

# **First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Vision**

1. The First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls vision is of a Scotland which is recognised as a world leader, for its commitment and action towards realising an equal society where all women and girls can reach their true potential.

### **Background**

2. The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2016-17: [A Plan for Scotland](#) included a pledge to establish a First Minister's Advisory Council for Women and Girls to help drive forward action to tackle gender inequality.

3. In March 2017, the First Minister appointed Louise Macdonald OBE, Chief Executive of Young Scot, as independent Chair of the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (the Council).

### **Membership**

4. Members of the Council will be passionate about tackling gender inequality and will be drawn from a range of disciplines. All core members of the Council will be women and girls aged 15+. Other people will be encouraged to participate in the Council's work through the 'Circle' and 'Community' (see below).

### **Role of the Council**

5. The role of the Council is to:

- Play a key leadership role in raising our awareness as a nation of gender inequality and the wide range of related issues experienced by women and girls in Scotland today;
- Act as a champion for positive progress and policies where these are making a meaningful difference to women and girls' lives; and encouraging Scotland to build on any success to become a beacon for gender equality;
- Act as a catalyst for change by providing a challenging voice to the First Minister and her team, where there are gaps in the work being undertaken to address gender inequality or where progress is not effecting real change;
- Provide advice, support, and challenge to the First Minister with the objective of realising the shared goal of equality for women and girls in every community across Scotland.

6. The Council is not a working group; a review body or a delivery agent. However, in fulfilling its role as above (5) it will seek to positively influence policy and decision making and service delivery across sectors.

7. The Council will be responsible for setting its own agenda and business, including the topics it wishes to cover, based on available evidence about women and girl's equality in Scotland and beyond – drawn from primary and secondary research and insight from communities and stakeholders. The Council will be able to request the collection or commissioning of new data and analysis in discussion with the secretariat (see below).

### **Length of Appointment**

8. It is anticipated that the first term of the Council will be three years, at which point there will be a review of effectiveness and the model carried out by the First Minister.

9. Members shall be invited to serve for a minimum of three years from the date of the first meeting of the Council. There is no maximum length of appointment.

10. Members can end their membership of the Council at any time, in writing to the Chair of the Council and the Scottish Government secretariat.

11. The Chair can end a Member's appointment at any time and for any reason, in writing to the Member. In doing so, the Chair will clearly set out the reason/s for ending the Member's appointment.

### **Frequency of Meetings**

12. The Council will meet three times per year. It is anticipated that alongside each meeting, the Council will undertake a related visit or engagement, usually topic focussed.

13. Members are requested to attend the first meeting and a further one meeting per year in person. Members may participate in other meetings remotely if possible.

14. It is anticipated that the Council will correspond between meetings and members are likely to be invited to participate in other ad-hoc engagements and events if they wish – however, there is no formal expectation for members to “represent” the Council or attend any events out with the main sessions.

## **Stakeholder and Digital Engagement**

15. There is an ambition to grow a circle of supportive allies to complement the Council, as well as establish a mechanism for community engagement. These are currently being described as the “Circle” and the “Community.”

16. The Circle will be comprised of invited stakeholders – representative of issues and lived experience. This will include people of all genders, including men and boys and those who identify as women, as well as non-binary people.

17. The Circle will be asked to offer insight and evidence, as well as act as public “champions” for gender equality (similar to the #HeForShe model but broader). Members of the Circle will not sit on the Council but will be encouraged to participate in events and face to face engagement, as well as the digital platform (below) by contributing blogs and opinion pieces etc.

18. Digital engagement will be a key feature of the Council’s activity, helping to ensure that the momentum between formal Council meetings is maintained, and its reach amplified.

19. The “Community” will be the digital platform for the Council – an online space where stakeholders, groups and communities can connect with the work of the Council.

20. Council members will be able to contribute to the development of the digital engagement strategy, but initial ideas include:

- Practical information about the Advisory Council; it’s work and membership.
- Monthly conversation topics formulated around commissioned provocation articles, blogs, essays and films. Each will be accompanied by a set of questions that can be used by any group themselves to spark a conversation about the issue – with a feedback mechanism so they can tell us what they think.
- This will allow insight to be gathered and an archive of views and ideas to be curated.

## **“Decision Making”**

21. As outlined above, the role of the Council is Advisory – it is not a decision-making or policy-setting group. It has no statutory powers but will instead focus on evidence, expertise and influence to generate change.

22. Evidence and insight will be gathered and our discussions recorded. This will lead to challenges and recommendations for action, based on the experience and expertise of the Members. These will be shared with the First Minister and publicly available on the Community platform – offering the opportunity for stakeholders and others to use them to take action and campaign for change.

### **Secretariat**

23. The Scottish Government will provide secretariat to the Council and other administrative, analytical, digital and communications support as required.

### **Role of the Chair**

24. The Independent Chair of the Council is responsible for leading meetings of the Council and for setting the strategic direction and business of the Council in discussion with Members and the First Minister.

25. The Council will formally report directly to the First Minister through the Chair (see below).

### **Transparency**

26. Minutes and papers of the Council will be published on the Scottish Government website as well as the Council Community platform.

### **Remuneration**

27. Members will not receive a fee – this is a voluntary role - but will be reimbursed for travel and accommodation expenses incurred in attending meetings of the Advisory Council and other ad-hoc events or engagements associated with the Advisory Council. Additional costs, including childcare and carer costs will be reimbursed by agreement. All expenses will be reimbursed in line with Scottish Government Travel and Subsistence policy.

### **Annual Report**

28. The Council will prepare an annual insight and impact report, submitted to the First Minister, summarising its work over the preceding year and advising on suggested action that Scotland should undertake in seeking to become a leader in gender equality.