



**Women's
Spaces**

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**Women's Spaces Response to
International Development Committee's
Call for Evidence on**



**WOMEN,
PEACE &
SECURITY**

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WOMEN'S SPACES

**Creating platforms to strengthen women's voices
in peacebuilding, civic and political life.**

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An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs
RECONCILIATION FUND



Women's Spaces seeks to strengthen the voices of all women and girls in peacebuilding and decision making, delivered by a consortium involving Women's Platform, NIRWN, WRDA and WSN.

Response to the International Development Committee’s Call for Evidence: Women, Peace and Security

Submitted by Women’s Spaces Consortium

Date: 2 June 2025

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About Women's Spaces Consortium

Women's Spaces is a collaborative programme in Northern Ireland aimed at enhancing women's participation in peacebuilding, civic engagement, and public life. The initiative is delivered by a consortium of four organisations, each contributing unique expertise and resources to empower women across urban and rural communities.

Here are the four partner organisations involved in the Women's Spaces programme:

1. Women's Platform, Lead partner

- **Purpose:** Advocates for the implementation of international human rights standards and UN resolutions in Northern Ireland, including the principles of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.
- **Role:** Acts as a liaison between the women's sector in Northern Ireland and international networks, amplifying the voices of women and girls on a global stage.

2. Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)

- **Purpose:** Represents and supports rural women through services, education, campaigning, and lobbying.
- **Role:** Acts as a membership-based organisation with over 400 groups and 400 individual members, providing advocacy representation at local, regional, and international levels.
- **Rural delivery partner for Women's Spaces**

3. Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA)

- **Purpose:** Advances women's equality and participation in society by transforming political, economic, social, and cultural conditions.
- **Role:** Works with women's groups from all traditions in disadvantaged communities, promoting empowerment and tackling inequalities through capacity building and advocacy.
- **Urban delivery partner for Women's Spaces**

4. Women's Support Network (WSN)

- **Purpose:** Supports established women's centres across the region and hosts the Rape Crisis Service NI.

- **Role:** Participates in policy development groups, conducts research on issues impacting women, and provides community-based training and education.

Together, these organisations form a dynamic and progressive team with a proven track record in engaging with hard-to-reach women in divided and marginalised communities. They collaborate to build capacity, advocate for inclusive peacebuilding, and create platforms for women's voices in public decision-making. The programme also fosters connections with women peace-builders and networks beyond Northern Ireland to share learning and strengthen solidarity.

The [Pillars for Peace-Building](#) digital toolkit is a dynamic online resource developed by the Women's Spaces consortium in Northern Ireland. Launched in May 2025, it aims to empower women engaged in community development and peacebuilding by providing accessible tools, stories, and insights rooted in the lived experiences of women across the region.

Structured around the pillars of UNSCR 1325, it includes five key sections—an interactive timeline, tools for influencing change, a community blog, video interviews, and additional resources—the toolkit offers both practical guidance and reflective prompts. Designed to be mobile-friendly and adaptable, it serves as a flexible resource for women at various stages of their peacebuilding journeys. The toolkit also highlights the critical role of women's activism in Northern Ireland's peace process, aiming to inspire and inform both local and global audiences.

By centring women's voices and experiences, the toolkit contributes to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of peacebuilding, fostering a movement where women are recognized as essential architects of lasting peace.

For more information or to get involved, visit the [Women's Spaces website](#).

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1. Executive Summary

The UK's 2023–2027 National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) outlines important strategic ambitions, but currently falls short of delivering substantive, measurable outcomes—especially for women and girls from conflict-affected and marginalised communities. Funding reductions, weak monitoring mechanisms, and limited domestic implementation, particularly in Northern Ireland, undermine the UK's credibility and effectiveness in advancing the WPS agenda.

This submission offers a response to the Committee's inquiry questions, grounded in policy analysis and lived experience evidence, and includes 10 key recommendations to strengthen the UK's WPS commitments, particularly in line with local implementation of WPS.

As part of this submission, Women's Spaces consulted with the Women's Regional Consortium NI and the Law Centre NI over their research findings. Finally, the Women's Spaces Consortium fully supports the Women's Policy Group NI's response to the call for evidence.

