



House of Commons
Women and Equalities
Committee

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the UK

Eighth Report of Session 2016–17

*Report, together with formal minutes
relating to the report*

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Women and Equalities Committee

The Women and Equalities Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

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Summary

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed by world leaders at the United Nations in 2015 and came into force in January 2016, requiring both domestic and international implementation by all signatories. The UK Government was at the heart of the SDG development process and strongly advocated for the inclusion of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), which aims to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2030. The nine targets under SDG 5, including the theme of ‘leaving no-one behind’, are reflected in some existing UK legislation and policy. However, unlike 22 other countries, the UK has not yet set out a clear strategic plan for the achievement of SDG 5. This stands in stark contrast to the UK’s leadership in formulating the SDGs.

We welcome the Government’s commitment to incorporating the SDGs into refreshed Single Departmental Plans (SDPs). However, many of the targets under SDG 5 require cross-departmental working and it is not clear that effective lines of responsibility for co-ordinating this have been established.

The collection of accurate data that can be broken down to reflect the experiences of the most disadvantaged people is central to the successful achievement and monitoring of the SDGs. We have heard that serious gaps exist in the necessary data which must be addressed urgently. Civil society and business are needed to help fill these gaps and to support the monitoring of SDG 5. The Government must ensure that the appropriate resources, support and incentives are put in place to achieve this.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 is more than an international obligation that the UK must meet. It represents an opportunity to develop the most effective structures and policies to achieve gender equality in the UK. We hope the Government will accept in full our recommendations for how this can be achieved. These include:

- The Government should domestically publicise its commitment to the SDGs in the UK and immediately commit to reporting to the UN’s High Level Political Forum in 2018.
- The Minister for Women and Equalities should take responsibility for ensuring the achievement of SDG 5 across government.
- The Government Equalities Office (GEO) should immediately consult on developing the most effective mechanism for facilitating ongoing partnership between government and civil society to achieve SDG 5.
- The GEO should ensure that the key SDG principle of ‘leaving no-one behind’ is fully embedded in its revised Single Departmental Plan.
- There is confusion around the role of the Office for National Statistics in developing national indicators and monitoring progress towards SDG 5, and this role must be clarified. The Government should also ensure funding for expert organisations to participate fully in the data collection and monitoring functions necessary for the successful achievement of SDG 5.

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals

1. In September 2015, 193 Member States attending the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Summit in New York adopted a new global development framework: ‘Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’. The Agenda consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under which sit 169 targets. These commit all signatory countries to making significant progress by 2030 across a range of issues including climate change, access to quality education and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies.
2. The UK Government played a significant role in ensuring the universality of the SDGs, also known as Agenda 2030, which apply equally to developed and developing countries. This is in contrast to their precursor, the Millennium Development Goals, which applied only to developing countries. The SDGs officially came into force on 1 January 2016 and the UK must now move forward with achieving the Goals domestically.

Sustainable Development Goal 5

3. UN Women describes Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) as “the stand-alone gender goal” because it is specifically dedicated to achieving women and girls’ equality and empowerment.¹
4. There are nine targets under SDG 5. These are:
 - End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
 - Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
 - Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
 - Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
 - Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
 - Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
 - Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

¹ UN Women, [A transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality](#), accessed 21 February 2017

- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

5. In addition to Goal 5, it is important to note that women's empowerment and gender equality underpin many of the Goals, and that all 17 Goals are intended to work together to reinforce one another. While our report is focused on SDG 5, we recognise that action across all the Goals is essential to achieving their aims.

Our inquiry

6. This inquiry was launched on 26 October 2016; the terms of reference are included in the Annex to this report. We received 46 written submissions from individuals and organisations. We also acknowledge two previous inquiries into the SDGs more broadly, undertaken in 2016 by the International Development Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee; their reports have informed our deliberations and are referenced here where relevant.

7. We held three evidence sessions for this inquiry, focussing on issues including data collection and monitoring, governance structures, partnership working to implement SDG 5 and how the domestic implementation of SDG 5 should address the needs of the most disadvantaged and marginalised women and girls in the UK. In our final session we heard from the Office for National Statistics and Ministers from the Government Equalities Office and the Department for International Development.

8. We are grateful to everyone who submitted written evidence, attended oral evidence sessions and contributed to this inquiry. We are also grateful to our specialist advisor, Janet Veitch OBE,² for her assistance throughout the inquiry process.

2 Interest declared: undertakes part-time consultancy work for Rape Crisis England and Wales.

1 Why should the UK engage with SDG 5?

Government commitment to the SDGs

9. The UK Government has been widely acknowledged as playing an important role in the development of the SDGs, and SDG 5 in particular.³ Lord Bates, Minister of State for the Department for International Development, told us:

a number of the goals that we secured, whether it be on forced marriage, FGM, access to education or sexual reproductive health—which came up against real opposition—involved tremendous effort from the Government working internationally and with civil society to bring about those changes. We have shown leadership.⁴

10. This leadership came from the highest political levels. Former Prime Minister David Cameron played a key role in the development of the SDGs as Co-Chair of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda 2012–13. He also personally hosted a side-event on the theme of ‘leaving no-one behind’ during the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Summit.⁵

11. In her first speech to the UN, in September 2016, Prime Minister Theresa May emphasised the UK’s role in the implementation of the SDGs, specifically referring to women and girls:

We will drive forward the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. We will continue to champion the rights of women and girls, making sure that all girls get the education they deserve, and tackling horrific abuses such as female genital mutilation and the use of sexual violence in conflict.⁶

12. The Government stated its continuing commitment to the SDGs in its evidence to this inquiry, saying that it

is committed to the implementation of the goals—both as part of our continuing commitment to being a key player in strategic international development and through our own domestic policy agenda.⁷

13. The Minister for International Development reiterated the importance of the domestic implementation in oral evidence to us, emphasising that

the SDGs apply not only internationally but equally domestically, and that is what makes them unique and different from the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals], and therefore we have to ensure that we meet all of those obligations at a national level as we meet them and advance them at international level.⁸

3 Independent Commission for Aid Impact, [DfID’s efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: a learning review](#) (May 2016), para 3.52

4 Q199

5 Department for International Development, [Leaving No-One Behind: our promise](#), accessed 28 February 2017

6 Prime Minister’s Office, [Theresa May’s speech to the UN General Assembly](#) (September 2016)

7 [Government Equalities Office](#) (SDG003)

8 Q199

14. Caroline Dinenage MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Early Years, told us that for Government Equalities Office (GEO), “Goal 5 embeds everything that [it is] always trying to do,” and that it is “very keen that that spreads throughout Government.”⁹

Why domestic implementation of SDG 5 matters

15. Several stakeholders told us that domestic achievement of SDG 5 was key to maintaining the UK’s position as a leading proponent of women’s rights globally. The British Council argued that if the UK took a proactive role in sharing its experience of implementing the goals with other countries, that “would cement the UK’s credibility and leadership in this area and help spread values of equality around the world.”¹⁰ The Government Equalities Office states that one of its priorities is “using our influence to promote international equality”.¹¹

16. Witnesses drew attention to the potentially negative effects of any discrepancy between the UK’s leadership role in championing SDG 5 and its record in taking action to achieve the goal. Jessica Woodroffe of the Gender and Development Network pointed to the leadership shown by “both David Cameron and Justine Greening [...] on the international stage, particularly on gender” and noted that without the UK’s contribution “a lot of the language on gender equality would not have been in Agenda 2030.” She warned that if the UK is not seen to take action in developing a clear plan, it “runs the risk of looking very paternalistic, very patronising and not being prepared to practise what it preaches, by having called on countries with far fewer resources to do things that it will not itself commit to.”¹²

17. Other witnesses told us that not clearly setting out a strategy for SDG 5 domestically could affect the UK’s position within the UN. Marianne Haslegrave of the Commonwealth Medical Trust said:

We could put ourselves into isolation when it comes to the whole process, which is not a good place to be, particularly when we worked so hard to get gender equality, women’s empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights into the agenda. The UK spoke up, spoke up and spoke up all the time. Now it is not there.¹³

Domestic opportunities presented by SDG 5

18. The SDGs present the Government with an opportunity to demonstrate work already done in the UK and show commitment to further work towards gender equality in the UK. As Plan International UK noted, “the SDGs have the potential to transform girls’ and women’s lives.”¹⁴ The Government Equalities Office (GEO) itself drew attention to

9 Q163

10 [British Council](#) (SDG0019), para 1.8

11 Government Equalities Office, [About us](#), accessed 28 February 2017

12 Q33

13 Q4 [Marianne Haslegrave]

14 [Plan International UK](#) (SDG0018), para 33

the alignment between SDG 5 and its own priorities, saying that “our domestic policy agenda on equality strongly supports the aims and spirit of Goal 5, as well as many of the priorities set out in it.”¹⁵

19. The focus within the SDGs on the principle of ‘leaving no-one behind’ also presents opportunities for alignment with the Government’s domestic policy priorities. This principle commits signatory countries to prioritising the needs of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups within each country. Dr Carole Easton of the Young Women’s Trust explained how there is evidence that women’s equality and empowerment is already valued in the UK, but that SDG 5 can add “weight and leverage” to this, particularly in terms of women not being left behind.¹⁶

20. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) pointed out that the SDGs can play a role in supporting other government commitments on gender equality. Specifically, it said a focus on the SDGs could strengthen the UK’s forthcoming state report to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), due in July 2017.¹⁷

21. The UK Government was at the heart of developing the Sustainable Development Goals and led globally on the inclusion of a standalone goal addressing gender equality. Existing policies and legislation show the Government’s commitment to gender equality but a clear plan is needed now. Domestic engagement with the SDGs is therefore critical to the UK’s standing at the UN, and to its position as a world leader on gender equality. The Government needs to act to ensure the effective implementation of SDG 5 in the UK as a matter of priority.

22. Domestic engagement with the SDGs, and SDG 5 in particular, can do more than protect the UK’s international standing. The Goals present the Government with an opportunity to further its work on achieving gender equality and improving the lives of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people and to leave no-one behind.

15 [Government Equalities Office](#) (SDG0003)

16 Q112 [Dr Easton]

17 [CEDAW](#) was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. It is often described as an international bill of rights for women.

2 Government leadership

23. This chapter examines how the Government has allocated responsibility for domestic achievement of SDG 5, actions it has taken to date, and levels of domestic political leadership. It also looks at how other, similar countries are allocating responsibility for the SDGs within government and considers whether the UK would benefit from submitting to a UN assessment of its progress.

