

# Annex 6: Recommendations

## Introduction

We would like to know how the Government are *“taking action in key areas where there are persistent inequalities compared to the experiences of men”*, as stated in their report, when many policies are disproportionately impacting on women?

### Article 1 - Overarching approach to the elimination of discrimination

- Remove reservation to Article 1
- Develop a national CEDAW Action Plan and report on this in one year
- CEDAW should be compulsorily taught in schools along with other international human rights mechanisms and domestic human rights legislation so that the population understand their rights and how to access them

### Article 2 - Legislative approach to obligations to eliminate discrimination

- Review the decision not to implement the dual discrimination section of the Equality Act 2010
- Carry out a gender equality impact assessment of the programme of public funding cuts
- There need to be authoritative sources of advice and support for government departments on equality impact analysis and a common model of analysis to predict the likely equality effects of policy should be developed
- We call upon the Government to improve its capacity to conduct gender impact assessments; and to go beyond piecemeal analysis of each measure, and assess economic strategy as a whole from a gender equality perspective
- Gender responsive budgeting should be mandatory for all national and local Government departments and public bodies
- There should be a single point of government responsible for monitoring and assessing the cumulative impact of future Spending Reviews and Budgets alongside independent and authoritative equality analysis of public spending
- There should be a comprehensive review of discriminatory legislation and a plan developed for legal reform to include the possibility of direct incorporation of CEDAW into domestic legislation

### Article 3 - The development and advancement of women

- The Government must encourage alternative models to be resourced for an independent, collective voice from women for the whole of the UK and should consider setting up a temporary resourced structure for a new ‘women’s national machinery’ to include an independent body for women and their organisations coordinated for the whole of the UK with assessment
- Communication is needed between government/public bodies and the women’s non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector. Women’s organisations need access to greater participation in government policy and processes including involvement in consultations, however, consultation with

women and NGOs must be sustainable, accessible and confidential for those involved and recognise and value their knowledge and involvement

- There is a need for ring-fenced funding for women-only services
- The needs of women within a particular locality need to be assessed in order to enable appropriate provision of services and address discrimination, including within existing services; local strategies should also be developed to address local needs
- The methods to collect equalities data should be improved and developed rather than cancelled. It is important that when government considers reducing its data collection that it shows 'due regard' to equality so that it can effectively monitor the effect on women of all policies
- There must be greater transparency, including clear guidance on data and analytical requirements, for the whole of government and common rules to allow easier sharing of equality data within government, such as standardised data collection
- Given the negative rhetoric around human rights, often propagated by UK political leaders, the UK Government must ensure that the vital rights and mechanisms contained in the Human Rights Act, which provide important protections for women and girls, will remain part of UK law

#### **Article 4 - Temporary special measures to accelerate equality**

The Government must introduce further temporary special measures to address discrimination against women after recommendations from the UN and others, and the success of this in other countries

#### **Article 5 - Sex roles and stereotyping**

- Media images of disabled women and women from diverse backgrounds in positive roles should be increased. Black and minority ethnic women's (BME) representation in the media should also be improved, in particular challenging the connection between Islam, Muslims and violent extremism
- While taking care to protect proper freedom of expression, the Government must ensure that women's voices are not silenced in and by the media and that stereotypes of women, which include the persistent and de-contextualised sexualisation and objectification of women in the media, are eliminated so that the media does not contribute to legitimising or promoting discrimination and violence against women

What steps has the Government taken in response to the Committee's 2008 recommendation to promote the value of gender equality for society as a whole, which would provide the essential basis for proper treatment of women in and by the media?

- Body image should be included as a subject within Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) including resources aimed at boosting young people's body confidence and self-esteem, along with materials to help

pupils think critically about the images they see on screen and in print media<sup>1</sup>

