

What about **Women?**

Key questions for parliamentarians
concerned with advancing women's
equality and human rights in the UK

About Fawcett

The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading campaign for women's equality and women's rights. Our vision is of a society where women, and our rights and freedoms, are equally valued and respected and where we have equal power and influence in shaping our own lives and our wider world.

We trace our roots to Millicent Fawcett's and the suffragists' successful parliamentary campaign for women's right to vote. Since then we have continued to work with parliamentarians on a cross party and non partisan basis to progress equality between women and men at home, at work and in public life.

For further information go to
www.fawcettsociety.org.uk
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Introduction

In the run up to the last general election the Fawcett Society led a major campaign coalition of over 60 national organisations and many thousands of individual women and men, that asked all the political parties – *What About Women?*

We wanted the different parties to consider and tell us how their policies in key areas such as the economy, political reform, crime and justice, the family and equality and human rights would impact on women's inequality: Would they progress or regress women's rights? How would they make a difference in women's everyday lives?

With a new government and parliament now in place we believe many of the issues and questions that we raised prior to the election are still highly relevant to key debates and decisions that lie ahead. The next parliamentary term could see major threats to women's equality but also exciting opportunities to make real progress if these are seized. In this context, consideration of whether new legislation and policies will progress or regress women's equality must be a central concern, not a fringe issue to parliamentarians.

For these reasons we have brought together the full set of questions and accompanying briefings produced for *What About Women?* into a resource and reference for parliamentarians who share our commitment to progressing women's equality and human rights. Also included in the appendices are the answers each of the main political parties gave us on what policies they would pursue if elected.

We hope this pack will act as an aid to informed debate on progressing women's equality, formulating policy and above all achieving results for women. Of course, neither the questions we raise nor policy solutions suggested by *What About Women?* partners are in any way exhaustive – there are many more questions and policy ideas for change than we can capture in one document. But we do feel it illustrates the size of the task and importance of considering women as a core part of all the debates upcoming.

Fawcett will be producing a number of supplementary briefings and resources for parliamentarians. In the meantime we hope this is useful in your work and to work with you to not only protect women's gains but to further them – for women and for us all.

Ceri Goddard,
Chief Executive of the Fawcett Society
June 2010

¹ See appendix for full list organisations. Further information and links to organisations with expertise in particular areas raised in the campaign can found in the relevant policy issue sections.

About this publication

1

What does it contain and how to use it?

The document has six sections:

1. The Economy
2. Democracy and Political Reform
3. Work and Family
4. Crime and Justice
5. Attitudes, Media and Culture
6. Equality and Human Rights

Each section sets out some key questions, a menu of possible policy options to address them and key facts and figures and other information that illustrate the relevant issue. The appendices include the answers to questions on their policies that each of the main cross UK political parties who responded to us submitted and link to the answers supplied by parties in devolved nations. It can be read as whole or used as a reference on key issues for women on given policy areas.

2

How have the key questions and suggested policy options been identified?

The questions raised in this briefing come from three main sources. Firstly, from Fawcett's research and analysis of drivers of women's inequality and practical ideas for change. Secondly, Fawcett also conducted a scoping exercise with the *What About Women* coalition organisations, all of whom provide specialised information and advice on issues covered by the campaign. Using this feedback we put together 17 questions covering six key aspects of women's lives, which are addressed in this report.

Our coalition partners also provided policy suggestions to tackle the issues outlined in each section. And thirdly, the questions and issues raised also reflect issues identified by the UN CEDAW committee in its last examination of the UK. The committee looks across the board at the status of women's rights in terms of countries' obligations under CEDAW and identifies area of progress but also flagged concerns. The text of the last report can be found at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws41.htm>

The shadow report produced by the Women's National Commission can be found at http://www.thewnc.org.uk/publications/cat_view/79-international-cedaw.html.

What is CEDAW?

The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women is an international treaty - ratified by the UK and Northern Ireland in 1986 - that represents the most comprehensive piece of global legislation aimed at ending discrimination against women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and acts as a framework to identify specific issues of concern for women. The UK government is required to report to the CEDAW Committee every four years on the status of women, whereupon it is issued with a series of

recommendations for advancing progress in particular areas of concern. The UK last reported in 2007 and is due to report again in 2011.

Where the issues we outline in this report have reference to the areas of discrimination outlined in CEDAW, this will be indicated by boxed text.

For further information please see Chapter 6 – Equality and Human Rights.

3

What policy issues does this report cover?

Instead of looking at women's equality and rights as a side issue, we have instead identified a number of ongoing, mainstream policy areas such as tackling the deficit, reducing crime or supporting the family and looked at key women's equality issues within each of these debates.

This is because we believe that women and gender equality need to part of the mainstream policy thinking and debate if we are to make progress. If this is not done then policies will be "gender blind" – missing opportunities for progress but also risking further embedding and even worsening women's inequality. For example, the overall approach agreed to cutting our deficit, the balance between tax and spending cuts and other specific measures, will have significant impact on women's economic and wider equality.

Whilst we do cover a significant number of the current challenges and opportunities facing women's equality, this document is in no way an attempt to be exhaustive.

4

Where is the evidence base and data from and where can I get more information?

All the key facts and figures are referenced in footnotes throughout the report. As far as possible they are current, though some can only provide a snap shot of a moment in time and are likely to fluctuate. However we have only used figures that we and our partners believe illustrate a real and ongoing issue and are the most recent or as current as we could source at the time of publication. Each section has links to sources of additional and more up to date information.

1 THE ECONOMY – TAX and SPENDING

Key Questions for the new Parliament

Women play a vital role in our economy. Decisions on the economy, in particular on tax and public spending, will have a major impact on women's income and wider lives. These questions are key if women's economic inequality is not to be worsened during a time of financial stringency and economic uncertainty.

How will changes to the tax and benefit system impact on women's incomes and wider economic position?

On average, benefits and tax credits comprise one fifth of women's income and less than one tenth of men's.²

How will you ensure that any cuts on public spending do not impact disproportionately on women – especially the most vulnerable?

65% of public sector workers are women.³

How will you ensure that women's contribution to our economy – both paid and unpaid - is supported and properly valued?

Increasing women's participation in the labour market could be worth between £15 and £23 Billion or 1.3 to 2 % of GDP.³ The economic value of the contribution made by carers, the majority of whom are women, is a remarkable £87 billion per year.⁵

Some key issues for women

Both overall economic inequality and women's economic inequality are high in the UK.⁶ Women are more likely to be employed in low paid, part-time work, more likely to head a single parent household, more likely to have less financial assets and more likely to live in poverty, especially in older age. At the same time, women's unpaid labour is worth tens of billions of pounds to the economy every year – unpaid carers (the majority of whom are women) contribute £87 billion a year. Women in work and business also contribute billions to our economy and are critical to its success.

An approach to cutting the UK's deficit that prioritises spending cuts over taxation measures is likely to increase women's inequality. This is because women make up a higher number of public workers (65%)⁷, public services users⁸ and the majority of those in receipt of tax credits and welfare payments.⁹ In the months leading up to this publication women's unemployment has risen whilst men's has dropped.¹⁰ Women who lose their jobs are less likely than men to have savings so become dependent on benefits more quickly. At the same time, cuts to public service are more likely to impact on women than men, as women tend to be more reliant on public services.¹¹

Why consider the impact on women of tax and benefits policies?

Traditionally, economists look at how changes in welfare systems impact on household income; this means that the impact on women's individual incomes is often hidden. Any changes in tax, tax credits and benefits policy will impact differently and often disproportionately on women, especially during vulnerable periods of their lives, such as motherhood and old-age. Women are more likely than men to be dependent on benefits and more likely to be living in poverty.

- Benefits and tax credits comprise on average one fifth of women's income and less than one tenth of men's.¹²
- Women's median net individual income is less than two-thirds of the median for men (£180 compared to £231 per week).¹³
- Lone parent families are more likely to live in poverty. 90% of the heads of lone parent families are women.¹⁴
- The risk of poverty is higher among young people than among the adult population as a whole. Young women are more likely to experience poverty than young men.¹⁵
- 40% of ethnic minority women live in poverty.¹⁶

Tax and benefits systems can play a key role in tackling inequality and women's poverty. Benefits and pension systems based around the model of a full time male breadwinner leave many women, particularly those with caring responsibilities, at risk of poverty. Women who take time out of paid work to care for children or other relatives or friends are likely to pay the price of poverty in old age.

- Single parents continue to receive low rates of child maintenance: just over half of families with a non resident parent have an arrangement for child maintenance in place, however only 68% of these families receive any maintenance.¹⁷
- Women's average personal pensions are only 60% of the average for men.¹⁸
- Approximately around two thirds of the 2.1 million pensioners living in poverty are women.¹⁹

Tax and benefits policies that do not take account of gender inequality may fail to meet their target. For example, income within households is not always shared equally among family members so it matters not only how much money a family receives but who receives it; money received by mothers is more likely to be spent on children than money received by fathers.²⁰

**‘40% OF ETHNIC
MINORITY
WOMEN LIVE
IN POVERTY’**

Why consider the impact of public spending cuts on women?

Women consistently rate public services such as education and health as a higher voting priority issue than men.²¹ Public services are important to everyone, but women are particularly affected by cuts in public services, as workers and as users of services. Women's unpaid work already fills many gaps in public services, if these are cut then women may have to do more unpaid work, reducing the time available for paid work and risking tipping them further into poverty. Although there is clearly an urgent need to cut the deficit, spending cuts are by their nature much harder to target demographically than taxes, and therefore more likely to have a disproportionate impact on the more vulnerable, including many women.

- 65% of workers in the public sector are women.²²
- As carers, women also make up a greater proportion of users of public services, so any reduction in state provision will have a greater impact on them.²³
- Carers UK's most recent research reveals that nearly two thirds of carers spend their own money to support the people they care for.²⁴

Women's services, which could reduce pressure on general services elsewhere, are already sparse and under-funded.

- 1 in 5 women's organisations have closed down in the last three years.²⁵
- By September 2008, the number of specialist independent BME women's led organisations across the UK had halved over the preceding five years.²⁶
- In 2008, Rape Crisis centres across England and Wales received just £3.5m.²⁷

Why support and value women's contribution to the economy?

Unpaid work such as caring is overwhelmingly carried out by women and is vital to the economy. Unaffordable private care options undermine businesses that may unnecessarily lose skilled staff, especially women, who can no longer afford to work, however flexible their employer.

- Three quarters of claimants of Carer's Allowance (the main benefit for carers) are women.²⁸
- Mothers do three quarters of childcare during the week and two thirds during the weekend.²⁹
- The economic value of the contribution of carers at £87 billion per year is considerably more than the annual cost of all aspects of the NHS audited in 2006/7 as £81.678bn.³⁰
- Carer's Allowance is £53.10 per week for at least 35 hours caring. This is equivalent to just £1.52 per hour.³¹

Gender equality has been recognised as a prior condition for sustainable growth, employment, innovation and competitiveness, yet men continue to dominate the top positions in our major businesses.³² At the current rate of change, gender parity will not be achieved in all of the UK's boardrooms until 2225. Whilst women make up over half the workforce in some areas, they are consistently under-represented in small businesses and entrepreneurial activities with only 15% of businesses with employees being led by women and with two men to every one woman starting new businesses.³³

- Women make up 47% of those active in the labour market.³⁴
- Only 28% of the self-employed in the UK are women. Only 15% of UK SME businesses are majority women-led.³⁵
- 12.2% of directors on the FTSE 100 boards are women.³⁶
- At the current rate of progress, it is estimated that it will take 73 years before equal numbers on FTSE 100 boards are achieved.³⁷
- The introduction of female quotas in Norwegian

boardrooms saw women's representation rise from 6% to 44% over six years.³⁸

- In the Finance Sector, men make up 66% of Managers and Senior Officials and women make up 73% of administrative and secretarial support.³⁹

Action to make a difference

Action proposed by Fawcett and other *What About Women* campaign partner organisations to create an economy that better values and supports the contribution of women include:

Tax and benefits

- Ensure that the tax and benefit system does not unfairly promote one type of family over another by penalising single parents or families where both partners work (for example through Marriage Tax Credits or by reducing the level of benefit to single parents to end the so-called 'couple penalty').
- Consider the different impact policies will have on men and women when drawing up new tax policies and every other aspect of a budget, and apply the Gender Equality Duty to the budgeting process.
- Invest more in benefits and tax credits to reach the poorest families and ensure they meet an acceptable minimum income standard.
- Make sure that the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission promotes a culture of payment and enforces maintenance payment effectively.

Women and Public Spending

- Protect front-line services for those who need them most. For example, single parents, the majority of whom are women, are likely to be particularly reliant on public services.
- Conduct gender impact assessments of central and local government budgets, to ensure that policies do not impact disproportionately on women, including taking account of the impact of public spending cuts on the burden of women's unpaid work.
- Take action to ensure a sustainable funding strategy for the specialist violence against women voluntary sector.
- Apply the Single Equality Duty to all public sector budgets.

Valuing women's paid and unpaid contribution

- Establish a regional living wage to end in-work poverty.
- Reveal the full-extent of women's poverty, by calculating poverty on the basis of individual, not household income, which masks the true level of women's poverty.
- Roll out gender-disaggregated data collection and breakdown to ensure women's contribution to the economy is fully recorded.
- Benefit sanctions should not be imposed on lone parents with children aged below seven years who do not take steps towards finding employment.
- Push forward on reforms to personal accounts, pensions and national insurance contributions to ensure that those who are not making regular national insurance contributions currently are able to support themselves in later life.
- Increase carers' allowance to the same rate as a basic state pension and provide access to tax credits for family carers.
- Use procurement channels to incentivise businesses to increase representation of women leaders.

Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women states that:

‘States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:
(a) The right to family benefits’

Further information and resources:

Women’s Budget Group – www.wbg.org.uk

Engaging and Empowering Women in Poverty, Women’s Budget Group, July 2008

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/engaging-and-empowering-women-poverty>

The Equality Trust - <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/>

Gingerbread - www.gingerbread.org.uk/policy

Manifesto to End Child Poverty - http://www.cpag.org.uk/publications/extracts/CPAG_manifesto_0309.pdf

Fawcett Society, *Poverty Pathways: ethnic minority women’s livelihoods*, June 2009.