Responsibility for the SDGs

24. The question of which government department is responsible for action to achieve the SDGs has been raised in previous inquiries. The International Development Committee recommended in its report that “the Cabinet Office should lead on this work, in consultation with the Department for International Development (DFID).”¹⁸ In response, the Government said it believed that

Agenda 2030 should continue to sit under the leadership of the Secretary of State for International Development as DFID is well placed to oversee the agenda in its entirety, having played a key role in negotiating the goals, which have poverty reduction as one of their primary objectives.¹⁹

The Government also noted the role of the Minister for the Cabinet Office to “support the domestic implementation of Agenda 2030”.²⁰

25. In written evidence to this inquiry, the Government reiterated its position that the “primary purpose” of the SDGs is to eradicate global poverty, and therefore it is appropriate for DFID to retain “policy oversight” of them. It also noted that the “Cabinet Office supports DFID by coordinating across the departments.”²¹

26. When asked for clarification of the respective roles of the Cabinet Office and DFID, the Minister for International Development told us that:

Our Secretary of State will play a co-ordinating role in ensuring that people understand what the policy is and what the intention is behind it, because we have that institutional knowledge built up over time. It is the Secretary of State’s responsibility to then report to the Cabinet Office.²²

27. The Minister for International Development further explained that, with regard to the SDGs, his Department was not “a lead department in a traditional sense.” He said that DFID would lead on the SDGs and make sure the policy was understood, with co-ordination being done by the Cabinet Office. He also noted that within this structure, “the Cabinet Office have their traditional role of scrutinising the single departmental plans” to ensure that SDG commitments are being met.²³

18 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 103, para 77

19 International Development Committee, Fourth Special Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Government response](#), HC 673

20 International Development Committee, Fourth Special Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Government response](#), HC 673

21 [Government Equalities Office \(SDG003\)](#)

22 Q177

23 Q175

28. In respect of SDG 5, the Government stated that the Government Equalities Office (GEO) “will lead on reporting for government in terms of domestic implementation of Goal 5, in a similar [...] way that GEO does for the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).”²⁴ The Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years told us that:

the GEO’s role really is liaising with other Government departments in the implementation of SDG 5 in particular and being available to support and advise other Government departments on that particular aspect of it and how we do all the gender equality aspects.²⁵

Recommendations for change

29. A variety of suggestions have been made to improve how the Government manages the SDGs. Jessica Woodroffe of the Gender and Development Network said that leadership from the very top of government could drive action:

We need the Prime Minister to play a leading role in this, in the way that her predecessor did. This is about whole-government action, and this shuffling around about who is doing what is clearly not working.²⁶

The Minister for International Development argued that leadership on the SDGs was, in fact, coming from the very top of government. He said that, “The Prime Minister is obviously key in this as leading this.”²⁷

30. In its 2016 report, the International Development Committee recommended that the Cabinet Office should lead on this work, in consultation with DFID. The UN Women National Committee UK also suggested that “the Cabinet Office report [...] to parliament each year on the progress made across government departments and agencies in the implementation of SDG.”²⁸

31. Other recommendations we heard for improving the effectiveness of government responsibility for the SDGs included that:

- A Cabinet Office Minister should hold the SDG portfolio (UKSSD);²⁹
- High-level leadership should come from the Prime Minister and Cabinet Office (Plan International UK);³⁰
- The Government should establish clear lines of responsibility and mechanisms for coordination between Government departments (UN Women National Committee UK);³¹

24 [Government Equalities Office \(SDG003\)](#)

25 Q210

26 Q34

27 Q176

28 [UN Women \(SDG0009\)](#), para 2

29 [UKSSD \(SDG0032\)](#), para 6

30 [Plan International UK \(SGG0018\)](#), para 6

31 [UN Women \(SDG0009\)](#)

- Each government department should have an individual lead on gender equality and there should be an overall lead to ensure progress across all departments (Agenda).³²

Awareness of the SDGs in the UK

32. Whilst there are high levels of awareness of the Government's work on FGM, domestic violence, and broader equality issues, the lack of a plan and domestic political leadership on SDG 5 have been cited as reasons for low levels of awareness of the SDGs amongst business and civil society in the UK. Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson told us that no-one in her network of women's organisations in the West Midlands had heard of SDG 5. She commented that

There has not been the leadership to say, "This is an important thing we have signed up to. We have led the way globally on this, and now we are going to deliver domestically", which has made organisations start getting involved, pushing on their bit and identifying issues. That mechanism needs to be in place for engagement, in order to create the pressure that is one of the key things for leadership to happen.³³

33. This view was backed up by British Council research. That research found that awareness of the SDGs was fairly low among organisations that had a predominantly domestic focus and agenda, while much higher among NGOs engaging in international development, for example members of the Gender and Development Network. The British Council interpreted this as an indication that "the universality of the goals and the significance of Goal 5 have not been taken on board by the majority of organisations and experts focusing on gender equality in the UK".³⁴

34. Lynn Everson, owner of a small business and representative of the Business and Professional Women's Network, noted a similarly low level of SDG knowledge amongst businesses:

Some commentators translate the SDGs as "Senseless, Dreamy and Garbled" and they are conspicuous by their absence in business circles in the UK. Indeed the British Chambers of Commerce makes no reference to the SDGs on its website. The concept and title are complex and seem remote whereas they should be taken as a blueprint of commercial best practice for all sizes of company and organisation, so they must be better publicised and mainstreamed.³⁵

35. In response to questions about the Government's plans to publicise the SDGs, the Minister for International Development expressed a hope that the Government's forthcoming report on Agenda 2030 would bring some publicity to the issue.³⁶

32 [Agenda](#) (SDG0004), para 10

33 Q46

34 [British Council](#) (SDG0019), para 4.1

35 [Business and Professional Women UK](#) (SDG0047)

36 Q169

Government action on the SDGs

Review of Single Departmental Plans

36. In its response to the inquiry, and in evidence to other select committees, the Government has focused on its forthcoming review of Single Departmental Plans (SDPs) as central to its work on the SDGs domestically. The Government initially rejected the International Development Committee's recommendation that "each department's Single Departmental Plan, [...] should be urgently reviewed [...] with specific references to relevant SDGs by number."³⁷ The Government responded that the Conservative Party general election manifesto "sets out the policy areas through which the UK will make its contribution to implementation of the goals."³⁸ However, in evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee on 17 January 2017, Cabinet Office Minister Chris Skidmore said that a "refresh" of Single Departmental Plans was taking place with the results to be published by the end of April 2017, and that this would "ensure that SDGs are fully referenced in all SDPs in every Department."³⁹

37. The Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years told us that this refresh of the SDPs is central to the Government's plan for implementation, and that the plans

will encapsulate how this is mainstreamed throughout Government. They will hopefully reassure stakeholders and organisations that do not feel that we are taking this seriously that every aspect of Government does have to take a view on this and pay reference to the goal.⁴⁰

38. The importance of each SDG target having clear "departmental ownership" was acknowledged by the Minister for International Development who explained that the "targets, obligations and indicators" included within SDPs were a priority at almost every departmental board. He noted that each SDG indicator "will be owned by a department and each departmental organisation will meet and be very much focused on delivering those indicators." The Minister said he expected this system would "drive quite a lot of activity and suggestions as to how we make better progress if we are falling behind."⁴¹

39. We asked the Ministers who is responsible for oversight of this process. The Minister for International Development's answer again focused on a division of responsibility between his Department and the Cabinet Office:

If there is an indicator that we are falling behind on, a target we are not meeting or a goal that is inadequately covered, [DFID] would spot that and, in our policy overview role, highlight it. However, we would highlight it in partnership with the Cabinet Office to the department for it to take action rather than necessarily stipulating what that action should be.⁴²

37 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 103, para 77

38 International Development Committee, Fourth Special Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Government response](#), HC 673

39 [Oral evidence taken before the Environmental Audit Committee](#) on 17 January 2017, HC 596, Q160

40 Q164

41 Q211

42 Q219

Publication of a report on Agenda 2030

40. In its response to the International Development Committee's report, the Government said it would publish a report setting out a clear narrative for the Government's approach to implementing the SDGs internationally and domestically. This would include "key principles, flagship initiatives and expected results and further information on how the government is set up to contribute towards achievement of Agenda 2030."⁴³

41. The Minister for International Development told us that this report would "go through goal by goal and identify the areas that [the Government is] going to focus on" in both an international and domestic context.⁴⁴ The Minister confirmed that this report was likely to be published in March or April 2017.

Lessons from other countries

42. While the UK has yet to publish its plan for domestic achievement of the SDGs, some other European countries have already set out their strategies in this area. Marianne Haslegrave of the Commonwealth Medical Trust was among several witnesses to criticise what she saw as the UK's relative lack of strategic plan on the SDGs.⁴⁵ She argued that

While the UK played a leading role in the development of the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, it is now in danger of being left behind in comparison with many other European countries, in implementation, follow up and review.⁴⁶

43. Other countries cited as examples of good practice included the Czech Republic, Germany and Switzerland. All three are cited in the International Development Committee's report.⁴⁷

43 International Development Committee, Fourth Special Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Government response](#), HC 673

44 Q187

45 See also Q36 [Sam Smethers], Q54 [Jessica Woodroffe] and Q4 [Dr Helen Mott].

46 [Commonwealth Medical Trust](#) (SDG0011), para 2

47 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 103

Box 1: How other countries have set out their plans to implement the SDGs

The Czech Republic's response to a UN regional survey on SDG implementation states that, "The Government Office has the leading role in the implementation process, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment. The Government Council for Sustainable Development, chaired by the Prime Minister, will serve as a coordination body to ensure that all key stakeholders are involved and informed about the process."

In Germany the Federal Chancellery is currently leading the process to revise and adapt its National Sustainable Development Strategy to reflect the 2030 Agenda. Responsibility has been given to the Chancellery, rather than one of the ministries, as "sustainable development is a guiding principle of any policy of the German government". The existing National Sustainable Development Strategy will "be structured along the 17 SDGs in a comprehensive manner. It will cover national implementation measures with both internal and external effects as well as measures aiming at progress at international level".

The Swiss Government published its Sustainable Development Strategy for 2016–2019 in January 2016. The Strategy states: "The 2030 Agenda is not legally binding, but provides an important reference framework for Switzerland. The Federal Council takes it very seriously, and is committed on both the national and international levels to the Agenda's implementation. One of the ways in which this will happen at national level is through the specific targets defined in this Sustainable Development Strategy, which is based on the SDG and will help to achieve them [...]. The aim in the future is to align the Strategy as comprehensively as possible with the 2030 Agenda to secure Switzerland's contribution to achieving the SDG by 2030".

Source: International Development Committee, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

44. Norway's approach to the SDGs was also given as an example of good practice by Bond/GADN in their written evidence to our inquiry. In some ways it is similar to the UK Government's plans for single departmental plans, with each of the 17 SDGs being allocated a co-ordinating ministry responsible for implementation, in consultation with other ministries involved in the targets. A key difference is the existence of a report from each ministry "on the status of follow-up for its respective goal(s) in its budget proposal." These proposals are then brought together by the Ministry of Finance in a national budget white paper and presented to the Storting (Norwegian Parliament) annually, along with the state budget.⁴⁸

45. Finland was also pointed to as an example for the UK to follow. Womankind Worldwide recommended that the UK follow its example of creating "high-level leadership [to] ensure that the SDGs are implemented as a universal agenda". Womankind Worldwide explained that, from 1 January 2016, the government of Finland transferred the coordinating secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development from the Ministry of the Environment to the Prime Minister's office. The aim was to strengthen "policy coherence for the implementation of the various dimensions of sustainable development".⁴⁹

48 [Bond/GADN](#) (SDG0028), para 32

49 [Womankind Worldwide](#) (SDG0020), para 9

46. Through its examination of a variety of approaches to implementing the SDGs, Bond/GADN suggested that:

a good national approach to implementation would include at least:

- an analysis of existing policies and practices to identify gaps and ensure alignment against the SDGs;
- formal institutional framework set up to ensure that Parliament and Government Departments are actively and regularly engaged with the agenda, coordinated by the Head of Government's office;
- clear lines of responsibility for the delivery of each goal;
- clear mechanisms for engaging a broad range of stakeholders and the wider public to garner support for the SDGs in society at large; and
- a planning and policy-making approach which explicitly refers to the SDGs.⁵⁰

Bond/GADN concluded that “so far the UK Government has not delivered any of the above.”⁵¹ It remains to be seen how far the forthcoming report from the Department for International Development and the refresh of Single Departmental Plans will address these issues.

High Level Political Forum

47. A specific action taken by some of the countries cited as being good examples for the UK to follow is participation in the UN's High Level Political Forum (HLPF). This is a voluntary process that takes place every July. At the HLPF a country delivers a report on its progress, successes and challenges, and will have this discussed by other states and stakeholders. The frequency with which countries are obliged to submit to these reviews has not yet been decided.

