



Assembly Election 2022

Candidate Question Pack



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Women Delivering Change



About this Resource

At our Women Delivering Change Conference delegates had the opportunity to ask questions to a panel of MLAs. The questions asked have been developed by the Consortium into this resource. We hope women will be able to use this resource during the 2022 Assembly Election campaign to challenge candidates in their area and ensure they are voting for people who will deliver for women.

About Us

The Consortium is the established link and strategic partner between government and statutory agencies and women in disadvantaged and rural areas. In our most recent membership survey conducted in May 2021 44% of members rated childcare as important to them. Women need the Assembly to deliver a comprehensive Childcare Strategy. This strategy should plan for free, full time childcare provision that is accessible to all women, meets the diverse needs of children and provides secure jobs and decent pay for the predominantly women workers.

Our Six Key Themes

Brexit

Childcare

Education, Training and Work

Health and Wellbeing

Lawfulness

Welfare Reform, Benefits and Poverty



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Welfare Reform, Benefits and Poverty

Welfare Reform, Benefits and Poverty is one of the Consortium's six key themes because Austerity has had a profoundly severe impact on women in Northern Ireland. Since 2010 women have shouldered 86% of the total burden of welfare cuts. 69% of members rated this key theme as important to them

Questions for representatives standing for election:

- One in four children in Northern Ireland live in poverty. What legislation will your party introduce to tackle this crisis?
- Between October and December 2021 3364 households presented as homeless to the NIHE. What is your party doing to support the building of more social homes?
- What is your party doing to support renters?
- Does your party support a Universal Basic Income?
- Will your party support the removal of the end date in the Benefit Cap mitigation
- Given that women, especially single parents, have been most impacted by welfare reform changes what support do you propose to specifically help single parents?
- The Cost of Living Crisis is impacting on those on the lowest incomes including the working poor. What will you do to help those in work who are outside help provided by the social security system who are so impacted by increasing energy/food costs?
- Universal Credit, especially the 5-week wait, is driving foodbank use, debt and poverty. What are your proposals for reform of Universal Credit to help better support those on the lowest incomes?

Lawfulness

Lawfulness was rated as important by 45% of members. We understand that a criminal justice response is not always the most productive response to harm and that prisons are not delivering for the imprisoned or the wider community.

Questions for representatives standing for election:

- What will your party do to make online spaces safe for women and girls?
- What will your party do to tackle cis male violence against women and girls?
- What will your party do to protect girls and young women from engaging in anti-social behaviour and gang involvement?
- What programmes will your party campaign for to help imprisoned women and women after their release?
- Will your party commit to ending remand sentencing for women?
- Will your party commit to ending prison sentences of less than a year for women as these sentences have a proven detrimental impact on the families of women prisoners?

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Childcare

By making childcare one of our six key themes the Women's Regional Consortium is reflecting how central this is to the lives of women. In our most recent membership survey conducted in May 2021 44% of members rated childcare as important to them. Women need the Assembly to deliver a comprehensive Childcare Strategy. This strategy should plan for free, full time childcare provision that is accessible to all women, meets the diverse needs of children and provides secure jobs and decent pay for the predominantly women workers.

Questions for representatives standing for election:

- Do you commit to support a fully resourced childcare strategy?
- What will you do to ensure childcare provision is accessible to rural women?
- What will you do to ensure decent pay and conditions for childcare workers?

Education, Training and Work

This is a broad theme with substantial scope reflecting the value given to it by our members, 81% of whom rated this theme as important to them. Women's employment 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. Many women have to take career breaks for unpaid care work and there is very limited support to help women retrain after. Women's access to training and education depends on access to childcare, elder care, transport and course funding.

Questions for representatives standing for election:

- Does your party support the introduction of a four day work week with no loss of pay?
- Does your party support the funding of soft skills courses as an essential entry point for women from disadvantaged urban and rural isolated communities?
- What will your party do to make education and training accessible to rural women?
- Will you add miscarriage to the parental bereavement bill?

Brexit

Brexit has the potential to roll back on the rights of all women in NI but it has particular impacts for rural women and women in border communities.

Questions for representatives standing for election:

- What will your party do to ensure there is no disparity in rights between women living in NI, GB and RoI?
- What will your party do to ensure women's voices on Brexit and the Ireland/N Ireland Protocol are heard?

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Health and Wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing was rated as important by 91% of members and is a key work area for many of the Partner organisations. The Consortium takes a holistic approach to Health and Wellbeing, understanding that it includes access to comprehensive relationship education, mental health services, decent housing and an adequate standard of living. The availability and access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services are crucial to women's health and well-being. We support commissioning of abortion services as a matter of urgency and the implementation of Safe Access Zones to ensure services are accessible. The Consortium also recognises the additional barriers faced by lesbian couples trying to access IVF.

Questions for representatives standing for election:

- Mental health services rely heavily on community and voluntary sector. What will you do to create a clear and funded pathway between the Community and Voluntary sector and the NHS?
- Will you support commissioning of abortion services and delivery of safe access zones?
- How will you ensure rural women have equal access to healthcare facilities?
- Will your party support the development of a mother and baby inpatient unit for mothers with severe maternal mental health needs?
- What will your party do to improve mental health outcomes in NI?



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