpretation, commencement, and short title of the Bill.</p>	<p>Stalking is an inherently gendered crime, with women representing a disproportionate number of victims.</p> <p>Domestic homicide is linked to high-risk indicators such as coercive and controlling behaviour, stalking and domestic violence</p> <p>Link to information on the Bill <a href="#">here</a></p>
Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill	Diane Dodds (previous), Minister for Economy – continued by Paul Frew (current)	Committee Stage	<p>A Bill to make provision about leave and pay for employees who have lost their children.</p> <p>The Bill is divided into two main sections. Firstly, parental bereavement leave, which will curate the right of parents who have lost their child to be absent from work, regardless of how long they have worked for their employer.</p>	<p>The FRP highlights the importance of employment protections for mothers and fathers who will undoubtedly be affected by the Parental Bereavement Bill.</p> <p>Parental leave is recommended as a day one employment right within the FRP.</p>

			Secondly, parental bereavement pay in which those eligible will receive a fixed or earnings-related weekly rate of pay.	Link to information on the Bill <a href="#">here</a>
Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims Bill	Naomi Long, Minister for Justice	Second Stage	<p>A Bill to make provision about and in connection with sexual offences; regulate particular matters relating to cases of trafficking or exploitation; and amend rules applying with respect to certain sexual or violent offences prevention orders.</p> <p>The Bill is divided into four parts. Part 1 legislates for the sexual offences covered within this Bill and the right to anonymity and privacy for both victims and perpetrators. Part 2 details trafficking and slavery offences separately. Part 3 detail what offences qualify for sexual offences prevention orders. The final part deals with the interpretation, commencement, and short title of the Bill.</p>	<p>Tackling sexual violence is a key aspect of tackling gendered violence and violence against women. However, to truly tackle rape culture will need to address issues of victim-blaming, identification and tackling of rape myths, and how the media reports on cases of sexual violence.</p> <p>Link to information on the Bill <a href="#">here</a></p>
Climate Change (No.2) Bill	Edwin Poots, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Second Stage	A Bill to set targets for the years 2050, 2040 and 2030 for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; to provide for a system of carbon budgeting; to provide for reporting and statements against those targets and budgets; to confer power to impose climate change reporting duties on public bodies; to provide for reports and advice from the Committee on Climate Change; and for connected purposes.	<p>The move to a “Green Economy” &amp; a environmentally sustainable job market is reflected in the FRP. The FRP cautions against reproducing the gender divide within STEM currently when creating green jobs.</p> <p>Link to information on the Bill to <a href="#">here</a></p>

## Non-Executive Bills – August 2021

Issue	Proposed by	Stage	Comments	Link to Feminist Recovery Plan
Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill	Paul Givan (First Minister – Lagan Valley)	Committee Stage	<p>A Bill attempting to restrict access to abortion by amending the Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 to remove the ground for abortion in cases of severe non-fatal fetal disability.</p> <p>There has been no public consultation for this Bill, and it should be noted that the Northern Ireland Office conducted a public consultation when developing abortion law reform which resulted in the current 2020 legislation.</p> <p>Should be noted that new FM has this month stated he will challenge the Secretary of State Brandon Lewis in the courts over his direction that Stormont must commission full abortion services by next March.</p>	<p>This would infringe upon the bodily autonomy of women and others, and violates the reproductive justice principle of the right to not have a child.</p> <p>Link to information on the Bill <a href="#">here</a></p> <p>Link to FM Paul Givan’s position on the issue <a href="#">here</a></p>
Climate Change Bill	Clare Bailey (Green Party NI – South Belfast)	Committee Stage	<p>A Bill attempting to mitigate the effects of climate change in Northern Ireland. The Bill seeks to establish a legally binding net-zero carbon target for NI, establish an NI Climate Commissioner and resultant Climate Office, achieve a climate sustainable economy by 2045, and guarantee existing climate and environmental protections.</p> <p>This Bill would declare a climate emergency until the threshold of the global temperature as defined by the Paris Agreement has been met.</p>	<p>The move to a “Green Economy” and a more environmentally sustainable job market is reflected in the FRP.</p> <p>The effects of climate change are disproportionately gendered globally.</p> <p>Link to information on the Bill to <a href="#">here</a></p>