48. The UK has not yet submitted a review and has not signed up to do so in 2017. A number of stakeholders, including the Commonwealth Medical Trust and the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO), have suggested that the UK should commit to participating in the national review process at HLPF in 2018 “and take a leadership role, rather than being left behind.”⁵² Jessica Woodroffe of GADN told us that, although scrutiny provided by participating in the Forum would be brief, the process of producing the report itself would “spur on action.”⁵³ She also pointed out that:

The lesson both from the [Millennium Development Goals] and from what other countries have so far done on the SDGs suggests that committing to voluntary national reporting is going to be key. Having an annual review, with a high level of stakeholder consultation, will also be key.⁵⁴

50 [Bond/GADN \(SDG0028\)](#), para 37

51 [Bond/GADN \(SDG0028\)](#), para 37

52 [Commonwealth Medical Trust \(SDG0011\)](#), para 9

53 Q48 [Jessica Woodroffe]

54 Q56 [Jessica Woodroffe]

49. Bond/GADN recommended that the UK should submit “at least three national reviews by 2030” and spelt out how such a review should be managed:

The process for preparing the report should be open, inclusive and participatory, supporting the active and meaningful engagement of citizens, with particular efforts to include marginalised groups.⁵⁵

NAWO suggested the UK follow the example of Finland, which developed its report to the HLPF in 2016 with the full involvement of civil society who were also involved in the report’s presentation to the UN.⁵⁶

50. When questioned on whether the Government would participate in the 2018 review, the Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years said:

We want to see what comes out of the Single Departmental Plans, when they come out later on in the year. We want to see what comes out of the ONS project and consultation. [...] It would be foolish for us to plough on and go and report to the High-level Group without that knowledge in our arsenal. However, we do not shy away from reporting.⁵⁷

The Minister also told us that “On average, only about six countries can report each year anyway.”⁵⁸ However, 22 countries reported in 2016,⁵⁹ and as of February 2017, a further 43 countries had committed to reporting in 2017.⁶⁰

51. We welcome the Government’s refresh of Single Departmental Plans to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This demonstrates a clear commitment to the goals and their domestic implementation. However, the UK is lagging behind many of its OECD counterparts in terms of outlining a clear plan for the achievement of the SDGs. This stands in stark contrast to the UK’s leadership role in formulating the SDGs, and in championing the inclusion of a standalone gender goal. It is regrettable that the UK has already missed opportunities to submit data to the UN and to participate in the High Level Political Forum in 2017. The Government must take the opportunity that the refreshed Single Departmental Plans provide, and use this to raise awareness of the SDGs, and SDG 5 in particular, across the UK.

52. In order to achieve this, our main recommendation is that:

Leadership on the SDGs should come from the top of Government. The Government should domestically publicise its commitment to the achievement of the SDGs in the UK. It should immediately commit to reporting to the UN’s High Level Political Forum in 2018.

53. In addition to this,

We support the International Development Committee’s recommendation that responsibility for the SDGs should sit within the Cabinet Office and not the Department

55 [Bond/GADN \(SDG0028\)](#), para 5

56 [National Alliance of Women’s Organisations \(SDG0027\)](#)

57 Q171 [Caroline Dinéage]

58 Q170

59 UN, [Inputs to the 2016 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#), accessed 21 February 2017

60 UN, [SDGs in Action newsletter](#) (February 2017)

for International Development. The Government should take greater leadership by bringing together the elements of Single Departmental Plans that support the SDGs in a co-ordinated National Implementation Plan, to be led by the Cabinet Office.

54. We urge the Government to publish its report examining the domestic implementation of the SDGs, as promised to the International Development Committee in September 2016, without further delay.

3 Specific actions to achieve SDG 5

55. The UK is a global leader on equality policies and law, and SDG 5 can help drive further improvement in empowering all women and girls in the UK. This chapter will outline actions that are needed to ensure the successful achievement of SDG 5 in the UK. It begins by assessing the Single Departmental Plans (SDPs), as these are the key mechanism through which the Government proposes to embed SDG targets in domestic policy-making. We will examine which specific targets should be included in departmental plans in order to achieve SDG 5, and outline some of the barriers that stand in their way. We will also examine how the core SDG principle of ‘leaving no-one behind’ can be incorporated within departmental plans.

56. Recommendations for other actions that could be used to support the domestic implementation of SDG 5 will then be assessed; these include using existing domestic legislation and international obligations as well as a broader focus on gender equality across government departments. Finally, we will examine some of the issues that must be addressed to ensure that SDG 5 is effectively implemented across the UK, including within the devolved administrations.

Refreshed Single Departmental Plans

57. In chapter 2, we noted that the Government’s refresh of Single Departmental Plans (SDPs) to include specific references to the SDGs demonstrates a commitment to domestic implementation of the goals. It is not just the fact of these refreshed plans which is important, however, but the extent to which they explicitly cover and allocate responsibility for all of the targets attached to the goals.

58. The Minister for International Development told us that the forthcoming Government report on the SDGs will not detail exactly how the goals are allocated across departments. However, he stated that this will be included in the Single Departmental Plans which:

will go down to the granular level of detail with each of the indicators that are set about how we are going to go about implementing them and measuring them.⁶¹

The Government Equalities Office’s current Single Department Plan

59. The GEO’s Single Departmental Plan targets are incorporated within the Department for Education’s plan. The aims relevant to SDG 5 currently included in the GEO section of that plan are those related to reducing the gender pay gap, increasing women’s representation on boards and promoting female leadership in the media, charitable and education sectors. The plan states that GEO is:

- working towards reducing the gender pay gap and pushing employers to do so, by:
 - implementing regulations requiring employers with at least 250 employees to publish the difference between the average pay and bonuses of their male and female employees;

- extending these reporting requirements to larger public sector employers;
 - stimulating debate and action on women’s economic inequality through strong communication and leadership; and
 - delivering support, guidance and best practice to support businesses to report, analyse and act on their pay data.
- working to build on the achievement of meeting Lord Davies’ target of 25 per cent FTSE 100 board positions being filled by women by increasing female representation on FTSE 350 boards to 33 per cent by 2020, which will include:
 - working with business to ensure a third of FTSE 350 board positions are held by women;
 - helping women progress through management to senior positions; and
 - promoting female leadership in the media, charitable and education sectors.⁶²

60. The relevant performance metrics are the percentage difference between the average earnings of men and women and the proportion of FTSE 350 board positions that are held by women.

What should be included in refreshed Single Departmental Plans

61. The following SDG 5 targets, which are highly relevant to the UK, are currently not included in any department’s Single Departmental Plan:

- Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

A further target within Goal 5 calls for ensuring “women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.”⁶³ Although the GEO’s current plan does include taking steps to achieve increased participation by women in public and economic leadership (through its work on women and boards), there is nothing within the plan referring to women’s political leadership or participation in political life.

62. The target on unpaid caring was raised as an example of a target which could deliver significant change, but which also raises questions about where SDGs sit and how they are measured.⁶⁴

62 Department for Education, [Single departmental plan 2015 to 2020](#), accessed 28 February 2017

63 UN, [Goal 5 targets](#), accessed 20 February 2017

64 Q38 [Jessica Woodroffe]

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson observed:

It does not fit anywhere neatly. Some of it has impact on women's poverty in old age: the surest route to poverty in old age is to be a woman and look after other people for nothing. That shows how we value unpaid work, if the price you pay for it in retirement is poverty. It does not fit neatly into any Department, so there is a gap there.⁶⁵

63. Dr Graham Long also pointed out that measuring the target on unpaid caring led to “an incredibly tough question that is worth asking: what kind of form should valuing unpaid or domestic work take?” He explained that the UN does give some suggestions of ways to measure the target, for example, through the provision of public services, infrastructure, social protection policies, and promotion of shared responsibility in the family. However, he noted that these were “only suggestions that we do not have to take.”⁶⁶

64. The Fawcett Society set out detailed suggestions for UK indicators for each target in SDG 5 in its written evidence to us, together with actions needed to achieve them. Its suggestion for the target on unpaid leave provides a starting point for considering some of the issues raised above.

Box 2: An example of how action and indicators could be developed under the target on valuing unpaid care

Indicators: Percentage take up of Shared Parental Leave by fathers; percentage of jobs advertised as flexible working and percentage of senior roles available as part-time or job-share; percentage of women and men requesting and securing flexible working; time-use survey data on the gender distribution of unpaid labour in the home; percentage of women experiencing pregnancy discrimination.

Action required: Introduction of a parental leave system that presumes equality of responsibility for caring for children (e.g. Swedish “daddy month” system with high level of pay close to replacement rate); a requirement on employers to advertise all jobs as flexible working jobs unless there is a strong business case not to; employment practices which lead to pregnancy discrimination regarded as undermining business performance, taken seriously and managed or disciplined appropriately. Abolition of employment tribunal fees.

Outcomes: Equalisation of time spent caring for children in the early years and other unpaid work in the home; all jobs advertised on a flexible working basis unless there is a strong business reason not to; senior roles available on a part-time basis; men as likely as women to work flexibly; an end to pregnancy discrimination; barriers to individual women fighting discrimination claims are removed.

Source: Fawcett Society⁶⁷

65 Q38

66 Q27

67 [Fawcett Society](#) (SDG0031)

Leave No-One Behind

65. In addition to the challenge of incorporating hard to measure targets within Single Departmental Plans, governments must also adhere to the principle of ‘leaving no-one behind’ throughout their implementation of the SDGs. This requires a focus on reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised and is an integral part of the SDG agenda: in signing up to the SDGs, the UK has committed to achieving this. The Declaration to the SDGs states:

As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no-one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.⁶⁸

66. Evidence to this inquiry suggests that the theme of ‘leaving no-one behind’ has particular relevance to SDG 5 because of the inequality experienced by women across a range of issues. For example, on average, women are more likely to live in poverty than men because of lower incomes and assets over their lifetimes. Women make up 65 per cent of pensioners living at risk of poverty.⁶⁹ A higher proportion of women than men in England and Wales report being a victim of domestic violence, with those aged 16 to 19, White women, disabled women and women in low-income households particularly vulnerable.⁷⁰ And, as our report on Women in the House of Commons after the 2020 election noted, the UK ranks only 48th globally for representation of women in the lower or single legislative chamber, having fallen from 25th place in 1999.⁷¹

67. Katharine Sacks-Jones, Director of the Agenda Alliance, said the SDGs offered an opportunity to focus on marginalised women “for whom services do not really work and who are particularly excluded within society.”⁷² She said it was important to recognise that

at the moment in the UK a lot of women are left behind. From a gender perspective, some women face multiple disadvantage: extensive abuse and violence, both as children and adults, on and off across their lives, combined with inequality and poverty.⁷³

68. The UN has raised concerns that women experiencing the multiple disadvantages outlined above are not protected adequately by UK equality laws. The Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) said in its Concluding Observations on the UK in 2013 that it was concerned that the Public Sector Equality Duty in England “does not adequately protect women against multiple discrimination.”⁷⁴

68 UN, [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (2015)

69 LSE Gender Institute, [Confronting Gender Inequality: findings from the LSE Commission on gender, inequality and power](#) (2015)

70 Office for National Statistics, [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: 2013/14](#) (February 2015)

71 Women and Equalities Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2016–17, [Women in the House of Commons after the 2020 election](#), HC 630

72 Q108

73 Q107

74 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, [Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#), para 16

69. The SDGs' emphasis on leaving no-one behind fits well with the Government's current focus on addressing disadvantage. This was reflected in the Prime Minister's first speech as she entered 10 Downing Street, when she spoke about:

fighting against the burning injustice that if you're born poor you will die, on average, nine years earlier than others [...]. If you're a woman, you will earn less than a man.⁷⁵

70. The refresh of Single Departmental Plans to incorporate the SDGs offers an opportunity to ensure that the theme of 'leaving no-one behind' is embedded in every Department's work. We asked the Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years whether her Department would incorporate that principle into its plan. She told us she hoped it would, and added that within the Department for Education there was ongoing work "to tackle some of the individual concerns such as FGM, forced marriage and early marriage."⁷⁶

Other recommendations to achieve SDG 5

71. Whilst the refresh of Single Departmental Plans offers a crucial opportunity to embed steps towards the achievement of SDG 5, it is not the only mechanism available to support its delivery. We heard a number of suggestions for other actions that could support effective progress towards the targets in Goal 5. These included use of domestic legislation, such as the Public Sector Equality Duty, existing obligations under international duties and conventions, and embedding cross-governmental action on gender equality.