No. Summary Recommendations

- 1 Strengthen implementation, monitoring, and accountability frameworks
- 2 Increase sustainable funding for local women's groups
- 3 Ensure transparency in WPS investment and resource allocation
- 4 Adopt an intersectional approach
- 5 Prioritise full implementation in Northern Ireland
- 6 Broaden definitions of security and armed conflict
- 7 Embed co-design and public participation models
- 8 Promote whole-of-government action including in justice and education sectors
- 9 Enhance international collaboration and networking
- 10 Address online and digital violence against women

2. To what extent does the UK Government integrate Women, Peace and Security principles across its ODA-funded programming?

WPS objectives appear in selected ODA-funded programmes, but are not systematically mainstreamed. The transition from the CSSF to the Integrated Security Fund diluted WPS visibility and priority. Gender is often treated as a cross-cutting theme, lacking dedicated strategies or indicators.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen monitoring and accountability across ODA programmes (Recommendation 1)
 - Ensure transparency in WPS-related investment and funding allocations (Recommendation 3)
-

3. What financial resources has the UK allocated towards advancing the WPS agenda? Are these resources appropriately distributed across programmes and regions?

There is no ring-fenced WPS budget under the 2023–2027 NAP. Financial commitments are opaque, and the shift to a 0.3% GNI aid target exacerbates uncertainty. Evidence suggests uneven distribution of funds and under-resourcing of grassroots and regional actors, notably in Northern Ireland.

The ISF is **managed more centrally by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)** and other Whitehall departments, with fewer clear entry points or mechanisms for grassroots or devolved-region engagement. This creates **structural barriers for regional actors**, such as those in Northern Ireland, to influence or benefit from WPS funding.

The ISF is framed primarily around **national security, geopolitics, and strategic threats**, rather than a human rights or feminist peacebuilding lens. This framing makes it harder to justify or prioritize the kind of long-term, community-based WPS work—like women's participation in peace processes or prevention of gender-based violence—that was more compatible with the CSSF structure.

From Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), 2023 report — Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security:

“The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) was the main funding mechanism supporting UK WPS programming and committed to allocating 15% of its resources to WPS-related work.

However, the launch of the Integrated Security Fund (ISF) in 2023 replaced the CSSF with a broader, more opaque fund that no longer explicitly prioritises WPS. This shift risks sidelining WPS issues and reduces transparency and accountability in funding decisions.”

— *GAPS, 2023*¹

From the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), UK & Ireland Section, 2023 briefing:

“The CSSF had become an important vehicle for funding Women, Peace and Security programmes, with a clear 15% allocation target. The move to the Integrated Security Fund has seen this thematic focus weaken, as the ISF pools funds into broader security and defence priorities without a dedicated WPS commitment.

This reduces the visibility of WPS in funding streams and creates uncertainty about the level of support for grassroots and feminist peacebuilding initiatives going forward.”

— *WILPF UK & Ireland Section, 2023*

In Northern Ireland, despite its significant role in the UK's peacebuilding history, there is evidence of under-resourcing for grassroots and regional actors. Although The Executive Office (TEO) launched the **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy** in **October 2024**, concerns remain about the allocation of funding for WPS-related work in the region. The UK NAP provides limited clarity on the roles of devolved governments, and the centralization of WPS implementation within London-based departments contributes to an England-centric approach, potentially overlooking the unique needs and contributions of devolved administrations.

Recent positive developments include FCDO meeting with the NI Assembly APG on UNSCR 1325 WPS and funding for research into international collaboration and networking by NIO and UK International Development.

Highlights from this development are two reports which make the case for strengthened connections with Northern Ireland’s women and peacebuilding sectors and for coordinated international collaboration and networking bed locally:

“Some of the most effective peacebuilding sharing occurs when women come together from a range of perspectives and experiences. Academics, community based activists and issue-based organisations (such as those focusing on victims/survivors; ex-

¹ <https://gaps-uk.org/assessing-uk-government-action-on-women-peace-and-security-in-2023/>

combatants; mediation, etc.) should work collaboratively in developing programmes for external use”.²

Recommendations:

- Increase sustainable, long-term funding for local women’s organisations, following (Recommendation 2)
 - Ensure equitable regional allocation, including targeted support for Northern Ireland and migrant communities
-

4. How does the UK’s current WPS National Action Plan compare to its previous iterations? To what extent is the UK successfully achieving the strategic outcomes it set out within the 2023 National Action Plan?

While progress has been made in terms of including Northern Ireland with the current NAP, we highlight the following recommendation from the civil society response to the UNECE Beijing+25 Review which still remain pertinent in regards to ongoing relevant issues Northern Ireland is facing: (1) economic and food insecurity driven by the 5 week wait for universal credit, (2) gender-based violence, (3) decline in race relations, (4) changing investment landscape with a move away from gender specific funding mechanisms towards gender neutrality, and (5) inconsistent participative democracy models to ensure women’s full inclusion in peace and decision making processes.

