

NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S MANIFESTO



WOMEN'S POLICY GROUP
GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2019

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Introduction:

The Women's Policy Group is comprised of a wide range of women's organisations, NGOs, individuals and trade unions working for a society where women and girls can fully realise their rights. This feminist manifesto sets out measures on a number of important gender equality issues that, with political will, can be taken forward over the next Westminster term.

It is crucial that women's issues and gender equality are at the core of any future UK Government, especially as the collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly is approaching three years, and MPs have already begun to implement legislation to advance human rights in Northern Ireland. Women's rights are human rights and human rights are not devolved. In addition, the UK is also bound by its international obligations, in particular CEDAW. The Concluding Observations of the CEDAW examination in early 2019 set a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening gender equality, and implementing these recommendations in full is vital in particular to ensure that women in Northern Ireland can enjoy the same rights and protections as women elsewhere in the UK.

It is essential to improve the overall framework for gender equality, including stronger measures in Northern Ireland's Programme for Government to ensure implementation across all policy and budgeting; a dedicated Gender Equality Strategy along with significant resources and support to public bodies promoting and mainstreaming gender equality; continued protection and advancement of women's rights in line with EU and international standards; and women's equal participation and leadership in measures for peacebuilding, legacy, transitional justice, reconstruction and governance in Northern Ireland.

The issues raised reflect the diversity of women in Northern Ireland across age, social class, life experience, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, disability and political or religious belief.

Economic Justice Pillar:

Women's Employment and Gender Pay Gap:

Women's employment in Northern Ireland is characterised by gender segregated labour-markets, gender gaps in pay, higher levels of part-time work and a high concentration in low paying and precarious sectors such as caring, cleaning and the service/hospitality industry. The interruption of women's employment for unpaid care work continues to significantly undermine women's career progression and lifetime earnings, including pension provision. The current parental leave and flexible working framework is inadequate and this, together with the lack of support for childcare, penalises working parents in general and women in particular.

Discrimination on the grounds of sex is still prevalent, on average more than a fifth of complaints of discrimination received by the Equality Commission are about sex discrimination, of these 21.5% are to do with pregnancy or maternity.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Address the barriers to women's participation in employment, particularly for those who are the most disadvantaged including the provision of accessible, affordable childcare, education and training and transport (particularly for rural women).
- Address the 'motherhood gap' whereby working mothers are over represented in part-time and temporary employment. Having one or more children reduces women's likelihood of being in a permanent full time job by almost one third, with only 45% of women with dependent children working in a permanent full time job.

- Introduce a framework of enhanced rights to flexible working and parental leave which is reserved for both parents and which is properly remunerated. Both rights should be available from day one of employment.
- Ensure that legislation to require mandatory pay and bonus reporting is enacted without delay. Ensure that a robust Gender Pay and Action plan is also developed, implemented and monitored.
- Introduce the Real Living Wage for all
- Address gender related harassment at work by ratifying the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.
- Address gendered stereotypes of how “women’s work” is valued and how young people are directed to different paths, with girls often being directed to low-income work.

Women, Poverty and Austerity:

Systemic issues often see women twice as dependent on social security as men with welfare reform and the wider austerity agenda having a disproportionate impact on women’s access to resources, security and safety. In addition, hunger and foodbank use disproportionately affects women; as women are twice as likely to be food insecure as men and single mothers are a third of all foodbank users. In total, it is estimated that austerity since 2010 will have cost women a total of £79bn, against £13bn for men. It shows that, by 2020, men will have borne just 14% of the total burden of welfare cuts, compared with 86% for women. Furthermore, the group with the highest poverty throughout the last decade and worst impacted by welfare reform have been lone parents in Northern Ireland; of which 91% are women.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Create a gender impact assessment of Universal Credit to assess the disproportionate impact on women; including the relationship between Universal Credit and increased domestic violence.
- Protect those most impacted by welfare reform and austerity and provide tailored advice and support to ensure maximum uptake.
- Abide by CEDAW recommendations to abolish the two-child cap on child tax credits.
- Implement and adopt a strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation on the basis of objective need; with a particular focus being placed on disabled women, lone parents and single women pensioners.
- Strengthen gender equality of outcomes across all public expenditure and government departments by progressing towards gender responsive budgeting.
- Promote equality in procurement including that linked to the reduction in corporation tax and how this impacts on women.
- Create appropriate measures to effectively tackle wide-spread discrimination based on pregnancy or maternity.
- Protect and provide financial guidance and support as women approach retirement, particularly as the age of qualification for state pensions rises.