Public Sector Equality Duty

72. In its evidence to this inquiry, the Government explicitly referred to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as relevant to the implementation of SDG 5, noting that the PSED "requires all Departments to consider the impact of their policies on groups with protected characteristics, including gender."⁷⁷

73. The Women's Budget Group (WBG) also referred to the potential of the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that gender is accounted for in policy-making, in accordance with SDG 5. It argued that adopting "gender-responsive budgeting" is essential for achieving SDG 5: this is the process by which all policies are assessed according to their different effects on men and women. The WBG noted that the effects of policies can "differ substantially because of men's and women's different situations, needs and priorities", and pointed out that policies which might appear gender-neutral on the surface could nonetheless have different effects on men and women and thus "may not work in the way they were intended [to]."⁷⁸

74. However, although the Women's Budget Group recognised that the Public Sector Equality Duty contains principles that allow for gender-sensitive policy-making, it argued

75 Prime Minister's Office, [Statement from the new Prime Minister](#) (July 2016)

76 Q207

77 [Government Equalities Office](#) (SDG003)

78 [UK Women's Budget Group](#) (SDG0039)

that in its current form the duty “has insufficient teeth to succeed in getting a government to carry out gender-responsive budgeting, or even to produce proper gender impact assessment of its measures when they are announced.”⁷⁹

75. Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Fellow at the Centre for Human Rights in Practice at the University of Warwick, said her research had found that the replacement of the Gender Equality Duty with the Public Sector Equality Duty in 2010 had led to “a loss of focus on gender within public bodies.” She found that under the PSED only 25 per cent of English local authorities have an equality objective that relates to gender.⁸⁰ Dr Stephenson suggested that this could be addressed through “a requirement on public bodies to have due regard to SDG 5 as one of the specific duties for the Public Sector Equality Duty.”⁸¹

CEDAW

76. Another existing mechanism that could be used to support the implementation of SDG 5 is the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).⁸² This convention was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and ratified by the UK in 1986. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and establishes an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Governments are required to report to the CEDAW Committee every four years on their progress towards implementation and the recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee (through ‘concluding observations’) in previous years. In the UK, overall responsibility for CEDAW lies with the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

77. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) stated that CEDAW is highly relevant to SDG 5 and noted its similarities to the SDG framework.⁸³ Target 5.1, “End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere,” mirrors articles 1 and 2 of CEDAW. The EHRC outlined further crossovers between SDG 5 targets and CEDAW in its written evidence to us and suggested that the two instruments could reinforce one another. It also noted that working on SDG 5 alongside CEDAW would allow for “an efficient coordination approach for GEO.”⁸⁴

Embedding gender equality across government

78. The need for ‘gender mainstreaming’ has been cited as central to achieving SDG 5. This has been defined by Agenda as ensuring that women’s specific experiences and needs are considered by government departments in policy design and service development. Despite evidence from the GEO that gender mainstreaming is central to its work,⁸⁵ Agenda argued that “gender equality appears only to be thought about in isolated pockets, for example, around gender-based violence or political participation, rather than across the piece.” It suggested that the Government needs to recognise that there is a need for “a great number of policy tools across government departments [that] could be used to advance gender equality.”⁸⁶

79 [UK Women’s Budget Group \(SDG0039\)](#)

80 [Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson \(SDG0036\)](#)

81 [Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson \(SDG0036\)](#)

82 [UN Women, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women](#)

83 [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(SDG0038\)](#)

84 [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(SDG0038\)](#)

85 [Government Equalities Office \(SDG0003\)](#)

86 [Agenda \(SDG0004\)](#)

79. The British Council called on the Government to develop and implement a cross-departmental equality strategy to support more effective co-ordination of gender equality policies. It suggested that “a more strategic approach towards UK gender equality policy” based on the SDGs and running across local government, the devolved administrations, and national government “would deliver strong co-ordinated action.”⁸⁷

80. When the CEDAW Committee examined the UK in 2008 it called for a unified national strategy to implement CEDAW across the UK. In its 2013 examination, it recommended that the Government ensure that the Government Equalities Office have a dedicated team to coordinate work on gender equality across the UK, and that it develop a comprehensive UK-wide strategy to put CEDAW into practice.⁸⁸

81. We heard positive evidence of the value of a strategic approach where this has been applied. Dr Helen Mott told us that the Home Office’s work on violence against women and girls (VAWG) could provide a model for other departments to follow.⁸⁹ The Home Office VAWG strategy includes an inter-ministerial group working across different government departments, mechanisms for regular stakeholder input, and an annual action plan which measures progress towards clear targets.

Ensuring progress across the UK

82. Delivery of the SDGs can only be achieved in partnership with the devolved administrations. We heard from Lesley Irving about the Scottish Government’s creation of frameworks which could be used effectively to deliver SDG 5.⁹⁰ However, there is one particular area where the position of a devolved administration stands in contradiction to the SDG targets; in relation to target 5.6, ‘Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights’.

83. The Abortion Act 1967 does not extend to Northern Ireland and health policy and criminal law are transferred matters that fall within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Executive. In 2013, the CEDAW Committee restated its 2008 recommendation that:

The State party [UK Government] should expedite the amendment of the anti-abortion law in Northern Ireland with a view to decriminalise abortion.⁹¹

In the UK’s state reports to the CEDAW Committee, the Government has repeatedly stated that this is a devolved matter.⁹²

87 [British Council \(SDG0019\)](#), para 5.2

88 Equality and Human Rights Commission, [Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women \(November 2014\)](#), p 50

89 Q12

90 [Lesley Irving \(SDG0045\)](#)

91 [CEDAW Concluding Observations regarding the United Kingdom \(July 2013\)](#)

92 UN, [Universal Periodic Review Mid Term Report of the United Kingdom \(2014\)](#)

84. A number of written submissions to this inquiry have noted that lack of access to abortion in Northern Ireland jeopardises the UK's achievement of Goal 5.6.⁹³ The Family Planning Association (FPA) argued that the situation is not consistent with the aims of SDG 5.⁹⁴ The FPA recommended that we:

call on the Northern Ireland Office (which holds responsibility for protecting human rights in Northern Ireland) to proactively engage with the Northern Ireland Assembly in order to extend reproductive rights.⁹⁵

85. The difficulties raised by this issue are acknowledged by the UK Government. The Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years told us:

You are right to raise that as an issue. [...] I do not think it will necessarily be something that would fall under the Government Equalities Office, but somebody will need to take ownership of issues such as that.⁹⁶

86. In subsequent correspondence, the Minister clarified that responsibility for target 5.6 sits with the Department for Health and said that the Government would use its regular discussions with the devolved administrations “to raise awareness of the SDGs and ensure that the administrations are aware of the commitments to which they are party.”⁹⁷

Conclusions and recommendations

87. **The review of the Department for Education's Single Departmental Plan to incorporate the SDG targets is welcome and presents an opportunity for the Government to act on SDG 5. The review of all Single Departmental Plans will also allow departments to embed the principle of 'leaving no-one behind' in all their work. This is consistent with Government policy and the Prime Minister's strategic focus on tackling inequality. This priority must be clearly reflected within the Single Departmental Plans.**

88. **Whilst action by individual departments is helpful, it is important to remember that achievement of SDG 5 requires cross-departmental working. Successful implementation of work towards the SDGs requires a cross-departmental equality strategy. We reiterate the recommendation made in our report on Ensuring strong equalities legislation after the EU exit that the Government adopt such a strategy.**

89. ***We recommend that the Government Equalities Office ensure that the key SDG principle of 'leave no-one behind' is fully embedded in its revised Single Departmental Plan. That revision should be carried out in consultation with organisations with expertise in this area.***

90. ***The Minister for Women and Equalities should take personal responsibility for ensuring action to achieve SDG 5 across government, with the full support of the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Cabinet Secretary to ensure cross-departmental action.***

93 [Abortion Support Network](#) (SDG0017), [Alliance for Choice](#) (SDG0023), [Professor Ann Marie Gray](#), (SDG0015), [Goretti Horgan](#) (SDG0024), [Ulster University Reproductive Health Law and Policy Advisory Group](#) (SDG0014)

94 [FPA](#) (SDG0007)

95 [FPA](#) (SDG0007)

96 Q213

97 [Government Equalities Office](#) (SDG0050)

91. *The Department for International Development should ensure that the following SDG targets are included within a named department's Single Departmental Plan: valuing of unpaid caring and promotion of shared responsibility for it within the household and the family; and ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels political and public life. The SDG 5 target to ensure "universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in the Beijing Platform for Action" must be included within the Department for Health's plan.*

92. *When all the refreshed Single Departmental Plans are published, the Government should make it clear how all the SDG 5 indicators have been incorporated. If choices are made not to incorporate some of the indicators, it must be clear which are not included and what the rationale for their exclusion is.*

93. *We note concerns that have been expressed to us about compliance of devolved administrations with SDG 5. We would welcome further discussion with the Government Equalities Office and representatives of devolved administrations and assemblies on how harmonisation of women's rights across the UK can be achieved.*

4 Building a partnership to achieve SDG 5

94. This chapter examines the role business and civil society could play in working with government to achieve SDG 5. It assesses current levels of partnership working and examines what could be done to improve the Government's engagement with business and civil society on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Partnership working and the SDGs

95. Collaboration between business, civil society and the state is at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 17, 'Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development', is specifically directed towards the creation of this tripartite partnership as the central means of implementing the goals. The UN says:

A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level. Urgent action is needed to mobilize, redirect and unlock the transformative power of trillions of dollars of private resources to deliver on sustainable development objectives [...]. The public sector will need to set a clear direction.⁹⁸

The ongoing role of civil society and the private sector in monitoring progress towards implementing the SDGs is also emphasised by the UN, which states that "contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities" should be drawn on during "regular and inclusive reviews of progress."⁹⁹

96. Partnership working therefore needs to be built into the UK's plan for implementing the SDGs, and SDG 5 in particular. Womankind Worldwide noted that "any serious implementation strategy must involve mechanisms to engage a wide range of stakeholders." It emphasised the need for "formal avenues to build collaboration with women and women's rights organisations" in order to successfully implement SDG 5 in the UK.¹⁰⁰

The benefits of partnership working

97. Evidence from the Millennium Development Goals, which preceded the SDGs, showed the value of stakeholder engagement. Jessica Woodroffe of the Gender and Development Network told us that, where women's organisations were involved in the design, implementation and, especially, the monitoring of plans for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, there was more success in achieving those goals.¹⁰¹

98. Harnessing the expertise of NGOs was cited as a likely key factor in the achievement of SDG 5. Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson pointed out that there are women's organisations

