

Labour Women's Network #NEC Candidates Pledges for Women – Joint Response from Theresa Griffin, Liz McInnes and Paula Sherriff

1. Will you defend the principle and implementation of All Women Shortlists, and commit to a Labour manifesto pledge to change the law to extend these to mayoral, local government and police and crime commissioner elections, and to ensure their use is legal until parity is sustainable without them?

Yes, Absolutely. Delighted to see the above covering all selections and devolved Government selections/elections. There has been an issue in some Labour and Campaign Groups, however, where AWS has not been used to maintain parity, once achieved, and this needs rectifying in a rule change. We also need to extend the good mentoring work of LWN as common good practice in all local campaign and Labour Groups to identify women and actively support them in coming forward as candidates. Followed by effective and welcoming induction and mentoring schemes for women once s/elected in all positions. This should include equality of access to resource and financial support for s/election procedures and for women who have caring responsibilities.

The success of AWSs is the progress Labour has made in comparison to all other parties in Parliament and Councils throughout the country. We have made considerable progress but there is more to be done.

2. Will you ensure Labour publishes data about the diversity of its candidates in all elections, in accordance with section 106 of the Equality Act?

We will actively work for this. This includes extending to include PCC elections and more effective monitoring of unsuccessful candidates to ascertain barriers for women and put mechanisms in place to correct them.

3. Will you support the urgent introduction of an independent complaints system for sexual harassment, from first contact to final outcome?

Yes, an independent complaints system is sorely needed which is properly resourced, trained and timely and, as you say, from first contact to final outcome.

4. What actions will you take to ensure Labour tackles a culture of sexism and misogyny from the grassroots up?

We have collectively, sadly, a lot of collective experience of this, having stood as local Councillors and in national and European elections and attended Labour Party meetings all over the country. We are particularly concerned for the many young women who will campaign but not attend meetings due to a toxic atmosphere. Misogyny is part of this problem and we cannot go on knowing this is happening and not deal with it. Too often we have witnessed shouting, bullying, undermining, transphobia, antisemitism, racism, homophobia, sexism and misogyny. We will have a zero tolerance policy towards all forms of discrimination and we will forcefully represent the views of minority groups if elected to the NEC.

While most meetings are held in venues that are now accessible for disabled members (rather than at the top of stairs in a pub), the way that meetings are conducted are often not accessible for disabled members. One of us witnessed a young woman who is hearing impaired leave a meeting in tears because she could not hear or be heard.

We need a united, winning party where every member is valued and where there is no place for, and zero tolerance of, factionalism in physical meetings, on-line chats or social media.

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The complaints and disciplinary procedure must be closely monitored by the NEC to ensure its zero-tolerance and transparency, with members being informed of where their complaint is in the process in a timely manner.

The issue is also cultural. All CLP officers should be trained in how to conduct inclusive meetings be that physically or on-line. Campaign sessions linked to social events have been successful in some areas for actually enabling members to get to know each other. All members meetings around issues not just process should be actively encouraged. All CLP members should be aware of and have input into their Constituency Development Plan. Campaigning across CLPs in a region or sub-region should be enabled, especially including members with no Labour MP (and definitely no Labour MEP!), including subsidising travel costs where appropriate. Equality training should be mandatory in each CLP. Grouping CLPs together for Young Labour to support one another should be actively encouraged and resourced by LA Campaign Groups.

Zero tolerance must be applied in social media but its opportunities should be also embraced. We have found that on-line meetings with members, fairly chaired and with time for a Q&A have been really useful in discussing policy and strategic issues but also in unlocking the ideas and skills of our members. A skills audit should be undertaken in each CLP. Welcome packs for new members and a welcome 'visit', regular newsletters. A code of conduct for all meetings and regular refresh as happens in all good workplaces. Our members are volunteers and this should be respected in all fora.

We are a Labour Movement, a family, and this should be driving us forward to win for our most vulnerable communities.

5. Will you sign LWN's campaign to #KeepTheGoodStuff from the Covid-19 crisis and reduce barriers to women's political participation by introducing a degree of long-term virtual access to Labour Party meetings and events? Sign here: <https://www.lwn.org.uk/keepthegoodstuff>

All 3 of us have signed. The new Labour world of zoom has thrown up some inclusive but also exclusivity issues, for e.g. access to technology. This needs a strategy going forward especially for disabled members and those who cannot afford access to technology. However, the goal of achieving a degree of long-term virtual access is the correct direction of travel and does help to get rid of some geographical, cost, caring barriers. Regular on-line meetings with members of our Shadow Team should also be made available to members.

6. Will you support the annual continuation of the Jo Cox Women in Leadership Scheme, which has successfully empowered women to stand for office and act as agents of positive change in their local parties, communities and workplaces?

Absolutely, we have seen its positive impacts and all 3 of us have has the pleasure of being involved in the Scheme in our various roles. We would be active champions of it and be delighted to get involved in its delivery from an NEC perspective if elected. It should be rolled out further as a model of good practice within the Party.

7. What steps will you take to improve the diversity of Labour Party staff in senior and strategic roles?

You cannot improve diversity without access to robust monitoring data and that includes people who applied and were unsuccessful and an analysis of barriers and opportunities. While the GS is responsible for staffing matters directly, relevant data should be reported to a sub-committee of the NEC initially for action and then to the full NEC on a regular basis. Positive action should inform

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recruitment advertising and processes. Mentoring of women such as through the Jo Cox Women in Leadership Scheme and staff appraisals and training to reduce barriers and the glass ceiling. Diversity in interview panels and diversity training for all staff, including the most senior.

8. Will you ensure that Labour women have a formal voice at every level of the party, and that a meaningful and engaging Women's Conference takes place every year?

We will actively work to achieve and resource this properly at every level. Women's Conference was instrumental in providing supportive networks for all 3 of us as candidates and then then elected representatives. Annual Women's Conference is a given starting point. If elected we will ensure that we champion an effective stand-alone Women's Conference annually and that its ethos, events and venue are accessible and welcoming, including access to flexible and subsidised travel and caring facilities. National Conference should provide opportunities for women to be visible, chairing and speaking at all events and from the platform. This includes ensuring that we have women fronting fringe and media events.

We will champion regular virtual women's meetings at sub-regional level and nationally with Angie and women members of the NEC and Shadow and eventually Cabinet team.

The Party Democracy Review agreed structures for Women, Young Labour, LGBTI +, BAME and Disabled members at CLP, region and national level and we will work to ensure these are implemented and that women's structures within CLPs are established and valued.

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

Yes, this should be a given at every level of the Party and we will work to ensure and monitor this.

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 pledge giving a legal right to baby leave for all forms of elected office?

Yes absolutely. I remember when my daughter (Theresa) was 6 weeks old I had to attend a Council meeting, close vote, so obviously took her with me and got roundly criticised by one or two in my own Group for doing so! Now we need the legal right to baby leave and mechanisms for voting, especially at a local level, to ensure no-one is put in that position again!

Thank You Labour Women's Network – thought provoking as ever!

In Sisterhood

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