Oxfam Paper and Reports on Gender <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/gender/index.html>

TUC report ‘Women and the Recession: One Year On,’ March 2010.

⁹ *Who Benefits?: A gender analysis of the UK benefits and tax credits system*, Fawcett Society, April 2006

¹⁰ ONS, Statistical Bulletin, Labour Market, February 2010

¹¹ NHS IC Trends in Consultation rates in General Practice 1995-2009 and Dft Public Transport Gender Audit <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/inclusion/women/ptgenderaudit?page=2>

¹² *Who Benefits?: A gender analysis of the UK benefits and tax credits system*, Fawcett Society, April 2006.

¹³ John Hills et al. *An anatomy of economic inequality in the UK: report of the national equality panel*, Government Equalities Office, London 2010.

¹⁴ The Poverty Site 2009, <http://www.poverty.org.uk/07/index.shtml>

¹⁵ C., Gordon, D. and Levitas, R. (eds) (2006) ‘Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain, the Millennium Survey’, Bristol, The Policy Press. Data on YWCA briefing No Frills, <http://www.ywca.org.uk/downloads/resources/briefings/nofrills.pdf>

¹⁶ Fawcett Society, *Poverty Pathways: ethnic minority women’s livelihoods*, June 2009.

¹⁷ www.gingerbread.org.uk

¹⁸ National Equality Panel, *An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK*, 2010.

¹⁹ Age Concern England’s Political Bulletin December 2008. Office for National Statistics, ‘Inequalities and poverty in retirement’, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=2352>, 27 Jan 2010.

²⁰ Jackie Goode, Claire Callender and Ruth Lister, Distribution of income within families receiving benefits, 31 March 1998, <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/spr468.pdf>

²¹ Political Attitudes, Gender Analysis, IPSOS/MORI 2010

²² The *Economic & Labour Market Review*, published by the Office for National Statistics in 2007 (taken from http://www.train2grow.co.uk/images/pdf/Women_and_Work_Final.pdf)

²³ NHS IC Trends in Consultation rates in General Practice 1995-2009 and Dft Public Transport Gender Audit <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/inclusion/women/ptgenderaudit?page=2>

²⁴ *Carers in crisis*. (2008). Carers UK, London.

²⁵ Not just bread, but roses too: Funding to the women’s voluntary and community sector in England 2004 - 07, Women’s Resource Centre, March 2009.

²⁶ Imkaan, *A Matter of Life and Death: the loss of specialist services for BAMER women and children experiencing violence*, Imkaan, June 2008.

²⁷ The crisis in Rape Crisis: A survey of Rape Crisis (England and Wales) centres. Women’s Resource Centre and Rape Crisis (England and Wales), March 2008.

²⁸ Women and Caring Briefing, Carers UK, 2009, www.carersuk.org

²⁹ The Equalities Review: Interim Report for Consultation http://www.pfc.org.uk/files/Equalities_Review-Interim_Report.pdf.

³⁰ ‘Valuing Carers – Calculating the Value of Unpaid Care’ Carers UK and University of Leeds, 2007. <http://www.carersuk.org/Professionals/ResearchLibrary/Profileofcaring/1201108437>

³¹ *Carers in crisis*. (2008). Carers UK, London.

³² II European Women in Power Summit, Cadiz Declaration, 2010.

³³ BERR Enterprise: Unlocking the UK’s Talent – 2008 and The Government’s Response to the Women’s Enterprise Task Force, November 2009 <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file53444.pdf>

³⁴ BIS, ‘The Government’s Response to the Women’s Enterprise Task Force’, 2009

³⁵ BIS, ‘The Government’s Response to the Women’s Enterprise Task Force’, 2009

³⁶ Cranfield University School of Management, The Female FTSE Board Report 2009.

³⁷ Sex and Power Report, EHRC, September 2008.

³⁸ Breaking the Mould for Women Leaders: could boardroom quotas hold the key? Fawcett Society, October 2008.

³⁹ H. Metcalf & H Rolfe, Employment and earnings in the finance sector: A gender analysis, Research Report 17, National Institute of Economic and Social Research, EHRC, Spring 2009.

² *Who Benefits?: A gender analysis of the UK benefits and tax credits system*, Fawcett Society, April 2006

³ *The Economic & Labour Market Review*, published by the Office for National Statistics in 2007 (taken from http://www.train2grow.co.uk/images/pdf/Women_and_Work_Final.pdf)

⁴ Women and Work Commission, *Shaping a Fairer Future*, Women and Work Commission, February 2006

⁵ Carers UK and the University of Leeds, Valuing Carers: Calculating the Value of Unpaid Care, <http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/circle/valuing-carers.pdf>

⁶ Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level*, Penguin 2009.

⁷ *The Economic & Labour Market Review*, published by the Office for National Statistics in 2007 (taken from http://www.train2grow.co.uk/images/pdf/Women_and_Work_Final.pdf)

⁸ NHS IC Trends in Consultation rates in General Practice 1995-2009 and Dft Public Transport Gender Audit <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/inclusion/women/ptgenderaudit?page=2>

2 DEMOCRACY and POLITICAL REFORM

Key Questions for the new Parliament

Women have a right to be equally represented in our political system and to have as much influence as men in decisions that affect their everyday lives and the society in which they live. The lack of women's representation in our political system is major democratic deficit.

How will you increase the number and diversity of women in parliament and government at the national and local levels?

*The UK's current proportion of female MPs is 21.4%. This places us 52nd in the world. Women make up only 4 out of 23 cabinet ministers.*⁴⁰

What will you do to ensure that the voices of women are heard and acted upon by decision makers?

*Only 39% of women feel able to influence decisions in their local area and only 30% feel able to influence national decisions.*⁴¹

How will you support a vibrant and sustainable women's voluntary and community sector?

*The women's sector makes up 7% of registered charities in England and Wales however less than 2% of voluntary and community sector representatives on local strategic partnerships are from women's organisations.*⁴²

Some key issues for women

Across the UK women are shockingly underrepresented in the political structures and decision-making processes that shape our lives. The UK democratic process presents specific structural barriers to women standing for democratically elected positions. These issues are compounded for ethnic minority women, women with disabilities, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender women and women from lower socio-economic backgrounds. An absence of women in decision-making, a lack of focus on issues that matter to women and girls and a shortage of avenues to make our voice heard often leads to disengagement with politics and a lack of confidence in the political system among women. Three quarters of women believe the current system of Government needs improvement.⁴³

Women's civil society organisations support women to engage with decision makers and have a great deal of specific expertise on women's issues. However they remain under-funded and are under-represented on local and national decision-making bodies.

Why increase the number and diversity of women in parliament and government at national and local levels?

The UK is now trailing in international league tables on women's access to positions of political power. Despite progress in the 1997 election, the increase in women MPs has stagnated – the last election saw an increase of only 2% in the number of women in parliament. Evidence suggests that increasing the proportion of female MPs has real practical benefits as women bring different experiences and knowledge to parliament.⁴⁴

- After the 2010 election, 21.4% of MPs are female – placing us 52nd in the world.⁴⁵
- At the current rate of progress it will take 200 years – another 40 elections – to achieve an equal number of women in parliament.⁴⁶
- Women make up only 4 out of 23 cabinet ministers.
- In Scotland in 2007, for the first time since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, the number of women elected declined to 33.3%.⁴⁷
- In Wales, women won 46.7% of the Assembly

seats in 2007. However, this was also a decline on the previous election result of 50%.⁴⁸

- Ethnic minority women comprise only 1.2% of members of the UK parliament,⁴⁹ despite comprising 4% of the UK population.⁵⁰
- In recent years, the House of Lords has become increasingly more representative with 148 women members, 4 out of the last 5 leaders of the house have been women and 41% of appointments made by the House of Lords Appointments Commission since 2004 have been women. However women still make up less than 20% of Peers.⁵¹
- Of the 24 countries where women's representation was over 30% in 2009, the majority employed quota systems in one form or another.⁵²

The number and percentage of women MPs in the three main political parties:

Conservatives	48 (16%)
Labour	81 (31%)
Liberal Democrats	7 (12%)

The inequality between men and women in political representation starts at the local level. Parliamentary candidates often start out their political careers in local government and the low numbers of women acting as local councillors feeds in to the low numbers of women in parliament.

- The most recent councillor census in 2008 found that women made up 30.8% of local councillors in England and ethnic minority women make up only 0.8%.⁵³
- In 2003, 27.7% of candidates in the Scottish local elections were women but by 2007 this figure had declined to 22.5%.⁵⁴
- In the UK, women constitute 30% of local councillors but only 16% of council leaders.⁵⁵

Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2008- 2010

The Speaker's Conference was charged to "consider, and make recommendations for rectifying, the disparity between the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the House of Commons and their representation in the UK population at large."

The resulting report and recommendations were published by all-party agreement and the leaders of the three largest parties appeared in person to give evidence to the Conference before the election.

The recommendations from the Speaker's Conference will be a vital tool for increasing the diversity of parliament. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/spconf.htm>

‘21.4% OF MPS ARE WOMEN’

Why ensure women's voices are heard and acted on by decision makers?

Women are more likely to be certain they will vote than men but less likely to feel that they can influence decisions within their communities.

- Only 39% of women feel able to influence decisions in their local area and only 30% feel able to influence national decisions.⁵⁶
- During Oxfam's Gender and Community Engagement in Manchester project, 82% of women reported feeling that they had no or very little influence over decisions regarding their communities.⁵⁷
- Only 28% of chairs of Local Strategic Partnerships in England are women.⁵⁸
- More women say they are certain to vote than men – 56% compared to 51%.⁵⁹

Why support a vibrant and sustainable women's voluntary and community sector?

Women's civil society organisations provide important support and space for women to engage with decision-making and have been responsible for bringing about significant gender equality changes in legislation, policy and public perceptions. However, women's organisations constantly face funding shortages and are under-represented on Local Strategic Partnerships, despite the specific expertise about women's issues they possess.

- Women's organisations represent around 7% of the voluntary and community sector, however less than 2% of voluntary and community sector representatives on Local Strategic Partnerships are from women's organisations.⁶⁰
- In 2006 only 2% of central government funding to voluntary and community organisations went to women's organisations.⁶¹

Action to make a difference

Action proposed by Fawcett and other What About Women campaign partner organisations to create a democracy that works for women and girls:

Women in politics

- Introduce a robust mechanism for taking forward key recommendations from the cross-party Speaker's Conference (see boxed text), including:
 - Increased engagement of the parliamentary parties with citizenship education.
 - A Commons debate on the introduction of large scale positive action measures such as prescriptive quotas.
 - The establishment of a Democracy Diversity Fund to be drawn upon by local parties to fund candidate identification and training.
 - The Senior Salaries Review Body to consider the introduction of formal maternity, paternity and caring leave arrangements for MPs.
 - Parties to draw up formal codes of conduct to encourage cultural change in the House and in campaigning styles.
- All parties to publish their plans setting out how they intend to achieve equal female representation and how they will act to eliminate any discrimination or harassment on the basis of sex, race or other grounds within their parties, including setting targets to achieve equal representation.
- Effective use of positive action such as all-women shortlists with a priority for selecting under represented women and set targets for progress on women's representation as women MPs, councillors, MEPs and the introduction of compulsory quotas if targets are not met.
- Equality and diversity training for party selection committees and party members.
- Ensure democratic institutions adopt family friendly hours of work.
- Ensure the House of Lords is fully elected using a proportional electoral system, and that the House of Lords Reform Bill introduces positive measures to ensure a full gender balance in the House of Lords.

Listening to women's voices

- Ensure that public authorities do not misinterpret the new Single Equality Duty to cut 'women only' services or restrict the activities of women's organisations.
- Funding for programmes and organisations who work with women from diverse backgrounds to raise their awareness of how politics impacts on their lives and how UK political institutions work.
- Greater representation of women and women's organisations in Local Strategic Partnerships.

Further information and resources:

Centre for Women and Democracy – <http://www.cfdw.org.uk>

CFWD Fact sheets – <http://www.cfdw.org.uk/resources/fact-sheets>

Hansard Society – www.hansardsociety.org.uk

www.womenatthetop.wordpress.com – Hansard Society blog to be launched 8 March

Women at the Top, 2005 report – Women at the Top 2005 report: <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/downloads/archive/2007/08/23/Women-at-the-Top-2005.aspx>

Audit of Political Engagement 1-7: http://hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/parliament_and_government/archive/2007/08/08/Public-engagement.aspx

No Politics Please, We're Women briefing paper: http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/recent_events/archive/2008/10/15/no-politics-please-we-re-women.aspx

Inter-Parliamentary Union international statistics - <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

Engender – <http://www.engender.org.uk/projects/38/Power-and-Participation.html>

Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation Final Report, January 2010, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/spconf.htm>

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women states:

'State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country' (article 7) and 'Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention' (article 4)

⁴⁰ Women Members of Parliament across the World, Centre for Women and Democracy, <http://www.cfdw.org.uk/uploads/pdfs/League%20Table%20Jan2010.pdf>

⁴¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1345295.pdf>

⁴³ *Not seen and not heard? Gender, Community Engagement and Representation*, Oxfam ReGender Briefing Paper, 2007.

⁴⁴ Sara Childs, Joni Lovenduski & Rosie Campbell, *Women at the Top: Changing Numbers, changing politics*, Hansard Society 2005.

⁴⁵ *Women Members of Parliament across the World*, Centre for Women and Democracy, <http://www.cfdw.org.uk/uploads/pdfs/League%20Table%20Jan2010.pdf>

⁴⁶ Sex and Power Report, EHRC, 2008.

⁴⁷ Hansard Society, *Has Devolution Delivered for Women?* 8 March 2010.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ http://www.equalities.gov.uk/what_we_do/representation_in_public_life.aspx.

⁵⁰ Population figures from *Census 2001*, Office for National Statistics

⁵¹ Hansard Society submission to the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation, January 2010.

⁵² Data derived from Inter-Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> and the Quota Project <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/search.cfm#>

⁵³ National Local Census of Local Authority Councillors, 2008.

⁵⁴ Hansard Society, *Has Devolution Delivered for Women?* 8 March 2010.

⁵⁵ www.cfdw.org.uk

⁵⁶ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1345295.pdf>

⁵⁷ *Not seen and not heard? Gender, Community Engagement and Representation*, Oxfam ReGender Briefing Paper, 2007.