98 UN, [Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development](#), accessed 28 February 2017

99 UN, [Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development](#), accessed 28 February 2017

100 [Womankind Worldwide](#) (SDG0020), para 23

101 Q48

“with a huge level of expertise” working across all the targets included under SDG 5.¹⁰² The Home office already works very effectively with organisations on its VAWG strategy and continuing to use women’s organisations wealth of experience and expertise will be critical to SDG 5. The National Alliance of Women’s Organisations (NAWO) elaborated on some of the skills and services that civil society can contribute towards achieving SDG 5, including the expertise and reach to provide direct services, information and advice to statutory bodies, training to business and the public sector at all levels and monitoring of implementation.¹⁰³

99. The UK Government recognises the importance of working with civil society in its international work. The Independent Commission for Aid Impact has highlighted how DFID has funded NGOs to pilot new approaches to preventing violence against women and girls, and includes them as an integral element of its theory of how to effect change in this area internationally.¹⁰⁴ The Minister for International Development told us that his Department had extensive experience of consulting with civil society:

because the issue of women and girls is at the heart of everything that we do—that is our declared policy—the level of consultation we have with civil society in this area is immense. I am sure that that is mirrored particularly in the Government Equalities Office.¹⁰⁵

Current levels of partnership working

100. Although DFID offers the Government a model for working with civil society, many witnesses we heard from said that this approach was not consistently replicated domestically. This was substantiated by evidence from the British Council’s report on gender equality and the SDGs. Dr Helen Mott explained:

One of the most consistent findings in our report—we interviewed over 35 gender equality stakeholders in the UK—was the issue of women’s and girls’ voice to Government. It feels to civil society as if that has been lost over recent years, and it is something that needs to have attention paid to it.¹⁰⁶

Dr Mott suggested that the evidence she had gathered led her to the conclusion that “a platform for engagement between Government, civil society and women’s organisations,” would be the most effective means to achieve progress on SDG 5.¹⁰⁷

101. There is currently no formal ongoing mechanism for engagement with civil society in the UK. The absence of such a structure was noted in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee’s most recent observations on the UK in 2013. It raised concerns about the closure in 2010 of the UK Women’s National Commission, and “the lack of a cross-departmental culture at UK level of regular engagement with women’s organisations.”¹⁰⁸

102 Q49

103 [National Alliance of Women’s Organisations \(SDG0027\)](#)

104 Independent Commission for Aid Impact, [DfID’s efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: a learning review](#) (May 2016)

105 Q183

106 Q23

107 Q32

108 British Council, [Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in the UK](#) (2016), p 14

102. We questioned the Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years on the evidence we heard from civil society organisations who told us they felt levels of engagement with government were poor. She told us:

I always value feedback from this Committee and, if you can come up with strong suggestions as to how we engage better, I will always take that into consideration.¹⁰⁹

103. Levels of engagement between UK businesses and government on the SDGs also appear to be weak. Whilst there is some evidence that international businesses are taking an interest in the SDGs,¹¹⁰ UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) cited evidence from the Ethical Corporations State of Responsible Business Report 2016 which shows that less than half of global companies plan to engage with the SDGs.¹¹¹ UKSSD said levels of engagement were likely to be even lower amongst small businesses and organisations in the UK. It suggested that “a demonstration of commitment from within the Government for the implementation of the SDGs in the UK would [...] go some way to remedy this.”¹¹²

104. The view that more needs to be done to engage with business on the SDGs was also put forward by the International Development Committee. That Committee welcomed DFID’s commitment to working with the private sector but concluded that “there is still a long way to go to get a wide range of companies engaged”. It noted that the agenda is not just relevant to those businesses engaging in developing countries, but to all businesses.¹¹³ The Committee recommended that:

The UK Government should take a leading role in communicating the SDGs to a wide private sector audience in the UK, including through leading business organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry and the Federation of Small Business. [...] the Government should support the development of international benchmarks against the SDGs to enable companies to monitor and report on their progress against relevant targets.¹¹⁴

Working with civil society

Models for engagement

105. The evidence we heard throughout this inquiry suggested a need to build better structures to allow civil society to work in partnership with government on SDG 5. Dionne Nelson of the Women’s Resource Centre told us that “there needs to be some mechanism to feed in from what is going on in the lives of women on the ground.” She suggested that such a mechanism would need to “engage with grassroots organisations that are working with women every day and their struggles.”¹¹⁵

109 Q200

110 PwC, [Making it your business: engaging with the sustainable development goals](#) (2015)

111 [UKSSD \(SDG0032\)](#), para 3

112 [UKSSD \(SDG0032\)](#)

113 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 103, para 62

114 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 103, para 63

115 Q73

106. There was widespread acknowledgement that a platform for better engagement between government and civil society was needed and a recognition that finding the right model would not necessarily be straightforward. Dr Carole Easton of the Young Women's Trust warned that the NGO sector was "huge and fragmented". She also argued that any model would need to ensure that the Government heard from those women who are often neglected, including very financially disadvantaged young women.¹¹⁶

107. One model suggested for engaging with women's organisations was the Women's National Commission (WNC). The WNC was an advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB) set up in 1969 to advise the UK Government on women's views, and to act as an umbrella body for UK-based women's groups in their dealings with government. It was funded by the Government. In 2010 it was closed after a review of NDPBs, and its public engagement role was taken over by the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

108. Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson described the WNC as "a very, very good model for engagement with the women's voluntary sector", saying that "it involved women from very large, nationally known groups like the WI, and very small, grassroots women's groups." She said it was a mechanism for ensuring smaller grassroots groups "had direct access to Ministers and officials."¹¹⁷

109. Lesley Irving, Head of Equalities Policy at the Scottish Government, offered an alternative model for engagement based on the Scottish Women's Convention (SWC).¹¹⁸ Unlike the WNC, which sat within government, the Scottish Women's Convention is an independent organisation. It is funded by the Scottish Government to communicate and consult with women in Scotland to influence public policy, which it does through local roadshows, conferences, informal networking, celebratory events and online surveys.¹¹⁹

110. The Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years also suggested that new models for engagement are needed:

The Women's National Commission was very much of its time; it was very valuable back in the days of the 1960s and 1970s, when female economic empowerment was really quite recent in this country. These days, we have so many more ways of reaching out to really marginalised groups around the UK. Our team is looking at how we really maximise the use of things like social media, how we can really get to the voices of women from all different age ranges and how we speak to everything from Girlguiding UK to Mumsnet to the WI. We are looking at really reaching out to little groups [...].¹²⁰

111. Dr Mary Ann Stephenson told us that whatever mechanism for working with civil society was developed, it needed to ensure:

- Two-way dialogue between government and civil society: this would include processes to allow "even the smallest member organisations [...] direct contact with Ministers and officials and allow Government to reach organisations that it would otherwise find difficult to access."

116 Q129 [Dr Easton]

117 [Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson](#) (SDG0036)

118 Q77

119 Scottish Women's Convention, [Who we are](#), accessed 20 February 2017

120 Q194

- New mechanisms for consultation: these would go “beyond ‘passive’ models of consultation, where policy proposals are published and circulated with a list of questions to ‘stakeholder’ organisations.”
- Scope for specialist working groups: “Over time these groups can build relationships of trust and understanding with Ministers and Officials. This will enable detailed discussion of new policies, which would not be possible in the same way if a group had to be set up from scratch for each consultation process.”
- Working across the UK: this would “allow women’s organisations across the four nations of the UK to build links and share information and ideas. It could also ensure that women from the devolved nations retain a voice at Westminster” about reserved matters.
- Outreach, “to reach the most marginalised and deprived women in the UK [...] and ensure that their voices are represented.”¹²¹

112. The National Alliance of Women’s Organisations suggested that the Government could look at its own international work to improve domestic engagement between civil society and government on SDG 5. It recommended drawing on the experience of international organisations working in the UK to “ensure the diverse voices of women are heard.” It also called for:

A strong, well-resourced, institutional mechanism with civil society as well as the establishment of the Women and Equalities Select Committee on a permanent basis. [...] Resources will be required to implement the action plan for Goal 5 and other related gender targets and the action plan should be costed, recognizing as a priority the need to reach those further behind first.¹²²

Resources for engagement

113. In its evidence to this inquiry, the Government made no mention of additional resources to fund achievement of the SDGs. However, under the Millennium Development Goals, countries were often given funding to develop and support civil society engagement.

114. Plan International UK emphasised the importance of resources in achieving SDG 5 in the UK. It argued that there are “no easy or quick fixes,” and that “increased investment” is needed for success. In addition to political leadership, it called on the Government to commit to investing financial resources in SDG 5.

115. Some evidence indicated organisations working with marginalised women and girls were struggling financially and would therefore not be able to play an effective role in supporting the achievement of SDG 5 targets without additional resources. Agenda noted that specialist services providing support to women with complex needs were “few and far between and increasingly struggling for funding.” It noted that these organisations often provided a wide range of services, including support around abuse and violence, counselling and mental health services, drug treatment, employment skills, health and

121 [Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson](#) (SDG0036)

122 [National Alliance of Women’s Organisations](#) (SDG0027)

well-being activities, child care and support with parenting, and housing assistance. Agenda argued that these services were crucial for addressing the “multiple difficulties” faced by some women and girls in order to achieve SDG 5, and required adequate funding.¹²³

116. Lesley Irving argued that her experience in Scotland demonstrated that government funding for women’s organisations was central to their success. She pointed to the Scottish Women’s Convention and Engender, which are both core funded by the Scottish Government, and noted that without this funding they would not be able to produce their shadow reports to CEDAW.¹²⁴

Working with business

117. The UN has made it clear that it is not only civil society which needs to be involved: business engagement is also needed for the successful implementation of work towards the SDGs.¹²⁵ In the rest of this chapter we examine the role business can play in implementing SDG 5 and how action by business can be most effectively facilitated.

118. The Minister for International Development acknowledged the importance of working with business. He said:

we cannot deliver a lot of the SDGs internationally without working in partnership with the business sector. I was very involved, when I was at the Home Office, in the modern slavery legislation that went through, and I know how important it is in tackling, for example, abuse that occurs within the supply chain. It is absolutely critical that business organisations, as part of the problem, must be part of the solutions.¹²⁶

119. With regard to SDG 5 specifically, Plan International UK noted that the private sector could support its implementation by “emphasising the importance of gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment in the workplace,” and by taking action on the gender pay gap, discrimination, and women in leadership. It also pointed to the role business could play in influencing wider social norms and stereotypes through marketing.¹²⁷

120. Although there is a clear role for business to play, UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) highlighted the fact that this will not happen without improved Government engagement. It told us that the private sector could “only reach its full potential with the correct facilitation from Government particularly in the case of smaller organisations or those that have not engaged with this agenda so far.”¹²⁸

121. When we asked what the Government had done to engage with business on SDG 5, the Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years told us that work was at an early stage. She said the Government was “at a listening phase at the moment, where we are really trying to scope the best way forward with this.”¹²⁹

123 [Agenda](#) (SDG0004) para 12

124 Q97

125 UN, [Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development](#), accessed 28 February 2017

126 Q205

127 [Plan International UK](#) (SGG0018), para 28

128 [UKSSD](#) (SDG0032), para 23

129 Q203

Improving engagement with business

122. A number of specific ideas for improving UK business engagement with the SDGs were put forward during our inquiry. In its report, the International Development Committee recommended using public procurement chains, to ensure that Government's private sector partners are held to a clear set of standards on "mainstreaming the SDGs into their working practices."¹³⁰ The Government accepted this recommendation.¹³¹

