

# Women's Manifesto 2021

# SCOTTISH LABOUR WOMEN'S MANIFESTO

## INTRODUCTION

The Labour Party is the party of equality, committed to achieving a world free from all forms of discrimination. Scottish Labour has a proud record of promoting women's rights but we have so much more to do. Last year was the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act, yet women still earn 10% less than men. Women have been particularly impacted by lockdown. Women continue to be disproportionately affected both by the cuts to public services carried out by the Tories and SNP and the economy based on insecure low paid work that they have let develop unchecked.

The death of Sarah Everard was a painful reminder of the violence and abuse that women and girls continue to face on a daily basis. We need a renewed and focused effort to reduce this violence through education and funding of services. However, violence against women is linked to structural inequalities so if we are to end it once and for all we must promote equality across Scotland including in our economy and public services. Scottish Labour are committed to the task, including through a new Equal Pay Scotland Act, tackling low wages across Scotland, valuing caring roles, and introducing a childcare service that is shaped by women's lives.

## ECONOMY AND WORK

### A jobs recovery for women

Scottish Labour's Jobs Recovery Plan is one of the largest and most ambitious jobs creation schemes in the history of devolution. With Covid-19 putting many livelihoods at risk, our aim is to ensure that everyone that can work has the offer for a job. Women's labour market participation has been particularly impacted by the pandemic, threatening women's financial security. Women are more likely to have been furloughed and this is especially true for young women, with highest rates for furlough in female dominated industries like retail and hospitality. Over the pandemic, the increase in unpaid caring work has disproportionately been taken on by women, impacting on their ability to do paid work. Scottish Labour's Recovery plan will protect jobs by:

- Offering a new Scottish Skills Benefit, with £500 available to everyone who is unemployed or on furlough to help them retrain, with £750 additional income support available to those who are unemployed. 72% of learners on the previous Individual Learning Account model were female and we will work with training providers to produce courses that are accessible to all, including those with caring responsibilities, with a range of part time, evening and online courses available.
- Target specific support to people with a protected characteristic who may face disadvantage in the labour market with an 'Equal Access Careers' scheme. We will create a national programme, in partnership with care organisations to support the individuals they work with to enter and continue in work. The scheme will guarantee every person has access to targeted career support both when in education and ongoing, a mentor, relevant training, and offer suitable placements with wages subsidised by the government, through public sector employment and partnership organisations.
- Support jobs within our crucial retail and tourism sectors with our economic stimulus package, including a £75 prepaid card for all adults to use on the high street and the Great Scottish Staycation 2021.

### Equal pay

It is time for the public sector to lead by example in ending the scandal of sex discrimination in the workplace in pay. Scottish Labour are determined to ensure that sex discrimination cannot happen now or in the future so we will:

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- Make central funds available to contribute towards paying historic equal pay claims.
- Bring forward an Equal Pay (Scotland) Bill to require all public sector bodies, and organisations with more than 250 employees who benefit from public sector procurement, to publish regular equal pay reviews.

### **Investing in care as a growth sector and making invisible work seen**

A strong economic recovery should have a caring economy at its heart. Even before Covid-19, unpaid work and caring roles were disproportionately carried out by women, impacting on their ability to do other paid work. It is also no accident that low pay and insecure work is overlooked or dismissed in the social care and childcare sectors; with predominately female workforces it is a long-standing issue of gender inequality. Yet research has suggested that increasing investment in care could create three times as many jobs for the economy than equivalent spend in construction. Scottish Labour will:

- Designate childcare and social care as key growth sectors, recognising them as a vital infrastructure and key component of Scotland's economic recovery. We will establish core training funds to subsidise the cost of entering, training or completing continued professional development in these sectors.
- Implement all-age, all-year, wrap-around affordable early years services, focused on the needs of the child and with the flexibility that families need. Following the planned expansion this year we would seek a year-on-year increase with the eventual ambition of offering 50 hours a week for every child. We would also ensure that services take into account the specific needs of lone parents.
- Establish a National Care Service, with national standards, improved terms and conditions for workers and collective bargaining established for the sector.
- Deliver an immediate pay rise to £12 per hour for care workers and the commitment to work with trade unions to increase this further to £15 per hour.
- Scottish Labour will introduce a comprehensive support strategy for unpaid carers, influenced by the proposals from the National Carers Organisations and including increased investment and entitlement to short breaks, access to leisure and wellbeing services, occupational health support and the provision of independent advocacy for carers of all ages.

### **Addressing poverty**

Addressing low incomes as a whole must be central to reducing the number of women in poverty. Tackling women's poverty and gender inequalities is also key to tackling child poverty. As well as the policies outlined to increase women's incomes through work, the social security system we would build would secure the wellbeing and human rights of everyone and seek to guarantee a Minimum Income Standard that no one would fall below. Under this model we would:

- Ensure good and fair unionised jobs, decent pay and conditions, and affordable housing costs, with a social security system there when you need it.
- Recognise the additional costs that groups such as lone parents, carers, and disabled people face. Work closely with communities in the development of the Minimum Income Standard, especially those most at risk of economic inequality.

### **Protecting women's place in the economy**

Women have much to contribute to the development of Scotland's economy but a recovery that does not encourage women's economic participation will fail to harness that potential. Truly sustainable growth has to share prosperity to create a better society for everyone so Scottish Labour will:

- Support the growing number of women who are starting new enterprises through our new Entrepreneur Unit, ensuring equality of access to government investment.

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- Scottish Labour has a plan to restructure and grow the Scottish National Investment Bank so it can provide seed funding for new ideas, offer investment for 'capital for good' projects and support businesses to transition towards greener and more digital futures, all while creating jobs and supporting our Good Work principles. Investment and support will be targeted and monitored to ensure that women led businesses are receiving a fair share of funding.
- Tackle the gender pay gap by encouraging women into leadership positions with targeted training and strengthened childcare support.
- Promote collective bargaining and trade union recognition in the workplace to protect women's working conditions. Flexible working agreements, negotiations on parental or carer leave, temporary or permanent adjustments, menopause workplace policies, require collective solutions.
- Work with organisations like Women's Enterprise Scotland and established networks of women in different sectors and industries, such as Women in Agriculture in Scotland, to best understand the priorities sector by sector.

## HEALTH

### Recovery from Covid-19

Scottish Labour's NHS and Social Care Recovery Plan also sets out the steps we would take to restore our health and care services, setting them on a renewed path for the future. We need to prioritise preventative measures which greatly improve women's life chances. The isolation caused by lockdown has also been particularly damaging and led to increased demand for mental health support. Young women and girls in particular can have specific mental health needs related to bullying and harassment on social media, body image, and increases in eating disorders. Our plans for recovery include:

- A catch-up initiative across all our screening programmes. Over 43,000 breast screening appointments were cancelled in 2020 and at least 180,000 cervical screening tests delayed so we will increase capacity and clear the backlog of appointments by the end of the financial year.
- Establish Rapid Diagnostic Centres in every health board so that patients with symptoms that could indicate cancer can get a diagnosis within two weeks, instead of waiting months.
- Reform the system of referrals for adult mental health and CAMHS services, taking a "no wrong door support" and ensuring no one is again rejected from accessing specialist help.
- Protect and reinstate women's wards in hospitals so that women have privacy and dignity when at their most vulnerable.
- Ensure that women have access to the full range of reproductive services, protecting their right to a safe, legal abortion, and designating buffer zones around clinics to protect women's privacy.