## **Article 6 - Exploitation of women**

- Review trafficking legislation and policy to ensure victims are identified and adequately supported and to ensure that a consistent and rights-based approach to women who have been trafficked is adopted
- Authorities need to be better equipped to recognise people who may have been trafficked and avoid their criminalisation
- Specialist knowledge and expertise, such as that developed by the Metropolitan Police, needs to be disseminated nationally if the UK is to become an unattractive and hostile environment for the organised crime networks that profit from sexual exploitation
- Standardise anti-trafficking responses across the UK insofar as possible given the devolution of law enforcement powers, and appoint a Rapporteur or Ombudsman in each devolved authority to make critical assessments and improve the UK's overall anti-trafficking response
- Undertake research on the extent to which religious delivery can be beneficial or damaging to the access to, uptake and quality of services provided to women involved in trafficking and prostitution
- Take whatever steps necessary to ensure that where possible women in prostitution are not criminalised and that prostitution related offences can be wiped from a woman's record
- Take all measures, legislative and other, to address the demand for women in prostitution and promote support services for women in prostitution including specialist support for women wishing to exit
- Guidance should ensure that objectors are not required to 'prove' in tangible, statistical terms, the negative impact on their lives (i.e. incidents of assault or anti social behaviour) in order for objections to Sexual Entertainment Venues to be admitted. This undermines the grounds of refusal on the basis of locality, and is therefore inconsistent with the content of the Sexual Entertainment Venue licensing regime
- Reinstate the rights of migrant domestic workers including the right to change employer; eligibility to renew a visa if in full-time domestic work; eligibility for settlement after five years; and eligibility to bring dependents to the UK
- Sign and ratify the International Labour Organisation Domestic Workers Convention<sup>2</sup>

## **Article 7 - Political and public life**

- We recommend that the Government announce its intentions to implement an engagement strategy for women as soon as possible
- The Government must clearly communicate a mandate/set of priorities for

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah, V. (2012) 'How to teach...Positive body image', *The Guardian*, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2012  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/jun/11/teaching-resources-body-image-report>

<sup>2</sup> Domestic Workers Convention

[http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:2551460:NO](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:2551460:NO)

the Government Equalities Office's Gender Equality Policy and Inclusion (GEPI) team as it relates to progressing women's equality. Stakeholders must have a clear sense of the core work over the coming years and of how this has been decided upon with priorities established through thorough consultation with the women's sector

- The Government should actively ensure that all political parties adopt proactive equality guarantees (such as women-only shortlists, twinning etc.) to redress the gender imbalance within the supply pool of party candidates and the selection and election of party candidates
- The Appointment Commission should be statutorily required to appoint equal numbers of women and men as peers in the House of Lords
- The Government must learn from best practice in the devolved assemblies and beyond, including initiatives such as: the recently passed Electoral Amendment (Political Funding) Bill 2011 in the Irish Dáil; and, the availability of crèche facilities and an emphasis on family-friendly working hours in the Scottish Assembly and Welsh National Assembly which has led to a greater representation of women in both assemblies, as is highlighted in the 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report<sup>3</sup>
- Political parties should set diversity targets for increasing women's representation and in particular increasing the representation of lesbian and bisexual women; BME women; women from lower socio-economic backgrounds; younger and older women and disabled women by 2020
- The Government should commit to implementing the full set of recommendations from the Speaker's Conference report and take action to ensure that all political parties implement the recommendations of the report within agreed timescales
- We recommend that Government introduce quotas for achieving gender parity on boards and in positions of power across public life, as a key mechanism in not only increasing the number of women in leadership roles and driving-through a step-change in women's representation, but in improving overall business performance of UK businesses and the economy
- Address the fact that disabled women are under-represented in democratic processes and decision making more generally, as well as in recreational activities, culture and sport. For example, develop specific rules on participation quotas to include disabled women
- Adopt measures to ensure the accessibility of polling stations, booths and voting material for women with disabilities, including permitting an individual an assistant of their own choice to help them to vote, without external surveillance. Information on elections and political campaigns must also be made accessible in the lead up to elections
- Ensure women are put forward for all levels of posts within international peace and security structures and set targets for the number of such posts filled by women. The Government should work to identify 'quick wins', posts which

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<sup>3</sup> Government Equalities Office (2011) *CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women) report. United Kingdom's Seventh Periodic Report*. GEO: London <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equalities/international-equality/7th-cedaw-report?view=Binary> Paragraphs 91 and 92

could be filled by well-qualified women in the immediate future, this would set a positive example and be a precedent for future recruitment<sup>4</sup>

- The Government should promote the use of its considerable influence with other states to encourage women candidates to be put forward as well as to encourage requests for women Special Representatives to the UN Secretary General, letting mission host countries know that there is an option to ask for this specifically (as was done by President Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia<sup>5</sup>)

