First Minister’s National Advisory Council on Women and Girls

Next Steps Report 2021
Our Manifesto

For generations, our history has been written by one gender.

One perspective, one vision, one half of the population.

Half of history is missing.

For years, we’ve been striving for change.

But now is the time to change for good.

To design a future where gender inequality is a historical curiosity.

With the voice of everyone we want to create a Scotland where we’re all equal – with an equal future.

Together, we are generation equal.

#GenerationEqual
The NACWG Council Members

Independently Co-Chaired by Louise Macdonald OBE, CEO of national youth information charity Young Scot, and Dr Ima Jackson, Senior Lecturer at Glasgow Caledonian University, the NACWG has 17 members aged 18-plus. All members are passionate about tackling gender inequality and are drawn from a range of disciplines. Due to COVID-19 the NACWG have mainly met virtually this year.

Amina Ahmed, Scottish Government Fairer Future Codesign Panel
Kara Brown, CEO, Tiny Changes
Tressa Burke, CEO, Glasgow Disability Alliance

Catherine Calderwood, MA Cantab. MBChB FRCOG FRCP Edin, NHS Lothian
Revati Campbell, Convener, Scottish Youth Parliament’s Equalities and Human Rights Committee
Sharon Edwards, Chair Women’s Committee, STUC

Vicky Featherstone, Artistic Director, London’s Royal Court Theatre
Jacqui Ferguson, Non-Executive Director, Wood Group PLC, Tesco Bank and Croda PLC
Dame Anne Glover, President, Royal Society of Edinburgh

Dame Katherine Grainger, Chair, UK Women in Sport
Katie Horsburgh, Volunteer Advocate, Girlguiding Scotland
Dr Ima Jackson, Independent Co-Chair

Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws, QC
Louise Macdonald OBE, Independent Co-Chair
Satwat Rehman, CEO, One Parent Families Scotland

Emma Ritch, Executive Director, Engender
Talat Yaqoob, Independent Consultant on equality and inclusion and Chair of Women 50:50
Co-Chair Foreword

“I STAND ON THE SACRIFICES OF A MILLION WOMEN BEFORE ME, THINKING; WHAT CAN I DO, TO MAKE THIS MOUNTAIN TALLER SO THE WOMEN AFTER ME CAN SEE FARTHER?”

Rupi Kaur, Canadian Poet

And never has that need to accelerate been more clearly demonstrated over this past year. The Covid-19 pandemic has allowed everyone to not just see, but experience, the ripple effects of gender inequality. It has brutally exposed the need for urgent action on persistent gender equality and the social and economic inequalities experienced by women and girls who are intersectionally marginalised.

What the pandemic has also exposed is the systemic inequalities in core services and in local, national and global level mechanisms. There has been significant positively disruptive innovations in decision-making during this pandemic year - but still we cannot ignore that we have seen people continue to be marginalised because of their gender, disability or because they are racialised as a result of how systems are designed and function. There are too few examples where they have been centred from the outset – and that tells its own story.

The way to drive change is by engaging with those who have the lived experience of inequality, injustice and oppression. We have firm foundations in Scotland, with modern, progressive politics and a Parliament that continues to deliver world-leading legislation – the foundations exist to turn this learning from the pandemic into evidence-led public discourse and policy which will improve the lives of women and girls and all people, regardless of their gender identity.
In this report we have laid out the rationale for developing a model which sees us move into an accountability and scrutiny role for a further three years to push forward the implementation of the systemic changes required to tackle gender inequality in Scotland. We have been clear from inception that we didn’t anticipate continuing our current model indefinitely and, given the scope of the NACWG’s recommendations to date, we are now of the view that the repeated annual submission of further recommendations at this level would be unhelpful, without taking time to take stock and allow them to be implemented and the consequences analysed. The system needs time to adapt – especially if wholly inclusive intersectional gender mainstreaming is to remain the end goal for Scotland.

For the next phase, we propose building on and upscaling existing accountability practices to assess the progress of the implementation of the recommendations and ensure these are taken forward as intended. We are not advocating for the next iteration of the NACWG to become “part of the system”. Instead, our aim would be to have a degree of independent oversight of implementation and assess impact so that at the end of this period there is a clear understanding of the successes, any unintended consequences, and whether further work is required.

