# Ethics Report – Fairer, Caring Nations

## Aims

This project aims to improve the evidence base for a full assessment of the potential impact of constitutional change in Scotland on inequalities, particularly gender inequalities, by focussing particularly on the structural inequalities caused (or exacerbated) by care policy. It asks: What is the relationship between governance, constitutional architecture and care policy? What options for constitutional change would be the most effective at tackling inequality, particularly gender inequality? What can Scotland learn from international evidence in this area?

## Scientific Background

The literature used to frame this research addresses issues of gender (in)equality and care policy, broadly defined. The literature will be used to construct ‘ideal types’ of care policy regimes that lead to high levels of gender equality, and up to 5 case study countries will be chosen which adhere closely to these criteria. The cases will then be used to construct ‘models of care’ that can be used to assess Scotland’s capacity to adopt such approaches.

Although there is a high degree of rigour with regards to the choice of case studies and the construction of the ‘models of care’, the research design is ultimately a qualitative one which relies on a reciprocal relationship between theory and data. The interviews gathered for this project will provide the main source of empirical data.

## Study Design

The research will begin with a detailed examination of the relevant literature in order to determine which factors contribute to excellent care policy and high levels of gender equality. Up to five case study countries will then be chosen which adhere to these criteria and examined using a comparative case study approach. The findings from these studies will then be used to examine the specific case of Scotland in order to ascertain whether or not Scotland could achieve these policy outcomes, keeping in mind changing and ongoing constitutional developments.

It is not envisaged that this project will require future ethics consideration due to emergent research design.

## Participants

The participants in this research will be drawn from a range of key informants, academics and stakeholders in Scotland and Wales with an interest in care policy and gender equality. These will include (for example) politicians, civil servants, equality campaigners, trade unionists and care providers.

Participants will be approached based upon the position they hold which will be deemed important as a result of the literature review. Around 30 interviews will be carried out in total.

## Methods of Data Collection

The main source of data for this project will be semi-structured interviews. It is envisaged that documentary analysis and survey data analysis will also be carried out, although both of these sources of data will be publicly available.

## Methods of Data Analysis

The interview data will be transcribed and coded for analysis using qualitative content analysis. Documentary data will also be coded, and a range of statistical techniques can be potentially utilised with regards to survey data.

Due to issues of sensitivity with regards to interview transcripts being potentially identifiable, the ESRC has agreed that transcripts will not be archived.

## Secondary Data Providers

The project will involve collaboration with ‘Engender’, who are an information, networking and research organisation for women in Scotland. Engender will assist the project by providing access to interviewees and assist the researchers in networking activities.

## Principal Investigator’s Summary of Ethical Issues

Previous research in this area has indicated the importance of confidentiality, particularly for political elites and other participants who may be expressing views that run counter to their organisational or political affiliations. For this reason transcripts will be anonymised and the data will not be archived for further research - this is in agreement with the ESRC. All the participants will be encouraged to give informed consent to their participation and offered the opportunity to highlight any direct quotes they do not wish to be used in the research which might identify them. Most of the potential participants have already indicated their interest in, and willingness to be involved in, the research.

Ethical agreements will form part of the memorandum of understanding with Engender. All data will be kept securely by researchers at the University of Stirling and not made available in uncoded format to any stakeholders, including Engender.

## Benefits to Participants and Third Parties

Those likely to benefit from the research include feminist third sector organisations in Scotland concerned with gender equality, individuals who are concerned with the impact constitutional change may have on gender equality in Scotland, Scottish policy networks inside the Scottish Government, cross-party MSPs concerned with care policy and equalities issues, and third sector organisations representing the interests of users of care services in Scotland. Participants in the research are likely to be drawn from these groups.

## Risks to Researchers

There are no risks envisaged.

## Procedures for Informed Consent

Detailed letters will be sent to participants outlining the interview process. Their confidentiality, right to request that their interview be deleted, data protection and other important matters will be clearly stated. They will also be provided with a consent form to sign.

## Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the research, amongst disseminating through academic and non-academic channels, will lead to a detailed understanding of the opportunities and constraints that Scotland faces in terms of becoming a more gender equal society. This will mean that the outcomes of the project will give the researchers the capacity to inform and be consulted by relevant stakeholders and institutions with regards to achieving a more gender equal Scotland. This capacity will become especially acute if Scotland votes for independence in September 2014.

## Dissemination

The dissemination plan is designed to reach a wide range of feminist communities of interest, policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders concerned with the development and implementation of care policy in Scotland, as well as increase capacity for further research in this area. Academic dissemination of the project will take place through two international conference papers midway through the project and a final conference paper at the end and the production of three related academic journal papers for submission to journals such as *Social Politics, Journal of European Social Policy* and *Policy and Politics* and through an academic conference designed to improve the capacity for research in this field.

## Confidentiality Measures

Data from the project will be kept in two main locations and up-dated in both whenever changes are made to documents. Firstly, data will be stored in a protected folder within the shared drive for the School of Applied Social Science on a secure server within the University. The folder will be locked and accessible only to members of the project team. Secondly, the data will be secured in a password protected folder on the project laptop. Back-up into the shared drive folder from the laptop will be done at the end of every working day on the project. It will be the responsibility of the research fellow to ensure this is done. The on-going data analysis of the quantitative data will be held within an SPSS project. Similarly, the data analysis of the qualitative data will be held within an NVIVO project. The journal function within NVIVO will be used to keep a note of the progress with analysis.