### **Article 8 – Women as international representatives**

Make simple adaptations to the Cabinet Office-led process which puts candidates forward for positions at the international level. A section should be added which specifically asks if women have been considered for the post. Simple adaptations to forms such as adding a tick box would encourage those undertaking recruitment exercises to proactively consider women candidates and make it easier for government to monitor progress and adherence<sup>6</sup>

### **Article 9 – Nationality**

- Women should not be routed into the detained fast track whilst the risk remains so high that a woman who has experienced sexual violence will have her claim inappropriately dealt with
- Gender issues should be mainstreamed so that they are considered strategically in all aspects of the asylum process, for example by linking work on the Equality Act 2010 and CEDAW, and by providing sufficient resources for the Gender Champion and stakeholder engagement on gender issues to ensure that this is effective and long-term. This should also include reviewing timescales in the asylum process to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible for women survivors of rape and sexual violence to be able to fully disclose their experiences in support of their asylum claims
- Ensure that Immigration Judges have appropriate guidance for making decisions on women’s asylum cases, including those involving gender-based persecution
- All asylum seekers, including those whose claims have been refused, and undocumented migrants should have access to free National Health Service (NHS) healthcare on the basis of need across the UK until they are given permission to stay in the UK or return to their country of origin

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<sup>4</sup> Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security and the Gender Action for Peace and Security Network (2011) *The Participation Challenge: Narrative Report of the First Civil Society Focus Group on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*. <http://www.gaps-uk.org/docs/FG1%20The%20Participation%20Challenge%20Narrative%20Report%20Final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security and the Gender Action for Peace and Security Network (2011) *The Participation Challenge: Narrative Report of the First Civil Society Focus Group on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*. <http://www.gaps-uk.org/docs/FG1%20The%20Participation%20Challenge%20Narrative%20Report%20Final.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security and the Gender Action for Peace and Security Network (2011) *The Participation Challenge: Narrative Report of the First Civil Society Focus Group on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*. <http://www.gaps-uk.org/docs/FG1%20The%20Participation%20Challenge%20Narrative%20Report%20Final.pdf>

- New migrants and migrants with insecure status should also have access to free NHS healthcare on the basis of need across the UK
- The UK Border Agency (UKBA) should revise its policies on dispersal of pregnant asylum seekers to ensure compatibility with National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on maternity care for women with complex social factors
- The Government's violence against women and girls (VAWG) *Action Plan* should properly address the situation of migrant, refugee and asylum seeking women in the UK as one of the groups more vulnerable to VAWG. Appropriate measures need to be taken to protect these women from violence and abuse including a specific action plan and adequate weighting and relevance within the strategy as a whole
- Extend the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession to all women who are subjected to domestic violence or abuse and immigration control so that they are exempt from the restriction on access to public funds and health and social care services
- Reform the Domestic Violence Rule so that all types of evidence of domestic violence are accepted, all women subject to immigration control are eligible, and provide adequate levels of legal aid so that there is access to good quality legal advice and assistance
- Properly assess and review the implications of the new family migration Immigration Rules to ensure they do not disproportionately affect women
- Home Office to set asylum support levels at a rate of at least 70% of Income Support and provide it as cash. Annual increments to asylum support rates should be linked to those for Income Support or its equivalent
- The Home Office should grant permission to work to asylum seekers who have been waiting for six months or more for an initial decision or who have been refused asylum, but cannot be removed through no fault of their own
- 'Section 4' support should be abolished and all destitute refused asylum seekers, especially pregnant women, should be maintained on 'Section 95' cash support until they are granted status or leave the country
- Accommodation provided under 'Section 4' support should be gender sensitive; safe for women; suitable for pregnancy related needs; and close to women's existing community support networks
- Monitor the situation of women migrant workers and ensure that they receive adequate protection
- Ensure that domestic workers can change employer and obtain permanent settlement after five years in the UK (as was the case before)
- Do not reduce the regulations of temporary workers but actually ensure that critical sectors such as the catering, cleaning and food processing industries are covered by the regulations
- The Government through its immigration enforcement procedures must never undermine human dignity and human rights, or put women at an increased risk of violence and abuse. Service providers should not have to turn away women in need because they lack a residence permit
- Prevention, protection and investigation of violence against women should take precedence over any proceedings concerning the immigration status of the victim. The Government must take steps to protect victims when they report violence and also, facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators regardless of the status of their victim