123. Developing a National Performance Framework, such as the one that has been adopted in Scotland, was also suggested as a mechanism for ensuring contracts for government business meet relevant SDG targets. Lesley Irving explained that, through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, private bodies that receive money to carry out public functions are required to have due regard to national outcomes on "things like eliminating the significant inequalities in Scottish society". Ms Irving explained that "businesses that wish to get government contracts to carry out public services" have to "give due regard" to the outcomes listed in the National Performance Framework. She also pointed out that the SDGs will be "embedded very firmly" in the next iteration of that Framework. This gives the Scottish Government a clear mechanism to encourage businesses to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals in how they do their business.¹³²

124. Embedding the SDGs in procurement processes is also used in Germany to encourage alignment with SDG targets. Farooq Ullah of UKSSD told us that the German Sustainability Code sets out in business terms "what sustainable development in Germany should look like," and said that companies which sign up to it "are very much favoured by the Government in terms of procurement."¹³³

125. Lynn Everson, owner of a small business and a representative of the Business and Professional Women's Network, had already had experience of procurement processes that reference the SDGs. She told us that that she had seen tenders from European countries which were "starting to ask questions about the SDGs." Ms Everson recommended that public tenders in the UK follow this lead and use alignment with the SDGs as "differentiator in the selection process."¹³⁴

126. The importance of embedding SDGs in public sector commissioning processes, in particular local authority commissioning, was raised by Pragna Patel of Southall Black Sisters. She said:

It would help in terms of making sure that policies [and] services [...] are equality-proofed. We need to make sure that every time somebody puts their hand up and says, "We would like to provide this service and we would like to work with you, as the Government, in partnership," the Government are making the criteria of achieving those SDG outcomes as part of that process.¹³⁵

130 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 103, para 64

131 International Development Committee, Fourth Special Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Government response](#), HC 673

132 Q87

133 Q89

134 Q69

135 Q127

127. In addition to government procurement criteria, a mix of incentives, publicity, and enforcement actions were also suggested as ways to increase business participation in the SDGs. Lesley Irving, for example, told us about schemes run by the Scottish Government to increase engagement on women's representation, which is one of the SDG 5 targets. These include the Scottish Business Pledge, which over 300 businesses have signed up to, and the '50/50 by 2020' campaign. Both schemes work by encouraging businesses to commit to a range of positive actions, including trying to achieve gender equality on their boards. There are also "benefits to being part of the pledge and the campaign, as well as the feel-good factor of putting something back into society."¹³⁶

128. Other suggestions made by Lynn Everson included:

- Raising awareness and assessing current levels of knowledge by asking the Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to run surveys to see if their members had heard of the SDGs and were planning to implement them.
- Government liaising with civil society and business to identify small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to act as 'SDG ambassadors', speaking to employers and colleges.
- Businesses sharing their 'SDG path' with other organisations, and publicising their activities in annual reports and press releases. These could be used to build a portfolio of examples for use in tenders and business competitions.¹³⁷

129. We welcome the Government's recognition that partnership working is central to the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. It is promising to hear that the Government Equalities Office has been listening to businesses about the most effective ways to engage with them on SDG 5.

130. However, more needs to be done to engage with civil society in a structured way on this important issue. The Government has models for civil society engagement in the work of the Department for International Development and in Scotland. This expertise should be used to help the GEO and the Cabinet Office to work more effectively with civil society in the UK on achievement of SDG 5.

131. We have outlined a range of suggestions that the Government could implement to improve engagement with civil society and business on the SDGs. The most important in relation to SDG 5 is developing an effective mechanism for civil society organisations to work in partnership with government, sharing their knowledge and expertise and delivering services in local areas. This partnership working must be properly resourced in order to be effective.

132. Our main recommendation is that the Government Equalities Office should immediately launch a consultation on developing the most effective mechanism to facilitate ongoing partnership between government and civil society to implement SDG 5. A plan, outlining how this mechanism will work and how it will be funded, should

¹³⁶ Q69

¹³⁷ [Business and Professional Women UK](#) (SDG0047)

be published by September 2017. Alongside this, a timetable should be published setting out when this partnership mechanism will be established and demonstrating that it will have met regularly prior to the 2018 High Level Political Forum.

133. We also recommend that the Department for International Development, or the Cabinet Office, should ensure that the relevant government departments investigate the possibility of incentives to increase business engagement with SDG 5 goals. This should specifically examine the possibility of embedding SDG 5 targets within public procurement criteria, as already undertaken by DFID.

5 Gathering data and monitoring progress

134. The data used to develop national indicators on the SDGs and the availability of data to assess progress towards the goals are both central to their effective implementation. In this chapter we outline the process for monitoring the SDGs and focus on the role of the Office for National Statistics in gathering the data needed for monitoring and implementation. As noted in Chapter 4, partnership working is central to the SDGs, and here we examine the role of civil society and business in data gathering and monitoring. We also return to the theme of ‘leaving no-one behind’ and assess the implications of this key principle for the process of data gathering.

Monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals

135. At the global level, the 17 goals and 169 targets will be monitored and reviewed using a set of global indicators. National indicators will be used to assist in monitoring progress made on the global goals and targets. These national indicators will give stakeholders in individual countries an opportunity to scrutinise how well their country is progressing towards achieving the various targets.

136. The UN states that governments are expected to take ownership of the goals and establish national frameworks for their achievement. It says that “countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the goals.”¹³⁸ The UN sets out guiding principles for this domestic accountability; these include the creation of a domestic mechanism for follow-up and review and an emphasis on this mechanism being “inclusive and participatory.”¹³⁹

137. In its 2016 report on the Sustainable Development Goals, the International Development Committee recommended that the Government publish an annual report on domestic progress towards the SDGs, along with a full breakdown and analysis of the data, disaggregated where relevant. This would enable select committees “to track progress and hold relevant Government departments to account.”¹⁴⁰ This recommendation was reiterated by Bond/GADN in their evidence to our inquiry.¹⁴¹

138. Dr Graham Long suggested that there was “scope for the development of an overarching domestic accountability” without the creation of new structures, for example through parliamentary committees. However, he cautioned that any structure would need to be inclusive and participatory, “It cannot just be experts and people testifying to committees. It has to be wider than that somehow.”¹⁴²

139. Including civil society in monitoring progress towards the SDGs would be one way to create a participatory and inclusive structure of accountability. The Government has recognised the role of the UK NGO sector “in both the delivery and monitoring of Goal 5.”¹⁴³

138 UN, [The sustainable development agenda](#), accessed 28 February 2017

139 Q29

140 International Development Committee, First Report of Session 2016–17, [UK implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 103, para 123

141 [Bond/GADN](#) (SDG0028), para 6

142 Q29

143 [Government Equalities Office](#) (SDG0003)

As an example of a non-governmental initiative, the Fawcett Society has already embarked on a process to monitor progress on the SDGs; it is developing an annual Gender Scorecard from 2017 onwards, using a number of substantive indicators it has identified as relevant to SDG 5.¹⁴⁴

140. Womankind Worldwide described how it had worked with women's rights organisations in Kenya, Nepal and Peru to develop an advocacy toolkit. This aims to help women's rights organisations use the SDGs to achieve change in their areas of expertise. The toolkit gives an overview of the commitments made under the SDGs, identifies key areas for action, and provides guidance on developing a tailored advocacy strategy.¹⁴⁵ Womankind Worldwide suggested that similar tools could be developed to support the implementation of SDG 5 in the UK.¹⁴⁶

141. The Government has said that the UK's process for monitoring and reporting the SDGs is "still under development". It clarified that ONS would be "responsible for providing UK data for the global indicators to the UN," and would make these data publically available.¹⁴⁷

National SDG Indicators

142. Dr Graham Long and UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) pointed out the importance of developing UK-specific indicators both to measure progress towards the SDGs and to identify gaps in data. UKSSD acknowledged the difficulties in translating generalised global targets into domestic ones. It noted that "qualitative targets' such as 'substantially increase' need translation into numeric policy targets at national level".¹⁴⁸

143. We asked ministers for further information on the process for establishing and monitoring UK indicators. The Minister for International Development told us that the information needed to update data on particular indicators "will be generated by the departments through the Single Departmental Plan, which will be informed by data from the ONS."¹⁴⁹

144. We asked for clarification in writing of exactly how the relationship between the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and government departments will work with regard to supplying data to measure progress towards the SDG indicators. The Minister for International Development told us that the ONS will continue to have "lead responsibility for compiling and reporting UK data for global SDG indicators." The Minister said that at the time of the Spending Review, the Government had not yet decided the UK's national indicators and had not assigned roles and responsibilities for how they would be monitored. However, the Government has now decided that the "indicators included in the SDPs will also serve as national indicators for the Goals".¹⁵⁰

144 [Fawcett Society](#) (SDG0031)

145 [Womankind Worldwide](#) (SDG0020), para 22

146 [Womankind Worldwide](#) (SDG0020)

147 [Government Equalities Office](#) (SDG0003)

148 [UKSSD](#) (SDG0032), para 15

149 Q212

150 [Department for International Development](#) (SDG0051)

Role of the Office for National Statistics

145. As noted above, the ONS has responsibility for reporting UK data on the SDGs to the UN. Written evidence from the ONS outlined its specific responsibilities as:

- The collection, collation, analysis, presentation and dissemination of data for regular monitoring of UK progress against the SDG indicators, as agreed by the United Nations Security Council in March 2016;
- Any additional further analysis of existing data and collection of new data as required;
- Continuing statistical support for the policy element of SDGs;
- International work to support SDG statistical processes in the UN and other countries.¹⁵¹

146. Emma Rourke, Director of Public Policy Analysis at the ONS, told us that the ONS was not responsible for “national domestic progress specifically.”¹⁵² Ms Rourke emphasised the role of the Single Departmental Plans as “the vehicle for the domestic, national indicators,”¹⁵³ and played down the ONS’s role in creating a national indicator framework. She said the ONS would “offer advice and support” in creating the indicators but said this would constitute “technical advice.”¹⁵⁴

147. However, in the preface to the findings on its research exercise on the SDGs published in August 2016, the ONS stated that one of its roles was to work with “official and non-official data producers to identify supplementary, UK focused indicators.” It also made clear that it intended to develop a “UK reporting framework for SDGs” which would be “put to the public for consultation in autumn 2016”.¹⁵⁵

148. When we asked the ONS for clarification on its role in developing national indicators and assessing progress against them, it pointed to evidence given to us by the Department for International Development which said the Government would be in a position to develop its thinking on reporting once the indicators had been agreed by the UN.¹⁵⁶

ONS consultation on national indicators

149. A research exercise on the SDGs carried out between March and May 2016 by the ONS in collaboration with UKSSD received 131 responses, representing 58 organisations and individuals.¹⁵⁷

150. The stakeholders consulted in the research exercise did not include any women’s organisations. Concern was raised by the British Council regarding this lack of engagement.