Childcare:

Access to free, high quality childcare provision, which meets the diverse needs of children, remains of fundamental importance in facilitating women’s participation in the labour market, education and training and progressing gender equality in paid and unpaid work.

We call upon elected representatives to expressly recognise the value of childcare in supporting women by:

- Investing adequately, based on an informed assessment of realistic needs, to deliver a high quality childcare infrastructure that is affordable for all to access, and providers to deliver.
- Fully implementing the CEDAW recommendations, noting the particular reference to Northern Ireland where we call on the Government to introduce a fully costed Childcare Strategy, underpinned by legislation, that meets the needs of children, parents, childcare providers and benefits the local economy.
- Ensuring all parents and childcare providers are accessing the financial help they are entitled to.
- Promoting family friendly policies and practices across all sectors to reduce barriers to women accessing and progressing in the workforce.

Rural Women:

Rural women in Northern Ireland today are still economically, culturally and politically unequal; this is amplified due to Access Poverty. The accessibility of; education, training, work and childcare provision and the cost and availability of public transport are factors in determining women’s participation; particularly in rural areas. Women in NI remain under represented in public and political life and rural women’s participation is further hindered by geography and distance from decision making spaces. Even within the wider women’s sector rural women still need a stronger voice and support; as only 1.3% of government funding for women’s groups goes towards rural women. The rationalisation and centralisation of services in recent years in NI has had a negative impact on rural areas in terms of ease of access to services but also by exacerbating social isolation; with long term impacts on rural community infrastructure and sustainability of the area.

Caring responsibilities often isolate women, particularly those in rural areas who may become excluded from fully participating in social, economic and community-based activities. Flexible, affordable, accessible quality childcare is very difficult to find in rural areas. Distance from work means rural women’s childcare needs to start earlier and end later, up to two hours a day more than their urban counterparts. This can make childcare unaffordable and work/life balance unrealistic. In an increasingly aging population it is falling to family members, in particular, women to care for their ageing family members this often inhibits: rural women’s participation; financial and employment security and has an impact on their mental health and well-being; they require more support than is currently available to them.

We call upon elected representatives to expressly recognise the value of rural women by:

- Ensuring the inequity of Government resourcing does not continue.
- Assessing proposed future budgets for rural impacts.
- Acknowledging and redressing the historic underinvestment in rural women.
- Assessing rationalisation and centralisation of services for rural impact in a cross departmental and regional context to ensure more than one service is not moved from a rural area.
- Introducing energetic, time bound progress to developing actions to go alongside a Childcare Strategy for NI which takes account of particular rural needs.
- Dedicated cross cutting support for those providing elder care to family members.

Social Justice Pillar:

Violence against Women:

In 2018-19 the PSNI recorded 31,682 domestic abuse incidents, this increased 10% on the previous year and is the highest level in 15 years. There were 16,182 recorded domestic abuse crimes. On

average the PSNI responded to a domestic abuse incident every 17 minutes, while domestic abuse accounted for 16% of all crime. In the same period the PSNI recorded 2,423 sexual offences and 1,023 reports of rape. Northern Ireland was identified as having the joint highest levels of femicide in Europe in 2017, with 8 women murdered in a homicide with a domestic motivation. In 2018-19 the PSNI recorded 4 murders with a domestic motivation, all of those murdered were women. Despite these figures, domestic and sexual violence continue to be under-reported and prosecutions remain low and, as noted by CEDAW, Domestic Abuse Legislation in Northern Ireland remains inadequate. To effectively tackle violence against women, coordinated action from government is required, including preventative measures, early intervention and protection, victim-centred justice and addressing the lack of services and barriers faced by women who experience multiple inequalities such as disabled, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women.

We call on all elected representatives to:

- Commit to preserve vital Women's Aid refuges, floating support/outreach and children's support services for women and children affected by domestic and sexual violence.
- Introduce Women's Aid Justice Support Workers in all police districts to provide tailored support for domestic violence victims throughout the criminal justice process.
- Roll out the non-court mandated perpetrator programme in all Trust areas on a permanent basis, to tackle the abusive behaviours of domestic violence perpetrators.
- Introduce Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process to advocate for and support high-risk victims of domestic violence.
- Establish an independently constituted inquiry on sexual and domestic violence during the conflict in Northern Ireland to give a voice to those who suffered this abuse.
- Ensure that legislation in Northern Ireland are on an equal footing with protections elsewhere in the UK and that there is robust and up-to-date legislation to tackle the Violence Against Women and Girls; including stalking, upskirting, FGM and honour based violence.
- Ensure that the Domestic Abuse Bill due to be debated in Westminster includes Northern Ireland and is sensitive to the particular circumstances here; through the creation of a domestic abuse commissioner, domestic abuse protection orders and notices alongside secure tenancies.