Our focus on system change has been about recognising the need to deal with both the consequences of gender inequality, but also broaden that focus to look at the systems that lead to those consequences and such poor outcomes. Our three sets of recommendations must be taken together as a package.

All of them are mutually reinforcing in reforming, enhancing or re-engineering the system. We caution strongly against any approach which implements only one or two in a disjointed way, losing sight of the vision.

We are proud of what we have achieved – but that pride is matched with a certainty there is much more to do to realise the transformational impact our recommendations could deliver, and a belief that through collective will, effective collaboration and shared ambition gender inequality CAN become a historical curiosity in Scotland.

For both of us as Co-Chairs we wish to formally and wholeheartedly pay tribute to our fellow members of the Advisory Council. It has been a huge honour to be alongside each of you. Fighting for equality is the fight to be in. The foresight of the First Minister to establish this Council was a significant step in itself for Scotland. It feels as though this is a moment of global societal change, with many threats to equality. To have been part of creating mechanisms during this time of chaos, risk and societal upheaval has allowed us to focus on, share and create hope. We hold to that hope as we move into this next stage of #GenerationEqual

Dr Ima Jackson | Louise Macdonald OBE
Co-Chairs | March 2021
Introduction

The First Minister’s National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) was established in 2017 – the Chair at that time Louise Macdonald was announced in March and the other members later that November. The Co-Chair Dr Ima Jackson joined the NACWG in January 2020 following an approach to the First Minister from Louise Macdonald who wished to evolve the role.

Below is an extract from our Terms of Reference and a link to the full version:

1. 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.

2. 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.

NACWG Terms of Reference

We held our first NACWG and Circle meetings on 6 December 2017 and the First Minister joined us for part of the day. We invited cross sector stakeholders to this Circle session and asked what value we could add to this space, in the context of all the excellent work already being taken forward in Scotland by women’s organisations and equalities groups to help advance gender equality. We made it clear that we didn’t want to duplicate and we wanted to add value at a strategic level. The outputs and feedback from the first Circle session helped us to create our 2018-21 Strategy and our model focussed on systemic change, outlined our approach to working with our Circle of allies on annual topics and how we would report on these to the First Minister. It also addressed public awareness and the need to try to involve those beyond the usual conversation, resulting in us also developing a digital engagement strategy.

This report gives a retrospective overview of this initial three year strategy, outlining what we think our successes have been, our challenges and what we believe could happen next, for the First Minister to consider.
NACWG Strategy 2018 – 2021

The NACWG has been clear from the start that we didn’t anticipate continuing with our current model indefinitely. The First Minister asked the NACWG to be bold and to challenge the government and public services, the private sector, and the public, where challenge was needed.

We have worked with our Circle to explore three topics, which should be viewed as a set, in a Scottish context and we believe we have produced a package that if taken forward collectively with focus and energy, will help to kick start and deliver tangible systemic change. At the time of publishing, all recommendations from the first two of the NACWG reports have been accepted, even those few UK matters in principle, and we are waiting for a response to our recently published third report.

Given the scope of our recommendations we believe that the repeated annual submission of further recommendations at this level is unhelpful, without taking time to take stock and allow them to be implemented and the consequences analysed. The system needs time to adapt – especially if wholly inclusive intersectional gender mainstreaming is the end goal.

As we reach the end of our third year of operation we are only just seeing the recommendations from our 2018 report being implemented, albeit due to some stalling due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is for good reason though. The ambition and intention behind those recommendations has been carefully thought through, scoped out and planned for, and all of this quite rightly takes time. We didn’t recommend quick fixes or tweaks, but systemic change and we thoroughly understand that care needs to be taken and careful attention paid to implementation.

Ultimately the decision around the ambition and direction of travel for this work going forward sits with the First Minister, and then for whatever evolves as the successor to the first NACWG to work on the detail. We do however have a lot of learning and experience to pass onto the next phase and from our perspective at this moment, we can see a clear and organic trajectory for this work.
What did we do in those first three years?

