



UK General Election 2017: Priorities for women's rights and equality

Engender is Scotland's feminist policy organisation. We have a vision for a Scotland in which women and men have equal opportunities in life, equal access to resources and power, and are equally safe and secure from harm.

Below are **three key asks from Engender for the 2017 General Elections**. We are asking all political parties and candidates in across the UK to include the commitments, which will protect and advance women's equality and rights, in their manifestos.

1. SOCIAL SECURITY: THE 'FAMILY CAP'

Provisions in the *Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016* limit entitlement to the child element of Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit to a maximum of two children in each household. Projections show that the two-child limit will result in a loss of up to £2,800 every year per additional child.

The policy was developed without adequate consideration of women's realities and is not evidence-based. Internationally, 'family cap' policies have worsened health and social outcomes for children, and increased the risk of homelessness and other hardships associated with severe poverty. In addition to pushing women and their families into further poverty, the 'rape clause' exception will re-traumatise individual women who have survived rape by forcing them to disclose sexual violence at a time and in a context not of their own choosing.

Although the equality impact assessment does acknowledge that protected groups, including women, would be disproportionately harmed by the 'family cap', these negative consequences for the enjoyment of women's rights and equality have not been mitigated.

WE ARE CALLING FOR A COMMITMENT TO:

Repeal provisions in the *Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016* which comprise the 'family cap', and all of its exemptions including the 'rape clause', and commit to undertaking and acting on a cumulative impact assessment of social security.

2. BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS

Over the last 50 years, EU laws have been underpinned by the principles of equality and non-discrimination, which have promoted and protected women's rights in several areas.

Among its many steps towards creating more gender-equal societies, the EU entrenched in law the rights of part-time workers, the majority of whom are women, and the rights of pregnant women. The Equal Treatment Directive underpins our anti-discrimination law.

The upcoming Brexit negotiations, and the lack of clarity surrounding processes and outcomes, puts the rights of women and girls in the UK in a precarious position. A lack of gender competence and failure to engage women in the process will lead to a gender-blind Brexit that may widen women's inequality.

WE ARE CALLING FOR A COMMITMENT TO:

Include women's equality and human rights in Brexit negotiations and subsequent bilateral and multilateral foreign relations engagement.

3. EQUALITY ACT 2010, HUMAN RIGHTS ACT, AND COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The UK's commitment to equality and human rights is codified in legislation including the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act, and in our membership of institutions such as the Council of Europe and the UN.

These Acts and institutions are vital safeguards of women's rights and equalities in our society. The Human Rights Act, for example, has played a key role in ensuring the fair treatment of older women in care home and remedy for inadequate investigation of rape. The Equality Act includes anti-discrimination measures in employment, including equal pay, and the provision of goods, facilities, and services.

WE ARE CALLING FOR A COMMITMENT TO:

Maintain the Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act, and membership of the Council of Europe.

Contact Details

For further information, please contact: Kate Nevens, Policy and Parliamentary Manager, Engender on kate.nevens@engender.org.uk