⁵⁸ E. Gudnadottir, S. Smith, et al. Where are the women in LSPs?: Women's representation in Local Strategic Partnerships, Urban Forum, 2007.

⁵⁹ Hansard Society, *Audit of Political Engagement 7*, 3 March 2010.

⁶⁰ E. Gudnadottir, S. Smith, et al. Where are the women in LSPs?: Women's representation in Local Strategic Partnerships, Urban Forum, 2007, <http://www.urbanforum.org/research-reports/where-are-the-women-in-lsp-s>. See also *Getting Women into Local Strategic Partnerships: Knowing your community, improving local services*, Oxfam, September 2009, <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/gender/getting-women-into-lsps.html>

⁶¹ Snapshot audit of central government funding streams, Women's Resource Centre, 2006 (unpublished).

3 WORK and FAMILY LIFE

Key questions for the new parliament

Women employees have the right to be free from unfair discrimination in accessing employment and once employed. Family friendly workplaces make for more effective employees and support stronger families.

How will you ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value?

*We still have a shocking gender pay gap with women on average earning 16.4% less than men for full-time work and 35% for part-time work.*⁶²

How will you improve the availability, quality and pay of part-time work?

*More than three quarters of all workers in part-time jobs are women.*⁶³

How will you support women who are also parents or carers to balance work and family life?

*48% percent of parents feel they do not have a choice about whether to spend their time with their children or at work.*⁶⁴

Some key issues for women

Patterns of work and caring are changing for women, who are entering the workplace in larger numbers than ever before. But the experience of too many women at work is one of low pay, unequal pay or discrimination. Women are the majority of the lowest paid and are still under-represented in senior positions.

Parenting, in particular, has a direct and dramatic influence on women's employment prospects and pay which typically lasts a lifetime. The pay gap, combined with dramatically different leave entitlements for mothers and fathers when a child is born (one year for the mother, two weeks for the father) means that in most cases women continue to be primary carers for children. Many women return to work part-time after having children, but most part-time work is characterised by low pay with few prospects for training and promotion.

Tackling these issues could have major benefits not only for women and their families but for the wider economy. Removing barriers to women working in occupations traditionally done by men and increasing women's participation in the labour market could be worth between £15 and £23 Billion or 1.3 to 2% of GDP.⁶⁵

Why tackle unequal pay?

Forty years after the Equal Pay Act the pay gap between men and women persists. Undervaluation of women's work, an employment penalty for mothers, occupational segregation and direct discrimination against women all contribute to the problem. 64% of low paid workers are women.⁶⁶ This contributes not only to women's poverty but to the poverty of their children.

- The gender pay gap for men and women doing work of equal value is 16.4% for full-time work and 35% for part-time work.⁶⁷
- In 2006, according to Office of National Statistics classifications, 29% of female workers were low paid compared with 16.1% of male workers.⁶⁸
- Two-thirds of the 4 million employees aged 22 to retirement paid less than £7 per hour in 2009 were women.⁶⁹
- Interruptions to employment due to caring work account for 14% of the gender pay gap.⁷⁰
- Nine out of ten lone parents are women. The median gross weekly earnings for male lone parents is £346 and the figure for female lone parents is £194.⁷¹
- 36% of the gender pay gap cannot be explained by sex segregation of job choices, including different industries in which men and women work, differences in years of experience or part-time/time out for child-rearing.⁷²
- The gender gap amongst young people taking part in apprenticeships is 21%.⁷³

Why improve the availability, quality and pay of part-time work?

Part-time jobs are typically low paid and with fewer prospects for promotion and access to training. Part-time work is more likely to be available in lower paid jobs; for example in catering, caring, retail and in the low-skill occupations in any sector.

- More than three quarters of all workers in part-time jobs are women.⁷⁵
- Almost half of women professionals (44%) who take up part-time employment move into low-skill jobs where the average employee does not have A-levels.⁷⁵

It is also more likely to be available in smaller, less unionised workplaces where wages and conditions are weaker. It is the interaction between low pay, part-time work, and occupational segregation which hits women hard. However, for women with caring responsibilities, part time work can be a necessity. The low quality of available part time work currently pushes skilled and experienced workers out of skilled jobs.

- One third of female corporate managers moved down the career ladder after having a child: two-thirds of those took clerical positions and the remainder moved into other low-skill jobs.⁷⁶
- A decade of working part-time rather than full-time will reduce women's relative hourly wages by a third.⁷⁷

‘2/3 OF LOW PAID WORKERS ARE WOMEN’

Why support women who are parents or carers balance work and family life?

Women still do the bulk of the caring work in the UK. Factors such as a lack of flexible working, the high costs of childcare and the culture of long working hours mean women pay a penalty at work for their caring role.

- 48 % of parents feel they do not have a choice about whether to spend their time with their children or at work.⁷⁸
- Of women caring for 50 hours or more each week, 13% are working full-time and 18% are working part-time.⁷⁹
- Of the 662,000 carers who work part-time, 89% are women.⁸⁰
- Even before the recession it was estimated that 30,000 women lose their jobs each year as a result of being pregnant.⁸¹

Meanwhile, there is little support or encouragement for fathers to spend more time caring. This is bad for fathers and children who would benefit if care was shared more equally but is also a key factor in the discrimination faced by women at work.

- Few jobs are advertised flexibly even in organisations with good flexible working policies.⁸²
- Across England, the average nursery place for a child under the age of two is now £167 a week. This represents a 5% rise on the figure for 2008.⁸³
- 42% of fathers think they spend too little time with their children. Two in five fathers thought that requesting flexible working would negatively affect their chances of promotion. Although flexible working is available to almost half of fathers, only 30% of these are actually using it.⁸⁴

Action to make a difference

Action proposed by Fawcett and other *What About Women* campaign partner organisations to improve the ability of all women to balance their work and family life in the way that suits them and their families include:

Equal Pay

- Ensure that all employers, large and small, conduct pay audits to promote transparency and as a tool to tackle pay inequalities.
- Allow women to bring equal pay claims as a group to reduce the burden and risk of stigmatisation on individuals.
- Set target dates to end the gender pay gap.
- Tackle occupational segregation through the education system, encouraging schools to actively break down gender stereotypes in careers advice. Include “gender stereotyping” as a measure in OFSTED inspection.
- Pay statutory maternity pay at minimum wage levels to ensure a decent income for new mothers.
- Homeworkers should be granted full employment rights to prevent employers exploiting uncertainty over their employment status and further examination should be undertaken into how piece-rate work regularly leads to a failure to meet the minimum wage standards.
- The Government should take forward the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission on setting targets to get women, especially ethnic minority women, back into sustainable jobs and on targeting enforcement of the minimum wage to sectors employing large numbers of women.

Improved part-time working

- Additional support should be given to low paid workers to stay in work, and progress. In particular this will require training for part-time workers that fits around childcare responsibilities.
- Support businesses to offer all jobs on a flexible or part-time basis to help prevent the “occupational downgrading” that often comes with moving from full time to part-time work.
- Extend to the right to request flexible working to all workers.
- Increase the availability of quality flexible and part-time jobs in the public sector.

Balancing work and caring

- Extend free entitlement to early year’s education to 20 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year, with further investigation into care in school holidays and atypical hours.
- Encourage fathers to share care by reforming parental leave so that paid leave can be taken by either parent, with a minimum of 3 months reserved for fathers.
- Establish how far flexible working is being promoted to both men and women and investigate whether both men and women are discriminated against as a result of their flexible working patterns.
- Reduce the costs of childcare – the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit should be increased to meet 100% of childcare costs.
- Support with job applications and training for returning mothers – access to support for getting back to work should be based on childcare responsibilities.

- Make the support systems – tax, benefits and childcare – simpler for families and ensure that work pays.
- Introduce a short period of paid leave to help with caring situations.
- Ensure teenage mothers receive adequate incomes to lift them out of poverty and support them into education/training that will improve their life chances.
- Use the opportunities presented by the Welfare Reform bill to support women back into work through greater provision of childcare and other support to get women back into work, rather than punish those who find it difficult to balance work and care.

Article 11 of the **UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** states: “In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measuresto prohibit...dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave... to introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances... to encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life.”

Further information and resources:

Carers UK – www.carersuk.org

YWCA – www.ywca.org.uk/resources

Working Families – www.workingfamilies.org.uk

TUC – <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/index.cfm?mins=383>

Gingerbread – www.gingerbread.org.uk/policy
http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/portal/pls/portal!/PORTAL.wwpob_page.show?_docname=524170.pdf

Fair Play South West: regional gender equality network – <http://www.fairplaysw.org.uk/>

Radar – www.radar.org.uk

Fatherhood Institute – <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/>

Grandparents Plus – <http://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/>

Daycare Trust – <http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/>

⁶² Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

⁶³ Closing the Pay Gap: An Update report for the 2008 TUC Women's Conference

⁶⁴ *Working Better: Meeting the changing needs of families, workers and employers in the 21st century*, EHRC, March 2009.

⁶⁵ Women and Work Commission, *Shaping a Fairer Future*, 2006

⁶⁶ *Working Out of Poverty: A study of the low paid and the working poor*, IPPR, 2008

⁶⁷ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

⁶⁸ *Working Out of Poverty. A study of the low paid and the working poor*, Cooke and Lawton, IPPR, 2008

⁶⁹ <http://www.poverty.org.uk/51/index.shtml#def>

⁷⁰ Wendy Olsen & Sylvia Walby, *Modelling Gender Pay Gaps*, Equal Opportunities Commission 2004.

⁷¹ www.gingerbread.org.uk/policy

⁷² GEO, *The Gender Pay Gap in the UK: 1995 to 2007, Research Findings no. 2010/2*, Feb 2010

⁷³ Barry Fong and Andrew Felps, Apprenticeship pay: 2007 survey of earnings by sector, DIUS Research Report 08 05, 2008.

⁷⁴ Closing the Pay Gap: An Update report for the 2008 TUC Women's Conference

⁷⁵ "The price of reconciliation: part-time work, families and women's satisfaction", the Economic Journal Vol 118, issue 526

⁷⁶ "The price of reconciliation: part-time work, families and women's satisfaction", the Economic Journal Vol 118, issue 526

⁷⁷ *Not Having it All: How motherhood reduces women's pay and employment prospects*, Fawcett Society, July 2009.

⁷⁸ *Working Better: Meeting the changing needs of families, workers and employers in the 21st century*, EHRC, March 2009.

⁷⁹ Sue Yeandle et al, Who Cares Wins Statistical Analysis, Sheffield Hallam University, Carers UK, 2006

⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁸¹ *Greater Expectations: Final Report of EOC investigation into discrimination against new and expectant mothers in the workplace*, Equal Opportunities Commission, June 2005.

⁸² Working Families, *We need to talk about...hours. Job Advertising in the Civil Service*, 2009

⁸³ *Childcare costs survey 2009*, Daycare Trust, January 2009.

⁸⁴ *Working Better: Fathers, family and work – contemporary perspectives*, EHRC Research Summary 41, October 2009.

4 CRIME and JUSTICE

Key Questions for the new parliament

Women have a right to be free from violence and fear of violence and to be treated fairly in our criminal justice system. These questions are key to taking a constructive approach to tackling inequalities in how women are served by the criminal justice system.

What will you do to end violence against women?

3 million women across the UK experience rape, domestic violence, trafficking, forced marriage or other violence each year.⁸⁵

How will you reduce the number of women being sent to prison?

Between 1998 to 2008 the female prison population increased by 42% compared to 26% for men.⁸⁶

How will you ensure that the people who run our criminal justice system represent the population of the UK?

Only 15 of the 109 High Court Judges are female; only 13.4% of police officers at Chief Inspector grade and above are female; and less than a quarter of prison governors are women.⁸⁷

Some key issues for women

Too many women lack confidence in the criminal justice system. 40% of women say that fear of crime has a high or moderate impact on their quality of life. Women victims of violence feel let down by a system that fails to protect them. Violence against women and girls is still not being treated with the same professionalism as other crimes. Support for women who experience violence very much depends on a woman's postcode and is failing to respond to the diverse needs of women. Women are more likely than men to be in prison for non violent offences. Most are serving short sentences which have a devastating effect on their lives, and the lives of their children. Women are still under-represented at senior levels in the judiciary, the police and as prison governors.

‘2 WOMEN DIE FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EACH WEEK’

Ending Violence against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls is the most persistent form of gender inequality in our society that successive governments have failed to take sufficiently concerted action on. The figures below speak for themselves.

- 3 million women across the UK experience rape, domestic violence, trafficking, forced marriage or other violence each year.⁸⁹
- 45% of women in England and Wales experience domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking in their lifetime. One in five women in Northern Ireland experience domestic violence.⁹⁰ Disabled women are twice as likely to experience violence as non-disabled women.⁹¹
- It is estimated that violence against women costs society £40 billion each year.⁹²
- 42% of young people know girls whose boyfriends have pressurized them into sex.⁹³
- It has been estimated that nearly 66,000 women living in the UK in 2001 had undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), and over 20,000 girls could currently be at risk. No prosecutions have been made under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.⁹⁴
- Nearly 90% of local authorities do not have a Rape Crisis Centre⁹⁵ and one in four local authorities in Britain have no specialist support services for women who have experienced violence.⁹⁵
- 600 women with insecure immigration status with no recourse to public funds facing domestic violence seek help every year. Only 10% of those who seek help are likely to receive refuge housing and support.⁹⁷
- Over one in four local authorities in Britain have no specialised violence against women support services at all.⁹⁸

Why reduce the number of women in prison?

Each year it is estimated that more than 17,700 children are separated from their mother by imprisonment. Nearly all have to leave home as well as losing their mother – just 5% of women prisoners' children remain in their own home after their mother goes to prison.⁹⁹ Women offenders are often also victims of crime – at least one in three have histories of sexual abuse and over half have been victims of domestic abuse.