Reproductive Healthcare:

The availability and access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services are crucial to women's health and well-being. We believe that free, non-directive sexual and reproductive healthcare should be made available to all women who wish to avail of it.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Ensure Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is standardised, starts early, is relevant to pupils at each stage of their development and maturity and is taught by people who are trained and confident in talking about the course content, in line with CEDAW recommendations.
- Set up an unrestricted fund specifically for organisations who offer contraception and non-directive information.
- Extend sexual and reproductive healthcare services across Northern Ireland to ensure equal access for all women, particularly those in rural areas.

- Ensure there are free, safe, legal and local abortion services for everyone who wants or needs them, through the introduction of regulations in line with the NI Executive Formation etc. Act 2019.
- Ensure there is funded assisted fertility treatment for everyone who wants or needs it, including same sex couples and single women.
- Ensure there is funded perinatal mental health provision.

Education and Training:

The extent to which women feel prepared to participate in education and training depends on a number of factors including childcare, transport and cost. Women’s organisations offer community education which attempts to address these barriers particularly for women from disadvantaged and rural areas. The drive behind the introduction of Welfare Reform was to get more people into work. Women need access to education and training to make the move from benefits to work, yet the Government are not supporting this.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Provide support to women impacted by welfare reform to enable them to be work ready through the provision of supported community-based education and training.
- Establish a fund to address the disproportionate cuts to the women’s sector community education.
- Create targets for apprenticeships to ensure a gender balance.
- Abide by CEDAW recommendations to:
 - Strengthen efforts to encourage girls to pursue non-traditional subjects and take coordinated measures to encourage girls to take up courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
 - Continue to implement the recommendations of the Women and Equalities Committee contained in the report of October 2018 on sexual harassment of women and girls in public places;
 - Take measures to introduce mandatory age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive rights in school curricula, including issues such as gender relations and responsible sexual behaviour, throughout the UK;
 - Promote human rights education in schools which includes a focus on the empowerment of girls and the Convention.

Politics, Public Life, Peacebuilding and Decision Making:

The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement committed to increasing women’s representation in public and political life, yet women remain under-represented in all spheres of political life, at Westminster, in the Stormont Assembly and in local government, as well as in public life and economic decision-making. The fall of the Northern Ireland Executive will likely impact the 2021 target date for reaching gender equality in public appointments. Multiple reports including annual reports of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland, the report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly by the Assembly Executive Review Committee (2015), the Inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security (2014) and repeated CEDAW Committee Concluding Observations, (most recently March 2019), concluded that women’s under-representation in political and public life and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland is a serious matter to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Recognise and act concretely on implementation of specific measures to realise the full spirit and intention of UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW recommendation no.30 to ensure women's effective participation and leadership in conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding processes in Northern Ireland.
- Guarantee women's participation in transitional justice mechanisms envisaged in the draft Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill.
- Implement special temporary measures to advance women's substantive equality.
- Utilise Section 43A of the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 to improve the proportion of women elected to parliamentary institutions through gender quotas.
- Accelerate action to reach gender equal representation in public bodies.
- Address obstacles to participation including:
 - Intimidation and violence by paramilitary groups, as noted by the 2014 inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security;
 - Online abuse of women political and public representatives;
 - Intersectionalities which compound barriers to participation, e.g. BME women, disabled women, rural women, LGBT+ women, younger women, lone parents and those with childcare responsibilities;
 - The rule obliging political candidates to publish their home addresses for elections which threatens the personal safety of Domestic and Sexual Abuse survivors.

Cultural Pillar:

Women and Girls in the Media:

Women and Girls are routinely subjected to sexism in the mainstream media. Sexualised imagery of women and girls across all media platforms is so commonplace that it is widely accepted and is no longer seen as an equality issue. This sexism and misogyny often takes an aggressive form when discussing women with intersecting identities, such as LGBT+ women (particularly trans women, who have been the target of a 'moral panic' in the media for some time now), BME women, disabled women and many others. Sexism in the media and targeted misogyny towards women in positions of leadership or decision-making roles acts as a major barrier to women in putting themselves into positions of leadership; such as becoming an elected representative.

