



WE Party Conference

15 – 18 October 2020

Title: WE support and promote healthy and positive ageing for all women in the UK.

Proposed by: WE Lewisham Branch

Proposer: Rebecca Manson Jones

Type of motion: Policy Motion

Motion text:

We propose two additions to the Women's Equality Party's Equal Health Policy

- 1) *to promote positive ageing for older women; and*
- 2) *to move away from the "deficit model" that views women's (and members of minority groups') health as a problem to be solved.*

"WE call on the Westminster government and devolved administrations to work across ideology

- to create a health and social care culture that moves away from the deficit model
- to support and promote women's health, wellbeing and full participation in all parts of life up to and including into older age.

Most UK women are expected to live into their 80s+ but there is an inequality within women's health that sees life expectancy declining for women living in disadvantaged areas. As they grow older, many women experience intersectional sexism/ageism and are encouraged to think that ill-health, isolation, experience of pain, depression, fatigue –amongst others – are normal. Older women experience both ageism and sexism at work.

WE call on the four National Governments of the UK to:

- prioritise investment in areas where women's life expectancy is declining or at risk of declining;
- assert and promote the potential and rights of older women to live positive and productive lives;
- create specialist and/or culturally specific older health and care services for BAME, disabled and LGBTQI+ women;
- highlight the prevalence of elder abuse and the health impacts it causes;
- implement policies that will improve the mental and physical health of older women
- challenge the negative stereotypes associated with women's ageing and the assumptions that women themselves, their families and wider society place on them."



Motion rationale:

25 The WE Health policy is just 2 years old. In that time we have seen the Health and Social Care
26 systems in crisis, publication of the Marmot Review Ten Years On² which revealed that life
27 expectancy for some women was in decline, a new and much contested NHS Ten Year Plan, a
28 Brexit plan which includes women picking up the shortfall in health and social care work⁴, and the
29 delayed White Paper for Social Care⁵.

30 Our health policy should remain dynamic and reflect the current conditions. These additions do
31 some of that work, allowing for the fact that WE are campaigning for a closer integrated health and
32 social care system.

33 Poverty is one of the biggest determinants of ill health.⁶ Women experience a gender pension gap
34 and older women experience ageism in the job market. As women age, they become more at risk
35 of experiencing isolation.⁷ In some parts of England, women's life expectancy is in decline.

36 During the pandemic, older women (aged 50+) have continued to provide much of the care work in
37 the UK and are the backbone of the social, social care, health care and education workforces. They
38 are also more likely to volunteer for civic roles. It is unknown how many older women will have
39 acquired unpaid caring responsibilities as a result of the pandemic and currently there are no
40 published plans to account for or support them.

41 Due to the low value placed on their paid and unpaid contributions to society, older women are too
42 often being discussed as chief care providers. In the same way that WE attest that women of child-
43 bearing age are more than their reproductive selves, older women must be supported to enjoy good
44 health and a full life beyond that of carer and community volunteer in the paid or unpaid service of
45 others.

46 Older women's health, wellbeing and potential is much more complex and nuanced than being pre-
47 or post-menopause, a carer or not a carer. Whilst we must continue to study, research and mobilise
48 to support women through the menopause, it must not be used as an excuse not to look beyond it
49 for changes and improvement in older women's health.

50 WE must ensure that women do not experience the double jeopardy of sexist/ageism. Despite
51 becoming an ageing population (20% by 2045 will be over 80), the UK is an intrinsically ageist⁸
52 society. Studies show that older people who have a positive attitude to ageing⁹ while they are
53 younger, are more likely to have a healthy and positive old age. We must insist that health and social
54 care institutions do not perpetuate or tolerate assumptions about women in older age. WE must
55 continue to assert the rights and needs of deaf/disabled, learning disabled and LGBTQI+ women as
56 they grow older. We must be mindful that cultural and religious heritage differences also play a role
57 in older women's health.

58 The change starts with us.

Footnotes:

1,2,6 <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/marmot-review-10-years-on>

3 <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/>

4 <https://qz.com/work/1349886/the-sexism-of-brexit/>

5 <https://www.peopletoo.co.uk/will-boris-get-the-social-care-white-paper-done/>



- 7 https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/loneliness/loneliness-report_final_2409.pdf
- 8 <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/dec/26/uk-is-completely-and-institutionally-ageist>
- 9 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S019188691530091X>

Reference sources:

- 10 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/27/womens-life-expectancy-in-poor-areas-falls-by-almost-100-days>
- 11 <https://ageing-equal.org/>
- 12 https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34732/IPPR_Social-isolation_among_Londoners.pdf/0a2b75b4-039d-4fb7-8c79-8afc5eddf18c
- 13 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4865782/>
- 14 <https://www.nhs.uk/news/mental-health/older-people-depression-less-likely-be-referred-psychological-therapy/>
- 15 <https://www.ft.com/content/e4141576-04eb-11e9-99df-6183d3002ee1>
- 16 https://www.sparetyre.org/downloads/files/BF_Art-dementia-in-UK-SA-Diaspora_Main-report_WEB.pdf
- 17 https://www.tht.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-04/Still_Got_It_-_Over_50s_Insight_Briefing.pdf