



## Second Annual Conference of the 4 Nations: Women and the Cost-of-living Crisis across the UK

### **Summary of the second session: How do we build and implement successful communications and campaigns to change the situation for women?**

After learning about the ways in which women as so-called 'shock absorbers' disproportionately suffer from the cost-of-living crisis across all four nations, the second part of the conference offered some optimism and hope. Chaired by Liz Law, who is a member of the Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group and sits on WBG UK's board, the panellists from our second session shared their insights on how to build and implement successful communications and campaigns for change.

Nikki Pound, Equality & Strategy Policy Officer at the Trade Union Congress (TUC), kicked off the session with a presentation about the TUC's current ['Protect the Right to Strike'](#) Campaign that was launched in opposition to the government's 'Anti' Strike (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. The proposed bill threatens to undermine workers' right to strike and would [particularly impact women](#) by imposing minimum service levels on the education and health care sectors in which women represent the overwhelming majority of the workforce. The campaign followed a [petition](#) that has over 250,000 signatures to date and has garnered wide support from the public. The TUC's campaigning strategy encompasses both collective and individual forms of action – from sharing social media posts and hanging up posters to joining picket lines and protests. A key strategic moment for their lobbying and campaigning efforts to make it as politically difficult as possible for the government to pursue this bill would be the end of February when the bill would be debated in the House of Lords.

Next, we heard from Paul Hebden who is Deputy Director covering Strategic Communications at Tax Justice UK. Looking at current wealth inequality levels and how deeply gendered they are – on average, men hold almost 40% more wealth than women – Paul provided some context for why they are [campaigning to reform wealth taxation](#). He moved on to share some insights from their focus groups that demonstrated that people have different ideas about what wealth is and what 'fair' means – emphasizing that *how* we talk about wealth matters. Sharing his key takeaways from the wealth tax reform campaign, Paul stressed that it is essential to give people hope and to communicate that the economy is something we create, it is made by humans for humans, and therefore can be changed.

The third and last panellist of this session was Maddy Moore, Campaigns and Public Affairs Manager at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Maddy gave a presentation on a new joint campaign with the Trussell Trust, ['Guaranteeing our Essentials'](#), which aims to tackle the inadequacy of our social security system. The [campaign](#) calls on the government to ensure the basic rate of benefits at least covers life's essentials and to maintain that level. Building on the successes of joint working on the Keep the Lifeline campaign that was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, JRF and the Trussell Trust sought to make it as easy as possible for other organizations to join it by keeping the campaign brand neutral. Maddy explained that campaigning will work on shifting public opinion to build a consensus that "we all need

to be protected". Strategically they are following a dual approach of risk mitigation against the argument of unaffordability and creating groundswell. In practice, this means capitalising on people's anger at rising poverty in the face of the cost-of-living crisis and offering a solution that is pragmatic and a good and affordable investment. Explaining that nine out of ten low-income households on Universal Credit are going without essentials, Maddy emphasized the urgency of this campaign.