When we asked questions of our Circle at that first meeting, we heard about issues, observations, and barriers that exist in Scotland preventing gender equality, as well as their thoughts on what difference we could make/what value we could add to this space. We sought out lived experience from the outset from everyone who attended and from those they worked with and in some cases represented. We aimed to listen, reflect, analyse and better understand the nature of gender inequality, in order that we would therefore come up with the right solutions, actions and recommendations to tackle it. The scale and volume of issues was significant and varied. This process helped us to establish our systemic change focus, and our approach to annual topics which reflected the issues raised. We wished to ensure we added value, did not duplicate or get in the way of good work already in progress, and that we brought additional energy and focus to the issues.

The plan to explore these issues at a systemic level via annual topics was shared with and agreed by the Circle.

2018: Attitudes and Culture Change

2019: Policy Coherence

2020: Creating an Intersectional Gender Architecture

We consulted our Circle over the years on these topics, as well as our gender competent stakeholders. We also reached out to business and targeted other communities – especially those who are more marginalised - where we didn’t see representation which reflected the demographics of our country. In participatory events of various sizes we explored our topics. We also enabled digital access to this work, for those who couldn’t travel to us. With the help of over 1300 Circle members, as well as those we consulted beyond our Circle membership, we created a strong package of recommendations to tackle, at a systemic level, the issues that had been identified to us.

As well as working with our Circle on our annual topics we engaged more widely across Scotland, attending and speaking at events to talk about the work of the NACWG. We also used our influence to approach others and discuss gender equality, enquiring how development was being considered through an intersectional gender lens, to try and ensure gender was being considered with important pieces of work, where we didn’t necessarily see it. We used our digital strategy to engage with those not usually involved in the conversation – an aspect we believe is very important to the overall objective of achieving better gender equality in Scotland. The general public needs to understand the issue and its consequences better, as well as the benefits of a more equal society for all, so that the value can be better understood and we see some real behaviour changes.
The Potential Power of Our Recommendations

The focus of the Advisory Council is systemic change – how to tackle the root causes of gender inequality that harm every single citizen of Scotland.

Our initial 3-year strategy was a package of actions to help to kick start systemic change to enable more gender equality. Attitudes and culture change can happen, if supported by policies, systems and structures.

We've already created change – all recommendations from our first two reports have been accepted – even those Reserved matters, in principle – and action is being taken. We are waiting to hear about the response to our latest report.

On the following pages, we have presented our recommendations in the clusters of our main cross-cutting themes: Leadership, Accountability and Creating Conditions to help to demonstrate what we believe is the collective power within these recommendations.
LEADERSHIP

Create a *What Works?* Institute to develop and test robust, evidence-led inclusive and representative approaches to changing public attitudes in Scotland to girls and women’s equality and rights.

Legislate for local and national candidate quotas for all parties by the 2021 election.

We call for Scottish Government to advocate for the full devolution of equality legislation and policy-making to the Scottish Parliament.

Creating a culture of gender equality policy-making in the Scottish Government:

- The creation of a standalone Equalities Directorate along with the establishment of “Centres of Expertise” created in all Scottish Government Directorates, on intersectional gender competence.
- The creation of a senior officials and leaders group.
- The creation of “Policy-makers National Standards” to support quality standards and accountability on intersectional gender competence in policymaking, with a requirement that all policy and analytical staff will adhere to it.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Improve access to justice for women and girls experiencing men’s violence by:

- Creating a world-leading process for complainers of sexual violence.
- Criminalise serious misogynistic harassment, filling gaps in existing laws.
- Create a consistent and inclusive model to ensure that women experiencing domestic abuse have sufficient access to expert legal advice and legal aid.

Scrutiny of gender competent policy-making:

- We recommend Scottish Ministers deliver an Annual Statement, followed by a debate, on Gender Policy Coherence to the Scottish Parliament.

Create a resourced media body in Scotland to hold the media to account and provide guidance on gender equality.
Creating Conditions

Create a Commission on Gender Equality in Education and Learning, covering Early Years, Primary and Secondary Education and Learning, tasked with providing bold and far-reaching recommendations on how gender equality can be embedded in all aspects of learning (from teacher training, to school behaviours/cultures, to the curriculum and CLD practice).

