



Engender and Equal Media & Culture Centre for Scotland response to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee call for views on its Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2025-26.

Introduction

Engender is Scotland's feminist policy and advocacy organisation, working to secure women's political, economic and social equality with men. Our aspiration is for a Scotland where women and men have equal access to and enjoyment of rights, resources, decision-making and safety.

The Equal Media and Culture Centre for Scotland (EMCC) provides research, monitoring and advocacy for gender equality in the media, creative and cultural industries across Scotland.

We ask the Committee to consider the following points in its pre-budget scrutiny of the culture portfolio:

- Targeted action must address the persistent lack of representation of women and diverse voices in positions of power in Scotland's arts, media, cultural, and sports industries. This aim should be explicit in the budgetary setting of the culture portfolio.
- Budgetary planning for the culture portfolio must actively address the inequality experienced by women and marginalised people in Scotland when participating in creative and cultural life.
- Gender budgeting should be kept at the forefront of decision-making and integrated into the design of new and innovative funding solutions for the culture sector.
- The current Scottish Government Culture Strategy Action Plan does not adequately consider or address the severe lack of gender parity in Scotland's arts and cultural industries, particularly the underrepresentation of minoritised women.
- We continue to have concerns that the Scottish Government's current approach to Fair Work does not adequately address the structural drivers of the gender pay gap.
- Future priorities for Fair Work in the culture sector must recognise and actively address the intersectional gender inequality entrenched in Scotland's culture sector.

Section 1: Planned Budget Increases

Q1. How should planned budget increases for the culture portfolio in Budget 2025-26 be prioritised to support improved cultural outcomes?

Engender has long called for the Scottish Budget process to pay attention to structural gender inequality and the differences between women's and men's lived experiences.¹ This has included advocating for integrating gender budget analysis throughout Scotland's budget and revenue-raising processes. Women and men have different experiences or access to power, resources and safety. Budgets are not neutral but present an opportunity to reinforce these inequalities or to account for them according to political and public policy goals. This has become even more urgent as we know that recent challenges such as Brexit, austerity policies, Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis have further cemented intersectional gender inequality and deepened women's poverty in Scotland.²

At the EMCC, we are primarily concerned with how planned budget increases and changes to the funding recognise and address inequalities for women and marginalised groups, specifically in the culture sector. Media and culture help shape societal attitudes and behaviours and have the power to transform the world around us. However, there remains a persistent lack of representation of women and diverse voices in positions of power in Scotland's arts, media, cultural, and sports industries. Structural barriers, such as lack of access to funding, inflexibility of roles, and a lack of consistent, well-paid work, continue disproportionately affecting women's representation and participation in Scotland's creative and cultural sectors.

The negative impact of the media on women and gender equality is profound. Stereotyping of women and an overwhelming lack of gender balance across all media platforms are ubiquitous. In 2020, a UK-wide analysis of print and broadcast news sources showed that 82% of media and creative industry professionals, 86% of government spokespeople, and 92% of sportspeople were men.³ A 2022 study of 67 political articles found that 58% of those quoted directly were white men, 23% white women, and 3% women of colour.⁴ Women of colour are routinely under-represented in Scottish news.⁵

Improving the representation of women and marginalised people is integral to improving cultural outcomes in Scotland, as recognised in the Scottish Government's Culture Strategy for Scotland, which aims to 'Place culture as a central consideration across all

¹ Engender (2023) Engender Parliamentary Briefing: Finance and Public Administration Committee Debate on the Scottish Budget 2023-24. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Engender-Parliamentary-Briefing---Scottish-Budget-2023-24-Scrutiny.pdf>

² Engender (2022) Women & the Cost of Living: A Crisis of Deepening Inequality. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Women-and-the-cost-of-living---updated-copy.pdf>

³ Global Media Monitoring Project (2020) Who makes the news? UK National Report. Available at: <https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GMMP2020-UK-Rol-report-GMMP.pdf>

⁴ Engender (2022) Reading Into the News: A review of gendered representations of politicians in Scottish election coverage in May 2022. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/files/2.-reading-into-the-news.pdf>

⁵ Boyle, House, and Yaqoob (2022) Time to Pass the Mic: Gender and race in Scotland's news. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14648849221128212>

policy areas, including: health and wellbeing, economy, education, reducing inequality and realising a greener and more innovative future.’

