



Private Member's Bill: Women and Girls in Sport in Northern Ireland

October 2025

The Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group (NIWBG) is made up of organisations and individuals from the women's sector, trade union movement, academia and wider civil society in Northern Ireland, with the aim of implementing a gender equal economy. The members of the NIWBG scrutinise policy and budgetary matters with a gendered lens to bring attention to the different ways in which women and men are affected by government-level decision-making. It aims to provide policy- and budget-makers with policy analysis to secure substantive equality for women and men through the assessment of gender impact.

The NIWBG writes this letter in support of the consultation response submitted by the Women's Policy Group (WPG), of which we contributed to. Through this brief letter, we want to reiterate the main points highlighted within the (WPG) response and we direct you to the WPG's response for a more in-depth assessment of these points:

1. There is a need for training for coaches at the junior level and above.
2. Women and girls' sports can work as a force against sectarianism.
3. In order to fully assess the scale of the issues, data will be vital.
4. Human rights implications and the need for an inclusive approach to 'women and girls'.
5. Gender Budgeting - Gender budgeting requires government departments to analyse the different impact of the budget on people of different genders, starting as early in the budget cycle as possible. The aim of gender budgeting is to ensure that the distribution of resources creates more gender equal outcomes. Over time, gender analysis should become embedded at all stages of the budget process. Women's intersecting identities are also included in this analysis and policy-makers are expected to promote these areas of equality as well. There is widespread political support for gender budgeting in Northern Ireland and a growing evidence base that it can help create a more equal society.

Using a diverse range of data sources following an equality - and rights-based methodology is key to determining where resources need to be targeted to ensure better outcomes are delivered to all women and girls in sport. Additionally, analysis opportunities and impacts must be inclusive, thorough, and grounded in

an equality- and rights-based approach, reflecting the data that is being used. It is crucial that gender equality obligations are not a 'tick-box exercise,' but rather that gender equality is mainstreamed in every area of the budgetary process through gender analysis of data supported by experts from civil society.

Women and girls in sport have historically been underfunded, underserved, and underrepresented. While there have been gender equality gains in the area of sport over the years, proper investment in the growth of women and girls in sport is key to closing the gap in equality. Gender budgeting can provide the infrastructure needed to ensure that our fiscal tools are maximised to achieve this goal.

Again, we reiterate our support for the WPG's response, and we encourage the use of the equality- and rights-based approach, supported by international obligations, to inform this PMB. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our response at a greater length and encourage engagement with the wider Women's Policy Group.