### Taking women's health seriously

Scottish Labour recognises that the issue of women's health has long been overlooked and under-researched; too frequently women are ignored or dismissed when they raise their concerns. It is time for this to change and for women's health to be given the priority it deserves. Our Women's Health Fund will support work to:

- Further research, advice, and services for predominantly women-specific conditions, such as female heart disease, thyroid symptoms, and conditions such as endometriosis.
- Support the collection of disaggregated data across the NHS to inform scientific research.
- Allocate specialist resources for GP training on women's health.
- Commission increased cervical screening at sexual health clinics and support the national roll out of self-sampling.

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- Ensure Scotland's NHS has the right specialists with a focus on women's health conditions, such as those for lipoedema.
- Partner with Universities to establish two new professorships in women's health in Scotland.

## **Supporting mesh-injured women**

The scandal of harm done to women with mesh implants must never be repeated. We support the calls for a new Mesh Charter and will:

- Create a fund to support mesh-injured women having the choice over where they have removal surgery.
- Establish a Patient Safety Commissioner to prevent a scandal like this ever happening again.

## **Maternal and child health**

Babies born during the pandemic have had an experience like no other. We know that the lack of peer support for new mothers has led to increased anxiety about their children's development and health.

To support new mothers and new babies we will:

- Offer an extra health visitor visit at 18 months for all between January 2020 and 6 May 2021.
- Provide specific support to women experiencing post-natal depression within our wider increase to mental health spending.
- Improve breastfeeding support by providing a home visit from a breastfeeding support worker within the first week a baby spends at home and carrying out further consultation to ensure women's needs are met.
- Launch a 'Babies meet Babies' programme to promote socialisation and interaction by bringing together parents and carers of babies born after January 2020, supported by appropriately trained staff and using accessible community-based facilities.

## **EDUCATION AND SPORT**

### **School education**

Scotland's schools, colleges and universities create strong foundations for people to succeed in life. But the recent limits on subject choice in Scotland's schools are restricting options for young women and girls. We will:

- Correct the restriction on subject choice so that as many girls as possible can study subjects that match their interests and their skills.
- Address the gender gap in subjects like STEM by identifying gender stereotypes and building the skills to challenge them within education and careers advice workforces.
- Renew our national approach to the digital skills pipeline, making sure that actions to inspire, educate, train and nurture digital talent are accessible to women and girls.

### **Colleges and universities**

Historically, investment in further and higher education has benefitted women, which is why the cuts under the SNP have been so damaging. Scottish Labour want to see more women take up or return to college and university so we will:

- Reinvest in further education to give it equality of status and improve the opportunities to study part time and through distance learning with the development of an Open College, based on the model of the Open University.
- Work in partnership with further and higher education institutions to increase accessible and affordable on-site provision of childcare for staff and students.

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- Encourage all universities and colleges to take action to end gender-based violence and harassment on their campuses and networks.

## **Promoting active living**

Scottish Labour is committed to seeing more women and girls live active lives and participate in sport at all levels. We will:

- Encourage participation from women, particularly from various religions and diverse minority communities through the provision of single-sex opportunities.
- Expand investment in outdoor education available to young women and girls.
- Create community spaces that are welcoming and safe places for women to exercise.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

### **Hate crime**

Scottish Labour is clear that hate and prejudice have no place in Scotland. We supported including sex as an aggravator within the Hate Crime Bill and to directly tackle hate towards women we will:

- Amend the Hate Crime Act so that misogyny and hate towards women is included within its scope.
- Ensure the Working Group on Misogynistic Harassment concludes its work within 12 months and implement any additional recommendations it makes, including further legislation where necessary.

### **Prisons**

Scotland's prison estate is outdated and overcrowded. The 2012 Angiolini report on women offenders sought solutions to reverse the dramatic increase in the size of the female prison population seen in the past 15 years. Scottish Labour will seek to realise the ambitions of the 2012 report by:

- Pursuing alternatives to prison for pregnant women and mothers who have committed non-violent offences.
- Address the imbalance of resources for rehabilitation in men and women's prisons and ensure every woman leaving prison has a harm prevention plan with a safe place to live, registration with a doctor and adequate financial support.
- Review the role of open prisons, rescue care units and day custody approaches with a preference for local custody services for women in particular.

