

**Professor Su Maddock (Fair-Play Southwest)****Submission to the WBG Commission on Gender- Equality Economy  
Second Call for evidence: Transformative Policies and Practices  
May 2019****About Su Maddock**

I am submitting this in my own capacity although a member of Fair Play SW because I wanted to present an overview based on my experience of transforming services and women's leadership role in service transformation. The evidence presented here comes from my working in government, public service innovation and communities in Yorkshire, Manchester and the South West. In the 1990s DI Parkin and I devised Gender Auditing as a tool to analyse the barriers women faced in local government, the NHS, Police, Fire Service culture. These studies demonstrated the impact of gender-cultures on public service innovation<sup>1</sup>. These cultures have worsened in the UK since 2010 and continue to undermine gender-equalities generally and to impede specific legislation, guidance and frameworks.

I totally agree with differentiating between direct and indirect interventions to drive equality policies and stress the need to appreciate the leadership role of, women in particular, in public service transformation and the significance of community-based interventions in creating opportunities for BME and working class women.

**1. Which Policies and Practices have had an impact on gender equality?****A Government Level****(a) Direct gender equality policies**

such as Sex Discrimination Acts, Abortion Act Gender Impact, Gender Pay Gap, EBS<sup>2</sup> Scottish Women's Budget Group.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equality-fairer-scotland-budget-statement-scottish-border-1029-20/>

One successful example was DFID's Gender Equality Mainstreaming, development programmes, although of course, not in the Dept. itself. It is significant that those countries where more women are involved in senior policymaking, their governments are committed to gender equalities and systemic innovation, such as in Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Canada and New Zealand. Obstacles in the UK as Ruth Pearson suggests are that

*"In spite of a legal obligation to consider the gender impact of public policy (the 'equality duty'), these administrations have ignored the reality of the way the economy functions introducing measures which ignore the gendered division of labour, unpaid work and voluntary work"*

By contrast, Sweden's parental policies in 1990s gave women and men the same rights- this had had the effect of men experiencing short-term career gaps which in the UK are associated only with mothers. Where men take short breaks then short-breaks taken by mothers are less unacceptable.

### **(b) Indirect Government Policies**

Include the Minimum Wage, Social Value Act, Social-Care pay and local economic strategies that invest in the social economy and Local Wealth Creation (CLES). The latter is important in the South West where 46% of all working women earn less than a living wage and a living wage would raise the pay of part-time women by 30% to 40% and reduce the dependence of women on benefits<sup>3</sup>

### **(c) Government led transformation**

In Whitehall in 2008 Ursula Brennan and Natalie Ceeney wrote briefing papers on the need for radical cultural change in Whitehall; to both to improve services and gender equalities<sup>4</sup>. When I was director of the Whitehall Innovation Hub we made senior civil service aware of the connections between gender-equalities and innovation, and of women's leadership role in transformation<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> FPSW Manifesto Podcast <http://fairplaysouthwest.libsyn.com/>

<sup>4</sup> Brennan & Ceeney, Cabinet Briefing 2009

<sup>5</sup> The Whitehall Innovation Hub was closed after the 2010 General Election

In 2010 government transformation was beginning to gain a foothold; since then the rise of authoritarian politics has undermined much of the groundwork and confidence for such innovation (verbal reports).

## **A The Community level**

### **Direct gender-equality practices – for women and led by women.**

Such as Women's Aid and particular Asian Women's Refuges. Women's health and Well-Being Centre. Examples include:

- Saheli Hub with five sites across Birmingham.<sup>6</sup>
- Kirklees Women's Centre supports women ex-offenders and has a 90% success in women's reoffending and returning to prison-support women with refuge, jobs, training and well-being.

**Impact** – of both are significant in their localities – unfortunately

Many women's centres and projects have closed due to a lack of funding. And many local champions are working in community projects not specifically for women and have a broader brief.

### **Indirect community Intervention.**

Programmes such as Sure Start and other Neighbourhood Action Programmes have been involving local women and others in co-design and consultations. It is at the community level where women lead projects and reach the disenfranchised, they grow in confidence and attract reliable volunteers in a way that many men are not. This is true across the country, in small towns and cities. Community projects provide a space where local people can talk, socialise and discuss local problems. Community venues alleviate isolation and loneliness, particularly for women. Most of the initiatives above are not funded by government but part of the social economy.

### **Critical factors.**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://saheli.co.uk>

- Very local projects and the projects create opportunities for women to grow in confidence and many find jobs after volunteering for some years. The Housing Aid Centre in the Leeds in the 1970s resulted in every single volunteer having a professional or managerial post with a salary after ten years.
- Women community leaders across the country are leading projects to fill gaps in service and facilities. For instance, St Ives has 8 cluster groups for driving change in the town (second homes, social housing etc.) all are led by women.
- Small local projects are increasingly supported by city or regional infrastructure bodies such Real Live (RIO) in Plymouth, The Eden Project and national organisations such as Locality.
- Well-Being Centres and other projects are supported by infrastructure bodies such as The Alliance of Wellbeing (TAWs) which provide an employment route for less educated and under-employed women.
- New models of supporting communities are also emerging such as Gateway Services a social enterprise which owns a M5 service station and reinvests its profits into community projects – 90% of which are run by local women.
- Increasingly this is where feisty women leaders work, and they are making a difference in communities and on local partnership boards.