Key recommendations:

- “Peace is not possible without meaningful and equal participation of women; especially women from civil society groups and women affected by conflict in the peace process and decision making at all levels. The process must focus on gender-inclusive outcomes and implementation with women being equal and meaningful part of both policy making and implementation.
- “We call for an expansion in the definition of security: in addition to the existing definition of state security, we need to increase the focus more on human security, which includes economic security, political security, community and personal security, environmental and food security. This shift must affect

² WOMEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND, PEACEBUILDING AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS: COLLATING A HISTORY OF WOMEN’S ENGAGEMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL PEACEBUILDING AND NETWORKS- 1995-2025 (Women’s Platform and Social Change Initiative). <https://womensplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Overview-of-women-peacebuilders-international-engagement-1995-2025.pdf>

implementation and budgeting issues which are or are not covered by policy. Otherwise, we will not succeed in establishing long-lasting and qualitative peace.

- “We need effective systems for early warning, conflict prevention and mitigation. This includes indicators, but also extensive peace education, training and empowerment for the groups that work for peace. It also requires protection and security for those who promote the peace agenda in their countries and communities.”³

Recommendations:

- Introduce a transparent and independent MEL framework (Recommendation 1)
 - Broaden definitions of conflict and security (Recommendation 6)
-

5. Are women’s voices, particularly those from conflict-affected communities and marginalised groups, sufficiently included within the UK’s approach to the WPS agenda?

Women from refugee, migrant, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and working-class backgrounds are frequently excluded from shaping WPS policy. Additionally, women peacebuilders are aging and investment is needed to develop young women peacebuilders and their networks.

The Law Centre NI’s Migration Justice Project highlights the following inequalities affecting migrants from conflict affected regions through research:

1. Lack in healthcare access for migrant survivors of domestic abuse
2. Lack of trust in interpreters / barriers to disclosure in healthcare settings
3. Lack in safe accommodation for LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers
4. Lack of childcare at Home Office interviews

³ [2.12.-PEACE-SECURITY-and-displaced-women-2.pdf](#)

1. Healthcare access for migrant survivors of domestic abuse

<https://www.lawcentreni.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Safeguarding-migrant-survivors-of-domestic-abuse-through-healthcare-recommendations-for-reform.pdf>

ASK: Northern Ireland healthcare regulations to be amended to extend access to primary healthcare for migrant survivors of domestic abuse.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK that does not provide primary GP access for all migrants, including victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

Legislative change is necessary to ensure that Northern Ireland complies with its international legal obligations including the Istanbul Convention.

A comparison of the different UK jurisdictions shows that migrant survivors of domestic abuse who live in Northern Ireland have fewer healthcare entitlements than their counterparts living elsewhere in the UK.

This inequitable access across the UK disadvantages migrant women in Northern Ireland.

	Are all migrant survivors of domestic abuse eligible to register with a GP?	Are all migrant survivors of domestic abuse eligible to access free secondary care?
Northern Ireland	No	No
Scotland	Yes	No
Wales	Yes	Yes – subject to being able to demonstrate ‘causation’
England	Yes	Yes – subject to being able to demonstrate ‘causation’

2. Lack of trust in interpreters / barriers to disclosure in healthcare settings

ASK: Healthcare Departments should establish an interpreting quality standard to specialise in domestic abuse and gender-based harm, sexual and reproductive health and minority sexual orientation/gender identity. This would increase the confidence of patients to seek help.

This issue affects women, and LGBTQIA+ individuals, trying to access sexual and reproductive healthcare, or to attend crisis services, or support for so-called honour-based abuse.

According to HSCNI (2025):

“If the patient and interpreter are from the same cultural background, issues surrounding privacy and confidentiality can arise, with reluctance to seek further care being commonplace (Mengesha et al., 2018). Feelings of vulnerability and unwillingness to share information may be exacerbated if the interpreter is a male (Mengesha et al., 2018). This challenge was identified in Northern Ireland specific research conducted by the Law Centre and Rainbow Refugees NI (2024) with LGBTQIA+ individuals, where they found low levels of trust for interpreters which lead them to withhold information or prefer to use digital translation.”⁴

Law Centre NI and Rainbow Refugees NI joint 2024 report “We Are Getting Hurt” documented the experience of LGBTQIA+ refugees and people seeking asylum in Northern Ireland. The report found that 78% people were concerned that interpreters (including those employed by the UK Home Office) would report details of their sexual orientation to their community, and 58% withheld information about their sexual orientation because of the interpreter. One lesbian respondent reported being misgendered by Home Office interpreters during her asylum interview⁵.