We call upon the elected representatives to:

- Create a task force to monitor and address the issue of gender stereotyping, objectification and sexualisation of women and girls in all media platforms.
- Strengthen protections against incitement to hatred within broadcast and print media against trans communities, in particular trans women and girls.
- Include online abuse and sexism in the media as forms of hate crime under the review of hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland.
- Create an awareness campaign on sexism in the media, the impact this has on women and girls and the legal ramifications of perpetuating it.

Hate Crimes and Online Abuse:

Addressing hate crime and online abuse perpetrated against women has not been a clear priority for either the UK Government or the NI Executive, and it remains a significant issue in our society. With

an ongoing Hate Crime Legislation Review happening in Northern Ireland, it is vital that elected representatives take immediate action to create updated legislation to address the growing crisis of increased hate crimes and online abuse towards minority groups.

With the aim of beginning to address this wide-ranging problem, we call on elected representatives to:

- Develop meaningful strategies to improve reporting of transphobic and misogynistic hate crimes and reduce overall rates of this hate crime.
- Reform hate crime legislation to ensure crimes can be reported across multiple characteristics; for example, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion.
- Develop education and rehabilitation strategies, in collaboration with women's civil society organisations, for increased knowledge of what constitutes a hate crime and to reduce rates of reoffending.
- Establish and sustainably fund community advocates within minority groups' civil society organisations with the aim of improving access to hate crime reporting mechanisms as well as access to justice and rights for these groups.
- Strengthen protections against hate crimes by including gender and gender identity as protected characteristics and include online abuse and incitement to hatred/contempt against women.

Rape Culture:

In order to address Violence against Women and Girls, we must acknowledge the social context which sustains it. Rape culture refers to a complex set of societal beliefs that permits male sexual aggression which supports Violence against Women. Victim blaming, rape myths and a lack of accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence all feed into rape culture.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Ensure that the recommendations identified by the Gillen Review are implemented. Particularly those which recommend education around rape myths across all levels of the justice system, and in wider society.
- Introduce awareness raising programmes, in line with CEDAW General Recommendation 35, in schools which inform and educate individuals on consent, sexual harassment and victim blaming to dismantle the belief that women and girls are responsible for their own safety.
- Ensure that effective measures are taken within the justice system to address high attrition and low conviction rates.
- Ensure that Violence Against Women and Girls is being reported in a responsible manner across media platforms so as to discourage victim blaming and rape myths as laid out in article 17 of the Istanbul Convention.
- Address issues with reporting gender based violence and threats to eradicate practices of victim-blaming, perpetuating myths and suggestions that women's behaviour should change.
- Have gender based violence, threats and abuse included as a protected characteristic in any upcoming Hate Crime Legislation Review in Northern Ireland.

Equality Pillar:

Legislative Framework:

The UK Government is the duty bearer for international human rights obligations. In addition to this, there is a responsibility to abide by the human rights and equality principles set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Incorporate the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) into domestic law and policies, ensuring these are implemented effectively to strengthen protection for women in Northern Ireland.
- Incorporate the full spirit and intention of the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security to address the impact of conflict on women and drive forward the pivotal role of women in conflict resolution and all aspects of building sustainable peace.
- Amend the Section 75 Public Sector Equality Duty to address intersecting forms of discrimination; and consider all international human rights conventions when making policy decisions in order to protect women in all their multiple identities; such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women, older women, disabled women, asylum-seeking and refugee women, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women; as recommended by CEDAW.
- Introduce a Northern Ireland Single Equality Act to strengthen, simplify and harmonise equality law and address gaps in protection between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.
- Introduce a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland; and ensure that there is no diminution in rights if the UK exits the EU by retaining the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and strengthening the constitutional status of the UK Human Rights Act 1998.

Transgender Women:

We believe that transgender women are women, and deserve access to the same human rights and services as all other members of our society. High rates of hate crime, alongside hostility in our political culture and our media, have led to worsening conditions for trans women across the UK. This hostility is rooted in misogyny and patriarchy - addressing it will have benefits for all women, and ensure freedom of expression and identity for all.