Safe Access Zones Bill (Public Health and Well Being Bill)	Clare Bailey (Green Party NI – South Belfast)	Bill with NI Speaker’s Office - ready to begin its legislative journey	This Bill aims to provide safe access to healthcare facilities including buffer zones/safe access zones around reproductive healthcare facilities.	<p>This would enhance the ability of women and others to access healthcare services such as abortion and accessing contraception without fear of harassment and intimidation.</p> <p>The FRP recognises the importance of enacting safe access and buffer zones.</p>
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### Consultations

Issue	Women’s Policy Group response (WPG)	Link to Feminist Recovery plan
WRDA Evidence Submission: Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay Bill)	<p>WRDA believes that all bereaved parents/primary carers, regardless of the age of their child, need time to grieve away from work. WRDA believes all parents/primary carers should have the right to paid leave in such a circumstance.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Paid leave entitlement should be included in this Bill for those who have suffered a miscarriage.</li> <li>II. That the definition of parent should include primary carers, stepparents, foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship carers.</li> <li>III. This Parental Bereavement Pay should be at the full rate of pay.</li> <li>IV. WRDA is strongly against the idea that only workers who have been employed for six months will have entitlement to bereavement leave and pay as this would exclude those on zero-hour contracts, agency workers and those on temporary contracts. WRDA strongly believes that this should be a Day One right for all workers.</li> </ol>	<p>The FRP highlights the importance of employment protections for mothers and fathers who will undoubtedly be affected by the Parental Bereavement Bill.</p> <p>Parental leave is recommended as a day one employment right within the FRP.</p> <p>Link to information on the Bill <a href="#">here</a></p> <p>Link to WRDA response <a href="#">here</a></p>

	V. WRDA does not believe it is appropriate to require evidence from grieving parents in order to access parental bereavement leave and pay.	Link to WPG response <a href="#">here</a>
WPG Response to 'Dept for Economy Skills Strategy or NI: Skills for a 10x Economy' Public Consultation	<p>The WPG welcomes the aims and vision of the Skills strategy to develop a '10x Economy' which strives toward a decade of innovation and investment in areas of strength within NI. Overall the WPG believes this strategy will positively impact our economic wellbeing, alongside our societal and environmental wellbeing.</p> <p>However, the WPG has some concerns regarding the strategy which would prevent women from benefiting equally. The WPG response uses relevant contributions from the FRP to respond to these gaps/concerns.</p>	<p>The FRP highlights the importance of economic equality between men and women as one of its core pillars. Issues relevant to the FRP and raised within this consultation include the gendered dimensions of insecure and low-paid work, the continued gender pay gap, flexible working, and sex discrimination.</p> <p>Link to WPG response <a href="#">here</a></p>

## [Westminster](#)

### Bills - August 2021

Issue	Date	Sponsored by	Stage	Notes	Links to Feminist Recovery Plan
Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill	27/08/21	Robert Buckley, Ministry for Justice (House of Commons)  Baroness Williams of	House of Commons passage completed; moved to Second Reading (House of Lords)	A Bill to make provision about the police and other emergency workers; to make provision about collaboration between authorities to prevent and reduce serious violence; to make provision about the powers of the police and other authorities for the purposes of preventing, detecting, investigating or prosecuting crime or investigating other matters; to make provision about the maintenance of public order; to make provision	This is a very broad Bill covering a range of topics including gender and sexual based violence. However, the right to protest has also been essential in furthering women's legislation.

		House Trafford, Conservative Life Peer (House of Lords)		<p>about sentencing, detention, release, management and rehabilitation of offenders; etc.</p> <p>This has been controversial as it is viewed as an attack on the right to protest.</p> <p>Debates have highlighted that the impact of violence against women, particularly domestic violence, sexual violence, controlling and coercive behaviour by men and their impact on the community is included in that strategy to reduce violence against women and girls.</p>	<p>Read full details of the Bill <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Summary of new clauses added to the Bill <a href="#">here</a></p>
Northern Ireland (Ministers, Elections and Petitions of Concern) Bill	07/07/2021	Brandon Lewis, Ministry for Northern Ireland Office	Report Stage (House of Commons)	<p>A Bill to make provision about Ministerial appointments, extraordinary Assembly elections, the Ministerial Code of Conduct and petitions of concern in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>This Bill will deliver aspects of the New Decade, New Approach Agreement which was agreed by the five main NI political parties in January 2020. The Bill is concerned with the sustainability and transparency of the Northern Ireland institutions.</p> <p>Some key changes include requiring petitioners to come from more than one Northern Irish political party and updating the code of conduct for Northern Ireland Ministers.</p>	<p>These new provisions reform the Petition of Concern mechanism in order to reduce misuse</p> <p>Previously the Petition of Concern has been abused and used to block socially progressive legislation such as equal marriage. Such reforms go some ways in ensuring one party cannot override the democratic process.</p> <p>Read full details of the Bill <a href="#">here</a>.</p>



