

## Why it's time to put care at the heart of economic recovery

The recent autumn statement demonstrates that once again the government has failed to spot the real problems; the care deficit, the deficit in affordable housing and the deficit in high quality paid work, all of which impact particularly on women.

The Women's Budget Group latest report is a comprehensive analysis on the impact of the 2014 Autumn Financial Statement on women and looks in detail at the care deficit and what can be done about it. The report concludes:

- Women have lost and will continue to lose more than men from the direct tax and welfare changes already carried out or planned between 2010 and 2015;
- Failing to address the gender imbalance in science, technology, engineering and maths will leave the UK with a shortfall of graduates in these areas and result in new science jobs going mainly to men;
- The extra £10m to free schools could lead to a downgrading in employment rights for women working academies;
- Though the AFS provides some help to new businesses women-owned businesses and self-employed women will lose out under the new regime;
- New spending on NHS will do nothing to cover the growing social care funding gap.

Commenting on their new report, Professor Diane Elson, Chair of the Women's Budget Group, said: *"The money the government has "saved" from cutting vital public services has not gone to reducing the deficit but instead has been given away to income tax payers in the form of higher allowances which has clear gender effects.*

*"Eliminating the budget deficit is the wrong policy target. To achieve a sustainable and equitable recovery in living standards, something different is required."*

The Women's Budget Group makes a bold call for a **national care infrastructure plan** consisting of a massive programme of public investment on **social infrastructure, including child and elderly care, health, and education** as well as funding for physical infrastructure such as **housing, public transport and affordable renewable energy**.

We need labour market policies to ensure that real wages and productivity grow in line with each other enabling upwards convergence in men's and women's wages, so that the UK does not become a low wage, low productivity economy.

A national care infrastructure plan forms the heart of our Plan F - using feminist economic policy to put care and quality at the heart of the regeneration of this battered UK economy.

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