Research has found there are several distinct and persistent barriers to diverse women’s employment and progression in the creative and cultural arts:

- **Insecure funding:** The trend of dwindling funding opportunities and the precarity of the job market. Women who work on temporary, part-time, insecure contracts or zero-hours contracts have been propping up the culture sector for many years, with limited support from the industries they work for.⁶
- **Casualisation:** The continued trend of the casualisation of contracts in the arts⁷ and the move towards project-based models of cultural production as a barrier to women’s equality in the sector.⁸ This leads to fewer opportunities for steady, well-paid opportunities and an increase in those (often women) relying on freelance or part-time work. Around 60% of part-time roles in the arts sector are held by women.⁹
- **Caring responsibilities:** Societal expectations of women to assume caring roles are a consistent driver of labour market inequality for women across many different sectors, including in the creative and cultural arts.¹⁰ In a 2017 Creative Scotland survey, almost three times the number of women to men cited care responsibilities as a major barrier to their work in the arts.¹¹
- **Barriers to career progression:** There is a severe lack of women in leadership positions and on boards within the sectors.¹² For example, there are only three female political editors of major newspapers in Scotland, and no women head up our national broadcasters.¹³ In a 2017 survey by Creative Scotland, 44% of women indicated that gender was a barrier to progression compared to only 12% of men.¹⁴ Some also reported specific examples of sexism and discrimination within their workplaces as reasons for not progressing.
- **Culture in workplaces:** Exclusionary practices within the industries are normalised, such as masculine work cultures, inflexible working policies that do not accommodate childcare or other caring responsibilities, and a lack of safety from harassment or other factors.¹⁵
- **Intersecting forms of discrimination:** Evidence also shows that BME women have a severe lack of access to paid job opportunities, consistent, well-paid work,

⁶ Aspinall Priest, R (2023) Blog. Cost of Living Crisis: How are Rising costs affecting women in the arts? Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/news/blog/cost-of-living-crisis-how-are-rising-costs-affecting-women-in-the-arts/>

⁷ Aspinall Priest, R (2023) Blog. Cost of Living Crisis: How are Rising costs affecting women in the arts? Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/news/blog/cost-of-living-crisis-how-are-rising-costs-affecting-women-in-the-arts/>

⁸ Eikhof, D.R., and Warhurst, C. (2013) The promised land? Why social inequalities are systemic in the creative industries, *Employee Relations*, 35(5), 495 – 508. Available at:

https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/19543/1/Eikhof_Warhurst_Employee_Relations.pdf

⁹ Generation Equal (2021) Gender Inequality in the Arts. Available at: <https://www.generationequal.scot/arts-and-creative-industries-what-we-already-know/>

¹⁰ Tuckett, J. (2023) Women in Theatre Survey Update. Available at: <https://womenintheatrelab.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Women-in-Theatre-Survey-Update.pdf>

¹¹ Creative Scotland (2017) Arts and Diversity Survey Summary Report

¹² Voices of Culture (2019) Gender Equality: Gender Balance in the Culture and Creative Sectors. Available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/docs/voices-of-culture/voices-of-culture-brainstorming-report-gender-balance-2019_en.pdf

¹³ Engender (2023) Sex & Power in Scotland 2023. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/SP2023NEW.pdf>

¹⁴ Generation Equal (2021) Gender Inequality in the Arts. Available at: <https://www.generationequal.scot/arts-and-creative-industries-what-we-already-know/>

¹⁵ Engender (2022) The Status Quo of Inequality in Scotland’s Media and Cultural Sectors. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/6.-Gathering-Attitudes-Report.pdf>

and permanent positions in the cultural sector. Intersectional analysis has also revealed that for Black and minority ethnic (BME) women, economic and employment obstacles outweigh all others when trying to maintain a career in the creative and cultural sectors.¹⁶

We broadly support the planned budget increases to the culture portfolio in 2025-26. However, this funding should be prioritised to support cultural organisations in improving working conditions and retaining and hiring female staff and staff from marginalised communities.

Budgetary planning for the culture portfolio must actively address the inequality experienced by women and marginalised people in Scotland when participating in creative and cultural life. A key priority of any budgeted funds for culture in Scotland should consider how funding can actively progress minoritised women's participation in cultural activity, who are even less well represented in the sector's workforce.

We ask that the Committee scrutinise whether an equalities approach has been used effectively to set the budget for the culture portfolio and whether progressing equality within the relevant sectors has been stated as a positive cultural outcome from the budget. This is especially important during the current funding crisis, as we know from our work at the EMCC that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) positions and projects that support women and marginalised communities in the sector are often the first to be cut when finances are challenged.