- Although the female prison population has been stable since 2002, between 1998 to 2008 it increased by 42% compared to 26% for men.¹⁰⁰
- 64% of women are in prison for non-violent offences, compared with 45% of men.¹⁰¹
- Women in prison are five times more likely to have a mental health concern than women in the general population.¹⁰²
- 29% of the female prison population is made up of ethnic minority women (whereas ethnic minority women make up just over 5% of the population as a whole).¹⁰³
- 81% of the women who Women in Prison worked with in 2008 reported having experienced domestic violence or sexual abuse.¹⁰⁴
- For every pound invested in support-focused alternatives to prison (for women), 14 pounds worth of social value is generated for women and their children, victims and society generally over ten years.¹⁰⁵
- 42% of female young offenders have experienced domestic violence.¹⁰⁶

Why ensure the people who run our criminal justice system represent the population of the UK?

Higher positions within the justice system remain male dominated. A greater representation of women, particularly in high level positions, is crucial to create a criminal justice system which is representative of our diverse society; responsive to the needs of women; and reflective of unique perspectives to issues.

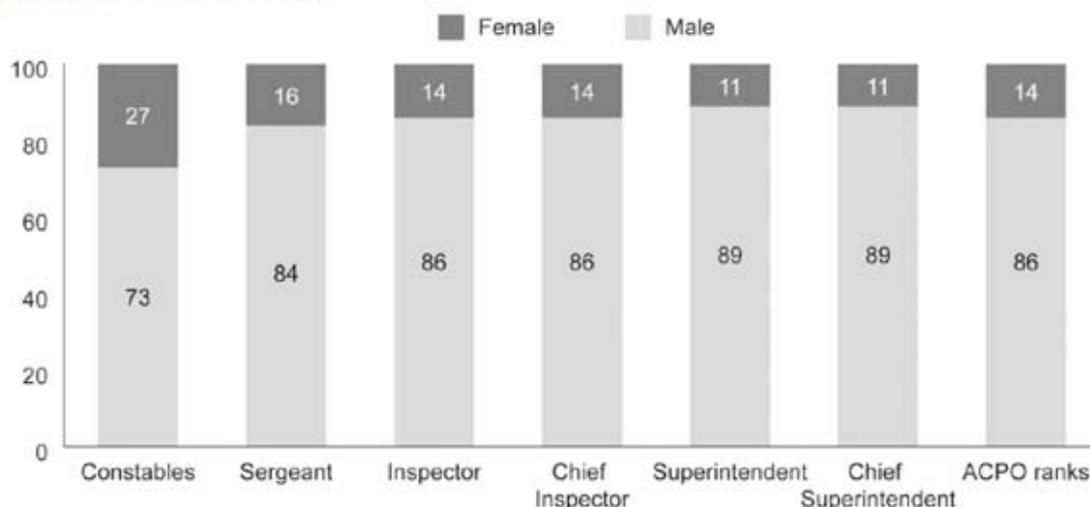
- Out of eleven judges on the UK Supreme Court, only one is female.
- Only 15 of the 109 High Court Judges are female.
- Only 13.4% of police officers at Chief Inspector grade and above are female.
- Less than a quarter of prison governors are women.
- There is only one ethnic minority woman in the senior judiciary and only 0.2% of police officers at Chief Inspector grade and above are ethnic minority women.
- Women lawyers working in private practice earned 28.9% less than men in 2008.
- In 2008/09, the number of women applying for Queens Counsel was at its lowest level in ten years.

Violence against women and human rights

Violence against women is a violation of women's fundamental human rights. States have a positive duty to protect women and children from violence in the home. This was highlighted by a European Court of Human Rights ruling in June 2009 where Turkey was found to have failed to prosecute adequately a man who repeatedly attacked his wife and eventually shot and killed his mother in law

Case of Opuz v Turkey, Application Number 33401/02, ECHR, Strasbourg, 9 June 2009

Figure 6 – Police Rank by Sex¹⁹⁶



Source: Statistics on Women and the Criminal Justice System, January 2009, Ministry of Justice

Action to make a difference

Action proposed by Fawcett and other *What About Women* campaign partner organisations to create a criminal justice system that works for women and girls include:

Ending Violence against Women and Girls

- The Cross-Government Strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls to be implemented with real commitment from all Government departments and adequate resources.
- Take forward recommendations from the Stern Review of Rape Reporting.
- A strategy to end all forms of violence against women and girls in Wales to ensure women in Wales get the same protection as women in other parts of Great Britain.
- Exemption to the ‘no recourse to public funds’ rule for abused women and equal and full access to protection under the law to safe housing, advocacy and support for all abused women and children with insecure immigration status.
- Civil law protection orders to be extended to cover all forms of VAW and the impact of legal aid reforms on the ability of women to access civil protection should be reviewed.
- The Government to fund a national awareness raising campaign on rape and sexual violence, similar to awareness raising campaigns in relation to drink driving.
- Specific training aimed at frontline staff within the police and the CPS to change attitudes towards rape, and improve initial responses to women and early evidence collection must be rolled out across the country.
- Joint targets for the CPS and the police to be developed to incentivise them to work together and develop a national strategy towards rape and other serious sexual violence offences.
- A Government commitment to sustainable funding for violence against women and girls service provision, including a national network of rape crisis centres and a 24 hour helpline.

- Ensure the criminal justice system provides women-specific responses to women offending.
- Ensure that increased reporting is matched by increased resources for support and advocacy.

Helping Female Offenders

- A consistent approach to the needs of female suspects in police custody.
- Implement the recommendations of the Corston Report into women offenders, particularly in relation to community alternatives to custody, the mental health needs of female offenders, women with caring responsibilities and the relationship between female offending and histories of violence and abuse.
- The procedures for breach of community sentences to be examined to reduce the number of women being imprisoned for non-compliance.
- Long term funding for a national network of women only support services for women on community sentences and women in and leaving prison.
- Gender-proof all serious youth violence policy and strategy by encouraging all agencies involved in addressing youth violence to take a gendered approach to understanding needs.
- Review safeguarding procedures in the light of the risks faced by girls who disclose gang related sexual violence.
- Develop a separate and coherent policy for reducing the numbers of foreign national women in prisons.

Creating a representative justice system

- Methods for promotion and locations for prerequisite training to take into account caring commitments of staff as well as any disadvantage for part-time or flexible workers in assessment methods chosen.
- Use the genuine occupational qualifications exception in relation to recruitment, training, promotion or transfer under section 7(2) of the Sex Discrimination Act to increase the number of female staff where they are required to undertake particular functions (such as searching within female prisons).
- Promote part-time and flexible working and job-sharing options and positive action measures.
- Provide appropriate avenues for reporting and responding to sex and race discrimination and harassment in the workplace as well as support mechanisms for women who have experienced discriminatory treatment and/or harassment.

The Beijing Platform for Action on Violence Against Women, which was agreed by governments around the world in 1995 states:

‘Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to all States and should be addressed’

Further information and resources:

Fawcett’s Commission on Women and the Criminal Justice System, Final Report, May 2009
<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Commission%20report%20May%2009.pdf>

Clean Break (a theatre and new writing programme for female ex-offenders) - <http://www.cleanbreak.org.uk/>

Clinks – <http://www.clinks.org/index.aspx>

Criminal Justice Alliance - <http://www.criminaljusticealliance.org>

End Violence Against Women Map of Gaps 2 report – http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/map_of_gaps2.pdf

Law Centres Federation <http://www.lawcentres.org.uk/>

YWCA – http://www.ywca.org.uk/resources/category/offending_and_crime
http://www.ywca.org.uk/resources/category/violence_and_abuse

Making Every Adult Matter coalition four-point manifesto - <http://www.meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/MEAM-report.pdf>

Rights of Women, Female Voice in Violence Project – <http://www.rota.org.uk/pages/FVV.aspx>

Race On The Agenda - <http://www.rota.org.uk/pages/ResearchPublications.aspx>

The Griffins Society directory of criminal justice resources – <http://www.thegriffinsociety.org/links.html>

White Ribbon Campaign - <http://www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk/links.html>

Women Asylum Seekers Together <http://www.wast.org.uk/>

Women in Prison – <http://www.womeninprison.org.uk>

- ⁸⁵ <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/>
- ⁸⁶ *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile*, Prison Reform Trust, 2009.
- ⁸⁷ <http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/keyfacts/statistics/women.htm>, April 2009.
- ⁸⁸ <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/>
- ⁸⁹ Walby, S and Allen, J *Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, London, Home Office. 2004, Northern Ireland Office & Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, *Tackling Violence at Home: A Strategy for Addressing Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland*, 2005.
- ⁹⁰ P. Magowan, 'Domestic Violence and Disabled Women', *Safe*, Women's Aid, Spring 2003.
- ⁹¹ Justine Järvinen, Angela Kail & Iona Miller, *Hard Knock Life*, New Philanthropy Capital, April 2008.
- ⁹² http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=17168 (accessed 07/01/10).
- ⁹³ FORWARD, *A Statistical Study to Estimate the Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales*, October 2007. A further study is currently being conducted which should provide a more up-to-date indication of the prevalence of FGM using data from maternity and other specialist services – see <http://www.forwaruk.org.uk/news/news/562>.
- ⁹⁴ Maddy Coy, Liz Kelly and Jo Foord, *Map of Gaps 2*, End Violence Against Women, 2009.
- ⁹⁵ M Coy, L Kelly & J Foord, *Map of Gaps 2: The Postcode Lottery of Violence Against Women support services in Britain*, End Violence Against Women and Equality and Human Rights Commission, January 2009.
- ⁹⁶ Sundari Anitha, *Forgotten women: Domestic violence, poverty and South Asian women with No Recourse to Public Funds*, Saheli, March 2008.
- ⁹⁷ Maddy Coy, Liz Kelly and Jo Foord, *Map of Gaps: The postcode lottery of Violence Against Women support services in Britain*, 2009
- ⁹⁸ *Women in Prison Briefing*, Prison Reform Trust, 2009.
- ⁹⁹ *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile*, Prison Reform Trust, 2009.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Justice, *Population in Custody, England and Wales*, June 2009, London.
- ¹⁰¹ *Women in Prison Briefing*, Prison Reform Trust, 2009.
- ¹⁰² The Fawcett Society, *Realising Rights: Increasing Ethnic Minority Women's Access to Justice*, January 2010: This includes women categorised as 'BME' by the Home Office, as well as women categorised as 'White Irish' and 'White Other': p.171: *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System- 200*, Home Office, 2007/8.
- ¹⁰³ *Women in Prison, Internal Monitoring Information*, 2008.
- ¹⁰⁴ New Economics Foundation, *Unlocking Value: How we all benefit from alternatives to prison for women offenders*, 2008.
- ¹⁰⁵ Centre for Social Justice <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/default.asp?pageRef=307>

5 ATTITUDES, MEDIA and CULTURE

Our media and cultural representations of women have a huge impact on how girls and women are viewed and view themselves and on public attitudes to women and women's equality. Government and schools have a duty to use education to tackle all forms of prejudice and discrimination in generations to come.

How will you encourage media and cultural institutions to tackle gender stereotypes and project positive images of women?

Almost twice as many women in news stories are portrayed as victims (19%) than men (10%). 84% of women news subjects are identified by their family status, compared with 16% of male news subjects.¹¹⁴

How will you address damaging representations of women in internet, print and web media?

A report by the American Psychological Association revealed that the proliferation of sexualized images of women and girls is linked to common mental health problems such as eating disorders and depression.¹¹⁵

What will you do to ensure education plays its part in educating young people about gender equality and tackling negative stereotypes and beliefs about women and men and amongst boys and girls?

75% of teenage girls reported that they had experienced some form of emotional violence from partners, and 25% reported experiencing physical violence.¹¹⁶

Some Key Issues for Women

Equality between women and men will not be achieved by legal change alone. Our media and cultural representations of women have a huge impact on how girls and women are viewed and view themselves and on public attitudes about women and women's equality. From the effects of celebrity culture and beauty advertising on young women's and girls' body image, to the stereotyped portrayal of rape victims, to a chronic under representation of female news subjects, our attitudes are moulded by cultural representations of women.

Why encourage media and cultural institutions to tackle gender stereotypes and project positive images of women?

Women continue to be predominantly represented in passive and stereotyped roles in film and television. This extends beyond fictional representations to news media – women are far more likely to be shown as victims and far more likely to be referred to in terms of their age, physical appearance, or family role than men in the news. Women are also less likely to appear in important roles behind the scenes.

- 19% of women news subjects are portrayed as victims compared to 10% of male news subjects.¹¹⁷
- 84% of women news subjects are identified by their family status, compared with 16% of male news subjects.¹¹⁸
- 83% of 'experts' cited in news stories are men.¹¹⁹
- In 2006 only 38% of journalists in the UK were women and the gender pay gap in the industry was over 20 per cent¹²⁰. This places the UK amongst the worst in Europe for gender equality in journalism.¹²¹
- In 2008 only 17.3% of writers for UK film releases were women and only 11.5% of directors of UK releases were women.¹²²

Why address damaging representations of women in internet, print and web media?

Women and girls are bombarded daily by sexualised advertising that objectifies women's bodies in order to sell products, by sexualised clothing marketed at primary school age children and by demeaning images of women as sexual objects in lads' mags and tabloid newspapers. This affects both women's and girls' self image and society's perception of women in general.

- Research from the Children's Society has shown that dissatisfaction with their appearance is the single biggest cause of unhappiness among girls aged 10-15. 21% of girls are unhappy with their appearance compared to 14% of boys.¹²³
- Media was rated as one of the earliest influences on beauty and body image by 27% of 15-17 year olds.¹²⁴
- 29% of 11-16 year old girls said they are 'not very happy' or 'not at all happy' about the way they look.¹²⁵
- 21% of 11-16 year old girls would like to change their appearance to be thinner.¹²⁶
- A report by the American Psychological Association, examining virtually every form of media, has revealed that the proliferation of sexualized images of women and girls is linked to common mental health problems such as eating disorders and depression.¹²⁷
- 12% of all websites are pornography sites and 25% of all search engine requests are for pornography.¹²⁸
- 26% of trade union branches have received enquiries from members who have been exposed to the sex industry, including pornography, at work.¹²⁹
- 83% of single parents say that the media represents them in a negative light.¹³⁰

Why educate young people about gender equality and tackle negative stereotypes and beliefs about women and men and amongst boys and girls?

A worrying proportion of people still hold outdated views on apportioning blame in rape cases where a woman has been drinking or flirting. Media reporting of rape also disproportionately focuses on false allegations.¹³¹ These attitudes and news stories can create a culture of disbelief in which victims and survivors are less likely to report crimes, or juries to convict sexual offenders. Negative and stereotyped attitudes to women and girls begin at a very young age and they are not being addressed sufficiently in the education system.