Childcare Bill	18/06/2021	Matt Rodda (Labour)	Second Reading (House of Commons)	A Bill to enable provision to be made for appeals relating to free childcare for young children of working parents to be settled by agreement; to make further provision designed to increase efficiency in the administration of free childcare schemes; to make provision about the promotion of free childcare, including to disadvantaged groups.	Childcare is recognised as an important aspect when the economic justice pillar of the FRP. Social expectations in which women are the predominate carers of children place barriers on their ability to access and progress within the workforce.  Read full details of the Bill <a href="#">here</a> .
Conversion Therapy (Prohibition) Bill	22/06/2021	Wera Hobhouse (Liberal Democrat)	Second Reading (House of Commons)	A Bill to prohibit sexual orientation and gender identity conversion therapy.  There is little detail about this Bill currently given its early stages, however, it will be interesting to keep an eye given similar legislation is in conversation in the Northern Ireland Executive.	This is a gendered offence, in which people were targeted as a result of their sexual orientation and gender identity. It is important to support victims/survivors and future generations deserve to be free from the repetition of similar gendered violence.  Read full details of the Bill <a href="#">here</a> .

Miscarriage Leave Bill	23/06/2021	Angela Crawley (SNP)	Second Reading (House of Commons)	<p>A Bill to make provision for paid leave for people who have experienced a miscarriage.</p> <p>There is little detail on the Bill in its current stages; however given the introductions of a Parental Bereavement Bill within Stormont this will be worth keeping an eye on especially as one of the WPG recommendations is that paid leave entitlement should be included in the Parental Bereavement Bill for those who have suffered a miscarriage.</p>	<p>The FRP highlights the importance of employment protections for mothers and fathers who will undoubtedly be affected by the Miscarriage Leave Bill.</p> <p>Read full details of the Bill <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
Pregnancy and Maternity (Redundancy Protection) Bill	24/06/2021	Maria Miller (Conservative)	Second Reading (House of Commons)	<p>A Bill to prohibit redundancy during pregnancy and maternity leave, including up to six months after the end of pregnancy or leave; except in specified circumstances.</p>	<p>The FRP highlights the importance of employment protections for mothers and fathers who will undoubtedly be affected by the Bill.</p> <p>Read full details of the Bill <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

Questions asked tabled during August 2021

Issue	Date	Proposed by	Notes	Link to Feminist Recovery Plan
Replacing US forces in Afghanistan	18/08/21	Theresa May (Conservative)	<p>The Question: “Will the PM please set out when he first spoke personally to Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary-General of NATO, to discuss with him the possibility of putting together an alliance of other forces in order to replace American support in Afghanistan?”</p> <p>It is an illusion to believe that there is any appetite among our partners for a continued military presence or for a military solution imposed by NATO in Afghanistan. I do not believe that today deploying tens of thousands of British troops to fight the Taliban is an option that, no matter how sincerely people may advocate it - we must deal with the position as it now is, accepting what we have achieved and what we have not achieved.</p>	<p>Violence against women and girls is a core pillar of the FRP. While the situation in Afghanistan does not directly relate to the FRP given the suppression of women’s rights under the Taliban it is important to support anyway we can and understand the British Government’s thoughts are in terms of humanitarian aid and/or intervention.</p> <p>Link to full answer <a href="#">here</a></p>
Afghanistan Refugees	18/08/2021	Chris Bryant (Labour)	<p>The Question: “The Home Secretary announced this morning that the UK will take 20,000 refugees from Afghanistan but that only 5,000 will be able to come this year. What are the 15,000 meant to do? Hang around and wait to be executed?”</p> <p>That is the 5,000 on whom—we are spending £200 million to bring a further 5,000 on top; I think it will be 10,000 altogether that we bring in under the ARAP and other programmes. We will increase that number over the coming</p>	<p>Violence against women and girls is a core pillar of the FRP. Further as an intersectional piece of research the FRP recognises the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.</p> <p>Link to full answer <a href="#">here</a></p>

			years to 20,000, as I said, but the bulk of the effort of this country will be directed and should be directed at supporting people in Afghanistan and in the region to prevent a worse humanitarian crisis.	
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