[Section 3: Progress on Innovative Funding Solutions](#)

Q1. What progress has been made in the last 12 months on taking forward innovative funding solutions?

The EMCC broadly agrees with the Committee that progress in advancing innovative funding solutions has been lacking. We agree on the need for greater urgency and a clear pathway to tangible progress on funding solutions for the culture sector. However, gender budgeting should be kept at the forefront of decision-making and integrated into designing new and innovative funding solutions.

Our research¹⁷ shows that funding regimes, particularly within the creative and cultural sectors, are damaging. Dependence on current forms of funding causes cultural and economic inequality for women and marginalised groups. Systems of necessity, educational prerequisites for filling in forms, fast turnarounds for deadlines, short-termism, and competitive behaviours are all linked to funding models in the industry, which perpetuate intersectional inequalities.

Progressing on improving stability for cultural organisations through 3-year funding settlements would reduce some of the job precarity that disproportionately negatively affects women and those from marginalised communities.

¹⁶ Kenny, M., Liu, S., McKay, F., and Thomson E. (2021) Women's experiences in Scottish media, creative and cultural industries. Available at: <https://emcc.engender.org.uk/publications/7.-i-just-didnt-see-anyone-like-me.pdf>

¹⁷ Engender (2022) The Status Quo of Inequality in Scotland's Media and Cultural Sectors. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/6.-Gathering-Attitudes-Report.pdf>.

As we've pointed out in our answer to Planned Budget Increases, women's economic inequality has deepened in recent years, exacerbated by new barriers to employment and progression in the creative and cultural arts. The prioritisation of budgeted funds should, therefore, consider how funding can place equality of participation in cultural activity front and centre.

[Section 4: Creative Scotland's Multi-Year Funding Programme](#)

Q1. How successful has the process of implementing Creative Scotland's Multi-Year Funding Programme been thus far in delivering longer-term clarity and confidence for the culture sector?

Organisations that successfully gain multi-year funding will feel more secure and able to deliver on EDI initiatives. However, we know that many organisations are awaiting their funding decisions and are unclear about when the announcements will be made this autumn.

The Creative Scotland Multi-Year Funding Programme is an extremely long process of Stage 1 and Stage 2 applications, which take months to assess. The entire funding process takes around a year and has not yet been completed, with organisations that proceeded successfully to Stage 2 still awaiting their funding decisions (due October 2024).

Therefore, implementing this multi-stage funding could not be deemed successful in delivering long-term clarity and confidence for the culture sector so far. However, once the successful organisations receive their multi-year funds in 2025, we hope that it will deliver some measure of clarity and confidence. We are interested in seeing how effective the EDI criteria in the application for the multi-year fund will be in how the funds are distributed and whether this results in improved equality, diversity and inclusion practices for creative and cultural organisations.

[Section 5: Fair Work](#)

Q1. What progress has been made in delivering fair work across the culture sector, and what should be the priorities for further progress?

We know from research that the culture sector has some of the most precarious and unequal working conditions for women, especially minoritised women.¹⁸ Further action is required to deliver fair work for women and marginalised groups across the culture sector.

As stated in answer to the question on Planned Budget Increases, many structural barriers exist to women's equal employment in the culture sector, such as insecure funding, temporary, part-time, insecure and casualised contracts. Societal expectations

¹⁸ Generation Equal (2021) Gender Inequality in the Arts. Available at: <https://www.generationequal.scot/arts-and-creative-industries-what-we-already-know/>

of women to assume caring roles are a consistent driver of labour market inequality for women in the culture sector. There also continue to be active barriers to career progression for women in cultural organisations, with examples of sexism and discrimination within their workplaces given as reasons for not progressing. This links to the prevalence of exclusionary practices within industries which are normalised, such as masculine work cultures, inflexible working policies which do not accommodate childcare or other caring responsibilities and lack of safety from harassment or other factors.¹⁹

Evidence also shows that BME women lack access to paid job opportunities, consistent, well-paid work, and permanent positions in the cultural sector. Intersectional analysis has also revealed that for Black and minority ethnic (BME) women, economic and employment obstacles outweigh all others when trying to maintain a career in the creative and cultural sectors.²⁰

Our Sex and Power²¹ and Diversity at the Top²² figures (from the time of publication in 2023) show how the lack of fair work for women results in a severe underrepresentation of women, especially diverse women, in positions of power in the creative and cultural industries. For example, under 25% of directors of national arts and culture bodies are women in Scotland.