151 [Office for National Statistics](#) (SDG0041)

152 Q137

153 Q144

154 Q145

155 ONS, [How should the UK report progress towards the SDGs?](#) (August 2016), pp 2-3

156 [Office for National Statistics](#) (SDG0049)

157 ONS, [How should the UK report progress towards the SDGs?](#) (August 2016), p 3

It reported that “there has been little input from the women’s sector so far [on the UK targets]” and recommended that “the ONS engage more systematically with civil society and in particular women’s organisations in the next phase of the consultation.”¹⁵⁸

151. The ONS was scheduled to launch a public consultation on the national indicators on 29 November 2016. However, this consultation was postponed. The ONS explained this was in order to “consider fully all the material received from stakeholders,” and that the postponement afforded it the opportunity to align the Sustainable Development Goals with other UK indicators of progress.¹⁵⁹

152. The ONS set out the reasons for this delay in more detail in supplementary evidence to us. It cited UN refinements to existing indicators, the refresh of Single Departmental Plans, and the ONS’s work with the Cabinet Office on a Racial Disparity Audit as factors leading to its decision to delay consultation.¹⁶⁰

153. Dr Helen Mott and the National Alliance of Women’s Organisations (NAWO) expressed concern about the delay in publishing the national indicators framework. NAWO noted that “it is already more than a year since the launch of Agenda 2030,” and said that the ONS needs to complete the development of a national indicator framework “as a matter of urgency.”¹⁶¹

Data collection

154. The difficulty of gathering accurate and timely data to establish indicators and assess progress on the SDGs was acknowledged by the Minister for International Development, who said it was a “huge statistical challenge—one of the biggest that we have ever faced as a Government.”¹⁶²

155. Although the UK is in an enviable position relative to many other countries when it comes to data collection, the SDGs’ explicit focus on gender equality creates specific challenges. Dr Helen Mott noted that, in its reflections on CEDAW in 2012, the Equality and Human Rights Commission said the UK had “actually lost a number of the mechanisms” it had for recording data particularly with regard to progress on gender equality. She pointed out that although the British Council report found that in a global context “the UK is in a really good position”, unavailability of data and, most importantly, lack of disaggregation in what is available could still cause problems.¹⁶³

156. Dr Mott suggested that this problem could be addressed in part through the reconstitution of the Gender Statistics User Group. This group brought together the EHRC, the ONS, and other stakeholders to discuss how gaps in data on gender equality and violence against women could most effectively be tackled.¹⁶⁴

157. A number of specific concerns about data collection were raised in written evidence. The EHRC noted problems in the collection of data on violence against women and girls, stating that issues remain in respect of “systemic under-reporting of sexual violence and

158 [British Council](#) (SDG0019), para 8.2

159 [ONS, Sustainable Development Goals Latest News](#), accessed 15 February 2017

160 [Office for National Statistics](#) (SDG0049)

161 [National Alliance of Women’s Organisations](#) (SDG0027)

162 Q229

163 Q14

164 Q19 [Dr Helen Mott]

unsatisfactory official recording of reports by the police.” It noted that survey data on sexual violence collected in England and Wales are limited to 16 to 59 year olds, with older people excluded from the data collection.¹⁶⁵

158. Research by Plan International UK for its State of Girls’ Rights in the UK report found “concerning gaps in publicly available data that would support targeted interventions and measurement of progress.” The report concluded that it was “impossible” to compare outcomes across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland due to both an absence of data and the fact that data are collected differently across the devolved administrations.¹⁶⁶ Plan International UK was also concerned about data on violence against the person and noted these were broken down by police force rather than by age, gender and local area.¹⁶⁷

159. Dr Carole Easton from the Young Women’s Trust also raised the issue of missing data on girls and young women. She told us that young women who did not fall into specific categories were “getting lost” from the data. She said this was a particular issue for those who were impoverished and not claiming benefits. Dr Easton noted that economically inactive women outnumber men considerably and these women were often missing from data, especially when they had additional protected characteristics.¹⁶⁸

160. The SDG theme of ‘leaving no-one behind’ is intended to focus data collection and policy-making on some of the issues raised above. As Dr Graham Long noted, the choice of data used to create national indicators will dictate which issues are addressed and which policies are put in place. If data is not collected on certain groups, the issues they face will not be highlighted and therefore risk being ignored. Dr Long suggested that a focus on ‘leave no-one behind’ could help ensure this does not happen.¹⁶⁹

161. In oral evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee, Abigail Self, Head of Sustainable Development Goals at the ONS, said that this is where the “biggest challenge” is, since hard-to-reach groups are “very small and often there is insufficient data to monitor them”. However, she acknowledged that the SDGs offer an opportunity for a “data revolution” in which data are gathered from official and unofficial sources in different ways that have “never been done before.”¹⁷⁰

Disaggregating data

162. The importance of gathering data that can be disaggregated by different characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity, and location, was raised throughout this inquiry. NAWO noted that

High quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, marital status, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location etc. is essential in order to effectively monitor SDG progress.¹⁷¹

165 [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) (SDG0038)

166 [Plan International UK](#) (SDG0018), para 23

167 [Plan International UK](#) (SDG0018), para 24

168 Q119 [Dr Easton]

169 Q15

170 [Oral evidence taken before the Environmental Audit Committee](#) on 15 November 2016, HC 596, Q4 [Abigail Self]

171 [National Alliance of Women’s Organisations](#) (SDG0027)

163. Pragna Patel of Southall Black Sisters told us about the difficulties her organisation faced when requesting data from the Home Office on how many domestic violence-related homicides involved black women. She was told that the Home Office did not keep data on race and could therefore not answer the question.¹⁷²

164. When we questioned ministers on this issue, the Minister for International Development made it clear he thought disaggregation was crucial, and that the SDG targets could not be met without it.¹⁷³ With regard to the specific issue of disaggregation by ethnicity, the Minister for Women, Equalities and Early Years told us:

The Government Equalities Office's role only covers women and people from LGBT communities, so it will be up to different Government departments to decide whether they want to do something similar with regard to race, for example.¹⁷⁴

Working with civil society and business

165. The UN, Government and stakeholders all recognise that there is a clear role for civil society and business to play in collecting the data needed to assess and implement SDG 5. UKSSD and NAWO both pointed out that the ONS will have to supplement its data with information supplied by business, civil society and academia.¹⁷⁵ However, UKSSD warned that in order to secure this information the Government will have to “strengthen the incentives” for stakeholders to collect and contribute data in a SDG compatible format.¹⁷⁶

166. NAWO pointed out that civil society could potentially play an important role in gathering qualitative, as well as quantitative data relevant to the SDGs. It said the value of the “actual lived experience of women and girls” should not be ignored.¹⁷⁷

167. Whilst many organisations were keen to participate in data collection for the SDGs, some witnesses cautioned that there were potential barriers to their support. Pragna Patel warned that some black and ethnic minority women may feel cautious about supplying data without knowing how it would be used by institutions.¹⁷⁸ In order to address this problem she suggested that:

There needs to be better and greater transparency within institutions as to why they are collecting data, what it is for, and in demonstrating that the data that is collected is to inform policy, strategies and plans and not for any other purpose.¹⁷⁹

168. A number of witnesses told us they had access to useful information, but made it clear that better support and resources would be needed for them to play any role in gathering data. Dionne Nelson of the Women's Resource Centre explained that women's organisation are already collecting data on issues such as “sexual violence, health inequalities or lack

172 Q125 [Pragna Patel]

173 Q228

174 Q225

175 [National Alliance of Women's Organisations](#) (SDG0027)

176 [UKSSD](#) (SDG0032), para 13

177 [National Alliance of Women's Organisations](#) (SDG0027)

178 Q119 [Pragna Patel]

179 Q120

of pension”. However, she said that more work was needed to support organisations in understanding their role in data collection. She suggested that “more information on how the standards should be kept” should be given to civil society organisations.¹⁸⁰

169. The need for specific resources for civil society to engage in data collection was raised by Natasha Walter of Women for Refugee Women. She pointed out that small, frontline organisations like hers do not have the resources for rigorous data collection:

as a tiny charity, we are not able to take a representative sample; we are not able to track the outcomes for those women over time. We know the limitations of the data that we are collecting.¹⁸¹

170. With regard to business contributing to the data set for the SDGs, UKSSD said one option could be to mandate non-financial reporting on SDGs within corporate governance rules. This would provide a means of compiling data on progress against the SDGs in the private sector. However, UKSSD suggested that voluntary reporting would be preferable.¹⁸²

171. Accurate and detailed data gathering is essential to the successful implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. The Government needs to ensure it collects data that can be disaggregated by different characteristics if it is to achieve the objective of leaving no-one behind. We have heard that there are some specific barriers to gathering data relevant to SDG 5. These gaps must be addressed urgently as the data used to set the UK’s national indicators will dictate which issues are examined and prioritised.

172. Although gender equality and partnership working are central tenets of the SDGs, no women’s organisations were involved in the Office for National Statistics’ survey of views on national indicators. This shows a lack of engagement with the principles of the SDGs.

173. There are significant opportunities for specialist organisations, which have extensive expertise and links to many of the most marginalised and disadvantaged women and girls, to inform the development and monitoring of the UK’s SDG indicators. However, in order to play this role these organisations will need additional funding and support.

174. We recommend that the Government publish its plans for a robust framework for the independent verification and monitoring of the UK’s progress on the targets within SDG 5. This should be made public by September 2017. Given that national indicators will be included within Single Departmental Plans, the Government should also demonstrate how it ensured that the process for selecting national indicators was transparent and involved the participation of civil society when it publishes the revised SDPs.

175. We also recommend that the ONS immediately convene a working group to explore what role organisations working with women and girls can play in developing national indicators and contributing data to them. This could be modelled along the lines of the Gender Statistics Users Group.

176. The Government should make a clear commitment to collecting data against the SDG targets in a manner that allows for comprehensive disaggregation.

180 Q96 [Dionne Nelson]

181 Q121

182 [UKSSD](#) (SDG0032), para 14

177. The Government should ensure that funding is provided to expert organisations to enable them to participate fully in the data collection and monitoring functions necessary for the achievement of SDG 5. This must be additional to any Government funding for their day-to-day activities.

Conclusions and recommendations

Why should the UK engage with SDG 5?

1. The UK Government was at the heart of developing the Sustainable Development Goals and led globally on the inclusion of a standalone goal addressing gender equality. Existing policies and legislation show the Government's commitment to gender equality but a clear plan is needed now. Domestic engagement with the SDGs is therefore critical to the UK's standing at the UN, and to its position as a world leader on gender equality. The Government needs to act to ensure the effective implementation of SDG 5 in the UK as a matter of priority. (Paragraph 21)
2. Domestic engagement with the SDGs, and SDG 5 in particular, can do more than protect the UK's international standing. The Goals present the Government with an opportunity to further its work on achieving gender equality and improving the lives of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people and to leave no-one behind. (Paragraph 22)

Government leadership

3. We welcome the Government's refresh of Single Departmental Plans to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This demonstrates a clear commitment to the goals and their domestic implementation. However, the UK is lagging behind many of its OECD counterparts in terms of outlining a clear plan for the achievement of the SDGs. This stands in stark contrast to the UK's leadership role in formulating the SDGs, and in championing the inclusion of a standalone gender goal. It is regrettable that the UK has already missed opportunities to submit data to the UN and to participate in the High Level Political Forum in 2017. The Government must take the opportunity that the refreshed Single Departmental Plans provide, and use this to raise awareness of the SDGs, and SDG 5 in particular, across the UK. (Paragraph 51)
4. *Leadership on the SDGs should come from the top of Government. The Government should domestically publicise its commitment to the achievement of the SDGs in the UK. It should immediately commit to reporting to the UN's High Level Political Forum in 2018.* (Paragraph 52)
5. *We support the International Development Committee's recommendation that responsibility for the SDGs should sit within the Cabinet Office and not the Department for International Development. The Government should take greater leadership by bringing together the elements of Single Departmental Plans that support the SDGs in a co-ordinated National Implementation Plan, to be led by the Cabinet Office.* (Paragraph 53)
6. *We urge the Government to publish its report examining the domestic implementation of the SDGs, as promised to the International Development Committee in September 2016, without further delay.* (Paragraph 54)