## Article 10 - Education and skills

- Follow the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission and draw up national guidance for teachers and Early Years childcare workers on how to ensure that the horizons of children are not limited by gender stereotypes
- All school staff should have training on gender equality and ensure that teacher training emphasises the need to challenge gender stereotypes, both in delivery of careers education and in subject teaching. Specialist training should be given to those who teach Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship
- Teacher training should include teachers self assessment and reflective practice on gender equality – specifically awareness, reduction and ultimately elimination of hostile and benevolent sexist teaching methods, practice and curricular content
- Overt statements stressing that sexism and sexual bullying are not tolerated must form schools visual vernacular alongside positive images of girls and women in schools
- There should be statutory guidance for schools on how to address issues relating to VAWG. The UK is obliged under international law<sup>7</sup> and CEDAW to train school staff on gender equality and VAWG
- There is a need for a clear route for identification, referral, and support of girls affected by VAWG
- Deliver training to teachers and head teachers on how to apply the Equality Duty in schools and education services, and provide on-going support for schools in setting and meeting gender equality objectives
- Make Personal, Social and Health Education and Sex and Relationship Education a statutory requirement for all schools. We support Ofsted's recommendation<sup>8</sup> that *"schools should ensure that their curriculum, including their Personal, Social and Health Education and citizenship curriculum systematically teaches pupils about all aspects of individual difference and diversity, including those related to appearance, religion, race, gender, sexuality, disability and ability"*
- Regulate groups providing information on contraception and abortion to schools to ensure that misinformation is not given to children
- Primary schools should make specific reference to the influence of the media on body image and personal identity within a new programme of study on 'Understanding Physical Development, Health and Wellbeing'<sup>9</sup>
- Carry out and publish full gender equality impact assessments on all proposed changes to education policy
- Reintroduce subsidies for Further Education courses, including for those over 24 years old
- Many women re-enter education in adult life via the women's sector, therefore statutory funding should be provided to women's organisations to support

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<sup>7</sup> Beijing Platform for Action <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

<sup>8</sup> Ofsted (2012) *No Place for Bullying* <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/no-place-for-bullying>

<sup>9</sup> Hannah, V. (2012) 'How to teach...Positive body image', *The Guardian*, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2012  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/jun/11/teaching-resources-body-image-report>

women into education and training with clear but fair targets and progression routes

- Consider reintroducing the Education Maintenance Allowance, or find an alternative measure to encourage and support teenage mothers and young women with special needs to participate in education from 16-19
- Undertake a full equalities impact assessment of the increase in tuition fees
- In order for Higher Education to genuinely be equally accessible to all, Higher Education institutions must provide adequate childcare provision to both students and staff
- Increase educational settlement programmes for women new to the UK and those who do not speak English and tackle the barriers to women's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learning by providing childcare options and community based learning provision, including measures to strengthen the provision of ESOL by voluntary sector community organisations that can reach the most vulnerable groups of women
- Continue to fund free ESOL provision for those on both active and non active benefits and ensure that fees do not make ESOL unaffordable for students in minimum wage employment
- Discontinue the new language requirements for family migration due to be enacted in 2013 and retain the option to take an ESOL with citizenship course for non European Union migrants with language levels below B1 who wish to settle in the UK

## **Article 11 - Employment and economic rights**

- Further support women in business by promoting alternative sources of finance and provide access to training and support as well as introducing more networking and mentoring opportunities
- Take steps to address the gender pay gap and high unemployment rates of women with disabilities, such as creating accessible employment opportunities and providing appropriate support and adaptation
- The National Minimum Wage should be increased automatically at least in line with inflation or average earnings, whichever is the higher
- Adopt a national strategic approach to tackle the structural causes of the gender pay gap, including initiatives to widen educational and employment opportunities for girls and women as well as direct support to employers to improve job evaluation, pay transparency and flexible work options
- Current maternity, paternity and parental leave policy needs to be re-designed to enable parents to be able to meet their work and caring roles. There needs to be greater integration of parental leave policy and early years and childcare policy and infant and maternal/paternal wellbeing with communication between Government departments
- When developing the shared parental leave policy the Government should build on the Marmot Review<sup>10</sup> recommendations including providing paid parental leave in the first year of life with a minimum income for healthy living
- Extend the right to request flexible working to all workers

