Creating a caring economy: A call to action [1]

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The final report of the Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy lands at a unique moment in global history. Reeling from the first wave of a deadly pandemic, perched on the precipice of a second wave, and a deep and brutal recession, there was never a better time to ask: do we really want to go back to business as usual?

The coronavirus pandemic has brought much to light.

When faced with crisis, care and kindness come to the fore. Almost overnight, people flocked to their doorsteps to clap for carers, to check in with vulnerable neighbours and to pin up pictures of NHS rainbows. Our interconnections and dependence on one another had never been clearer.

The key workers that have kept us going are low-paid carers, nurses, shelf-stackers, cleaners and delivery drivers. Key workers who had been branded 'unskilled' earlier in the year were heralded as heroes.

Government intervention is possible, and powerful. When confronted by the pandemic, governments across the four nations chose to put people's health first. The introduction of widespread restrictions massively reduced economic output, but sought to ensure people would be safe; and borrowing to fund the furlough scheme kept up many people's incomes even if we had to stay at home.

Crises do not impact everyone equally. While we may all be weathering the same storm, we are in drastically different boats. The virus has hit the most disadvantaged the hardest. Structural inequality is embedded in our society, and it requires bold, concerted action to eliminate it.

Above all, **we, the people, make and sustain the economy and human life.** The economy is not a black box, something we cannot understand or influence, or separated from us. We are the economy. And we can do things differently. This understanding is empowering. It emboldens us to ask: what kind of world do we want to create? What kind of economy do we want to make?

It is not that what has been revealed is wholly new. But Covid-19 has shone a light so brightly on these realities that it is no longer possible to look away.

As we chart a new way forward, we must not forget that the crisis did not occur in a vacuum. We are faced with an unfolding technological revolution, impending climate catastrophe, and entrenched inequality and prejudice. The task ahead is big, but can no longer be delayed.

This report lays out a roadmap to building a new economy. Laying out the what, the why and the how, this report is a call to action: action from governments at all levels; action from businesses, including both large firms and small cooperatives and social enterprises; action from charities and community organisations. Working together, across the four nations of the UK, at every level, we can design and demand a new economy: an economy which has the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the planet at its centre; an economy which values care, both paid and unpaid, as the activities that nurture us all; an economy which ensures that no-one faces discrimination, violence, or poverty, and in which no-one is left behind, or pushed behind. This new economy is a **caring economy.**

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