

# Women's Policy Group NI

## Key Briefings for Ministers: Minister for Communities

6<sup>th</sup> February 2024

### Introduction

The Women's Policy Group (WPG) is a group of policy experts and practitioners who advocate collectively for women and girls by promoting gender equality through an intersectional feminist lens. We challenge systemic injustice and discrimination affecting women and girls by informing society and influencing policy and law. Our work is informed by women and girls' lived experiences and rooted in international human rights law.

There are a number of issues that we have spent several years lobbying for and working towards, that could not be progressed because of the absence of government. Now that the Assembly has returned, we would like to outline our key priorities to every Minister, explain why these issues are important, and highlight what can be achieved if we begin early and focus on the long-term benefits of these actions.

### Policy Issues: Implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategies and Welfare Mitigations

- **All of the Social Inclusion Strategies must be urgently implemented**
- **Implement the recommendations of the Welfare Mitigations Review panel. Particularly urgent are mitigations on the two child cap.**

*Why are these measures important?*

Prior to the Executive collapse in 2022, years of work went into developing drafts of the Social Inclusion Strategies. Several women's sector organisations fed into the co-design processes for Strategies such as the Gender Equality Strategy and the Anti-Poverty Strategy. It is crucial that the Strategies, based on the recommendations from the Expert Panel Reports, are implemented as soon as possible. Taken together, these strategies can form the basis of a more equal society, one that can build a thriving Northern Ireland.

Welfare Reform, overall, has had a profoundly negative impact on large parts of Northern Ireland. Research both locally and across the UK has shown an increase in poverty, and this has most direct impacts on women, on children, and on people with a disability. Welfare Mitigations have helped to shield people in Northern Ireland from some of the changes, and we urge the Department to implement the recommendations of the Welfare Mitigations Review to extend the support that the mitigations can offer. Particularly we urge the ending of the Two Child Cap, which has a particular and obvious impact on child poverty, and which disproportionately impacts families in Northern Ireland, which tend to be larger than families in Great Britain.

*What are we asking for?*

- Investment in and implementation of all of the Social Inclusion Strategies
- Implementation of the Welfare Mitigations Review recommendations
- Mitigations on the two child cap

#### **Further information**

If you have any questions or queries regarding this briefing, please contact:

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