



WE Party Conference

15 – 18 October 2020

Title: WE call for support for women disproportionately affected by long-term effects of Covid-19 and other pandemics

Proposed by: The Women's Equality Party's Policy Committee

Proposer: Rebecca Manson Jones

Type of motion: Policy Motion

Motion text:

1 The Women's Equality Party calls on the UK governments and devolved administrations to set in
2 motion a working group between their respective Departments responsible for health, work &
3 pensions, women and minorities, on the long term health, employment and older age effects of
4 people in recovery – or suspected to be in recovery – from Covid Viruses and other pandemics*,
5 and to set in place:

- 6 • Guarantees both for people who have been diagnosed and especially for people for whom no
7 formal diagnosis has been available, that they are not discriminated against if they are unable
8 to return to work as before their symptoms presented.
- 9 • Support for employers to make reasonable adjustments for workers who have experienced
10 Covid-19 and to keep roles open against the time they can return.
- 11 • Occupational Therapy and talking therapy for people and families who may have to make
12 adjustments to their working and ways of life as a result of contracting Covid-19.
- 13 • Access to care support for carers who cannot do what they previously managed for children or
14 other relatives.
- 15 • Access to caring support for people who now need assistance as a result of long term Covid-
16 19 symptoms.
- 17 • Extend the Access to Work scheme for people who need assistance to work that they did not
18 need before.
- 19 • Fund programmes to combat isolation.

20 Women have already paid for the pandemic in terms of childcare. Without state intervention and
21 investment in new working practices for workers, freelancers and people in the gig economy, they
22 face a further unpaid care burden.

23 The Women's Equality Party further calls on all UK administrations to recognise that long term
24 statutory sick pay is insufficient and that a new support package for sickness is urgently needed.

25 *and any or all subsequent Covid viruses or similar pandemics.



Motion Rationale:

26 The Covid-19 Pandemic has hit the UK with a force which has left not only the NHS but also the economy
27 reeling, with more shocks to come. Whilst the emergency measures have focused rightly on saving lives,
28 the government has made little attempt to deal with long- and medium-term health implications for people in
29 recovery and/or who were never formally diagnosed, of whom there are thousands in the UK. Community
30 testing was stopped on 12 March 2020ⁱ and many people have been self-managing their symptoms.

31 People in recovery from Covid of all ages are still experiencing unpredictable physical and mental health
32 symptoms up to 20+ weeks after first illness.ⁱⁱ Many are now facing obstacles in receiving treatment from GPs
33 and problems with their employers despite the introduction of the Covid rehab serviceⁱⁱⁱ in parts of England.

34 As is the case with childcare, women are expected to assume the bulk of extra work associated with the
35 pandemic. Women who are already statistically likely to be shouldering caring responsibilities in their 40s and
36 50s are also over-represented in people experiencing long term effects of Covid 19.^{iv}

37 In particular, women in their 50s and upwards who already face discrimination in the workplace due to sexist-
38 ageism, are reporting "long haul Covid."^v Women in this demographic are over-represented in low wage
39 manual jobs that cannot be done flexibly from home. They are most at risk of redundancy, dismissal and
40 replacement. Disabled women are already reporting loss of income due to Covidⁱⁱ and BAME women are
41 more at risk of financial disadvantage^{vi}. Women are already over-represented in providing unpaid care to
42 relatives and friends in their communities and include women with no recourse to public funds.

43 Much or all of this paid and unpaid work women are less likely to be able to do whilst in recovery and if they
44 do, they increase their risk of not making a full recovery.

45 For these women, returning to work, caring or simply enjoying daily and family life is still a remote possibility.
46 As Job Retention Schemes end and redundancies are being announced daily, it is clear that they do not
47 feature in any of the government's BUILD BUILD BUILD strategies or Levelling Up priorities.

48 The Womens' Budget Group indicates that the unpaid caring economy contributes £ millions in unrecorded
49 support, and that every pound invested in care returns more to the economy than the construction sectors.
50 Quite apart from the social injustice ignoring Covid long haulers entails, the UK cannot afford it.

51 "Death is not the only thing to count in this pandemic, we must count lives changed. We still know very little
52 about covid-19, but we do know that we cannot fight what we do not measure."^{vii} Dr **Nisreen A Alwan**

53 WE must make women count.

References:

54 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-53772260>

i <https://inews.co.uk/news/coronavirus-testing-uk-missed-critical-moment-stop-covid-19-outbreak-testing-community-429023>

ii <https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/reports/covid-19-report-the-impact-on-women-in-coventry/>

iii <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/07/nhs-to-launch-ground-breaking-online-covid-19-rehab-service/>

iv <https://covid.joinzoe.com/post/post-menopause-covid>

v
https://twitter.com/BBCNicola?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Eembeddedtimeline%7Ctterm%5Eprofile%3Along_covid&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.longcovid.org%2Fstories

vi <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2020/aug/19/bame-over-50s-likely-to-be-among-poorest-20-in-england>

vii <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/07/28/nisreen-a-alwan-what-exactly-is-mild-covid-19/>