Specific actions to achieve SDG 5

7. The review of the Department for Education's Single Departmental Plan to incorporate the SDG targets is welcome and presents an opportunity for the Government to act on SDG 5. The review of all Single Departmental Plans will also allow departments to embed the principle of 'leaving no-one behind' in all their work. This is consistent with Government policy and the Prime Minister's strategic focus on tackling inequality. This priority must be clearly reflected within the Single Departmental Plans. (Paragraph 87)
8. Whilst action by individual departments is helpful, it is important to remember that achievement of SDG 5 requires cross-departmental working. Successful implementation of work towards the SDGs requires a cross-departmental equality strategy. We reiterate the recommendation made in our report on Ensuring strong equalities legislation after the EU exit that the Government adopt such a strategy. (Paragraph 88)
9. *We recommend that the Government Equalities Office ensure that the key SDG principle of 'leave no-one behind' is fully embedded in its revised Single Departmental Plan. That revision should be carried out in consultation with organisations with expertise in this area.* (Paragraph 89)
10. *The Minister for Women and Equalities should take personal responsibility for ensuring action to achieve SDG 5 across government, with the full support of the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Cabinet Secretary to ensure cross-departmental action.* (Paragraph 90)
11. *The Department for International Development should ensure that the following SDG targets are included within a named department's Single Departmental Plan: valuing of unpaid caring and promotion of shared responsibility for it within the household and the family; and ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels political and public life. The SDG 5 target to ensure "universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in the Beijing Platform for Action" must be included within the Department for Health's plan.* (Paragraph 91)
12. *When all the refreshed Single Departmental Plans are published, the Government should make it clear how all the SDG 5 indicators have been incorporated. If choices are made not to incorporate some of the indicators, it must be clear which are not included and what the rationale for their exclusion is.* (Paragraph 92)
13. *We note concerns that have been expressed to us about compliance of devolved administrations with SDG 5. We would welcome further discussion with the Government Equalities Office and representatives of devolved administrations and assemblies on how harmonisation of women's rights across the UK can be achieved.* (Paragraph 93)

Building a partnership to achieve SDG 5

14. We welcome the Government's recognition that partnership working is central to the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. It is promising to hear that the Government Equalities Office has been listening to businesses about the most effective ways to engage with them on SDG 5. (Paragraph 129)
15. However, more needs to be done to engage with civil society in a structured way on this important issue. The Government has models for civil society engagement in the work of the Department for International Development and in Scotland. This expertise should be used to help the GEO and the Cabinet Office to work more effectively with civil society in the UK on achievement of SDG 5. (Paragraph 130)
16. We have outlined a range of suggestions that the Government could implement to improve engagement with civil society and business on the SDGs. The most important in relation to SDG 5 is developing an effective mechanism for civil society organisations to work in partnership with government, sharing their knowledge and expertise and delivering services in local areas. This partnership working must be properly resourced in order to be effective. (Paragraph 131)
17. *Our main recommendation is that the Government Equalities Office should immediately launch a consultation on developing the most effective mechanism to facilitate ongoing partnership between government and civil society to implement SDG 5. A plan, outlining how this mechanism will work and how it will be funded, should be published by September 2017. Alongside this, a timetable should be published setting out when this partnership mechanism will be established and demonstrating that it will have met regularly prior to the 2018 High Level Political Forum.* (Paragraph 132)
18. *We also recommend that the Department for International Development, or the Cabinet Office, should ensure that the relevant government departments investigate the possibility of incentives to increase business engagement with SDG 5 goals. This should specifically examine the possibility of embedding SDG 5 targets within public procurement criteria, as already undertaken by DFID.* (Paragraph 133)

Gathering data and monitoring progress

19. Accurate and detailed data gathering is essential to the successful implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. The Government needs to ensure it collects data that can be disaggregated by different characteristics if it is to achieve the objective of leaving no-one behind. We have heard that there are some specific barriers to gathering data relevant to SDG 5. These gaps must be addressed urgently as the data used to set the UK's national indicators will dictate which issues are examined and prioritised. (Paragraph 171)
20. Although gender equality and partnership working are central tenets of the SDGs, no women's organisations were involved in the Office for National Statistics' survey of views on national indicators. This shows a lack of engagement with the principles of the SDGs. (Paragraph 172)
21. There are significant opportunities for specialist organisations, which have extensive expertise and links to many of the most marginalised and disadvantaged women

and girls, to inform the development and monitoring of the UK's SDG indicators. However, in order to play this role these organisations will need additional funding and support. (Paragraph 173)

22. *We recommend that the Government publish its plans for a robust framework for the independent verification and monitoring of the UK's progress on the targets within SDG 5. This should be made public by September 2017. Given that national indicators will be included within Single Departmental Plans, the Government should also demonstrate how it ensured that the process for selecting national indicators was transparent and involved the participation of civil society when it publishes the revised SDPs. (Paragraph 174)*
23. *We also recommend that the ONS immediately convene a working group to explore what role organisations working with women and girls can play in developing national indicators and contributing data to them. This could be modelled along the lines of the Gender Statistics Users Group. (Paragraph 175)*
24. *The Government should make a clear commitment to collecting data against the SDG targets in a manner that allows for comprehensive disaggregation. (Paragraph 176)*
25. *The Government should ensure that funding is provided to expert organisations to enable them to participate fully in the data collection and monitoring functions necessary for the achievement of SDG 5. This must be additional to any Government funding for their day-to-day activities. (Paragraph 177)*

Annex: Terms of reference

The Committee set out the following questions on which it welcomed views:

- How well understood are the Goals in the UK and what more can be done to promote them?
- Is there consensus across Government about what the terms used in Goal 5 mean in the UK context?
- What action is the UK Government taking to implement Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in the UK by 2030? What more can the UK Government do to achieve this?
- What more do individual government departments need to do to prioritise Goal 5 targets? What practical steps need to be taken?
- What resourcing is in place for the implementation of Goal 5? Is further resourcing required?
- How effective is coordination and leadership across UK government departments on implementing Goal 5? Is a single point of responsibility preferable to delegated responsibility across departments, and who should lead?
- What monitoring mechanisms are in place to measure progress in the UK against Goal 5 and how can these be improved?
- Which targets under Goal 5 are the most difficult to measure progress against? How can the Government ensure that the hard to measure targets are not neglected?
- Which targets/issues under Goal 5 have been hardest to make progress on and why? Which require a greater emphasis?
- What role do the private and third sector have to play in achieving Goal 5 in the UK and how effectively are these roles supported by the Government?
- What examples of good practice are there in the UK or abroad, for implementing and monitoring progress against these and other global targets? How effectively does the UK Government learn from such practice?

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 1 March 2017

Members present:

Mrs Maria Miller, in the Chair

Lucy Allan	Mrs Flick Drummond
Tracy Brabin	Ben Howlett
Angela Crawley	Jess Phillips
Philip Davies	

Draft Report (*Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the UK*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, that the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 177 read and agreed to.

Annex and Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Eighth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 8 March 2017.]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 11 January 2017

Question number

Dr Graham Long, Senior Lecturer in Politics, Newcastle University, **Marianne Haslegrave**, Director, Commonwealth Trust and Vice-Chair, UK NGO CSW Alliance and **Dr Helen Mott** [Q1–32](#)

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Fellow, Centre for Human Rights in Practice, University of Warwick School of Law, **Sam Smethers**, Chief Executive, The Fawcett Society, and **Jessica Woodroffe**, Director, Gender and Development Network [Q33–65](#)

Wednesday 25 January 2017

Lesley Irving, Head of Equality Policy, Scottish Government, **Farooq Ullah**, Co-Chair, UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, **Lynn Everson**, Immediate Past President, Business and Professional Women UK, and **Dionne Nelson**, Head of Business Development and Innovation, Women's Resource Centre [Q66–100](#)

Dr Carole Easton, Young Women's Trust, **Pragna Patel**, Southall Black Sisters, **Natasha Walter**, Women for Refugee Women, and **Katharine Sacks-Jones**, Agenda [Q101–135](#)

Wednesday 8 February 2017

Emma Rourke, Director of Public Policy Analysis, Office for National Statistics [Q136–162](#)

Caroline Dinenage MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Early Years, and **Lord Bates**, Minister of State, Department for International Development [Q163–234](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

SDG numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Abortion Support Network ([SDG0017](#))
- 2 Age International ([SDG0002](#))
- 3 Agenda ([SDG0004](#))
- 4 Alliance for Choice (Derry) ([SDG0023](#))
- 5 AlphaZULU Advocates ([SDG0026](#))
- 6 Autism Women Matter ([SDG0040](#))
- 7 Bond and GADN ([SDG0028](#))
- 8 British Council ([SDG0019](#))
- 9 Business and Professional Women UK ([SDG0047](#))
- 10 Commonwealth Medical Trst (Commat) ([SDG0011](#))
- 11 Department for International Development ([SDG0051](#))
- 12 Dr Graham Long ([SDG0033](#)), ([SDG0034](#)), ([SDG0042](#))
- 13 Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson ([SDG0036](#))
- 14 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([SDG0038](#))
- 15 Fawcett Society ([SDG0031](#))
- 16 FPA ([SDG0007](#))
- 17 George Eckton ([SDG0001](#))
- 18 Girlguiding ([SDG0006](#))
- 19 Goretti Horgan ([SDG0024](#))
- 20 Government Equalities Office ([SDG0003](#))
- 21 IC Change ([SDG0013](#))
- 22 Joanna MacGregor ([SDG0025](#))
- 23 Lesley Irving ([SDG0045](#))
- 24 Maternity Action ([SDG0016](#))
- 25 Miss Carly Jayne Jones ([SDG0012](#))
- 26 National Alliance of Women's Organisations ([SDG0027](#))
- 27 National Council of Women of Great Britain ([SDG0035](#))
- 28 Nordic Model Now! ([SDG0010](#))
- 29 Office for National Statistics ([SDG0041](#)), ([SDG0049](#))
- 30 Plan International UK ([SDG0018](#))
- 31 Professor Ann Marie Gray ([SDG0015](#))
- 32 Scottish Women's Convention ([SDG0029](#))
- 33 Southall Black Sisters ([SDG0044](#))

- 34 Transgender Trend ([SDG0022](#))
- 35 UK NGO CSW Alliance ([SDG0030](#))
- 36 UK Women's Budget Group ([SDG0039](#))
- 37 UKSSD ([SDG0032](#))
- 38 Ulster University, Reproductive Health Law and Policy Advisory Group ([SDG0014](#))
- 39 UN Women National Committee UK ([SDG0009](#))
- 40 University of Manchester ([SDG0021](#))
- 41 Widows for Peace through Democracy ([SDG0037](#))
- 42 Womankind Worldwide ([SDG0020](#))
- 43 Women for Refugee Women ([SDG0043](#))
- 44 Women's resource centre ([SDG0048](#))
- 45 Young Women's Trust ([SDG0046](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2015–16

First Report	Transgender Equality	HC 390
Second Report	Gender Pay Gap	HC 584 (HC 963)
Third Report	Appointment of the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission	HC 599

Session 2016–17

First Report	Pregnancy and maternity discrimination	HC 90 (Cm 9401)
Second Report	Employment opportunities for Muslims in the UK	HC 89 (Cm 9371)
Third Report	Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools	HC 91 (HC 826)
Fourth Report	Equalities analysis and the 2015 Spending Review and Autumn Statement	HC 825 (HC 974)
Fifth Report	Women in the House of Commons after the 2020 election	HC 630
Sixth Report/ First Joint Report	High heels and workplace dress codes	HC 291
Seventh Report	Ensuring strong equalities legislation after the EU exit	HC 799
First Special Report	Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 826
Second Special Report	Equalities analysis and the 2015 Spending Review and Autumn Statement: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 974
Third Special Report	Gender Pay Gap: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2015-16	HC 963