People powered policy-making:

> The Scottish Government, Local Government and Public Bodies should build on existing work already underway (Scottish Approach to Service Design) to create a genuine effort in co-production of policy-making with evidence of lived experience at its heart.
> Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission consider producing a set of scrutiny principles to support this methodology/approach for public bodies, similar to their recent “Principles for Community Empowerment”, (linked to the Policy-makers National Standards).
> We recommend adequate resourcing to enable the collection and analysis of robust intersectional data.

Provide 50 hours per week of funded, good quality and flexible education and childcare for all children between six months and five years old.

We call on the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) to appoint a Commissioner tasked specifically with promotion and protection of Women’s Rights. This Commissioner would lead work to realise rights for all women and girls as set out in CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention and other international instruments.

Embed gender sensitive approaches in all work relating to programmes developed through the new Scottish Government ‘Scottish Approach to Service Design’ model.

Create a ‘Gender Beacon Collaborative’ – made up of Scottish Government, a Local Authority, a public body, a third sector agency and a business to take a holistic and systemic approach to gender equality and work.

We also call for the expansion of the mandate of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, with sufficient resourcing, to allow it to take on cases on behalf of individuals.

We call for the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) to appoint a Commissioner tasked specifically with promotion and protection of Women’s Rights. This Commissioner would lead work to realise rights for all women and girls as set out in CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention and other international instruments.

Create two ‘Daddy months’ of use-it-or-lose-it paid paternity leave in Scotland, using existing and additional powers transferred by UK Government.

We call for an Equality Focused Review Body to be established in the Scottish Parliament.

(we did write to the Parliament about this and received a response warmly welcoming the recommendation and advising that this is something for the next Parliament to consider)

We call on the Scottish Government as part of the current review of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) regulations in Scotland to place additional specific duties on listed Public Bodies to:

> Gather and use intersectional data, including employment and service-user data, to advance equality between protected groups, including men and women;
> Integrate intersectional gender budget analysis into their budget setting procedures.
Challenges and Learning

Before we move onto discuss our suggestions for this work moving forward it is important to discuss the challenges we observed and key learning points we experienced together as a NACWG over the past three years.

During our time together as an Advisory Council we have seen the dialogue around equality become polarised and often cruel. This has at times resulted in conversations in this space with women and girls and all people, regardless of their gender, becoming challenging at best and unsafe at worst, and risks a loss of focus on tackling systemic issues and the poor outcomes experienced by too many as a result of gender inequality.

Language
To encapsulate the focus of our work in 2020 in particular, we adopted the descriptor of “Intersectional Gender Architecture” – a phrase recognised in the rights sector. It is worth reflecting on why we chose it. “Intersectional gender” was chosen to highlight in our work how identities intersect within gender (and not as was sometimes suggested that gender is always intersectional so this is an unnecessary clarification). We have always sought to acknowledge the genesis and ownership of this term by the Black women’s rights movement and recognise that is the theory we are drawing from. “Architecture” was chosen to highlight how the framework to address gendered inequality has to become embedded in institutions, laws, regulations and systems of a country – the “architecture” that surrounds it.

Although it has been criticised for being cumbersome – we recognise that “intersectional gender architecture” is not an easy entry point in terms of language – we did want to ensure that we were disciplined in our focus for this year. It also illustrates some interesting learning around the entire language around equality issues that we observed along the way in that accessible language is crucial, but can also be used as a “proxy” by some to make judgements about whether to move past challenging language and engage more fully in a spirit of learning and curiosity.

Participation
We really wanted to ensure an inclusive and intersectional approach which included women and girls and all people, regardless of their gender identity, background or life experience. We firmly believe that gender equality can only be achieved through an intersectional approach: this enabled diverse voices and lived experience to be at the heart of our work to build solutions and recommendations. We feel it was important to the overall success of the project to hear from everyone with a stake in achieving gender equality.

However, over time the visual participation at Circle events became mainly women, albeit diverse women (we also had a digital channel to engage with our annual topics). This may or may not have contributed to the drop off of men attending in-person events. We believe that further thought needs to go into ensuring all people, regardless of their gender, feel as though they have a place at the table when it comes to tackling gender inequality.
Lived Experience versus Research

There is abundant academic research about women’s inequality full of compelling statistics and evidence, carried out by various institutes and organisations. We sought to supplement this and involve the very people affected by the inequality, in coming up with solutions to tackle this inequality. This empowering approach was embedded from the outset when we discovered a lack of some representation at the Circle events, for example from disabled or younger people. Lived experience was targeted through expert networks and organisations to build our knowledge and understanding of this lived experience. This was vital to enable a proper understanding of the issue of gender inequality, the correct analysis and the most powerful and effective solutions to tackle it.