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<sup>10</sup> UCL Institute of Health Equity (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England Post-2010 (The Marmot Review)*. UCL: London  
<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>



- Maternity leave needs to be ring-fenced for mothers for at least the first six months with better pay arrangements to enable optimum health and wellbeing outcomes
- The Government should take urgent action to reduce the incidence of pregnancy discrimination. This requires awareness raising amongst employers about their legal obligations and amongst women about their rights. It is important that women have support to pursue legal action against employers who behave unlawfully
- Introduce a statutory right to paid breastfeeding breaks and the provision of facilities to support breastfeeding and expressing breast milk
- The Department of Health should implement the recommendations in the Public Health white paper *Healthy Lives Healthy People* to encourage employers to implement breastfeeding-friendly employment policies
- Protect rights at work: the weak labour market is adding to the power that employers have over workers, and so it is essential to maintain and enforce the vital protections that do exist for vulnerable workers
- Leave and pay arrangements should enable all women to have access to these and targeted awareness campaigns for employee rights and employer responsibilities must be prioritised, particularly in sectors identified by the EHRC formal investigations<sup>11</sup> and the Trades Union Congress vulnerable workers commission report<sup>12</sup>
- Protect access to justice by exempting low-income workers from employment tribunal fees. Consideration should be given to a fee system in which all unlawful discrimination claims would be exempt from fees
- Explore investing in a national system of universal childcare. This would create employment (in a sector in which women are over-represented), and would help to make work pay for second earners and single parents (both of whom are more likely to be women)
- Protect Sure Start services by reinstating the ring-fence to the Sure Start grant to Local Authorities in England while providing additional money to fund it so that other services are not affected
- The Government must sign the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families

## **Article 12 - Healthcare and women's health**

- The UK Government should ensure that health professionals and commissioners receive education on CEDAW and other relevant international human rights obligations
- Greater public investment must be directed towards prevention to tackle the root causes of women's poor mental and physical health and measures to improve gaps in health services

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<sup>11</sup> See for example Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010) *Inquiry into recruitment and employment in the meat and poultry processing industry*. EHRC: London  
<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/inquiries-and-assessments/inquiry-into-the-meat-and-poultry-processing-sectors/>

<sup>12</sup> Trades Union Congress (2007) *Hard Work, Hidden Lives: The full report of the Commission on Vulnerable Employment*. TUC: London  
[http://www.vulnerableworkers.org.uk/files/CoVE\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.vulnerableworkers.org.uk/files/CoVE_full_report.pdf)

- Effectively tackling the health issues women and girls face must take into account the diverse experiences of women's lives, including poverty, sexual violence and abuse and reproduction, and understand how these experiences impact on women's health and wellbeing. This must include a cross-government approach and gendered analysis to address the issues that impact on women across their lives
- Introduce models of enhanced primary care provision to reduce gender inequalities e.g. more flexible opening hours, provision of outreach services, inviting patients to attend 'health checks'
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Health and Wellbeing Boards need to have a basic equalities framework, and an understanding of gendered issues, including violence against women and girls
- Women's health and social care needs must form an integral part of the Department of Health's strategic framework and statutory guidance on how to proactively fund and 'intelligently' commission the women's sector should be developed
- Language services using professionally qualified interpreters need to be a key part of commissioning in primary care
- Healthcare professional communication training should include cultural awareness skills and diversity issues including better signposting to services for women from BME groups. Statutory and voluntary sector service providers should also consult with women from BME groups regarding future service developments
- Through work with its voluntary sector Strategic Partners, the Department of Health should ensure that any inequalities and barriers that women experience in accessing healthcare should be monitored and reviewed to include good and bad practice. The data should then be communicated to local Health and Wellbeing Boards to encourage shared learning and promote good practice
- Identify and target specific health measures for lesbian and bisexual women in order to ensure improved physical and mental health in the longer term and to specifically tailor health services to meet their needs
- Make medical and health facilities accessible, and train medical professionals to be aware of disability/gender related issues, so that they can be sensitive towards all disabled women's needs
- The Government should introduce a targeted national strategy to improve the health outcomes of Gypsy and Traveller women
- Ensure that the education and training of all health and social care professionals includes awareness of, and the specialist skills needed, to enable them to respond to the needs of an ageing population
- Violence against women and girls needs to be a Department of Health strategic priority
- There is a need for more preventative measures and raising awareness about women and mental health including ensuring that violence against women is acknowledged as a key inequality that impacts upon mental health. This should be a role for Public Health England and Health and Wellbeing Boards
- The Department of Health needs to provide clear guidance about the value and legality of women-only specialist services, and should be promoting and supporting women's services as partners in supporting women's good mental health

