



WE Party Conference 2020

15 - 18 October 2020

Sample Policy Motion

This is an example of wording that could be used for a policy motion. It is important to ensure you include all the information requested in the form and the official guidelines for submitting motions (access at https://www.womensequality.org.uk/conference_2020_motions_timeline). Submissions that don't adhere to these rules will be rejected automatically.

Policy motions may be proposed by a local WE branch (or branches) or by not less than 20 WE members working together. The Party Leader, the Steering Committee, the Executive Committee and the Policy Committee can also put forward motions.

This is a sample policy motion (based on a 2018 motion) that you can check out when you are writing your motion.

Motion Title: Protecting Migrant Domestic Workers against Abuse and Servitude
Proposed by: WE Islington Branch/ islington@womensequality.org.uk
Proposer: Guilene Gaspais GG@emailaddress.UKd
Type of motion: Policy Motion



Motion text:

The Women's Equality Party Conference 2020:

- Reaffirms its commitment to ending violence against women and girls;
- Notes that 75% of Migrant Domestic Workers in the UK are female; and
- Recognises the vulnerability to exploitation and abuse of Domestic Workers with work visas tied to their employers.

The Women's Equality Party calls upon the Government to:

1. Restore the rights of Migrant Domestic Workers to the pre-2012 system and end this form of modern slavery.
2. Allow Migrant Domestic Workers to renew their work visa annually from the UK and build five continuous years of presence in the country, which will open rights to Indefinite Leave to Remain.
3. Introduce mandatory group information meetings for workers who remain in the UK for more than 42 days to ensure that they are aware of their rights to withdraw their labour and change employer if they are in an abusive working relationship.

Motion rationale:

There are over 18,000 Migrant Domestic Workers in the UK, 75% of whom are women, who experience unfair working conditions as well as abuse (physical, psychological and sexual) because of a punitive visa system that ties the domestic workers to their employers. Despite strong opposition that it would institutionalise abuse, the Government made significant changes to the domestic worker's visa in April 2012. The changes meant that Migrant Domestic Workers coming to the UK were tied to their employer for a maximum of six months, with no right to renew or extend their visa beyond this time. In April 2016, after a long campaign, the Government made limited changes to the visa system, accepting that workers should be allowed to leave their employer without being criminalised — but only during the period of their six-month visa. A recognised victim of trafficking can increase the length of their visa for up to two years.

Prior to the amendment of the rules in 2012, domestic workers travelling to the UK with their employers were allowed to remain in employment for as long as their services were required. Their right to change employment had been introduced into the Immigration rules to ensure protection from abuse. Domestic workers were also allowed to settle in the UK after five years.

The Tied Visa system set up in 2012 is based on the Kafala system in place in a certain number of countries in the Middle East. It is primarily used for low paid labour. It links the worker's visa to a sponsor in the country, thus restricting their freedom by heavily regulating the conditions allowing them to change employers, sometimes defining where they are allowed to live or when they can



leave the country. Human rights organisations have consistently documented how the Kafala system leads to abuse¹².

Since the implementation of the Tied Visa system in 2012, organisations working with Domestic Workers have seen an increase of abuse cases reported to them³.

In 2015, James Ewins was commissioned by the Government to review the conditions of the Overseas Domestic Workers visa and consider whether they were appropriate, given the Government's commitment to tackling modern slavery.

The Ewins report called for all overseas domestic workers to be given the right to change employers. Its second recommendation would allow domestic workers to apply for further leave to remain in the UK for up to 30 months.

The Government did not implement Mr Ewins' recommendations, despite being under considerable pressure to do so by the House of Lords and some MPs in the House of Commons. Instead, in April 2016, the Government changed the immigration rules in order to allow domestic workers in private households to change employer (for any reason) during the valid period of their six-month visa. They also amended the immigration rules to increase the length of visa granted to a recognised victim of trafficking from six months to two years.

These limited changes do not tackle the level of abuse that Domestic Workers experience in their daily lives. Domestic Workers, frightened of being deported, prefer to disappear instead of reporting their employers, putting them even more at risk of trafficking and abuse.

Currently all work visas are eligible for extension (under different conditions), except for the Overseas Domestic Workers Visa (unless the Domestic Workers can prove that they have been the victim of trafficking or slavery).

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/06/lebanon-migrant-workers-abuse-account>

² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/16/uk-modern-slavery-bill-fails-vulnerable-women>

³ http://www.kalayaan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/QuestionnaireNGOs_EN-17-05-2018-K-ASI.pdf