Relationships and trust with women and participants were built over the 3 years and lived experience was shared including the barriers and issues - what doesn’t work, what actually does work and how we can build on this towards change. Real life experience mattered during these 3 years and working with women and their organisations allowed us to hear their voices, understand intersecting barriers and work together to figure out the solutions. By shifting our own understanding, we modelled shifting the power - even of the NACWG itself. We corrected our own assumptions and misunderstandings and accepted that women themselves are the experts and know what works, what doesn’t and what needs to change.

By taking this inclusive approach we learned that extremely disadvantaged women who face multiple barriers to having their voices heard - like disabled women - required specific and targeted approaches and support to participate. As such we worked alongside grassroots organisations who were well placed to provide support by reducing barriers, providing access and capacity building for those involved.
NACWG Operational Observations

NACWG Accountability Days
To strengthen accountability within our own model we introduced an annual Accountability Day, to formally hold the Scottish Government to account over our recommendation development and implementation and to ensure that we kept a formal accountability process on this work as a whole. Our 2020 Report also includes recommendations directed to the Parliament and therefore further consideration on managing accountability will be required, if those recommendations are accepted, for the next phase of this work. There is lots of learning from this initial stage to pass on to the next one.

The Circle
It was challenging at times to get Circle members to focus on systemic problems and systemic solutions because their focus was often on dealing with and trying to mitigate against the outcomes of the issues caused by the system. This made complete sense, as many of the organisations and individuals represented were at the harsh end of policy, living the effects of poorly designed systems every single day. In fact, their focus on these issues evidences the need for deeper, systemic change which tackles these root causes which perpetuate inequality.

The tension between dealing with and living through gendered inequity whilst also trying to support the systemic work is challenging to navigate. The potential for funded online engagement in future NACWG work in order to make this happen will become increasingly important within our future strategy and is discussed in more detail below.

We also had to work hard to move the conversation beyond existing networks... and “usual suspects” - and make effort to access wider opinion. We did this in the form of roundtables and specific targeted engagement, such as the Youth Circle activity. We believe that more work is required to ensure that wider communities are engaging with our overarching objectives.

Our Circle of just over 1300 members have a wealth of life and service experience, and a range of gender competence – from those with high levels to those who understood they need to do more and want to understand things better. We believe that attitudes and culture change play a large part in achieving gender equality and that the general public – as well as those with a high degree of gender competence – play an important part in achieving this outcome.

It has been an absolute pleasure to work with the Circle but sometimes they were rightly frustrated by our focus on systemic change and our work and outputs didn't feel tangible enough to them at times. It is vital that everyone understands the process and approaches required to affect longer term systemic changes that will help generations to come, and the power that everyone has to help this change. Each small step that Circle members and their organisations take will cumulatively help to embed the change in the longer term. Consideration of how to help the current and future Circle members to not only understand the complexity and intricacy of the issue of gender inequality, but also system theory needs further attention.

We believe maintaining the momentum of this engagement with the Circle is key to the work of the next phase of the NACWG.
**Young People**

Whilst young people were always welcome at the main Circle meetings, we found that teenagers and younger adults were underrepresented. Therefore, we established the Youth Circle to gather views from girls, boys, young women, young men, and trans and non-binary young people. There was much to be learnt from this process in terms of how to engage with young people in discussions about systems and policy. We found that creative methods allowed young people to talk in a way that was fun and engaging, and to express themselves in a medium that suited them rather than focusing on what would be ‘easiest’ for us to analyse. We also found that giving young people time to sink into a topic was essential; our results were infinitely more useful when our investigations were preceded by time for learning about the topic and getting to know each other.

Finally, our work with young people had intrinsic as well as instrumental value: a large majority of them talked about how much they enjoyed our various projects, how much they’d learnt, and how powerful it was to be listened to as a young person by those who have a direct line to the top of Government.

