

THE GREEN PARTY'S MANIFESTO FOR

GENDER EQUALITY

2017 GENERAL ELECTION / GREEN PARTY WOMEN





END IMMIGRATION DETENTION

Detaining asylum seekers is traumatic, inhumane, costly and totally unnecessary. We want it to end.

Currently, in an all-women detention centre, men are employed in direct contact with women detainees, watching over them showering, dressing and using the bathroom. Research from Legal Action suggests that 70% of detainees have experienced rape, sexual violence and forms of torture, and this only adds to their trauma.

We would introduce laws to:

- » **Protect the most vulnerable.** Pregnant asylum seekers and those who have experienced rape, sexual violence and forms of torture will not be detained. There will be no male staff employed in roles where they come into contact with female detainees.
- » **See that applications for refugee status are dealt with quickly and fairly.** This should be at three months maximum. After three months, an applicant should receive equal rights to access public services until a decision is made.
- » **Ensure that funding is made available for integrated support.** This includes language training and assistance with asylum applications, plus access to health and welfare services. The Green Party does not agree with any person being left destitute after a failed asylum claim or if deemed to have not applied “appropriately”. Every person in the United Kingdom should be entitled to the basic necessities of life, including food, shelter and medical care, whether this be achieved through employment rights or public funds.
- » **Not deport at-risk asylum seekers.** We recognise that asylum seekers in the UK whose application for refugee status is rejected simply cannot be deported to a country where they face danger, discrimination or punishment.
- » **End detention.** In the long term, we would work towards the closure of Yarl’s Wood and the abolition of immigration detention centres, allowing their claims to be dealt with in the community.
- » **Call for a referendum on the deal for Britain’s departure from the EU.** We want to ensure that women’s and LGBTIQ+ people’s rights are safeguarded.



SAFETY FOR SEX WORKERS

The Green Party supports full decriminalisation of the sex industry. Respected research by Amnesty International and the UN has shown that it is the safest legal model for sex workers.

The Green Party would:

- » **End criminalisation of the purchase and sale of sex.** Sex workers should be able to screen and select their clients for safety, therefore decreasing their risk of violence.
- » **Remove prosecutions for sex work from existing criminal records,** enabling sex workers to seek alternative employment should they wish to do so.
- » **Have zero tolerance of coercion, violence or sexual abuse.** We will ensure that physically coerced sex trafficking and child prostitution remains illegal.



SAVE WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

The cuts to our healthcare services have disproportionately affected women, including trans women, as well as those who are LGBTQIA+. Women are also more likely to have additional needs to safeguard their sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights. The Green Party is committed to reversing NHS cuts and providing high quality health care for all.

The Green Party would:

- » **End pay freezes for public sector workers.** The TUC estimates that by 2020, midwives and social workers (both female-dominated professions) will have lost £3000 from their salary in real terms. We would ensure that all workers are paid a true living wage, which, unlike the current pay cap, rises in line with the cost of living.
- » **Reinstate our sexual health services.** Since the introduction of the Health and Social Care Act, passing the responsibility for sexual health to councils, many centres providing contraception and maternal healthcare have reduced opening hours. The Green Party would reinstate and expand these services, providing high quality sexual health services for all.
- » **Introduce safe levels of staffing across the NHS.** No one benefits when staff numbers are reduced, leaving those remaining forced to care for patients on long hours without the necessary breaks or enough colleagues to provide support. The Green Party recognises the part that migrants, especially from the EU, play in our NHS, and would seek to protect their rights in any referendum on the final Brexit deal.

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HEALTHCARE FOR ALL OF US

SAVE WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE
| REVERSE THE CUTS TO OUR
HEALTH SERVICES



MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a gendered issue. Women are almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with anxiety disorders, and are also more likely to be diagnosed with other common mental health problems. Those who are trans, identify as non-binary and/or express themselves in ways that challenge stereotypical ideas about gender also face high levels of mental health problems. It is estimated that 40% of non-binary people in the UK have attempted suicide. This issue is further compounded by our ethnicity: people from black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to have mental health problems, and then go on to experience worse treatment than those who are white.

Despite the clear documentation of the disproportionate impact mental health problems have on our wellbeing compared to other illnesses, funding is falling further and further behind.