The TAW chief executive says that the narrative of gender equalities is useful as it provides a way of women talking about the way they are treated and about assumptions about men and women. Most infrastructure organisation now talk about 'strength-based skills' and of the need to make explicit gendered assumptions in tea meetings. She says these are the only space where it is legitimate to talk about gender-relations and gender –roles for both men and women.

## **B Local Government Level**

### **Transforming public services**

Local Authority leaders and chief executives have been struggling with budget cuts and transforming local councils for over twenty years. In order to:-

- Improve and integrate services
- engage communities in co-design and collaboration
- mainstream service innovation by driving by a transformation of insular cultures and improve responsiveness through inter-agency working and a greater empathy with clients and the public.<sup>7</sup>

Women chief executives play a significant role in public sector transformation and while there are many excellent male chief executives, it is women who are recruited for their transformative skills to deal with challenging problems and budget cuts. A few stand out which demonstrate women's leadership and impact on the wider community.

- Donna Hall CE in Wigan who led a New Settlement for social care in 2013 which involved the community and third sector in redesigning social care, investing in voluntary orgs and placing social workers in the community. This resulted in 40% savings
- Kersten England, CE in York and Bradford, invented Incredible Edible in Todmorden and was the first to introduce digital technologies in social care.
- Irene Lucas, CE Sunderland , motivated front-line staff by providing them with phones to become community minders was brought into government to galvanise innovation in the Dept. of Communities and Local Government.
- Karen McCuskey with the backing of the chief constable in Glasgow introduced a whole system, public health approach to a knife crime in 2008 by involving all agencies, gangs and victims in negotiations. This led to murder in the city centre by 44% in one year

Over the last five years I have interviewed all of the above women and many more about the obstacles they faced as chief executives and the challenges involved in systemic transformation and service redesign. Each are

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<sup>7</sup> Su Maddock Making Modernisation Work (2002) Research Gate

exceptional change agents, share a '*people approach*' to change and prioritize engagement with communities and staff. As managers they all opened up opportunities for other women; a real shift from the 'Queen Bee' syndrome common in the 1990s. However, rarely do they do they talk about Gender Equality Framework, rather GE integrated strategies. Their eye is on service transformation.

This seems to me to be a particular problem in England – where to name gender-biases and cultures is to belittle your status and undermine other plans, consequently, any explicit language about 'gender' is kept for HR issues of abuse, sexual harassment or direct discrimination.

## **2. Was the policy or practice implemented at a local, national or international level?**

I have referred to the level of intervention above, made reference to some International examples and the significance of community led projects many for creating opportunities for BME and Working Class women. Much more could be said about the need to understand better intersectionality in gender equality policies.

## **3. Could the above be implemented in other contexts?**

Yes, with committed transformative leaders – however each place is very different and copycat practices rarely work. There are factors which more likely to support transformation, and ease in gender-equality practice

- An energy for change
- Political backing is usually essential
- Alignment with some aspect of national policy (Well-Being, Inclusive Growth etc.)
- Community leadership
- Staff willingness to reach-out to communities & partners
- Desire to talk about gender-related conflicts.

## **Continuing Obstacles**

- Good programmes and strategies usually involve time and commitment and are undermined by large structural change, financial cuts and unrealistic, short-term targets
- Lack of awareness of the particular problems faced by women, i.e. lack of money, child-care and transport. Urban policy makers usually fail to understand what a lack of transport means to those in rural areas etc.
- Too little understanding of why gender equalities relevant, conflicting interests between disadvantaged groups (who is the most disadvantaged group?). Resolution to this, is less about arguing for gender equality on the grounds women are victims - more that they bring the skills for making change possible; many local leaders now recognize this.
- The social economy sector in some instance is rather complacent about gender-equalities, and poor at gender impact assessment and lax about recruitment.
- A lack of data is a real problem, particularly the lack of any breakdown to Town Council level. Data on women's role in small business and social enterprise is poor: and local business surveys rarely differentiate by gender. While the social economy is seen as an alternative sector where women are involved equally it rarely conducts its own gender impact surveys.
- Social Value is gaining some ground with the acceptance of social prescribing but mostly assessed through statement of intent.

## **Any Additional Comments**

In 2019 Gender Equalities would benefit from a narrative that is explicit about the connections between GE and income inequalities, particularly in areas where men's wages are low and work is hard to find, such as in the Southwest.

More positively, many in the local government and the community sector felt that given the current backlash against women which is widely recognized – gender equalities provide an umbrella for unpacking the gender dynamics of '*boastful men*' and '*apologetic women*' which is increasingly value by men and women. This is good sign.

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October 2019