

Women's Policy Group NI

Key Briefings for Ministers: Economy Minister

6th 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: Circular Economy Strategy, Expansion of the 10X Strategy, Miscarriage Leave and Paid Leave for Survivors of Domestic Abuse

- **The Department must prioritise moving to a Circular Economy for Northern Ireland.**
- **The 10X Strategy is too narrowly focused on STEM to the exclusion of the humanities and work that is disproportionately pursued by women, such as care work. This is a failing that can be addressed.**
- **Miscarriage Leave should be introduced as soon as possible.**
- **The Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) was given royal assent in 2022. The Minister must give effect to this legislation with guidance for employers as soon as possible.**

Why are these measures important?

A number of these recommendations relate to work carried out during the last mandate, or during the period the Assembly was not sitting. As such, the urgency of setting out guidance for legislation already passed is clear. Some employers have already helped to put provisions in place for survivors of domestic abuse, but it is time for guidance to support the 2022 Act.

Consultations took place on both Miscarriage Leave and Circular Economy proposals. These are things that will support people in their most vulnerable times, and to build a new society that is sustainable and in harmony with our environment, respectively. In the case of the Circular Economy, it can help build new businesses and to assist with rural development.

The current 10X Strategy is not sufficient to meet the needs we will have in the future, and it does not serve women workers or recognise work that is typically done by women, which is vital to the future economy. This is a mistake - as illustrated in via our work on the Circular Economy - and we can improve it if we rethink it now.

What are we asking for?

- Issue guidance for the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
- Introduce legislation to make Paid Miscarriage Leave a reality
- Continue work on the Circular Economy Strategy and implement it
- Reconsider and broaden the focus of the 10X Economy Strategy

Further information

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

Elaine Crory,
Women's Sector Lobbyist,
Women's Resource and Development Agency
elaine.crory@wrda.net