- 36% of British adults believe that a woman is at least partly responsible for being raped if she is drunk.¹³²
- 20% of people believe that it is acceptable in some circumstances for a man to hit or slap his wife or girlfriend in response to her being dressed in sexy or revealing clothes in public.¹³³
- 25% of young men believe that women 'often' provoke violence by nagging.¹³⁴
- 77% of young people feel they do not have enough information and support to deal with physical or sexual violence.¹³⁵

Education has an important role to play in providing non-stereotyping careers advice to girls and boys.

- An Equal Opportunities Commission study found that Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Caribbean origin girls believe that their careers advice had not opened their eyes to a full range of jobs and careers.¹³⁶
- 76% of girls and 59% of boys would be more interested in a non-traditional sector if they could try it before making a final choice

‘There was quite a lot of low-level sexual bullying in the corridors that we were completely unaware of as a school. Some of the Year 10 girls, especially, began to say “I’m sick of boys touching my bum all the time – they’ve got no right to”.’

Male PSHE teacher (Challenging Violence, Changing Lives: Gender on the UK Education Agenda, Womankind Worldwide, 2007)

“When I think about careers education in school, I don’t remember much. This is because there wasn’t really any. In the last half year, I met reps from Connexions a couple of times but nothing really came of it – they suggested I go into hairdressing and into college for this. I don’t remember anything else being offered to me.”

Young woman, YWCA West Kent

Action to make a difference

Action proposed by Fawcett and other What About Women campaign partner organisations to challenge damaging and stereotyped images in the media and educate young people include:

Tackling media and cultural institutions

- Gender equality to be mainstreamed into media regulation, such as OFCOM and ASA, rather than setting standards solely according to obscenity and decency.
- A strong media campaign on changing public attitudes to sexual violence, focusing on men as well as women.
- Create opportunities for women to progress in senior media positions, particularly as editors, directors and producers.
- Work to raise awareness of the negative effects of the objectification and sexualisation of women and girls in media and advertising.
- See also Object’s charter for Media and Objectification for range of additional policy proposals in this area (<http://www.object.org.uk/index.php/home/3-news/89-press-release-object-supports-sexualisation-reviews-calls-to-regulate-lads-mags>).

In the education system

- Incorporate gender equality principles across the curriculum, not only in PSHEE.
- Encourage whole school investment in creating a culture where gender inequality against women is addressed openly and appropriately, with a strong lead coming from senior staff as well as individual teachers.
- Raise the status of PSHEE to a statutory foundation subject within the national curriculum, and incorporate media literacy into PSHEE classes, particularly focusing on stereotypes and women in advertising.
- Develop comprehensive guidance for schools on sexual bullying.
- Ensure that all schools have access to adequate advice and support to complete their Gender Equality Scheme, under the Gender Equality Duty.
- Encourage young men and women to explore non-traditional career options via work experience and incentives.

Article 5 of the **UN Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women** calls on states:

- a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women

The Beijing Platform for Action, which was agreed by Governments around the world in 1995 states: The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications – electronic, print, visual and audio – must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women’s diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world.

Further information and resources:

Awareness raising campaigns:

- 'This is not an invitation to rape me,' <http://www.thisisnotaninvitationtorapeme.co.uk/>
- 'My Strength,' <http://www.mystrength.org/>
- 'Pause Button,' <http://pause.nycagainstrape.org/>

Home Office Violence Against Women Opinion Polling, February 2009, <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/violence-against-women-poll.html>

Challenging Violence, Changing Lives, Womankind Worldwide's UK Schools Programme <http://womankind.org.uk/uk-schools.html>

Girls Shout Out! Girlguiding UK http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/about_us/girls_shout_out.aspx

Case studies collected during our recent work can be found at: <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=947>
http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=16618

Object <http://www.object.org.uk/>

Pink Stinks <http://www.pinkstinks.co.uk/campaign.php>

Women in Film and TV www.wftv.org.uk

Bird's Eye View <http://www.birds-eye-view.co.uk>

¹¹⁴ Natasha Marhia, Just Representation? Press reporting and the reality of rape, The Liith Project, 2008.

¹¹⁵ American Psychological Association, Report of the APA Taskforce on the Sexualisation of Girls, 2007.

¹¹⁶ Christine Barter, Melanie McCarty, David Berridge and Kathy Evans, "Partner exploitation and Violence in teenage intimate relationships", NSPCC, 2009

¹¹⁷ Natasha Marhia, *Just Representation? Press reporting and the reality of rape*, The Liith Project, 2008.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ *EFJ Survey: Women Journalists in the European Integration Process*, by Annegret Witt-Barthel, European coordinator of the IFJ Gender Council (2006) <http://europe.ifj.org/assets/docs/118/144/bad0a76-d2b7b90.pdf>

¹²¹ *EFJ Survey: Women Journalists in the European Integration Process*, by Annegret Witt-Barthel, European coordinator of the IFJ Gender Council (2006) <http://europe.ifj.org/assets/docs/118/144/bad0a76-d2b7b90.pdf>

¹²² UK Film Council statistical Yearbook 2009, tables 21.10 and 21.11

¹²³ The Children's Society, *Understanding children's well-being: A national survey of young people's well-being*, 2009.

¹²⁴ N. Etcoff, S. Orbach, J. Scott, H. D'Agostino, *Beyond stereotypes: Rebuilding the foundation of beauty beliefs*, February 2006.

¹²⁵ *Girls Attitude Survey 2009* – 11-16a, ChildWise and GirlGuiding UK, July 2009.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ American Psychological Association, Report of the APA Taskforce on the Sexualisation of Girls, 2007.

¹²⁸ Object, *Joining up the dots: why urgent action is needed to tackle the sexualisation of women and girls in the media and popular culture*, May 2009, referencing English, B. (2005, May 12), 'The secret life of boys: Pornography is a mouse click away, and kids are being exposed to it in ever-increasing numbers,' The Boston Globe.

¹²⁹ Fawcett Society, *Corporate Sexism: The sex industry's infiltration of the modern workplace*, September 2009.

¹³⁰ Gingerbread, *Survey of Members*, 2008.

¹³¹ Natasha Marhia, *Just Representation? Press reporting and the reality of rape*, The Liith Project, 2008.

¹³² Home Office/ Ipsos Mori, 'Violence against women opinions survey,' Feb 2009.

¹³³ ibid

¹³⁴ NHS Scotland, *Young People's Attitudes towards gendered violence*, 2005.

¹³⁵ ICM poll, November 2006, commissioned by EVAW: A survey of 16 – 20 year olds in the UK and Wales.

¹³⁶ R Bhavnani, Moving on Up? Ahead of the Game: the changing aspirations of young ethnic minority women, Manchester Equal Opportunities Commission.

6 EQUALITY and HUMAN RIGHTS

Key Questions for the new parliament

Women's rights, including the right to live free from discrimination, are basic human rights which governments have a duty to protect, respect and fulfil.

How will you strengthen our equality legislation to ensure it makes a real difference for women?

It can currently take up to ten years for an equal pay claim to progress through the employment tribunal system.

How will you protect and progress women's human rights in the UK and internationally?

In 2008, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women made over a dozen recommendations to the United Kingdom government on areas it could progress UK's women's rights including developing a cross government women's strategy.

Some key issues for women

Women's human rights, including the right to equality, must be enshrined in law and respected in practice if women are to play a full and equal part in all aspects of society. Our current equality legislation is inadequate: It is failing to deal adequately with the issues such as the gender pay gap. It does not protect vulnerable women, such as asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds. It does not require adequate positive action measures at work and in public life. Although the public sector now has a duty to promote gender equality thinking about the different needs of men and women it is still not mainstreamed into everyday practice as it should be.

In the short term the Equality Act recently passed in parliament addresses many of these shortcomings in current law. But in the longer term we need equalities law with more readily available enforcement powers backed up with practical guidance.

Women's rights are human rights and the UK government has a duty to protect and progress women's human rights both here in the UK and as far as it can do so in the wider world. To do this a future government must ensure that adequate domestic and international human rights laws and practices are in place that protect and respect women's human rights.

Why strengthen equality legislation?

- It can currently take up to ten years for an equal pay claim to progress through the employment tribunal system.
- After nearly 40 years of equal pay legislation women still earn less than men – the gender pay gap is currently 16.4% for full time work.
- In 2005, the EOC found that 30,000 women lose their jobs every year as a result of being pregnant.¹³⁷
- Inequality is damaging to the whole of society, not just the poorest. Research has shown that a level of equality similar to Sweden, Japan or Denmark could lead to an 85% increase in the proportion of the population who feel they can trust others.¹³⁸

Whilst the Equality Act could have been bolder, it is an important step forward in harmonising and simplifying existing equality legislation. It will improve protection for individuals, employers, service providers and public bodies. It will also strengthen equality legislation in a number of ways that could benefit women:

- Requiring public bodies to consider socio-economic inequality in carrying out their work.
- Enabling public bodies to use the £175 million it spends on buying goods and services each year to promote equality on grounds of age, sexual orientation, religion or belief and gender reassignment as well as on the currently permitted grounds of gender, race and disability. This will benefit older women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and women of different faiths or no faith.
- Allowing employers to use positive action – taking account of under-representation of a particular group, including women, when choosing between two equally qualified candidates.
- Introducing provision on dual discrimination which will protect people who are discriminated against because of a combination of factors, for example Black women or older women.
- Allowing employment tribunals to make recommendations that will benefit the employer's whole workforce and not just the individual who

has taken the case.

Why protect and progress women's human rights?

The Human Rights Act 1998 places a duty on government, the courts and all other public bodies to respect the human rights of both women and men in everything they do. It provides a vital safeguard for women's rights. It has been used by women and their advocates inside and outside the courtroom to challenge unfair decisions to remove children from their mothers, to uphold the dignity of older women living in care homes and to safeguard vulnerable migrant women with little other protection and respect for their rights. Under human rights law, public bodies have a positive duty to step in when they become aware of a potential breach of a woman's human rights. For example, a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in June 2009 found that Turkey had failed to prosecute adequately a man who repeatedly attacked his wife and eventually shot and killed his mother in law.¹³⁹ This obligation on states to protect women and children from violence in the home is seen closer to home in cases where public sector workers have been empowered by the HRA to secure accommodation for women fleeing domestic violence. It helps to promote a preventative approach towards issues faced by women as well as providing redress once violations have occurred.

Human rights laws and practice also protect women who do not fall within existing equality laws, like the millions of carers whose fundamental rights to protection from inhumane and degrading treatment and to a private and family life are put at risk when they are offered little or no respite from their caring responsibilities.

The government has a range of obligations and duties under the UN Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women – CEDAW. CEDAW is solely concerned with the position of women and outlines a comprehensive set of rights for women in all fields. Among other things it covers discrimination (article 1), sex role stereotyping (article 5), political and public life (article 7), education (article 10), Health (article 12) and marriage and family life (article 16).¹⁴⁰ It is the only treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces in shaping gender roles. As the UK has ratified the treaty it is legally bound to put its provisions into practice. The UK must submit a national report, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their obligations under CEDAW. The UK last reported to CEDAW in 2008.

As a result of the 2008 report the CEDAW committee made recommendations to the UK government for improvements in the situation of women in relation to: understanding of the principle of equality, women in prison, temporary special measures, national machinery for the advancement of women, funding for women's organisations and implementation of the gender duty, stereotypes and negative cultural practices, violence against women and girls, trafficking, political participation and participation in public life, employment, health, economic consequences of divorce and vulnerable groups of women.

The UN also reissued its call for the UK to develop a cross cutting government strategy on implementing CEDAW.¹⁴¹

The HRA has legal teeth and is applicable to all women in the UK, regardless of immigration status. Its fundamental ideals and frameworks can be used inside and outside the courtroom to empower women to challenge the state when it fails to provide adequate rights protection. The international nature and breadth of rights covered by CEDAW complements the HRA and when used with other laws and treaties these are a powerful means to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of all women in the UK.

Currently the coalition government is considering replacing the Human Rights Act with an alternative Bill of Rights. But this should not mean a row-back from existing levels of protection for women's human rights and it is vital that women's views should be at the heart of any debates which follow and of any proposals.

**‘WOMEN EARN ON
AVERAGE 16.4%
LESS THAN MEN’**

Action to make a difference

Action proposed by Fawcett and other *What About Women* campaign partner organisations to deliver equality and human rights for women and girls include:

On strengthening UK equality legislation domestically:

- Ensure the Equality Act and its linked public sector equality duty is fully implemented. Ensure appropriate regulations are applied to the specific duties so that gender is not lost among the other 'equality objectives'.
- Ensure that the new duties do not row back on the Gender Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Impact Assessments.
- Conduct further research into the effectiveness of current equality legislation on tackling women's inequality and take action to address weaknesses.
- Promote the implementation of the European Commission's Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (2006-2010) and the UK and the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action (2005-2015).
- Promote the value of human rights as an umbrella under which public bodies can be confident that in meeting their equality obligations they are prioritising those women who are most vulnerable to discrimination or poor treatment.
- Specifically promote human rights as a framework to ensure that the new public sector equality duty fully promotes gender equality and protects vital women-only services.

On promoting and protecting women's human rights in the UK and internationally:

- Retain the current Human Rights Act as a minimum level of protection thus maintaining the vital protections and tools it provides for tackling inequality, human rights abuses and poor treatment of women by public bodies and in their own lives.
- Promote the value of human rights in empowering public bodies to protect women's rights in situations such as forced marriages when fundamental rights to private and family life are in jeopardy.
- Ensure that any proposed legislative changes increase the level of women's human rights protections and that women are fully engaged in any consultations on a new Bill of Rights.
- Implement the recommendations of the UN CEDAW Committee in their examination of the UK in 2008, including the development of a cross government plan for furthering its CEDAW obligations. Ensure the UK government reports to the CEDAW Committee in 2011.
- Support the reform of UN gender equality mechanisms with the establishment of a composite gender equality entity, and agree on the establishment of an Executive.
- Support the appointment of a Special Rapporteur or equivalent high level post on and for Older Women and/or a new Convention on the rights of the Older Person which recognises gender differences.
- Make women's human rights and gender equality a priority for UK Foreign and international development policy including gender sensitive work on climate change, tackling violence against women and increasing women's political participation.