- The Government need to commit to a national primary prevention strategy for breast cancer as part of the Cancer Reform Strategy
- Reform the Abortion Act 1967 to remove the two doctors' signature requirement, allow suitably trained nurses and midwives to carry out early medical and surgical abortions and allow women to take the second stage of early medical abortion medication at home
- Review policies on maternity care, in particular undertake a review of regulations, guidelines and practice with the aim of ensuring access to maternity services for all women
- Train clinicians working with women who have suffered violence to be aware of their clients' HIV-risk status and engage in crisis intervention
- Integrate gender violence into the national Sexual Health Programme<sup>13</sup>

### **Article 13 - Social and economic benefits**

- The Government must develop - in consultation with the voluntary sector - mitigating actions to lessen identified impacts of the current welfare reform and commit to undertaking full gender equality impact assessments of all welfare changes announced
- The Treasury must adhere at all times to the requirements of domestic equality law to assess both the individual and cumulative impact of all future tax and benefit changes on equality between women and men
- Protect the social safety-net, by giving Local Authorities in England and Wales sufficient resources to maintain existing levels of Council Tax Benefit; monitoring the effect of the Housing Benefit and overall benefit caps; reversing the switch from Retail Price Index to Consumer Price Index inflation for benefit uprating; maintaining real Child Benefit levels; and reversing cuts to childcare support
- Move towards a fairer tax system by clamping down on tax avoidance
- Measures must be put in place to mitigate the possible exacerbation of women's economic disempowerment within a couple under Universal Credit and to monitor the impact on women's economic independence of the new system. These measures should include directly paying all or part of Universal Credit to women
- The Government must prioritise social and economic investment, and target that investment in pro-poor ways using a gender lens. The Government can ensure that it protects the services upon which women in poverty most rely while helping to boost demand and provide investment in the long-term
- Carry out a full equality impact assessment of the changes in the welfare system and how they are affecting BME women subjected to multiple discrimination and put corrective actions in place to mitigate negative effects
- The Government and particularly Local Authorities should ensure that funding for specialist BME women's organisations is provided and increased and that they can continue providing valuable services to BME women
- Create a fair simplified system which assesses disabled women's gender and disability specific needs and entitles them to benefits accordingly. The system

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<sup>13</sup> Public Health England, Sexual Health Programme  
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1201094614842> Accessed: 16/04/13

must assess disability, housing and income benefit entitlement on a case by case basis, rather than impose a 'one size fits all' model on disabled women

- Ensure adequate indexation of state pensions that takes full account of rises in cost of fuel and food
- Monitor the impact on informal carers of public sector service reductions and introduce a carer's allowance post-retirement

#### **Article 14 – Rural women**

- Work with all stakeholders to integrate, co-ordinate and improve affordable transport services in rural areas, including a range of options from dial-a-ride schemes to buses and increase accessibility in public transport to assist disabled, older and women travellers
- Ensure access to affordable, quality health and social care services and enable rural women to work with other stakeholders involving them in decisions during the design and delivery of these services
- The Government should introduce policy measures to effectively address the housing crisis facing the Gypsy and Traveller communities which disproportionately affects Gypsy and Traveller women

