

Fair Play South West¹ Manifesto 2019

Progress in Women's political, social and economic equality is at risk from a growing manifestation of abuse, hate crime and populism within the UK, as in other parts of Europe

The right to vote and stand in UK elections was gained by women after nearly 30 years of campaigning, demonstrating, torture and death, until 1928 when all women were finally given the same rights as men to participate. This hard won right must not be squandered. Nor must we stand by while voting rights of EU nationals and migrants are restricted and they are prevented from accessing public services and positions of influence.

Since the EU referendum of 2016 the Brexit debate has become increasingly toxic and violent, to the point where many MPs are deselecting themselves from standing in the 2019 General Election. Women are over-represented amongst MPs giving up on a future political career, citing violent and threatening harassment as a key factor in the decision to resign from a job they believe in and value. BME women MPs have been particularly targeted for abuse and this both reflects and encourages hate crimes in the wider public, particularly against migrants.

Whilst much of this harassment and abuse is coming from outside Parliament, there is a worrying amount coming from politicians and Party officials themselves. The use of social media by pro Brexit political parties and individuals has spread misinformation as well as threats and intimidation. This behaviour undermines both the credibility of Parliament and the participation in democratic processes of women and minorities who have been targeted.

Despite this, many Women are acting as leaders of change within their communities, local politics, civil society and in Parliament

The contribution of these women goes largely unrecognised and unsung in the media. Women continue to campaign: for equal pay; for better support for survivors of violence and sexual assault and better enforcement of laws against perpetrators; for quality childcare and social care for all, free at the point of use; for quotas of women in decision making positions; for better health provision; for sex-based rights; for removal of taxes on sanitary products; for reductions in climate-changing activities; and more.

Membership of the European Union has been good for UK women

1. At times when the UK government has not always had women's equality and rights at its heart, membership of the EU has brought us:
 - a. Fundamental Treaty obligations on equal treatment of women and men;
 - b. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value;
 - c. Directives on equal treatment in pay, employment, statutory and occupational social security, access to goods and services;
 - d. Rights for pregnant workers, maternity and paternity rights;

¹ **We are the Women's Equality Network** in the south west of England

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We are not a political party and we do not have candidates standing in this election. We issue this statement / 'manifesto' in case it helps people decide how to vote.

- e. Pension rights for women;
 - f. And many others².
2. The EU has funded a number of projects within the UK specifically to advance the rights, safety and well-being of women and continues to do so³, including for example:
 - a. Projects to support survivors of domestic abuse, violence against women and rape;
 - b. Projects to enable women to access decent employment;
 - c. Projects which promote women's equality and gender mainstreaming.
3. It has enabled and empowered women in the UK to participate in Europe-wide networks and formal structures of women to influence policies and legislation in a way which has not always been possible within the UK itself.

In the light of the above, the Women's Equality Network, Fair Play SW, is calling⁴ on all candidates in the 2019 UK election to commit to:

- **Behave with respect for all others, not using language which is inflammatory or misogynistic.**
- **Place equality and human rights at the centre of policy and law-making.**
- **Legislate to remove barriers to women's equal participation in politics, society and the economy.**
- **Ensure that gender budgeting is carried out in all tax and spend decisions.**
- **Legislate to improve women's safety in the home, at work and on the streets.**
- **Establish and fund formal mechanisms for the involvement of women's organisations in policy and law-making, such as those which exist within the EU.**
- **Ensure that trade deals made with the EU and other countries include non-regression in women's rights (and employment rights more generally).**
- **Ensure that women's perspectives on environmental issues and climate change are included in policies and actions.**
- **Support the specific policy asks in the SW Women's Manifesto**
https://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/images/media/SW_Womens_Manifesto_R2.doc

² <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/59/equality-between-men-and-women>

³ *Ibid*

⁴ For more information, listen to:

<http://fairplaysouthwest.libsyn.com/misogyny-says-un-rapporteur-on-uk-poverty>

<http://fairplaysouthwest.libsyn.com/fair-play-south-west-podcast-2>