Further information and resources:

CEDAW <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/index.htm>

Equality and Diversity Forum -
<http://www.edf.org.uk/>

The UK Gender and Development Network
Manifesto – <http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/storage/UK%20Gender%20and%20Development%20Network%20Manifesto%202010.pdf>

The GEAR Campaign – <http://www.un-gear.eu/index.php>

End Violence Against Women Coalition – <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/m>

EVAW, Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations: A Template for an Integrated Strategy on Violence Against Women for the UK – http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/realising_rights.pdf

BIHR – www.bihhr.org.uk

BIHR – *The Human Rights Act: Changing Lives*, http://www.bihhr.org.uk/sites/default/files/BIHR%20Changing%20Lives%20FINAL_0.pdf

Liberty – <http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/>

National Alliance of Women's Organisations –
info@nawo.org.uk

Appendix 1

***What About Women?* coalition partners**

Bird's eye view
British Institute of Human Rights
Carers UK
Centre for Women and Democracy
Child Poverty Action Group
Clean Break
Clinks
Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre
Criminal Justice Alliance
Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre
Day Care Trust
Discrimination Law Association
Electoral Reform Society
Engender
End Violence Against Women
Equality Trust
Fatherhood Institute
Gender and Development Network
Gingerbread
Grandparents Plus
Griffins Society
Hansard Society
Law Centres Federation
Nacro
National Coalition Building Institute
National Alliance of Women's Organisations
National Council of Women of Great Britain
National Union of Students
Object
Oxfam UK Poverty Programme
Pink Stinks
Progressive Women
Race on the Agenda
RADAR
Scottish Women's Aid
Rights of Women
Unlock Democracy

Wales Women's National Coalition
Welsh Women's Aid
White Ribbon Campaign
WOMANKIND
Women Asylum Seekers Together
Women for Refugee Women
Women in Film and TV
Women in Prison
Women's Aid
Women's Budget Group
Women's Environmental Network
Women's Resource Centre
Working Families
YWCA England and Wales

Appendix 2 – How the Parties Responded

The major parties responded to the *What About Women?* campaign questions in March 2010. We have provided their responses for your reference.

The Conservatives' Responses

The Economy

How will the policies you propose on tax and benefits impact on women's incomes and the wider economic position?

Today the tax and benefits system rewards couples who split up. This can impact women with children who decide to live with their partner. A recent survey found that three quarters of families on low and modest incomes would have been better off living apart than together, by an average of £58 per week. Researchers cited the example of a two-earner, two-child family living in private rented accommodation, with weekly incomes of £520 and £150 and child care costs of £120, whose family income would increase by 60 per cent if they decided to live apart. The Institute of Fiscal Studies estimate that there are 200,000 more people claiming tax credits as lone parents than actually exist in the UK. A Conservative government will end the couple penalty in the tax credits system as we make savings from our welfare reform plans. Importantly, no-one would be worse off as result of this change.

We also need to tackle some of the perverse incentives in the benefits system that can prevent women moving into work following a period on benefits. Unfortunately many people are little better off – or in some cases worse off – when they get a job and come off benefits. For example, if you are a single mother with two children earning £150 a week, the withdrawal of benefits, tax credits and the additional taxes means that for every extra pound you earn, you keep just 4 pence. We are very concerned that this offers little or no incentive for people to do the right thing and look for work. To combat this problem we will be working on a new programme of work to develop a lasting and affordable policy solution to this problem.

How will you ensure that any cuts on public spending do not impact disproportionately on women – especially the most vulnerable?

We have made it clear that we should not cut the deficit on the backs of the poorest in our society. So we will protect the lowest paid public sector workers from a pay-freeze and we will maintain the benefits that many women rely on including child benefit, winter fuel payments and free TV licenses for over 75s. Given the terrible state of the public finances, we believe that we can no longer afford to pay tax credits to households with annual incomes of over £50,000. Tax credits are designed to help families on low incomes, but we are now paying them to families earning over £50,000. We don't think that is affordable anymore, so we have said that under a Conservative Government these families would stop receiving tax credits. No families with a combined household income of £40,000 or less will be affected by our policy.

To ensure security in retirement for pensioners we will restore the link between the basic state pension and earnings in 2012 and we will tackle the rising cost of living for pensioners by working with councils to implement a two-year council tax freeze. A Conservative government would also expand the role of the Post Office Card Account so it could be used to make direct debit payments on utility bills. This could cut the energy bills of up to 4 million POCA holders by up to £100 a year.

How will you ensure that women's contribution to our economy – both paid and unpaid – is properly supported and valued?

We need to ensure that all women have a fair and equal chance to succeed in the workplace, and that they are fairly rewarded for the work they do. We therefore need to tackle the persistent gender pay gap which is still holding women back. We will ensure that every company found guilty of pay discrimination undergoes a full gender pay audit. We also need to ensure that women who are carers – whether for their own children or another member of the family – have the right to request flexible working. We will initially extend the right to request flexible working to every parent with a child under the age of eighteen. However, we want government to lead from the front, so we will extend the right to request flexible working to all those in the public sector, recognising that this may need to be done in stages. In addition, we will in the longer term, extend the right to request flexible working to all, but only in the light of experience and after full consultation with business on how to do this in a way which is administratively simple and without burdening them with extra costs. As part of our support for flexible working, we will also oblige JobCentre Plus offices to ask employers if their vacancies could be advertised on a part-time or flexible basis.

We must also value those women who undertake a vital caring role and who are not seeking paid employment at all. Conservatives have outlined plans to ensure regular planned respite care and we will ensure that everyone who wishes to have an Individual Budget and Direct Payments can do so to make sure that they can get the support and assistance that they need and want, rather than being forced to fit around the provision of the local authority.

Democracy and Political Reform

How will you increase the number and diversity of women in parliament and government at the national and local levels?

When he was elected as Party Leader in 2005 David Cameron made increasing the number of women and BME candidates a top priority. Since then a number of changes have been made to our selection procedures. Around a third of our candidates are now women and as a result if the Party wins the next General Election then we will go from having 18 women MPs to having around 60. The organisation women2win was founded in 2005 to attract more women to the Conservative Party and encourage more women to stand for parliament and has provided support to women candidates. In January this year the Party moved to its by-election procedure which means that if any MP stood down after that date the Party centrally would provide a shortlist of candidates to their association and we agreed to look at using some all women shortlists. This would be in recognition of the fact that there are many very talented women on our candidates' list who haven't yet been selected.

What will you do to ensure the voices of women are heard and acted upon by decision makers?

Getting more women elected to Parliament will help in this process not only by providing a greater female voice but also by encouraging other women to get involved and to speak out. It is of course important for decision makers to ensure that they consult widely when considering new proposals and that the consultation should not exclude particular voices such as women. In putting together our strategy to end violence against women we consulted widely with women's groups and intend to continue doing so.

How will you support a vibrant and sustainable women's voluntary and community sector?

In 2008 David Cameron launched our Green Paper 'Voluntary Action in the 21st Century' which highlights the importance of the voluntary sector and sets out clear ways of encouraging it as a force for social progress. A Conservative Government would support organisations such as women's refuge centres as well as a number of other foundations by allowing the voluntary sector to compete on an equal footing with the private sector and making Government contracting of the voluntary sector less burdensome. Key to this will be the creation of Social Enterprise Zones which will help nurture the enterprising potential for growth and replication in the women's voluntary and community sector.

Work and Family Life

How will you ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value?

The causes of the gender pay gap are complex and deep-rooted. It is partly caused by outright discrimination – and we have proposals for compulsory pay audits and a new reasonableness test for the material factor defence which would tighten the legislation and address this discrimination. A clear distinction between us and the other parties is that our pay audit proposals would cover all companies that are found guilty of discrimination rather than only large companies. But the pay gap is also caused by factors like the career breaks women take to care for their children and poor careers advice. Conservatives have policies which would promote flexible working and help women returning to the workforce to address these deeper causes and we will ensure that all young people get good quality careers advice including the creation of a website that will give information on the earnings achieved by graduates and students' satisfaction with different university courses.

How will you improve the availability, quality and pay of part-time work?

At the moment there is still a great deal of expectation that women will adopt male skills and behaviours in the workplace. The next great challenge is to enable women to do jobs using their skills and in the manner they choose rather than expecting them to behave like men and work the traditional male 9-5 working pattern. Labour extended flexible working. That's a good thing. In fact the Conservatives would like to go even further, by extending the right to request flexible work to all employees, initially extending to all parents with a child under eighteen and to everyone in the public sector as described above.

These measures will also allow us to confront the issue of the quality of part time work currently available. As it stands mothers are often forced to take part time jobs for which they are vastly over-qualified. A culture change in attitudes would enable broader choices for these women and could have a knock-on effect on the crippling cost of childcare.

How will you support women who are also parents or carers to balance work and family life?

This is a crucial issue. We would change maternity leave to flexible parental leave. Under this scheme the first 14 weeks of the 52 weeks available (39 paid and 13 unpaid) would be for the mother. Thereafter the parents could decide how to use the leave between them. They could share the remaining leave or one could stay at home and the other be in work for the whole remaining period. They could also decide to take some of the leave simultaneously as long as the father only took one block of leave.

One in five women say they cannot find affordable childcare in their area and because of the Government's obsession with state-run, centralised childcare the number of voluntary and independent nurseries and childminders is declining. These different forms of childcare are important to meet the different needs of parents. Another problem is that Gordon Brown's complicated tax and benefits system means that many women are not claiming the support that they are entitled to. So one thing we must do is simplify the tax and benefits system. We support the provision of free nursery care for pre-school children and we want that support to be provided by a diverse range of providers – including the many childminders and private, voluntary and independent nurseries which are currently being squeezed out of the system. In government we will review the way the childcare industry is regulated to ensure that no provider is put at a disadvantage.

The provision of better flexible working rights will also help people balance their work and family life. This might equally be for a man or for someone with a particular medical condition such as arthritis or MS or for an older person. Whoever it is for, the flexibility enables them to remain in the work place and contribute to the economy. People should think of flexible working as something not only for women and something that can be of benefit in a wide variety of contexts – and, importantly, it is not just about someone working less time.

Crime & Justice

What will you do to end violence against women?

In 2008 we published a strategy document titled 'Ending Violence Against Women', outlining the steps that we would take in government to tackle gender-based violence. We have been strongly calling for a more coordinated, cross-government approach with a much greater emphasis on preventative work. We will work with schools, police, health care professionals and the voluntary sector to tackle the root causes of violence and provide support to victims. The specific steps we will take include ensuring appropriate training for police recruits in all forms of violence against women, increasing the number of health visitors to new mothers, teaching consent in the sex education curriculum and providing funding for up to fifteen new rape crisis centres. A Conservative government will also end the process of short-term annual funding decisions by introducing stable three-year funding cycles for rape crisis centres.

How will you reduce the number of women being sent to prison?

We support the principle that only women who have committed serious or violent offences, or pose a threat to the public, should receive a custodial sentence. We should look at alternatives to custody, including community sentences where appropriate. We also need to tackle the causes of women's offending, recognising that women prisoners are more likely than male prisoners to be homeless, addicted to drugs, or to have suffered from domestic or sexual abuse. Across a range of areas we will take action to tackle drug and alcohol addictions, homelessness and violence against women. We broadly support the recommendations of the Corston Report, and will work to ensure progress based on its conclusions. In particular, we support the concept of smaller, more local prisons, which could be beneficial for those women who receive custodial sentences.

How will you ensure that the people who run our criminal justice system represent the population of the UK?

The lack of women in key positions in the criminal justice system is concerning. For example, the new Supreme Court contains only one female member and there is no longer a woman head of a division of the High Court. Not only does this suggest that there are still barriers to women reaching the top of the legal world, it can also be off-putting for female victims of crime who may be reluctant to pursue cases if they feel that the criminal justice system is dominated by men. We need to reform the unambitious and low quality careers advice for young women that has contributed to this. The Conservative Party is committed to improving the quality of careers advice given to young women, in order to equip them with accurate and honest information about the implications of career and education choices.

Attitudes, Media and Culture

How will you encourage media and cultural institutions to tackle gender stereotypes and project positive images of women?

There has been a huge shift in our cultural attitudes towards women and sexuality that has shown a particularly worrying change in relation to attitudes to do with sexual violence. We must face up to this and admit that the past decade or so has seen the growing sexualisation of our society, where sex is aimed at an ever younger audience which leads to children believing it is acceptable to treat women like sex objects. As David Cameron has said, we need those that work in the media and music industry to exercise their responsibility in how they present female role models to children. We would like to see women in the media being celebrated for their success in science, sport or business rather than their physical attractiveness.

How will you address damaging representations of women in internet, print and web media?

The focus on body image in western industrialised societies is something that affects both men and women but it would appear that the focus on women's body image is greater and so far has proven to be more damaging and is something that any responsible Government should be addressing. In February we announced a set of measures which are aimed at giving children back their childhood and stopping the early sexualisation of children which has been so harmful to our society. Through punitive measures for companies which flout advertising guidelines and empowering parents and teachers to ban inappropriate advertising we hope that this will start to teach children to think of women in a different way at an early age.

What will you do to ensure education plays its part in educating young people about gender equality and tackling negative stereotypes and beliefs about women and men and amongst boys and girls?

We need our schools to talk about consent when they teach sex education. We know there are some parents who have concerns about sex education, and they should reserve the right to opt their child out. But we believe that sex education, when taught properly, is extremely important. It should not be values-free and it is hugely important in forming cultural attitudes towards women. Part of our Fair Play on Women's Pay campaign is also to improve the quality of careers advice for girls and young women. The Government has cut funding for careers guidance for the young by nearly 16% since the start of the decade. The advice that girls get is still woefully inadequate and many women are never directed towards or even informed about professions that are higher paid and seen as the preserve of men, even though they require skills that both sexes possess. The Conservative Party is committed to redirecting funds currently used on administration and inadequate careers advice, providing £180 million to fund a careers adviser in every secondary school and college in the country. We will also spend £100 million to create a new all-age careers advice service which will provide a community-based source of advice and guidance for people of all ages. As well as face-to-face guidance, we will invest £5 million in a new web-based skills matching service, revolutionising people's ability to access information on jobs, training and apprenticeships.