**Digital Strategy**

Our digital strategy over the years has been incredibly successful, helping us to reach out and engage with those that we might not usually engage with – widening the conversation – and in many cases recruiting Circle members along the way. We know that attitudes and culture change is key to realising gender equality and that broadening and normalising this conversation where it might not usually happen, is a crucial step in doing that.

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**We have concentrated on identifying the key aspects of systemic change needed throughout all of this first phase, not delivery. We have worked hard to “add value” to this space by not encroaching on existing work and by focussing on the root causes gender inequality.**

**What we have delivered is a strong set of recommendations that we believe, if taken forward as a package, will help to kick start the systemic change required in the right direction. Even so, we are not saying that this work is complete and the following section outlines what we believe the next phase of NACWG should focus on, based on all our learning over the past three years.**
NACWG Phase Two

We believe that the next iteration of the NACWG needs to develop a model which sees it primarily moving into an Accountability and Scrutiny Role for a further three years. We are not advocating for the next iteration of the NACWG to become “part of the system” – our value has been to act as a disruptor and we feel that spirit should be maintained. The aim would be to closely monitor recommendation implementation and during that time to assess impact, so that at the end of this three year scrutiny period, there is a clear understanding of the successes, any unintended consequences, what hasn’t worked and why, and whether any further work is required.

We would advise this next phase to consider our experience and feedback to date with our Accountability Days and work on improving and upscaling that when considering the core recommendation scrutiny. As part of this we also advise using this next phase to assess whether the ambitions and intent of the recommendations have been taken forward as the first phase intended, or if interpretation and logistics have meant they have fallen short. We would expect after a further three years to see all of 2018 and 2019 recommendations being implemented and good progress on the recommendations from those accepted in the 2020 report. We would also advise the next phase to consider whether further research and evaluation is needed to help to monitor progress and define success.

As an addition to a scrutiny function, we also believe that the First Minister and the Cabinet and Scottish Government Director Generals would benefit from an independent ‘sounding board’ to offer a routine and competent gender lens advisory function. Initial thoughts are that the NACWG and relevant experts could periodically meet with the Scottish Government Director Generals and Cabinet, plus the First Minister, to offer reflections on policy development and/or wider issues that we believe would be beneficial to discuss. We see this as a two way benefit and one which is perhaps a little closer to the President Obama administration Advisory Council, but one which could prove to be helpful to also discuss gender issues that are wider than policy and legislation, as they crop up.

One other aspect to develop, is how the next phase of the NACWG aligns with or ties to our recommendation in our 2020 report for an independent Equality Focussed Review Body within the Scottish Parliament, should this be accepted. We would propose that further engagement should take place with the Scottish Parliament Presiding Officer and Corporate Body after the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021.

The Circle is our next key consideration: currently just standing over 1300, this has proven to be a committed and motivated group. We believe the next phase should consider how they can help members turn their pledges to #GenerationEqual into commitments and recruit more to do the same. This would broaden the community of people and organisations taking positive action in communities to help progress gender equality. An engagement strategy that ensures members are kept updated with the developments of the next phase and the difference being made is recommended, as well as directing them towards other information and ways to stay actively involved in the wider issue, which could also be linked to NACWG Spotlights.
We also believe it is important that our public awareness work continues and to consider the work we have taken forward to improve on Spotlight topics by extending them to quarterly and by providing more input with webinars/podcasts – the majority of which should be linking to content already created. This would provide a rich source of material for both the Circle and the general public and help with the ambition to widen the conversation and bring those into it that might not necessarily do so.

We have not addressed in detail how we consider the next phase of the NACWG might progress developing a participation strand. Participation and co-design is evolving in Scotland - we made a recommendation in our 2018 Report and Recommendations on how the Scottish Approach to Service Design should become more gender-competent. **If this recommendation is implemented, then issues around gender equality should be a factor in every piece of co-design undertaken by Scottish Government.** Many other recommendations, as a combined force, will also have a profound impact on participation and gender-competent policy making.