While interpreting service providers regulate employees through professional codes of conduct, this assurance is not reaching affected communities who still do not trust the service. The quality standard would go a long way to reassure patients.

3. Safe accommodation for LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers

ASK: separate asylum accommodation should be available for LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers in Northern Ireland, in line with provision through Micro Rainbow in other parts of the UK.

Law Centre NI and Rainbow Refugees NI joint 2024 report “We Are Getting Hurt” documented the experience of LGBTQIA+ refugees and people seeking asylum in Northern Ireland.

78% of respondents reported some form of abuse or violence from others in the refugee/asylum community, 74% reported bullying consistent with so-called honour-based

⁴ P.23 <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/doh-make-my-voice-heard-doc.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.lawcentreni.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/We-Are-Getting-Hurt-June-2024.pdf>

abuse. For 79%- this abuse happened in their asylum accommodation provided by the UK Home Office⁶.

Unlike racial and domestic abuse incidents, LGBTQIA+ hate crime in asylum accommodation does not warrant an immediate safeguarding/relocation response and victims are often left to live with their perpetrators, at continued risk.

Asylum accommodation providers in England and Wales already have arrangements in place with charity [Micro Rainbow](#) to provide LGBTQIA+ accommodation to asylum seekers under Home Office contracts. That this is not an option for LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers in Northern Ireland and must change.

4. Lack of childcare at Home Office interviews

[\[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64d0ec63e5491a000d4b5933/Asylum_interview.pdf#\]](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64d0ec63e5491a000d4b5933/Asylum_interview.pdf#)

ASK: Home Office should ensure childcare is available at all interview locations across UK.

Childcare during asylum interviews is only available at sites across England, Scotland and Wales, and no provision is available in Northern Ireland⁷.

While the Home Office guidance explains that parents should not be expected to recount details of past persecution (including sexual and gender-based violence) in front of their children, many single mothers are left with the choice of either bringing their children to interview or relying on friends/family, or strangers from within the asylum-seeking community to supervise their children. At worst, mothers who are unfamiliar with the law might leave their underage children at home alone if they have no other option.

***Case study** – Law Centre NI was contacted by a community worker who asked about the availability of childcare at an asylum interview for a single mother she was supporting. The woman had a pre-school child and one aged 9. Having no family or network in Northern Ireland, the mother was considering keeping her 9 year old home from school to look after their young sibling.*

This inequitable access across the UK disadvantages women in the asylum system in Northern Ireland and may negatively impact their claim for protection if they have been unable or unwilling to provide full disclosure of their experiences.

The Queering the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: A Practice-Based Toolkit offers actionable recommendations to enhance the inclusivity and

⁶ <https://www.lawcentreni.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/We-Are-Getting-Hurt-June-2024.pdf>

⁷ P. 17

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64d0ec63e5491a000d4b5933/Asylum_interview.pdf#

effectiveness of the UK's National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Developed collaboratively by Queen's University Belfast, Colombia Diversa, and Christian Aid, the toolkit emphasizes the integration of LGBTQ+ perspectives into WPS frameworks, drawing insights from Colombia's peace process.

1. Integrate LGBTQ+ Perspectives Across All WPS Pillars:

- *Prevention:* Address the specific risks of violence and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- *Participation:* Ensure meaningful inclusion of LGBTQ+ voices in peace negotiations and decision-making processes.
- *Protection:* Develop protective measures that consider the unique vulnerabilities of LGBTQ+ communities.
- *Relief and Recovery:* Design recovery programs that are inclusive of LGBTQ+ needs and experiences.

2. Foster Collaborations Between Feminist and LGBTQ+ Organizations:

- Encourage partnerships to build cohesive strategies that address overlapping issues of gender and sexual orientation in peacebuilding efforts.

3. Queer the National Action Plan:

- Use inclusive indicators and benchmarks to measure progress effectively.

4. Provide Dedicated Funding and Resources:

- Allocate specific funds to support LGBTQ+ initiatives within the WPS agenda, ensuring sustained and focused efforts.