We call upon the elected representatives to:

- Reform the Gender Recognition Act to be based on self-declaration of gender and to provide accessible pathways to legal gender change for non-binary individuals and trans people under the age of 18.
- Ensure access to timely transition-related-healthcare interventions for trans women and trans people of all genders.
- Reform gender affirming healthcare provision to depathologise trans identities in line with WHO's ICD11 and the WPATH standards of care, creating a model that works for NI based on global best practice and human rights.
- Undertake a review of trans people's ability to access mainstream healthcare services
- Develop meaningful strategies to tackle rising transphobic hate crime and abuse.
- Ensure the provision of relationships and sexuality education which includes and affirms trans bodies, experiences and identities, while providing useful information on sexual health and wellbeing in every school in Northern Ireland.

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Women:

Due to high levels of invisibility and marginalisation, lesbian and bisexual women and their children face barriers in accessing the most basic goods, facilities and services in everyday life.

We call upon the UK Government to:

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We call upon elected representatives to:

- Introduce civil marriage equality in line with the rest of the United Kingdom by January 2020.
- Introduce religious same sex marriage in line with the rest of the United Kingdom by January 2020.
- Introduce a system to convert civil partnership to marriage, and vice versa, in line with the rest of the United Kingdom by January 2020.
- Introduce education in schools on diversity and different family types, including same sex families.
- Introduce relationship and sexuality education that includes lesbian, gay and bisexual issues in teacher training colleges.
- Ensure health services meet the needs of lesbian and bisexual women particularly in relation to the practice of safe sex.
- Ensure lesbian and bisexual women have equal access to health services including fertility treatment.

Disabled Women:

Disabled women and girls can be subject to discrimination on two levels; marginalised on account of their disability and on their gender. The Government needs to recognise and implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) effectively within Northern Ireland to ensure that disabled women live in an equal society which is free from economic, social and cultural barriers. Only 7% of disabled people are employed, but those who are face low-paid work and underemployment. In addition, disabled women earn 22.1% less than non-disabled men, 11.8% less than disabled men and 26% of households with a disabled person live in poverty compared to 22% of households overall. Disabled women are set to lose 13% of their annual net income by 2021 due to cumulative tax-benefit changes and austerity. Furthermore, disabled single mothers will have lost 21% of their net income by 2021, and 32% if their child is also disabled.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Ensure that programmes and policies dealing with the elimination of exploitation, violence and abuse contain specific actions for disabled women.
- Urgently address the issue of disabled women being denied the same access to maternal health services, including sexual and reproductive health, as other women.
- Promote the employment of disabled women in all sectors, and support entrepreneurship development.
- Introduce staff education programmes, based on the social model of disability, to effect attitudinal change in all sectors; but particularly health and education sectors.
- Urgently address and reform the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application process, Universal Credit and Welfare Reform, to prevent any further discrimination against disabled women in the Northern Ireland.

BME Women, Migrant Women and Women Seeking Asylum or Refuge:

Inequality and exclusion from economic, cultural and political spheres are among some of the key challenges facing women from BME communities, migrant women, women seeking asylum and women refugees. Research shows that BME women are more than twice as likely to be in low paid and insecure work. BME women and migrant women in Northern Ireland have suffered due to rising hate crimes, as racial hate crimes have been higher than sectarian hate crimes for the past three years. Women seeking asylum and women refugees face additional barriers to accessing education, healthcare, jobs and housing and the majority of these women live in poverty. In addition to this, many refugees have qualifications that are not recognised in the UK, creating further barriers to employment. Northern Ireland does not have a refugee integration strategy nor an adequate hate crime legislation. Significant work needs to be done to tackle race inequalities in society, the workplace, in education, the criminal justice system and through all healthcare services.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Develop, adopt and implement an up-to-date Racial Equality Strategy, Refugee Integration Strategy and Hate Crime Legislation with targets and monitoring procedures in consultation with minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland.
- Provide adequate long term core funding for BME, asylum and refugee support groups.
- Designate English Speaker for Other Languages (ESOL) as an essential skill, increase free English speaking classes and address the barriers faced by women in attending these classes.
- Ensure gender equality for BME, asylum seeking and refugee women in access to social protection, including work with the Home Office to increase the National Asylum Support Service benefit to at least 70% of Job Seekers Allowance and to provide access to disability-related benefits.
- Ensure that all women are protected from violence regardless of their immigration status, in line with the Istanbul Convention on Ending Violence against Women.
- Take immediate measures to end the detention of pregnant women and nursing mothers; in line with CEDAW recommendations.
- Ensure that women experiencing domestic abuse with no recourse to public funds can access vital services; including refuge.