#### **Article 15 – Equality before the law and civil matters**

- Prioritise the continuing improvement of victim experiences in the criminal justice system. In particular attention must be paid to training for frontline professionals and for the adoption of special mechanisms to improve the support provided to women throughout the criminal and civil law processes and increase women's confidence in those processes
- The Government must ensure that women who have experienced violence have access to legal advice for a wide range of issues, including many of the areas of law that are proposed to be removed from the scope of legal aid. Women who have experienced violence must have access to face-to-face legal advice from qualified legal professionals
- Temporary Special Measures should be introduced under CEDAW Article 4 to ensure availability of legal aid to victims to prevent further abuse
- Ensure that women whose rights are at risk have access to judicial review to seek redress
- The Government and the Judicial Appointments Commission should set targets for the representation of women (including BME women) in the senior judiciary, based on their representation in the qualified legal community (those with 15 or more years' experience)
- The recommendations of the Corston Report must be implemented, particularly in relation to community alternatives to custody, the mental health needs of female offenders, women with caring responsibilities, and the relationship between female offending and histories of violence and abuse
- Adequate health, including mental health, services are needed for women in prisons and the mental health and substance misuse needs of vulnerable women need to be assessed by Health and Wellbeing Boards at a local level
- Adopt a national action plan on women in the criminal justice system to be led at the highest level of Government and report regularly on progress made. This should be a joined-up approach bringing together different government

departments to coordinate a holistic response. The causes of women's offending must be targeted and gender-sensitive policies, strategies and programmes for women in prisons developed

- The Government must ensure that the impact of funding and service cuts on women in low income and/or single-parent households are rigorously monitored and assessed, to avoid perpetuating poverty-related offending

### **Article 16 - Equality in marriage and family law**

- The Government should take forward the recommendations from the Law Commission's report on cohabitation, and explain to the Committee why this has not happened yet
- Include forced marriage in schools citizenship programmes for 15/16 year olds to know about the Act and the support available
- Establish additional counselling and other support services for victims of forced marriage
- The Government should legislate to prohibit all forms of physical punishment against children in the family and in all other institutions and alternative care settings
- Reinstate the Health in Pregnancy Grant and the Sure Start Maternity Grant or introduce an alternative payment
- Funding for Supporting People must be ring-fenced
- There must be a robust statutory framework in place within the family justice system which ensures the early identification and effective response to women and children's experience of domestic violence, setting out respective roles and responsibilities of all key professionals in the system
- Judges, solicitors, barristers, Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) officers and mediators must receive compulsory, specialist training on domestic violence and its impact on women and children's lives
- Post-separation abuse training should be compulsory and on-going amongst all court personnel
- The domestic abuse toolkit should be reinstated by CAFCASS<sup>14</sup>
- The Government should base any legislative decisions on the recommendations of the Family Justice Review and the evidence regarding shared parenting and domestic abuse
- All bodies involved in private arbitration around family law must be subject to the CEDAW principles and to key UK legislation protecting women's rights, including the Sex Discrimination Act<sup>15</sup> and the Human Rights Act<sup>16</sup>
- Parents with care should not be required to pay a collection fee to use the child maintenance system in the UK
- If a collection fee is to be imposed, victims of domestic violence should be exempt from the requirement to pay a collection fee in recognition that direct payment is not a safe option where there is a risk of domestic violence

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<sup>14</sup> Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) <http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/>  
Accessed: 26/03/13

<sup>15</sup> Sex Discrimination Act 1975 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1975/65>

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Act 1998 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