5. Implement Intersectional Approaches:

- Recognize the interconnectedness of various forms of identity and oppression, ensuring that policies address the complex realities faced by LGBTQ+ individuals.

By adopting these recommendations, the UK can enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of its WPS initiatives, ensuring that they address the diverse needs of all individuals affected by conflict. For a comprehensive understanding and additional resources, you can access the full toolkit here: [Queering the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: A Practice-Based Toolkit](#).

Recommendations:

- Prioritise full WPS implementation in Northern Ireland beyond Ending Violence Against Women and Girls including with respect to health inequalities (Recommendation 5)
 - Adopt an intersectional approach to inclusion (Recommendation 4)
 - Implement co-design and participatory models (Recommendation 7)
-

6. Are there appropriate accountability mechanisms in place to ensure that the Government is meeting its WPS commitments, and that these commitments are translated into substantive outcomes?

The 2023–2027 UK NAP presents a **step forward** in developing a more systematic and learning-oriented Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework. It moves beyond basic monitoring to emphasize **learning and adaptation**, and aims to improve **disaggregated data use** and **civil society collaboration**. However, gaps persist around **transparency of indicators**, **regional inclusion**, and **resourcing for MEL activities**, particularly in conflict-affected or devolved areas.

Additionally, there is a need for oversight in relation to ensure that local policy contradictions do not occur. The following is a case study for how one local policy is impacting negatively on the WPS agenda.

CASE STUDY: Overcoming the 5 week wait for universal credit: The 5 week wait is a significant source of hardship. It means new Universal Credit claimants must experience a period without (sufficient) income – or take out a loan that leads to deductions from their regular Universal Credit payments. Research by the Women’s Regional Consortium and the Equality Commission has shown that the 5 week wait to receive universal credit has been a “driver” for paramilitary and illegal lending in addition to debt, hunger, food bank reliance, and poverty.⁸

Furthermore, local social inclusion policies and strategies (with appropriate investment) could strengthen UK WPS commitments into devolved regions. Failure to produce a Gender Equality Strategy in Northern Ireland reflects the current rollback on rights and threatens implementation of UNSCR 1325 locally. Enhancing local government accountability as part of the NAP could strengthen the Government’s WPS

⁸ <https://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Womens-Regional-Consortium-response-to-NI-Affairs-Committee-Call-for-Evidence-on-Paramilitaries.pdf>

commitments and ensure meaningful participation of women in all their diversity in participative democracy in the ongoing peace process in Northern Ireland.⁹

Recommendations:

- Establish a robust MEL framework with civil society oversight from across devolved regions (Recommendation 1)
 - Prioritise full WPS implementation in Northern Ireland beyond Ending Violence Against Women and Girls including social inclusion strategies such as the Gender Equality Strategy and others (Recommendation 5)
-

7. Can you provide examples of successful programmes or initiatives where the UK's WPS framework has led to measurable improvements in women's security and participation in peace processes?

Limited impact data hampers full evaluation.

Recommendations:

- Improve data collection and reporting to showcase outcomes
 - Strengthen international collaboration (Recommendation 9)
-

8. What are the current trends that can be observed in respect of adherence of the international WPS agenda? What role does the UK play on an international scale, and how can this be improved?

Globally, the WPS agenda faces decline due to militarisation and shrinking civic space and rollback of rights. The UK's role is further weakened by policy contradictions (e.g. arms exports).

⁹ [https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/DMU/Brexit-Impact-on-Women\(Feb2024\).pdf](https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/DMU/Brexit-Impact-on-Women(Feb2024).pdf)

With a change in the funding landscape, investment in women's rights organisations and peacebuilding efforts is declining. However, "findings from women involved in peacebuilding in Northern Ireland stress that international networking is important and valuable, and could significantly contribute to building local good practice, as well as build participants' personal networks, skills and understanding of women's experiences in other (post)conflict regions.

"Participants also felt that strengthened networking could bring new perspectives that can support innovation and help women in communities in Northern Ireland build a better understanding of the experiences of women in other (post)conflict regions. This was felt to be vital in the current local and global context, as a mechanism to maintain and build solidarity, and explore ways to maintain multilateral networks and structures, in order to effectively implement the WPS agenda.