Older Women:

Older women are often overlooked in many strategic policy initiatives. Older women have the right to live as equal and engaged citizens, and to have full enjoyment and protection of their rights.

We call upon elected representatives to:

- Reform the adult social care framework and protect and fully resource the NHS to ensure that women can live in dignity at all stages of their lives, including in older life.
- Ensure robust and responsive inspections and minimum standards in all care settings.
- Ensure adequate resourcing to alleviate fuel poverty.
- Implement age discrimination legislation on the provision of goods, facilities and services.
- Recognise and value the role grandparents play in providing unpaid care and supporting parents to get into and stay in the workforce.

- Recognise and value the role older women play in community leadership through volunteering.
- Abide by CEDAW recommendations relating to older women's inadequate pensions, disproportionate caring responsibilities and high levels of poverty.
- Tackle issues of domestic abuse against older, rural women across the UK, including issues of underreporting and limited data gathering in Northern Ireland on how older women are captive and controlled.

Brexit:

Brexit is set to have an impact on all pillars of the Women's Manifesto, through the economy, social justice, culturally and through changes to equality legislation. As women in Northern Ireland are greatly underrepresented in all aspects of public and political life, it is deeply concerning that women's issues have been largely absent from all Brexit-negotiations. This manifesto has highlighted many of the areas of progress needed to ensure a gender equal society. With many areas of women's rights yet to be achieved, Brexit has complicated this further by adding a new threat to existing, hard-fought rights that women currently have. With women's voices largely absent from all negotiations, at a local, national and EU level, it is necessary to highlight the unique and disproportionate impact Brexit will have on the women of Northern Ireland.

To do this, the rights achieved and rights at risk will be analysed under the four pillars of this manifesto:

Economic Pillar:

Many of the rights gained through EU membership have covered economic activity and employment law. These protections includes equality between men and women; the right to equal pay for equal work; protection against discrimination on the ground of pregnancy or maternity; introducing measures to provide specific advantages to the underrepresented gender; prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex; introduction of paid holidays. Furthermore, the EU has commitments to Gender Mainstreaming and the gender Recast Directive 2006; the European Protection Order; Rural Development Programme; European Social Fund; European Parliamentary Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality; alongside various other directives and EU funding streams that support women in Northern Ireland.

We call on elected representatives to:

- Address the lack of representation of women from Northern Ireland in Brexit Negotiations.
- Mitigate against the predicted disproportionate impact of Brexit on women - through negative economic impact, loss of wages, uncertainty, loss of economic and workplace rights.
- Negative impact of Brexit on economy – mixed with uncertainty in fragile peace, devastating consequences for women in NI. UK Women's Budget Group quote.
- Match funding programmes that will now be lost and ensure no diminution of rights provided to women through EU legislative frameworks.

Social Justice, Culture and Equality Pillars:

It is deeply concerning that no guarantees have been made to protect, or enhance, the rights of women mentioned above post-Brexit; particularly as the European Human Rights Framework is much more robust than the UK Human Rights Framework. Based on previous comments from the UK government; alongside election manifestos and public pledges, there are some worrying insights into the future of women's rights in Northern Ireland. As the political climate has been increasingly divided

over Brexit, and the Northern Ireland Assembly is still not functioning, we need women’s rights to be put on the agenda again.

We call on elected representatives to:

- Continue to adhere to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, particularly Article 20 on the right to equality before law; Article 21 which prohibits discrimination; Article 23 on the right to equality between men and women; Article 34 on the right to social security (which is significant in cases of maternity pay) and Article 35 on the right to healthcare.
- Uphold existing EU case law established through the Court of Justice of the European Union post-Brexit.
- Protect and enhance the Human Rights Act 1998 and implements a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland in line with the commitments outlined in the Good Friday Agreement 1998.
- Uphold any EU protections relating to women’s rights in Northern Ireland, such as legislation on violence against women or child maintenance payments, to ensure that there is no divergence on human rights on either side of the border.
- Ensure all intersectional human rights frameworks and anti-discrimination legislation are maintained to protect the rights of migrants, LGBT+ people, disabled people, refugees, asylum seekers and all groups mentioned in this manifesto.



Northern Ireland Women's European Platform