## General Recommendation 19 – Violence against women and girls

- Targets are needed to increase the numbers of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) to ensure provision around the country and so that support for victims is not inconsistent. This would also create better support availability for women who experience multiple discrimination
- Allocate adequate resources within government budgets for the implementation of the *Action Plan* at all appropriate levels
- A 4 nations Independent Taskforce should be established, reporting to relevant Ministerial Groups on VAWG, to examine the relationship between VAWG and mental health, suicide and self-harm; access to education and other services; and the impact of cuts in public spending and legal aid on women and girls. It should also examine legal and statutory responses, including that of the police and social services
- The Government should take steps to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO) as soon as possible
- National governments must set guidance and milestones for local bodies to tackle VAWG, with robust enforcement and implementation mechanisms. This should include guidance on the necessity to collect and publish disaggregated data on VAWG in relation to all minority groups under the new Public Sector Equality Duty in Britain
- Raise awareness of VAWG and challenge discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes, including harmful traditional or social practices, through education and the media
- It is crucial that there is a minimum standards framework based on equality and human rights principles for all organisations working on VAWG and mandatory training for all teachers, social workers, police officers, health workers and other professionals distributed evenly throughout the country
- The voluntary VAWG sector should be commissioned to deliver quality training on VAWG to a range of agencies as part of vocational qualifications and ongoing professional development and to increase the consistency in the implementation of existing good policy
- Review the *Action Plan* to include policy and guidance on older women, outlining the roles and responsibilities of service organisations
- Make resources available for service providers to meet the needs of older women including staff, accommodation and outreach services
- Commissioning guidance should stress the value and legality of women-only services and those targeting minority women. The specialism of smaller groups must not be marginalised within policy and funding frameworks due to a preference for delivering services via more generic providers
- Funders need to recognise the cost-effectiveness and value of sustainable funding interventions instead of short-term projects. What is needed are women-only support groups, therapeutic interventions, outreach, advocacy, and resettlement and accommodation-based support
- Particular attention needs to be paid to the funding of service provision for particular groups of women who may face additional barriers, such as BME, disabled, transgender women and women with an insecure immigration status
- Government policies should not leave vulnerable women at risk of VAWG

- Ensure that specialist service provision is accessible for BME and refugee (BMER) women survivors of VAWG. Funding for specialist organisations/services for BMER women should be ring-fenced and protected and/or a central funding stream should be provided
- Develop a multi layered strategy to prevent and tackle hate crime and violence against BMER women and girls
- Training for the police and other front line agencies on 'honour'-based violence (HBV) must be undertaken without any further delay
- Urgent steps must be taken to improve schools' response to HBV, including making training in HBV compulsory for all school staff, making response to HBV part of the schools inspection regime, and ensuring that forced marriage is included as a compulsory part of the PSHE Curriculum
- Training for all statutory professionals on the identification, management and support of those at risk and affected by female genital mutilation (FGM) should be conducted routinely, in particular for teachers, social workers and health personnel. This will form the foundation for identifying cases and increased reporting. Training should also target legal professionals, police and immigration officers
- FGM is an entrenched cultural norm which is a major problem across Europe and it is important that the UK Government engages with other European policy makers who have been more successful in engaging affected communities and implementing laws on FGM
- VAWG needs to be a Department of Health and NHS strategic priority within their plans to cut health inequalities
- The Department of Health and the NHS should engage with the women's sector in a review of how it is ensuring compliance with the CEDAW Convention
- Increase the number of accessible VAWG services for disabled women including supporting adaptation of refuge provision
- More research is needed to truly understand the extent and prevalence of all forms of VAWG. There needs to be an improvement in the collection and analysis of statistics across all agencies. Improved and disaggregated data including 'protected characteristics' is essential to underpin effective strategies to prevent and respond to VAWG and monitor the effective implementation of law and policy
- Adopt and implement gender-sensitive policies to prevent and respond to violence against women at all levels – Police, Crown Prosecution Service, UKBA, Legal Services Commission etc.
- Other government departments, especially the Department of Health, should contribute to the Rape Support Fund to boost resources available in light of the support to adult survivors of child sexual abuse and the absence of any specialised services within local health services
- A national helpline for victim-survivors of sexual violence should be funded by the Westminster Government and delivered by Rape Crisis
- Ensure police are more informed about the impact of trauma on women's choices seemingly to place themselves at risk, which would help improve their response to sex worker victims. Such training could be delivered by ex-service users and voluntary sector agencies
- In the light of the evidence in recent years of very serious cases of failure to protect women and girls experiencing violence from very serious harm and

cruelty and, in some cases, torture, further action must be taken to ensure that statutory services, including the police, social services and NHS, understand their duty to protect women and girls they know to be at risk, and to prevent abuse and torture

### **Annex 2 - The UK's relationship with the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories**

- An annual process is set up in the UK where an enquiry is sent to Jersey and Guernsey each year to share details of the UK's work on women's rights and ask them what their position is on CEDAW
- Our final and strongest recommendation is for a gender-monitoring post to be established in the UK to collect and collate data from the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories

### **Annex 3 - UK reservations and declarations under CEDAW**

Ensure that the UK's ratification of CEDAW no longer includes a reservation relating to Article 1 or immigration issues