Therefore, we believe further discussion is required – once the remit of the next evolution of the NACWG is clear – to discuss what an appropriate mechanism and model might be for participation in work that is focussed on accountability and scrutiny. We believe there is a significant opportunity to reflect this in the membership and representation of the future NACWG.
Conclusion

We have always understood that continuing with the model of the initial three year strategy was not one we wished to propose for this work going forward, as working on systemic change requires time for any recommendations to bed in. The first iteration of the NACWG has delivered a strong package of recommendations and we believe the subsequent phase should focus on the scrutiny of the development of these recommendations, and assessing the impact. Current and future individual members of the NACWG will be involved in the development of the recommendations where their expertise fits via their own organisations and networks, but this moment requires a refresh of the membership of whatever comes next.

Looking at the wider evolution of the NACWG, what we are proposing would mean three years of recommendations followed by three years of scrutiny and assessing the success of the implementation of those recommendations; continued engagement with a Circle committed to these issues; more public awareness building with those not necessarily engaged; and a more informed assessment of impact and any further action required, based on reflection of the six year period.

Every member of the initial First Minister’s Advisory Council on Women and Girls has considered it a privilege and an honour to be part of this work. We are proud of what we have achieved – but that pride is matched with a certainty there is much more to do to realise the ambitions of our recommendations, and a belief that through collective will, wit and wisdom, gender inequality CAN become a historical curiosity in Scotland.

NACWG
March 2021
Acknowledgements

As we conclude our programme of work we wish to acknowledge once again the women’s organisations, community networks, specialist individuals, Government and its officials who despite the enormous pressures many people have found themselves in within this moment, have continued to support the work of the NACWG. We also want to extend our profound thanks to everyone who has supported the work of the Advisory Council over the past three years – from our first steps to now, we have benefitted hugely from the deep insight and wise counsel of women’s organisations; grassroots community organisations; networks; business leaders; third sector providers and public bodies. Those working across all spheres of Government have been generous with their time and open to challenge, with a shared commitment to improve the lives of all women and girls across Scotland.

Finally, we wish to record our gratitude to all the women and girls who have given so much during this year of such tragedy due to the pandemic and been part of the fabric of our response as a nation. Those who are unpaid carers; who are working in supermarkets and essential services; in care homes; in our NHS, emergency services and social care; our teachers, early years and youth workers; activists and people whose creative expression have given us moments of sustenance and hope – we see you and all you do every day.

We would like to open this section of acknowledgements with a huge thank you to the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, for your ambitious commitment to gender equality and for entrusting us with this vital work. We have provided you with a package of recommendations that we are proud of and we hope we’ve met your ambition for this work.

To the Minister for Older People and Equalities, Christine McKelvie MSP, who has been tasked by the First Minister to oversee implementation of our recommendations. We have no doubt that your involvement will ensure these recommendations are delivered with the intended ambition.

To our Circle members who have inspired and worked with us to deliver our package of recommendations – your insight, lived experience and powerful testimony has shaped this work every step of the way. We also want to acknowledge our appreciation of Circle members who took forward Wee Circles with their organisations or networks, collating broader evidence and spreading the word wider, and ultimately helping to normalise the conversation of the often complex topic of gender inequality. A huge thank you to Circle members and to everyone who contributed to our Circle events, including all our speakers who inspired and challenged us; performers who helped to share stories through different mediums; to our wonderful facilitators who provided us with their professionalism and skills during our discussions; and to our illustrator in residence, Linda Hunter, who captured our in-person events in an incredible and visual way. You all collectively contributed to the success of the Circle events and motivated us all to do more.
To those others who have fed into this initial three year strategy: the wealth of experience that was collated during our roundtable events was invaluable; to Selina Stephen who helped us focus on the system itself with the development of Driver Diagrams; to Lou Brodie who has helped us to explore our topics with younger people, making our strategy accessible to them; to Disability Equality Scotland, for producing our Easy Read reports; and to our BSL interpreters who signed on our videos and also attended our Jan 2021 Circle event.

Thanks also to everyone who has contributed content to our Spotlight sessions and the digital platform – from background research to provocation pieces and case studies from communities across Scotland. Your stories of cross-sector collaborations demonstrate the art of the possible when people come together and act as beacons for the future.

And finally to our Secretariat Team who have delivered high quality project management, including delivery of our wider digital strategy and provided us with professionalism and dedication throughout this initial three year strategy.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of you for working with us over this initial three year strategy. We truly couldn’t have done this without you and together we are #GenerationEqual.