### **Support for victims**

Our criminal justice system needs to better support those who are victims and witnesses of crime. Scottish Labour want to strengthen the Victim's Code and establish a Victim's Commissioner to ensure the rights of victims are finally enforced and championed. The victims of sexual assault and rape are predominately women but these crimes still have unacceptable low rates of prosecution and conviction. Scottish Labour want to reform the way the criminal justice system handles these cases by:

- Working with the relevant training and regulatory bodies to increase the number of qualified female forensic examiners available in Scotland so the predominate preference of victims to request a female examiner can be realised and not remain an ambition.
- Establish a specialist sexual offences court and consider reform to the evidential requirements in these cases, reviewing the role of corroboration and extending the use of pre-recorded and video evidence.

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- Implement the right of complainants to have independent legal advice, particularly during hearings on evidence of sexual history, support by an expansion in legal aid.
- Abolish the 'not-proven' verdict and move to a two verdict system across all criminal trials to improve transparency and deliver fair and just outcomes.

### SAFETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

#### Considering gender across government

Recovery from Covid-19 gives us an opportunity to create a stronger and fairer Scotland. But to build an equal society we must acknowledge and address the dangers and discrimination that women and girls face. To embed this approach across all of government activity, Scottish Labour will:

- Incorporate the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Continue in the use of the Equality Act 2010 to frame equalities policies.
- Improve the effectiveness of the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessments with additional resources, improved monitoring, and sanctions where necessary to ensure gender mainstreaming is realised across public sector policy making.
- Deliver a full gender analysis on the Scottish budget so the cumulative impact of spending decision on women's equality is considered.
- Ensure a zero-tolerance approach to violence, bullying and discrimination based on a woman's sex or sexuality.

#### Protecting women's representation

Scottish Labour pioneered women's representation in the Scottish Parliament and we support the campaign by Women 5050 for 50% representation of women in our Parliament and local authorities. Holyrood was always intended to be a more family friendly Parliament but the number of women deciding to stand down as MSPs at this election, across all political parties, shows there is still progress that needs to be made. Scottish Labour also believe that women should be able to speak without fear of abuse or threats of violence. The rise in threats, both verbally and on social media, towards many women representing their communities is a growing concern. To protect against these serious threats to women's representation now and in the future, Scottish Labour will:

- Call for a review of arrangements in Holyrood so parents are better supported. In particular, there should be improved childcare facilities and consideration of implementing more flexible voting options for MSPs, taking account of the remote voting and proxy voting arrangements put in place over the pandemic and elsewhere in the UK.
- Stand up for the right of women to speak without fear of abuse or violence.
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to threats against women, in person or online, both within our own party and in government.
- Ensure that threats of violence online continue to be taken seriously by Police Scotland and Crown Office.

#### Prioritising women's safety

Our communities must be places where women feel safe and free from fear of violence or crime. Yet, women are less likely to feel safe walking alone after dark and more likely to be the victims of domestic abuse. Any strategy that seeks to protect women's safety must recognise the structural inequalities that underpin violence towards women and girls so Scottish Labour will:

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- Provide sustainable funding for critical services such as Women's Aid and local refuges and rape crisis centres, without which vulnerable people are placed in danger with nowhere to turn.
- Support individuals and families fleeing domestic violence who need to establish a new safe home with more housing options, support to stay in work and a new extension of the Scottish Welfare fund, ring-fenced to offer grants to victims of domestic abuse.
- Build on the success of our period poverty campaign by ensuring that women have safe, well maintained public toilets to use, in workplaces, educational institutions, and public spaces.
- Pilot physical space safety audits and ensure a gender approach is taken in community planning so that our public spaces have safe walking routes and are places where anyone can feel secure.

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