The Green Party would:

- » **Bring spending on mental health care in line with spending on physical health care.** Targets should be introduced for speed of access to mental health services, bringing mental health care in line with other serious health issues. This includes a maximum wait time between referral and initial appointment for psychological therapies.
- » **Recognise the need for specialist services.** We would ensure that community specific mental health programs for those who are LGBTIQ+ are well funded. We would also reduce barriers for people of colour receiving care by funding community specific outreach programs, focused upon raising awareness and reducing stigma of mental health problems.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The Green Party would:

- » **Increase assistance to destitute pregnant people and new parents.** Everyone should be entitled to the highest standards of care during pregnancy and birth. These standards will be maintained for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, level of income, race or ethnicity, age or disability. We would reverse the exclusion of migrants from the mainstream benefits system. All new parents should be able to feed, clothe and house themselves and their babies.
- » **Provide free NHS maternity care for everyone.** Charging for healthcare is presented in the media as a strategy to deal with visitors from abroad, yet in reality this puts people in danger. No person should be wrongly refused, or asked to pay for, basic pregnancy and maternity care.
- » **Provide free sanitary products in schools to those who cannot afford them,** to avoid the scandal of young people missing school due to lack of access to these items.
- » **Decriminalise abortion procedures across the entire UK,** regulating them through medical practice instead of the law. We would provide patients from Northern Ireland with free-of-charge access to NHS abortion care and travel expenses in the mean-time.

SAFETY FOR ALL OF US

END IMMIGRATION DETENTION
| SAFETY FOR SEX WORKERS

EARLY INTERVENTION TO END HARASSMENT

NSPCC research shows that one in two boys believe there are some circumstances in which it is okay to hit a woman or force her to have sex. In 2010, 40% of 16 to 18-year-olds said they either didn't receive lessons or information on sexual consent or didn't know whether they did.

Developing Personal, Social and Health Education in the UK

Our policies call to:

- » **Help teachers understand bullying and sexual harassment:** We want to make schools a safe place to learn. Staff must receive training to help them spot sexual harassment and bullying, including that taking place outside school and over the internet, and consider how school uniform policies can contribute to a culture of victim blaming.
- » **Ensure all children receive high quality age appropriate sex and relationships education** exploring issues such as consent, different kinds of abuse in relationships, maintaining healthy relationships in the world of smartphones and the internet, and of sexual and romantic identities beyond "heterosexual". Where necessary, teachers shall be provided with additional training to enable this.
- » **Promote discussion of the gendered and racial stereotypes** employed in the media and wider society, to allow children to better understand society and themselves.
- » **Address gender stereotypes, homophobia and transphobia in society**, initiating public education programs both in schools and wider society.
- » **Connect schools with community-led education initiatives** to tackle the causes of prejudice and to increase awareness of the value of diverse cultures and genders.

FREEDOM FROM ABUSE

While imbalances of power can lead to abuse regardless of gender, it is acknowledged that a large majority of cases of abuse in the home are against women, plus transgender and non-binary people, with research indicating that one in four women will experience domestic abuse during their lifetime.

On average, more than two women a week in Britain are killed by current or former partners. Abuse can be physical, emotional or psychological, financial, or involve restricting of personal freedom. The Green Party recognise that migrants, women of colour, and those who are disabled are particularly at risk.

The Green Party would:

- » **Reverse cuts to domestic violence services and implement a UK-wide strategy to tackle domestic violence.** This will include working with perpetrators to prevent them from continuing to abuse.
- » **Provide safe and secure housing** for those who cannot otherwise escape from abuse.
- » **Scrap the bedroom tax** for those at risk of abuse who have a “panic room” installed due to risk of abuse.
- » **Scrap the “rape clause” for receiving child benefit.** The Green Party strongly opposes the restriction of child benefit to two children, where parents have to prove that additional children were the result of abuse to receive support for further children. This is a degrading measure which requires claimants

to relive their ordeal, and then questions them by forcing them to seek verification from a third party.

- » **Make universities and colleges safe places to learn** Higher and further educational establishments will develop clear student-led policies to combat sexual abuse and harassment. These will include the requirement to monitor levels of sexual violence, and training for both staff and to enable peer-to-peer support.
- » **Restore legal aid** to prevent victims being forced to represent themselves against their abusers in court.
- » **Prevent HBV (honour based violence) and forced marriage** by funding community based initiatives, led by women with relevant cultural experience of these issues, working with other appropriate government agencies.
- » **Implement a UK-wide strategy to tackle FGM** including appropriate training for teachers to help them identify at-risk children.
- » **Promote a zero tolerance of racist hate crimes** which the Fawcett Society argues particularly affects Muslim women. We would place an emphasis on campaigns to encourage those experiencing witnessing hate crimes to report them and emphasising that they will be taken seriously.
- » **Recognise abuse against the 1 in 100 babies are born with bodies that don't fit into stereotypical categories of male or female.** The Green Party would seek to protect intersex minors from unnecessary medical interventions until they are old enough to decide for themselves.



AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL OF US

CLOSE THE GENDER GAP

Research from the Women's Budget Group shows that by 2020, women will have lost twice as much income from as men due to the Conservative changes to our tax and benefits system – with those who are poorest losing out the most. Parents also do not get paid fairly for taking parental leave, often putting pressure on one to earn more money, or for a parent to return to work before they are ready.

The Green Party would:

- » **End age discrimination in pay.** Scrap age-related pay bands for the minimum wage, including for apprentices and trainees.
- » **Provide high quality, paid, internships for all.** Research by the Young Women's Trust shows that, on average, young female apprentices are paid 21% less than young male. The Green Party would standardise apprenticeships and internships to ensure a minimum standard of education, skills, training, support and personal development is provided.

- » **Create Green jobs for more women in STEM in renewables and sustainability.** Currently, just 5% of engineering apprentices are women. The Green Party would ensure that the roll-out of Green Jobs would be accompanied by specific initiatives to train and encourage young women, in particular, to fill these roles.

The pay gap is then worsened at the point at which many take a career break in order to adopt or have children.

We would:

- » **Introduce fair pay for parents.** Parental leave pay should be at least at the level of the Living Wage, including for those who are self-employed.
- » **Protect the right to return to work.** We will ensure that parental employment rights are protected, in line with guidance from charities such as Maternity Action.

- » **Guarantee parental leave rights, regardless of gender.**
- » **Provide statutory rights to breastfeed infants on return to work,** and provide the practical provisions to enable this.
- » **Make returning to work easier.** We will make returning to work following a birth or adoption of a child easier, by introducing tax incentives for employers who provide support facilities at the workplace such as childcare, job-sharing and flexible working.
- » **Guarantee free universal early education and childcare** for all children.

Empower parents to tackle discrimination. The Green Party would reduce tribunal fees so that workers facing discrimination at work including due to parental leave can afford to seek justice and recompense.

- » **Report on the gender pay gap.** The Green Party would push for public disclosure of race, gender and pay bands in businesses bigger than 50 employees.

» **Implement a Universal Basic Income.** We will develop a government-sponsored pilot scheme so that, in the long term, everyone will be given a basic income to support them. With increasing automation, and people struggling to balance earning with the demands of life, we will provide support so you can make the decision that is right in regards to work, childcare and other caring arrangements, as well as supporting those who are disabled.

SUPPORT FOR UNPAID CARERS, DISABLED & OLDER MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

While women continue to do the majority of caring for family, playing a vital role in our society, our jobs market discriminates against people who care and their contribution goes largely unrecognised.

The Green Party would:

- » **Protect and support disabled people.** We would reinstate the Independent Living Fund and increase the budget for Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments to fully provide for the extra expenses associated with being disabled.
- » **Support for those who care.** We would progressively increase Carer's Allowance, until everyone is given a basic income to support themselves.
- » **Increase funding for social services,** both through central funding and an increase in funding to councils who provide

these services. By providing enough funding for proper implementation of the 2014 Care Act, we will be able to provide disabled people with the support they may need to find and stay in employment, as well as providing much needed support to unpaid, mostly female, carers who are currently trying to fill in the gaps.

- » **Fair pensions for women.** The rapid introduction of changes to equalise the pension age has left many women in a state of uncertainty. We support the calls for fair, transitional payments to these women, and would build a pensions system for everyone, enabling older people to continue to be active members of society. In the long term, the Green Party's Universal Basic Income scheme would enable retirement age to be flexible, recognising that some need to retire sooner than others.



EQUALITY NOW

It is now nearly 100 years since the first woman was elected to the House of Commons, yet only 29% of MPs in the parliament elected in 2015 were women. At this rate, a girl born today will be drawing her pension before she has an equal say in the government. Without a government that represents us, our laws do not accurately reflect our needs.

The Green Party would:

- » **Increase diversity with a “50/50 Parliament”** through measures such as enabling MPs as well as other “full-time” politicians to job-share – a practice which has been shown to increase representation of women, disabled people and those from ethnic minorities.
- » **Open civil partnerships to all couples.** Couples may want to legally recognise and protect their relationship without having to enter into marriage. Both marriage and civil partnerships should be open to all couples, regardless of sexual orientation and without discrimination.

- » **Review current anti-discrimination legislation** to provide protection to all trans people, including those who do not identify as men or women, as well as providing protection for intersex individuals.
- » **Defend the Human Rights Act** alongside other equality legislation that has resulted from membership of the EU.

**Green Party Women is the branch of the
Green Party campaigning for gender equality,
and welcomes women, including trans women,
as well as non binary members**



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