Yet, the 2023 Culture Strategy Action Plan refresh did not adequately consider the severe lack of gender parity in Scotland's arts and cultural industries. As a result, the current Strategy does not contain specific actions addressing the persistent lack of representation of women and diverse voices in positions of power in Scotland's culture sector.

Instead, there is a broader action articulated about increasing 'diversity' in vague terms: 'S2: Work in partnership to increase diversity in the sector, sharing new approaches and codes of practice that ensure skills development and board membership have diversity at their core, including helping recruitment diversity by introducing appropriate remuneration for board members of national culture and heritage public bodies.'

The Culture Strategy Action Plan also links to the existing Scottish Government Fair Work Action Plan 2022 as the strategy which addresses the gender pay gap.²³ This is a further concern as we agree with the position of Scotland's expert policy advocacy organisation working on women's labour market participation, Close the Gap, that the Fair Work Action Plan does not go far enough to address the gender pay gap in Scotland:

"While the narrative in refreshed fair work action plan is more gendered than its first iteration, the current fair work policy framework and supporting tools do not afford

¹⁹ Engender (2022) The Status Quo of Inequality in Scotland's Media and Cultural Sectors. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/6.-Gathering-Attitudes-Report.pdf>.

²⁰ Kenny, M., Liu, S., McKay, F., and Thomson E. (2021) Women's experiences in Scottish media, creative and cultural industries. Available at: <https://emcc.engender.org.uk/publications/7.-i-just-didnt-see-anyone-like-me.pdf>

²¹ Engender (2020) Sex & Power in Scotland 2023. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/Engenders-Sex-and-Power-2020.pdf>

²² The Equal Media and Culture Centre (2023) Diversity at the Top. Available at: <https://emcc.engender.org.uk/publications/mediandiversity.pdf>

²³ Scottish Government (2022) Fair Work action plan: becoming a leading Fair Work nation by 2025. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-action-plan-2022-anti-racist-employment-strategy-2022-equality-impact-assessment/pages/7/>

sufficient attention to women’s divergent experiences of employment including the wide-ranging causes of the pay gap.

The action plan also commits to an intersectional approach in implementation but there is no information on how this will be operationalised. The current policy framework is therefore unlikely to promote transformational change for women, especially women from marginalised communities, or to enable employers to operationalise fair work for women.”²⁴

The National Partnership for Culture Workshop on Fair Work has proposed that diversity of boards should be made a condition of funding²⁵ and this should be a priority for further progress. Our research shows that **male-dominated leadership** and **precarity of positions** are the main barriers to women’s participation in the media, creative and cultural industries²⁶ and these should be considered as priorities for further progress.

We ask the committee to ensure priorities for Fair Work in the culture sector recognise and actively address the intersectional gender inequality entrenched in Scotland’s culture sector. This must include gender budgeting and a gender and equalities approach being used when the Culture Fair Work Taskforce makes recommendations on priority actions. We would be happy to discuss this with the Committee and Taskforce members in more detail.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact us:

Sharon Holland, Communications and Engagement Officer

Sharon.holland@engender.org.uk

About us:

The [Equal Media & Culture Centre for Scotland](#) (EMCC) launched in September 2023 and is housed within the feminist equality, policy and advocacy charity [Engender](#). The EMCC arose from a recommendation by the National Advisory Council for Women and Girls stating that Scotland should have its own Women in Media body. We develop research, monitor media and advocate for women’s equality in the cultural, media and sports sectors in Scotland.

Engender is Scotland’s feminist policy and advocacy organisation, working to secure women’s political, economic and social equality with men. Our aspiration is for a Scotland where women and men have equal access to and enjoyment of rights, resources, decision-making and safety.

²⁴ Close the Gap (2023). Close the Gap briefing for Scottish Government Debate – Fair work in a wellbeing economy November 2023. Available at: <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-briefing-for-Scottish-Government-Debate---Fair-work-in-a-wellbeing-economy-Nov-2023.pdf>

²⁵ National Partnership for Culture: Workshop 2 – culture and fair work information paper (2022) Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-partnership-for-culture-workshop-2-culture-and-fair-work-information-paper/>

²⁶ Kenny, M., Liu, S., McKay, F., and Thomson E. (2021) Women’s experiences in Scottish media, creative and cultural industries. Available at: <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/7.-I-Just-Didnt-SeeAnyone-Like-Me.pdf>.