

Many thanks for an opportunity to answer Labour Women's Network's questions. I'm a member of LWN and very happy to support the Power Pledge and the sterling work LWN does within the party. I've given more detailed answers to the questions below.

*1) Will you defend the principle and implementation of all women shortlists, and commit to a Labour manifesto commitment to change the law to extend these to mayoral, local government and police and crime commissioner elections?*

Yes. I was selected on an all women shortlist for the 2015 General Election and was proud to be so. Unsurprisingly, I'm afraid, this meant when selected I was challenged on the selection process on a number of occasions and defended it vigorously. My own CLP has recently successfully challenged the decision that we should be an open selection and will be a women only shortlist for the next General Election.

Our lack of female mayoral and police and crime commissioner candidates, in particular, is an embarrassment to a party that stands for equality, as is the continuation in some areas of all male ward councillor teams. I would support any action to change this including enabling all women shortlists but we also need a culture within the party of encouraging and facilitating women to come forward and take these positions. We need a culture within the party that is welcoming and inclusive and doesn't put women off.

*2) Will you take action to ensure Labour's approach to any boundary changes does not reduce the number of women MPs?*

Yes. This is of particular concern in Wales, where we have a smaller percentage of women MPs than average (10 Labour and 1 Plaid out of 40 – so 28% compared to 32% in Westminster as a whole) and the proposed reduction in number of seats is more severe (from 40 to 29).

*3) Will you ensure Labour publishes data about the diversity of its candidates in all elections?*

Yes. Openness is a great disinfectant. However we do need to be sure we safeguard the anonymity of the data to protect identities – this will be particularly important for some LGBT people.

*4) What actions will you take to ensure Labour tackles a culture of sexism from our grassroots up?*

We need a culture of challenging sexist behaviour and to recognise that calling it out should not be left to the person on the receiving end, the women's officer, or the women in the room. I recently spoke on a panel at a women's event at Welsh Labour conference and recalled how in a new CLP at my first door knocking session, where I was the only woman, a senior man told me "I could go and have a cup of tea with his wife if I wanted to put my feet up." As a longstanding member, albeit not of that CLP, I wasn't deterred and someone did say something supportive to me afterwards, but I'd like to think someone said something to him as well.

*5) Will you support the introduction of an independent complaints system for sexual harassment, from first contact to final outcome?*

Yes. Our current systems are not fit for purpose. People should not be in a position where their only option is to complain to people who may know them or the person they are complaining about. Neither should they be put in a position where in order to get action taken they have to be in a room with and even worse cross-questioned by the person they are accusing. There are other ways of testing evidence. We also need to recognise that complainants may need support in reporting and providing cases and this should also be provided independently.

*6) Will you ensure Labour publishes data about equal pay among its staff, and the diversity officers in senior and strategic roles?*

Yes. For the same reason as my answer to 3.

*7) What actions will you take to ensure Labour women have a formal voice at every level of the party?*

Our rules require Labour women to be represented at many levels within the party, but I still sadly hear CLPs or branches say there aren't any women who want to fill whatever position. It's not good enough and people need to question whether it is because they haven't been encouraged. The gender balance amongst party membership has improved with the recent membership surge and we need to build on that and ensure we are never in that position again. But too often informal decision making is done without women. We should always question that where we see it, but we also need to create a culture where men look around the room and ask why there are no women there.

*8) Will you take action to ensure no Labour Party event advertises an all male panel or uses gendered language?*

Yes. I recently had to propose a motion at a local meeting to replace chairman with chair in the minutes!

*9) Will you support a change so that in future when there is a vacancy there is at least one woman in Labour's leadership team?*

Yes. I was very pleased that we have made this change in Welsh Labour and our recently elected Deputy Leader had to be female. I would also like to see at the very least a woman on the ballot paper in the election of Welsh Labour Leader that is about to take place.

*10) Will you ask Labour Groups to introduce formal parental leave arrangements for councillors, so baby leave is not a barrier to public life, and commit to a Labour manifesto commitment giving a legal right to baby leave for all forms of elected office?*

Yes. When my eldest was born 22 years ago I remember telling the CLP meeting that they wouldn't be getting a CLP Officer's report from me that month as I assumed they were progressive enough to

give me maternity leave and being nervous that someone would challenge this. Noone did, but we should not be putting new mothers in that situation, whatever position they hold.