Equality and Human Rights

How will you strengthen our equality legislation to ensure it makes a real difference for women?

The first step is to ensure that the Equality Bill actually passes before the election is called, and we are hopeful that it will. Although we have some concerns about specific aspects of the Bill, we have broadly welcomed it. It is essential that consolidating the equality duties makes it easier for public bodies to adhere to them. It is also essential that public bodies correctly interpret the single equality duty and that there are no unforeseen consequences. For example, we have been concerned that the existing Gender Equality Duty has in fact damaged some of the women-only services that domestic violence victims rely on, and we will issue clear guidance to local authorities to ensure that this is no longer the case. In the longer term we will of course monitor whether any further legislation is necessary.

How will you protect and progress women's human rights in the UK and internationally?

This year the UK celebrates the 30th anniversary of CEDAW – an international treaty which commits the signatories to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women both at home and abroad. Since we signed up to CEDAW we have seen significant progress but despite passing a raft of legislation the progress under this Labour Government has been slow and we are now failing on our CEDAW commitments.

The Conservative Party is fully committed to making progress on both CEDAW and the Millennium Development Goals which promote specific activities to enshrine the rights of women and girls, including in the areas of girls' education, maternal mortality and reproductive health. Sadly progress on the Millennium Development Goals and the 'Education for All' has stalled, and many countries missed the 2005 Millennium Development Goal target to get as many girls as boys into primary and secondary education. This is why David Cameron has reaffirmed our commitment to meet the internationally agreed goal of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income spent on aid by 2013. We need to start making progress on these issues. This is a moral obligation – a priority, not an afterthought. Ensuring equal participation of women across all spheres of society is crucial to economic growth and development. We believe that using women as recipients of aid is an important way of improving development and ensuring equality.

We will replace Labour's Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. This would set out people's rights clearly, would enable those rights to be protected in British courts, and would strengthen our hand in the fight against crime. It would be home-grown and sensitive to Britain's legal inheritance, enabling people to feel they have ownership of their rights.

Labour's Responses

The Economy

How will the policies you propose on tax and benefits impact on women's incomes and wider economic position?

Since 1997, Labour's tax and benefit changes have meant that in 2010/11, households with children will be on average £2,200 a year better off, while households with children in the poorest fifth of the population will be on average £5,000 a year better off.

The introduction of tax credits in 1999 has extended financial support to many more families, including, for the first time, those without children – benefitting around six million families and 10 million children. The Child Tax Credit (CTC) has the highest level of take-up of any income-related support, with 81 per cent of eligible families benefitting. Take-up is even higher for lone parents and households with incomes below £10,000.

Because we believe that work is the best route out of poverty and to support our commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020, we have made sure that work pays. Part of this is the introduction of an in-work credit for lone parents. Coupled with our other financial support, this means that a lone parent with two children is likely to have at least £119 a week (incl. £40 in-work credit per week) more income when working at least 16 hours compared to not working.

A fair deal for all and a decent retirement for all are at the heart of Labour's values of fairness and dignity for everyone. The pension system has long been unfair for women who are more likely than men to take a break from work to bring up a family or for care of older relatives. We are making radical reforms to the pension system which will help to close the gap in pension entitlements between men and women, deliver fair outcomes for women and carers and significantly improve women's State Pension coverage. Our reforms mean a reduction in the number of years of work, and of national insurance contributions needed to qualify for a full state pension on retirement from 44 for men and 39 for women to 30 for all. We will remove the current minimum contribution conditions meaning that carers can qualify for a full basic state pension in their own right without any record of employment. This will vastly improve outcomes for women who are more likely to take time out from work and from National Insurance contributions - around three quarters of women reaching state pension age in 2010/11 will be entitled to a full basic State Pension compared to around 35% now. This will rise to over 90% by 2025.

For the first time paid and credited contributions for caring will be recognised equally for basic State Pension and State Second Pension purposes, meaning women will no longer have to rely on their husbands' (or civil partners') contributions. This will give women greater reassurance about their future security.

How will you ensure that any cuts on public spending do not impact disproportionately on women – especially the most vulnerable?

Labour made the choice to invest through the recession to support the economy. This action helped protect savers when the banks faced collapse, and protected jobs, homeowners and businesses.

We targeted support at families, bringing forward increases in child benefit and child tax credits, at pensioners, increasing the state pension and the winter fuel payment, and at businesses, deferring tax payments and increasing investment allowances.

The action we took together is working - Britain is coming out of recession. Now we must build our economic future, using the potential of all British people, not just the few. It would be a huge mistake to cut support while the economy is still recovering. Immediate cuts in spending – as the Tories advocate - would choke off recovery – leading to a decade of low growth and austerity.

We will continue supporting families and businesses, strengthening the recovery and promoting jobs. When growth is secured we will halve the deficit over four years and we will do it fairly. At all times, we will be guided by our values: prioritising ordinary families and businesses, and the public services which they rely on. We will ensure that those who are most able to bear the burden make the greatest contribution with a new 50p top rate for those who earn over £150,000.

How will you ensure that women's contribution to our economy – both paid and unpaid - is properly supported and valued?

We introduced the National Minimum Wage and Tax Credits, helping women out of poverty by making work pay. We will build on this through the measures we are taking as part of the Women's Employment Strategy and the Equality Bill. And we want to see women's enormous contribution to business life both recognised and expanded. We are already backing women entrepreneurs through, for example

- Providing easy access to advice and support through the business link network and website.
- The continued implementation of the aspire fund, which has now made a number of investments – £12.5m fund launched in November 2008 with the aim of securing a total of £25m of investment. The fund provides equity funding and increased networking support for women-led businesses.
- BIS working with the British Business Angels Association (bbaa) to address the low number of women led businesses receiving business angel investment and ways of increasing the number of women who are business angel investors.

We have also helped women and carers doing unpaid but vitally important work to build up a State Pension in retirement by reducing the number of qualifying years, abolishing the need for initial contributions and introducing new weekly national insurance credits.

Democracy and Political Reform

How will you increase the number and diversity of women in parliament and government at the national and local levels?

Throughout the post war era Labour is proud to have led the way on gender equality, fighting for a fair deal for women in the workplace, in the home and in society as a whole. Labour's Equality Bill – opposed by the Tories - will extend the permission to use women-only shortlists for parliamentary selections to 2030. Thanks in part to our use of all-women Shortlists for parliamentary selections in the past we lead the way on women's representation with more than three times as many women MPs as all the opposition parties combined.

What will you do to ensure the voices of women are heard and acted upon by decision makers?

Labour will use the new Equality Bill to introduce specific provisions to allow for positive action measures to redress under-representation in all areas of politics and public life, specifically in the Westminster and European Parliaments, other assemblies and public bodies

In order for women to be able to participate in local decision-making, they need transparent information about how local services are managed and the different ways in which all parts of the community can input. Some women also need support and encouragement to have the confidence to speak up and get involved, or to overcome barriers that they face. 18 Take Part local pathfinders are running learning programmes that build skills and confidence, as well as community leadership programmes that offer tailored support into civic activism and/ or lay governance roles. They offer information to participants about the availability of opportunities for influence and lay governance roles across the public sector in the locality; and access to accreditation for citizenship learning and skills development.

How will you support a vibrant and sustainable women's voluntary and community sector?

We recognise the importance of the role the third sector plays in helping to deliver our mutual aims. The importance of developing an active and vibrant democracy is self evident and we will continue to support and encourage the growth of a healthy and vibrant third sector in helping to make our society more just and fair.

The Office of the Third Sector works with the Women's Resources Centre, a membership based NGO, to ensure that the views of the women's voluntary sector are heard. We are taking forward work that will address the long term sustainability of the women's sector, focusing on those agencies which support victims of violence against women. However, a number of other work areas such as the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning and funds such as grassroot grants will also be of relevance to the women's sector, helping to address some of the challenges that they are facing.

Work and Family

How will you ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value?

Despite almost forty years of equal pay legislation, the gender pay gap in Britain is still too wide. Labour's Equality Bill contains several measures to reduce the gender pay gap. In the private sector the Bill will introduce compulsory gender pay gap reporting for businesses in 2013 should there not be sufficient voluntary progress by then. It includes powers for Ministers to require public authorities to report on equality issues, including their gender pay gap. It will also ban secrecy or 'gagging' clauses which stop employees discussing their pay with colleagues.

How will you improve the availability, quality and pay of part-time work?

Women are particularly disadvantaged by lower pay in part-time work. This is why we are developing a major programme of work to promote quality part time and flexible working, looking at it from both the employer and employee angle. This will include:

- a free online training course which would be made accessible to all employers
- work with training providers to help ensure their management training courses cover key part-time work issues including job design
- a business mentoring 'twinning' scheme on part time working which would allow companies to share best practice in this area with other businesses

The National Minimum Wage – two thirds of the beneficiaries of which are women - has increased year on year, providing a floor below which no one is legally allowed to fall and playing a substantial part in narrowing the pay gap. Building on the achievement of the National Minimum Wage, we are significantly strengthening its enforcement. We have already outlawed the use of tips to make up workers' national minimum wage and we will continue to fund enforcement to crack down on rogue employers who underpay staff. We have introduced a fairer method for dealing with National Minimum Wage arrears, calculated so that workers do not lose out as a result of underpayment.

How will you support women who are also parents or carers to balance work and family life?

We believe that the right to choose a lifestyle and a way of life is as important for women in the 21st century as it has ever been – and that breaking down the barriers and discrimination that can prevent women having this choice is at the heart of what a Labour government can offer women in Britain.

We have championed parental leave, flexible working for parents and greater childcare provision and we will go further as we work to make life easier for Britain's parents. We have introduced extended schools and are on track to open a Sure Start children's centre for every community by this year, and we are expanding free nursery provision to three and four year olds making 15 hours available to 15 hours from 12.5 hours this year and we are rolling out free childcare to two year olds so that more than 60,000 will benefit every year by 2012.

Crime and Justice

What will you do to end violence against women?

We have strengthened the law through the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004, and improved how the police, prosecutors and courts handle domestic violence cases. As a result, there has been a 64% reduction in the number of incidents of domestic violence in England and Wales since 1997. Our success rate on domestic violence prosecutions has increased by 12.5%, from 59.7% in 2005/06 to 72.2% in 2008/09 and there was a 54% increase in the number of convictions for rape from 2000 to 2008.

But we recognise that there is still more to do. Our new cross-governmental strategy is placing a renewed focus on stopping violence before it starts through education and public campaigns in order to change attitudes and make it clear beyond any doubt that any form of violence against women is unacceptable. From 2011, gender equality and preventing violence in relationships will be taught in schools and we are ensuring teachers have the skills and experience to tackle these issues effectively where they recognise that a student may be affected. We are expanding Family Intervention Projects which work with the most troubled families on issues including violence in the home and are already helping to significantly improve the lives of vulnerable families, including reducing incidences of domestic violence.

We are introducing new 'Go' orders giving police and courts the power to exclude domestic violence perpetrators from victims' homes for up to 28 days to give victims a breathing space to apply for longer term protection, to feel safe in their own homes and to not have to seek refuge elsewhere. Specialist Domestic Violence Courts are successfully working to better protect and support victims, prevent further violence and bring more offenders to justice. And we will extend the network of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers who give professional support and advice to victims to help them move safely towards living violence free lives and continue to support the national domestic violence helpline that provides free counselling and advice.

To continue to help support victims of sexual violence we will ensure there is a Sexual Assault Referral Centre in every police force area in England & Wales by 2011. There are currently 28 such centres; when we came in to office there were none.

The conviction rate for rape cases when a case gets to court are at their highest for 10 years but the fact is conviction rates are far too low and Labour is determined to drive them up to gain justice for the victims of this horrendous crime. To better support the victims of these devastating crimes we are conducting a review into how we can encourage increased reporting, improve the handling of rape complaints, better support the victims as well as increasing the conviction rate. Labour will build on our work to better provide for the needs of victims and to give them a stronger voice in the justice system. The new National Victims' Service will make sure that for the first time, every victim of crime reported to the police will get 7 day a week help, and will be given a named, dedicated support worker to give them emotional and practical support - for example with security or childcare. To help the most vulnerable victims we have launched a pilot project to help victims of domestic violence who have entered the UK on a spouse/partner visa and have no recourse to public funds and we will continue to provide support for victims of human trafficking.

Labour is giving the police the tools they need to fight crime. CCTV and the DNA database play a vital role in helping to protect the public and tackling the fear of crime. The Conservatives have campaigned against CCTV and their proposals to restrict the use of DNA evidence would seriously weaken the ability to investigate and convict criminals, including suspected murderers and rapists - putting the public at greater risk.

How will you reduce the number of women being sent to prison?

The Corston Review highlighted particular issues with regard to women in the criminal justice system. We aim to reduce the number of women coming through the criminal justice system and to ensure that the needs of women who are found guilty of an offence can be met in the community, wherever possible, rather than prison. We also aim to ensure that women who are sentenced to custody have appropriate facilities that properly meet their needs in prison.

How will you ensure that the people who run our criminal justice system represent the population of the UK?

Labour believes in diversity of representation in all sectors of public life and we have taken measures needed to work towards equal representation of men and women in public office. The Equality Bill will introduce specific provisions to allow for positive action measures to redress under-representation in all areas of politics and public life.

Labour is committed to delivering a criminal justice system which promotes equality, does not discriminate against anyone because of their race, and has a workforce which fairly represents the communities it serves. We are committed to increasing the diversity of the judiciary in courts and tribunals at all levels, whilst ensuring appointments are made on merit. A more diverse judiciary with increased understanding of the communities it serves will contribute to increased public confidence in the justice system. Encouraging applications from as wide a range of candidates as possible, with the right skills and abilities, will ensure a judiciary of the highest possible calibre.

Attitudes, Media and Culture

How will you encourage media and cultural institutions to tackle gender stereotypes and project positive images of women?

Dr Linda Papadopoulos' independent review of the sexualisation of young people was published recently. Early findings informed the Government's strategy including proposed changes to personal social, health and economic (PSHE) education in schools and the Government's media campaign targeting violence within teenagers' relationships. The Prime Minister has accepted two of the recommendations:

- To work with the NSPCC as it makes manufacturers and retailers take far greater responsibility for merchandise which is quite frankly often offensive and harmful and;
- The creation of a one-stop shop website for parents to raise concerns about sexualisation

How will you address damaging representations of women in internet, print and web media?