"However, it was repeatedly stressed that meaningful networking must be adequately supported and resourced, as this is the only way to ensure women in Northern Ireland can participate in such networks. Resourcing does not need to be significant, but it does need to be sustained, and it was proposed that supporting a specific networking focal point, for example a local organisation with close connections to the women's sector as well as grassroots groups, would be a potentially very effective mechanism to build networks and identify ways to meaningfully share and cascade learning across women's networks in Northern Ireland."¹⁰

Recommendations:

- Reassert international leadership through transnational networks (Recommendation 9)
 - Address digital harassment of women peacebuilders (Recommendation 10)
-

9. What can the UK Government do to ensure that its WPS efforts are sustainable long-term, particularly in light of global political shifts?

Sustainable WPS implementation requires a holistic, trauma-informed, and locally grounded approach.

¹⁰ TOGETHER, ACROSS DIFFERENCE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING TRANSNATIONAL MOVEMENTS FROM WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND, COLOMBIA AND IRAQ. (Women's Platform and GAPS UK) <https://womensplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Networking-for-women-peacebuilders-Findings-from-feasibility-study.pdf>

As Kisane Prutton, C.Psychol., AFBPsS, states:

“‘Ordinary’ women have a substantive, and pre-political role to play in the social transformation of countries transitioning from conflict. Women’s mental health and emotional wellbeing are fundamental to their change agency. In the economic climate of budgetary cuts and global insecurity, women’s groups are one example of a grass-roots psychosocial resource where the long term benefits outweigh the investment. Long-range funding must be ring fenced to protect these groups. Elsewhere, the funding of women’s programmes and services needs to address the psychology of self-belief that underpins women’s capacity to make a difference. This requires a disciplinary shift in thinking. Funding must accommodate a more complex understanding of women and the interrelationship between their mental health, emotional wellbeing and agency (both as individual and as a collective). Siloed funding fails their potential, as motivated agents of change.”

Recommendations:

- Ring-fence funding for grassroots and mental health-informed services (Recommendation 2)
 - Embed WPS within education, health, and justice policy sectors (Recommendation 8)
-

10. Summary of Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendations for Strengthening the UK’s Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan (NAP)

The UK’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security is a vital framework to promote gender equality and inclusive peacebuilding. To enhance its effectiveness and impact, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Strengthen Implementation, Monitoring, and Accountability

Develop clearer frameworks for the effective implementation and monitoring of the NAP. Incorporate robust data collection, transparent reporting, and independent evaluation mechanisms to ensure commitments translate into tangible outcomes.¹

2. Increase Sustainable Funding and Support for Local Women’s Groups

Ensure dedicated, long-term funding for grassroots women’s organizations, particularly in sensitive contexts such as Northern Ireland, where local women play a crucial role in peacebuilding and community cohesion.²

3. Ensure Transparency in Investment and Resource Allocation

Enhance transparency regarding the allocation and use of funds within the NAP. Publicly accessible reporting will foster accountability and build trust with women peacebuilders and affected communities.³

4. Adopt an Intersectional Approach

Incorporate intersectional analysis that addresses the diverse identities of women, including race, disability, socio-economic status, and other factors, to ensure peace processes and policies are truly inclusive.⁴

5. Prioritize Full Implementation in Northern Ireland

Recognize Northern Ireland as a key context for the WPS agenda, ensuring full and context-sensitive implementation of the NAP to support women's participation in peacebuilding, address sectarian conflict's gendered impacts, and promote reconciliation.⁵

6. Broaden Definitions of Security and Armed Conflict

Expand the understanding of security beyond military aspects to include economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Likewise, redefine armed conflict to reflect low-intensity, protracted, and post-conflict scenarios relevant to the UK's own contexts.⁶

7. Embed Co-Design and Public Participation Models

Implement co-design models that actively involve women at all stages of policy development. Drawing on the UK's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, foster participatory approaches that ensure women's voices meaningfully shape policies impacting their lives.⁷

8. Adopt a Whole Government Approach with Emphasis on Justice and Education

Promote integrated action across government departments, with a particular focus on justice and education sectors. This approach should address systemic inequalities, support survivors, develop gender-sensitive curricula, and cultivate a culture of peace and equality.⁸

9. Enhance International Collaboration and Networking

Strengthen cross-border cooperation and knowledge-sharing among women peacebuilders by prioritizing international collaboration. Recent evidence from Women's Platform highlights the value of networking to amplify women's voices and improve peacebuilding outcomes globally.^{9 10}

10. Address Online and Digital Violence Against Women

Incorporate measures to protect women peacebuilders from online harassment and digital violence, recognizing the growing importance of digital spaces for activism and community building.¹¹

Endnotes

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