



WE Party Conference

15 – 18 October 2020

Title: Valuing the work of BAME women in health and social care roles

Proposed by: Lambeth Branch

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Proposer: Lambeth Branch

Type of motion: Policy Motion

Motion text:

1 The Women's Equality Party Conference 2020 reaffirms its commitments, under its Equality in
2 Health Policy, to:

- 3 - Protecting the long-term sustainability of the NHS
- 4 - Developing social care policies
- 5 - Building a care workforce for the future

6 Care work is crucial to maintaining public health, protecting vulnerable people and preserving our
7 NHS's capacity. WE recognise that:

- 8 A) This work is predominantly done by women, with a high proportion of Black, Asian and Minority
9 Ethnic women and migrant workers.



- 10 B) Support and pay for this predominantly-female workforce is insufficient, which
11 disproportionately impacts the health, wellbeing and economic security of women, especially
12 BAME women
- 13 C) All carers put themselves in harm's way to protect the most vulnerable, but due to bias,
14 institutional inequalities and lack of representation, BAME women are more likely to be put in
15 dangerous situations

16 WE call on the Westminster Government and the Government of Wales and Northern Ireland to:

- 17 - Increase pay for all publicly-funded care workers to the real Living Wage for carers in line with
18 the practice already established in Scotland;

19 WE call on the Governments of the four nations of the United Kingdom to:

- 20 - Improve job security for carers in the public and private sectors by addressing unfair non-
21 standard contracts;
- 22 - In addition to a gender pay gap, require care providers to publish an ethnicity pay gap,
23 revealing disparity in pay amongst carers due to race or ethnicity;
- 24 - Commit to improving representation of women and BAME people in decision-making teams in
25 health and social care;
- 26 - Scrap the minimum income requirements in the Immigration Bill 2020, ensuring migrant care
27 workers can continue to live and work in the UK.

28 **Motion rationale:**

29 WE's Equality in Health policy lays out the changes WE are calling for to build and protect the
30 predominantly female health and social care workforce. The policy recognises that care work is
31 traditionally seen as female and is consequently underpaid and underappreciated, leading to
inequality for the largely female workforce.

32 However, in the context of COVID-19, government's undervaluing of paid care has been stark. WE
33 believe this is particularly unacceptable given that COVID-19 has exposed inequalities affecting
34 women, and the inequalities affecting BAME people. In addition to calling for equality for women in
35 health, WE must specifically address the inequalities facing BAME women working in health and
36 social care. BAME women make up a disproportionate amount of the paid care workers who have
37 become sick or died during the pandemic, therefore we must have a strong policy stance on this.

38 Research by Public Health England revealed that people of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other
39 Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity had between 10% and 50% higher risk of death
40 compared to White British people.¹ This higher risk is due partly to discrimination and bias² in our
41 health service, leaving BAME employees feeling less represented, less confident to raise concerns
42 and that their concerns about safety are not taken seriously. BAME staff are therefore more likely
43 to be put in harm's way, an inequality with dire consequences for BAME care workers.

44 Since its beginning in 1948, the National Health Service has depended on the labour of BAME

¹ <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/About/Blog/Blog/New-survey-launched-for-BAME-care-workers.aspx>

² <https://www.gmjournals.co.uk/bame-healthcare-workers-and-covid-19>



45 Britons and migrant workers.³ This history is not sufficiently acknowledged, and the work of
46 BAME women in our health and social care services is still unrecognised and undervalued. There
47 is a strong legacy of Black women paying critical roles in the NHS and social care.⁴ Despite
48 people from BAME backgrounds accounting for around 1 in 5 of the social care workforce in
49 England, they are only 5.4% of board members.⁵

50 Over half of frontline care workers are paid less than the 'real Living Wage' and are more likely to
51 be on non-standard contracts.⁶ The Immigration Bill 2020 characterised the work of carers as
52 low-skilled⁷, introducing a minimum income requirement of £25,600,⁸ well above most carers'
53 pay. The government's 'fast track' for health care professionals to work in the UK's health service
54 has excluded care home workers.⁹ 17% of the current care workforce are foreign citizens,¹⁰ who
55 cared for our communities and our most vulnerable throughout the COVID crisis, but will not be
56 able to stay in the UK to continue these vital, skilled roles.

57 There is a clear link both to WE's Equality in Health policy, which aims to ensure that the caring
58 workforce is adequately paid and valued, and to our Equal Pay policy, as care workers, who are
59 disproportionately female, are more likely than the rest of the workforce to be working on zero-
60 hours contracts or through an agency, and to be on low incomes.

Supporting Research:

- a) <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/what-happens-after-the-clapping-finishes/>
- b) <https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/coronavirus/workplace-racism-described-as-factor-in-bame-nurses-higher-virus-risk-16-06-2020/>
- c) <https://www.gmjournals.co.uk/bame-healthcare-workers-and-covid-19>
- d) The real Living Wage is calculated by the Resolution Foundation and overseen by the Living Wage Commission. It is currently set at £10.75 in London and £9.30 in the rest of the UK. <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/calculation>
- e) <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/Employer/sQxENb3s/2018>

³ <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/the-windrush/called-came-remembering-nurses-windrush-generation/>

⁴ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/windrush-and-the-nhs-an-entwined-history/>

⁵ <https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/its-time-to-talk-about-the-ethnicity-pay-gap>

⁶ <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/what-happens-after-the-clapping-finishes/>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/20/immigration-bill-ministers-care-workers-covid-19>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-immigration-system-what-you-need-to-know>

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/13/uk-new-fast-track-immigration-system-to-exclude-care-workers-salary-thresholds>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/13/uk-new-fast-track-immigration-system-to-exclude-care-workers-salary-thresholds>