As above.

What will you do to ensure education plays its part in educating young people about gender equality and tackling negative stereotypes and beliefs about women and men and amongst boys and girls? From 2011, gender equality and preventing violence in relationships will be taught in schools and we are ensuring teachers have the skills and experience to tackle these issues effectively where they recognise that a student may be affected. We are expanding Family Intervention Projects which work with the most troubled families on issues including violence in the home and are already helping to significantly improve the lives of vulnerable families, including reducing incidences of domestic violence.

Equality and Human Rights

How will you strengthen our equality legislation to ensure it makes a real difference for women?

Over the last 30 years the pattern of equality legislation is clear. Labour governments from 1965 to 1979 championed the equality agenda and created a framework for individual rights by introducing laws on race, equal pay and sex discrimination – all opposed by the Tories. This progress came to a sudden halt when the Tories came into government in 1979 and remained until Labour once again came into government in 1997.

Labour's Equality Bill – opposed by the Tories – will make life fairer for women by bringing in compulsory gender pay gap reporting for businesses in 2013 if there is not sufficient voluntary progress by then. It will allow the use of public procurement to improve equality by insisting on a diverse workforce as part of a contract or on recruitment practices which help ensure diversity for contractors. Women are often the primary carers in a family and we will protect their rights not to be discriminated as a result of their caring responsibilities and we will also make sure that breastfeeding mothers are protected from discrimination.

We will also extend the use of positive action in the workplace so that employers can choose to make their workforce more diverse when selecting between two job candidates who are equally suitable. So that people's rights are more easily secured we will extend the power of employment tribunals so that they can make decisions which affect a whole workforce not just the individual who brought the case.

The Equality Bill will also extend the permission to use women-only shortlists for parliamentary selections to 2030 and thanks in part to our use of all-women shortlists for parliamentary selections in the past we lead the way on women's representation with more than three times as many women MPs as all the opposition parties combined. How will you protect and progress women's human rights in the UK and internationally?

Labour is strongly committed to progressing women's rights and gender equality, both domestically and internationally. It was under a Labour Government that the UK became a founding member of the Council of Europe, which produced the European Convention on Human Rights and it was this Labour Government that ensured, through the Human Rights Act (HRA), that the rights contained in the Convention became directly enforceable in UK courts. We remain committed to the HRA and we will look at how we go further to enshrine and protect rights, including developing plans for a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities to build on the HRA - actively promoting the message that rights come with responsibilities.

The UK is fully supportive of the new UN Women's Agency to deliver real change to women and girls across the world. We will work tirelessly with international partners to help make the agency a reality as soon as possible and the Prime Minister recently appointed Glenys Kinnock as the first ever minister with responsibility for tackling international violence against women.

At the EU level, Harriet Harman co-hosted the 2nd 'EU women in power' summit in Cadiz on 3 February. The main theme of the event was women's political and economic decision making. The summit brought an unprecedented number of 25 EU women ministers from 17 member states.

The Liberal Democrats' Responses

The Economy

How will the policies you propose on tax and benefits impact on women's incomes and wider economic position?

Liberal Democrats will raise the threshold at which people start to pay tax so the first £10,000 you earn is tax free, paid for by closing loopholes that benefit those at the top and increasing aviation taxes. That policy will put £700 back in the pockets of tens of millions of people and lift 3.6 million people out of tax altogether; a majority of these will be women, since women are more likely to work part-time and to be employed in lower paid work. It's a scandal that city bankers can at present declare part of their income as capital gains, and pay a much lower rate of tax than their cleaner does on his or her wages. We know our country treats people in a completely topsy-turvy way when six figure share bonuses get taxed at 18% while six pound an hour jobs are taxed at more like 30%

How will you ensure that any cuts on public spending do not impact disproportionately on women – especially the most vulnerable?

Reducing the budget deficit is an enormous challenge, but we have to put fairness first when we do it. So we've chosen cuts that will make Britain more, not less fair. Take our policy on public sector pay restraint – we are proposing a £400 cap on pay rises, meaning those who work for the lowest wages will be entitled to the highest percentage increases. That will really help those millions of women who work for lower incomes in the public sector.

We also want to tackle the deficit by ending wasteful or unnecessary projects like Identity Cards, the ContactPoint database for children, and by ruling out like-for-like replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system. Trident is a cold war relic that is no longer the best way to protect our safety, and at £100bn it is a relic we simply can't afford. Overall we've identified £15bn of savings that can be made by 2012, but we are so determined to enshrine fairness in our society that we will not put

every penny we can save into deficit reduction. We will use one third of that money for alternate spending to hardwire fairness. We propose a pupil premium, worth £2.5bn a year for our schools, for example, targeted at helping children from the most deprived backgrounds, but making it possible for schools to cut class sizes and increase one-to-one tuition to the benefit of everyone.

How will you ensure that women's contribution to our economy – both paid and unpaid - is properly supported and valued?

Our tax plans would make a real difference to many working women, with up to £700 back in their pockets. We would also made pay audits for all but the smallest companies mandatory to stamp out pay discrimination. And because there will never be equality at work while there is inequality at home, and women are the ones who take the lion's share of parental leave, we will make maternity and paternity leave completely interchangeable. Over time we'd like to see that increased to 18 months, but with six months attached to each parent that they can't transfer, to help encourage shared parenting. Another really important contribution made, very often by women, is as carers. They are a hidden army of heroes; it would cost untold billions – the estimates are about £87 billion – for the state to find employees to do their work, and they could never provide the same standard of care. That's why we're determined that we should provide a guaranteed period of respite to carers every year, recognising the work they do and providing a real – if modest – benefit in return. Democracy and Political Reform

How will you increase the number and diversity of women in parliament and government at the national and local levels?

We need to rebuild our political system from top-to-toe, starting with the voting system used at every level of election. It's been shown that more proportional systems tend to elect much more diverse people. But until we can make that change, we will fight to get more women elected with the system we've got. We've looked in detail at the selections held in the Lib Dems and half of the selections where a woman has actually put herself forward, she's been selected. So it seems the problem – for the Lib Dems at least – is getting women to put themselves forward. Young mums in particular feel they just don't have time to campaign, and we need to be more flexible in how we offer them support. We've been fighting for a crèche in Parliament for ages – finally it's happening, but there should be that kind of support, and formal maternity leave, for elected people at all levels.

What will you do to ensure the voices of women are heard and acted upon by decision makers?

By diversifying our Parliament and every local authority, and making sure that young women growing up in Britain today see a political system they want to be a part of, and which they see as an accessible, constructive mechanism for getting things done. It's no wonder so few women feel able to influence the way our country is run when most of what they see of those in power is the risible, pointless, macho braying of Prime Minister's Questions. Debates in Council chambers aren't much better. Our radical reform of the political system would change all that for good.

How will you support a vibrant and sustainable women's voluntary and community sector?

The voluntary sector has a lot to offer our country in supporting vulnerable people in our country, yet it's very often the first thing to get cut back when local authorities have to look for spending cuts. Because Liberal Democrats would hand so much power and money back from Whitehall to local councils – and work towards a fair local income tax, so authorities can raise revenue fairly and accountably – we would end that trend. If councils were able to respond to pressure from their communities to fund particular groups, rather than to pressure from Ministers to cut funding to all groups, I'm confident that women's organisations would benefit financially, and they would get a stronger voice on decision-making bodies like Local Strategic Partnerships.

Work and Family Life

How will you ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value?

It's a scandal that women are paid 16.4% less than men for full-time work, and the disparities are worse still for part-time work, at some 35%. Liberal Democrats would introduce equal pay audits for all but the smallest companies, to identify where women are paid less for equal work and insist that the disparities are addressed. Our shared parental leave policy will also make a difference, ensuring people of both sexes take time out from work for children so employers don't discriminate against women of child-bearing age.

How will you improve the availability, quality and pay of part-time work?

There needs to be more of a drive for job-sharing; we'd like to see job-sharing at ministerial level to provide leadership and show quite how practical an arrangement jobshares can be. For too long the concept of flexible working has been seen as a sort of get-out clause from 'real' work, and 'real' jobs. An escape hatch for parents, and primarily for women. I think life is about more than just work – that spending time with your children and making time for ageing parents is just as valid and important a part of life – so we would extend the right to request flexible working to everyone. The more people who are entitled to new working arrangements, the more higher-quality, better-paid, part-time work there will be.

How will you support women who are also parents or carers to balance work and family life?

Over time, we hope to extend the total shared parental leave to 19 months, and introduce 20 hours of free childcare from the moment that leave comes to an end, offering seamless support for parents. And it is time to recognise that there is a hidden army of carers in Britain, without whom no social care policy would be even remotely affordable. They put in hour after hour, day after day, week after week of care for their relatives and loved ones. We would give them a guaranteed period of respite, with a budget to spend as they wished to take one break or a series of breaks, for example: to get someone to take over caring for several weekends while the carer takes a break, or payment towards the cost of the person you care for going away leaving you to take a break at home. You could arrange for someone to look after the person you care for at home while you go away or use the money to pay for a holiday for you both together.

Crime and Justice

What will you do to end violence against women?

Domestic violence has risen substantially in the last few years – up one third between 2005 and 2009 – but fewer than one in fifteen incidents results in a conviction in court. That must change. Police forces should be prepared to bring charges even without a formal complaint from the victim, who is often the only witness. Medical evidence can be enough to secure a conviction – but the authorities must have the resolve to pursue these cases. Meanwhile, Britain has the worst conviction rates for rape in the whole of Europe and a smaller percentage of rapists are being put behind bars than a decade ago. We urgently need more Rape Crisis Centres, more forensic nurses, and more specialised police and prosecutors to bring rapists to justice.

One other small thing that would make a difference in terms of stranger violence: I've always thought you should be able to get night buses to let you off between stops to reduce the distance you have to walk to get home late at night. Far too many women are attacked getting home, and those last few hundred yards can be terrifying.

How will you reduce the number of women being sent to prison?

A record number of women are being sent to prison last year yet there is no evidence of a corresponding rise in women committing more serious crimes. The rise in older women, including pensioners, being put behind bars is particularly alarming. And about two-thirds of women in prison are there for non-violent offences. We would reform the justice system fundamentally to end the absurdity of sending drug addicts and the mentally ill to prison – it's not the place for them. Leaving children abandoned by locking up their mothers is one of the best ways of creating a new generation of offenders, so we should avoid sending women to prison except where it is absolutely necessary to protect the public.

How will you ensure that the people who run our criminal justice system represent the population of the UK?

In much the same way as we'll get more women into top jobs elsewhere. We have to show that these are jobs for women – that there should never be a choice between a successful career and bringing up children. If we live in a country where flexible and part-time working is the norm – where work is at least sometimes made to fit round life, rather than the other way round – we'll see a step change in the number of women who get into the jobs which have for far too long been the near exclusive province of men.

Attitudes, Media and Culture

How will you encourage media and cultural institutions to tackle gender stereotypes and project positive images of women?

There is clearly disparity in the coverage – women are often there as victims, but so not so often there as high-flyers. But the media reflects the society it reports. By making the changes to the political and judicial system, and by removing glass ceilings so that more women are high-flyers in the work place, women in the news are much less likely to be victims, and much more likely to be role models.

How will you address damaging representations of women in internet, print and web media?

Some adverts are ridiculous. The models have been airbrushed so much that their appearance in the photo is a complete misrepresentation of how that woman looks, and of what the product she is promoting can do. And it's a huge worry that with this unrealistic ideal of beauty, we foster body image problems and serious eating disorders, especially in young girls. It all starts at an terrifyingly young age. The research shows that girls aged 5½ to 7½ report say they like their bodies less and that they want a thinner body once they've been exposed to images of thin dolls. Girls who saw images of dolls with a healthy body size or no dolls at all had a much better view of themselves. It's very striking, and it means we absolutely must promote real – not doctored – images of real women. As a first step, Liberal Democrats would force advertisers to state clearly whether they've used airbrushing, and it should be banned completely for adverts aimed at children and young teens.

What will you do to ensure education plays its part in educating young people about gender equality and tackling negative stereotypes and beliefs about women and men and amongst boys and girls?

It's partly about the world around children as they grow up. You can have reams of policy about what should be taught in Personal and Social Education classes but if the top jobs seem to be the preserve of white men, and early years parenting the preserve of mothers, you're unlikely to break the stereotypes in children's minds. After all, if there's one thing we know about children it's that they're incredibly perceptive. Schools should think about how they present their curriculum, and they should encourage everyone to take up and develop in the skills and subjects they enjoy and are good at, rather than the ones that the people who look and sound like them undertake.

Equality and Human Rights

How will you strengthen our equality legislation to ensure it makes a real difference for women?

The Equality Bill – hopefully soon to be Act – going through Parliament at the moment is a big step forward, bringing equality legislation on gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation – you name it – all under one roof. But it's also a missed opportunity, for example, to introduce Equal Pay Audits, to make sure that men and women get an equal pay for equal work.

How will you protect and progress women's human rights in the UK and internationally?

We're pressing the government to prioritise Millennium Development Goal numbers four and five – promoting child and maternal health – when the MDG review summit comes along in September. That means real investment in education about family planning, promoting choice for women in every part of the world, and making it a priority to eliminate avoidable diseases. It costs just a pound, for example, to vaccinate five children against Polio, yet if we don't get those vaccinations to those who need them more than ten million children will be paralysed by the disease in the next forty years. Developed countries have a duty to stop that happening, which is just one of the reasons we've said that the government should get on with enshrining in law the agreed target of raising international development spending to 0.7% of GDP.

As for human rights at home, our records show us to be staunch defenders of the Human Rights Act – which protects everyone in our country, and has brought human rights home from Brussels to our courts. The Conservatives are threatening to unpick it – but we will never play fast and loose with hard-won human rights.

To view the responses submitted by the Green Party, the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru, please go to: www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/whataboutwomen
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How will you ensure that any cuts on public spending do not impact disproportionately on women – especially the most vulnerable?

What will you do to end violence against women?

How will you protect and progress women's human rights in the UK and internationally?

How will you encourage media and cultural institutions to tackle gender stereotypes and project positive images of women?

How will you increase the number and diversity of women in parliament and government at the national and local levels?

How will you ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value?