

Equalities and human rights in the 2017 manifestos



It is perhaps surprising that equalities and human rights feature quite prominently in each of the six main party manifestos issued for the 2017 election. Space does not permit me to give all the details, but here are some highlights from amongst the commitments made.

Human rights

The Conservative Party commits to the Human Rights Act and European Convention on Human Rights for the next parliament, but adds *we will consider our human rights legal framework when the process of leaving the EU concludes* (p. 37). However, the armed forces would be *withdrawn from the ambit of the European Convention and will in future be subject to the Law of Armed Conflict* (p. 42).

UKIP promises to prevent prosecutions of members of the armed forces *for actions taken whilst in the service of the Crown* (p. 46). UKIP would *Repeal Labour's Human Rights legislation and remove the UK from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights* (p. 41) and introduce a new UK Bill of Rights. It would *Protect religious freedoms..., provided those beliefs exist firmly within the framework of British law. We will not condone any faith position that is itself intolerant of the human rights of others* (p. 38)

Labour, Lib Dems and Greens would retain the Human Rights Act, and Plaid Cymru would *publish a human rights charter for Wales to defend Welsh people against the backdrop of a Tory government intent on undermining the Human Rights Act* (p. 39)

Labour, Lib Dems and Greens would build in human rights protections along the supply chain as part of post-Brexit trade deals. Labour *will appoint dedicated global ambassadors on women's rights, LGBT rights and religious freedom* (p. 109) and the Lib Dems will appoint an ambassador for freedom of belief.

The Conservative Party manifesto contains a detailed policy on tackling modern slavery, and commitments to tackling the issue are also made by Labour and the Lib Dems.

Refugees and asylum

Welsh Conservatives say that the current asylum system *is geared towards people who ... have the resources to get to Britain, rather than those who are most in need of our help. Wherever possible, the government will offer asylum and refuge to people in parts of the world affected by conflict and oppression, rather than to those who have made it to Britain. ... We will ... establish schemes to help individuals, charities, faith groups, churches and businesses to provide housing and other support for refugees.* (p. 40)

Labour promises to *meet our international obligations on the refugee crisis* (p. 112) and will review the dispersal arrangements. UKIP says it would *comply fully with the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and honour our obligations to bona fide asylum seekers* (p. 33).

The Lib Dems make a number of promises, including expanding the Syrian Resettlement Scheme to 50,000 people over the next Parliament and reopening the Dubs Scheme for 3000 unaccompanied refugee children from Europe.

The Greens promise *A humane immigration and asylum system that recognises and takes responsibility for Britain's ongoing role in causing the flow of migrants worldwide* (p. 19).

Immigration

The Conservatives will make it harder for those with criminal convictions to enter the UK and UKIP would refuse them a visa. UKIP says that *Migrants who commit crimes resulting in a custodial sentence will have their visa revoked and be detained until they are deported* (pp 34, 40). UKIP (p. 33) proposes a detailed post-Brexit scheme of visas and work permits; the Conservatives promise a new system but do not detail it.

Labour will develop and implement fair immigration rules (p. 26). Lib Dems will ensure that the immigration system is operated fairly and efficiently, with strict control of borders (p. 77)

Plaid Cymru promises *A logical immigration policy that works for Wales, where students and job creators can come, but wages aren't undercut and communities are protected* (p. 51).

Labour, Lib Dems and Greens would all guarantee unilaterally the rights of EU citizens currently in the UK. UKIP would guarantee the rights of *law-abiding EU citizens living in the UK before Article 50 was triggered* (p. 34) and EU citizens working in health and social care (p. 20). However, *EU nationals who entered the UK after 29th March 2017 will not have the automatic right to remain and when we leave the EU will lose access to all benefits, including non-urgent healthcare* (p. 34).

Conservatives promise *We will ... secure the entitlements of EU nationals in Britain and British nationals in the EU* (p. 36).

Integration and counter-extremism

Welsh Conservatives promise to tackle extremism, especially *Islamist extremism*, by considering *what new criminal offences might need to be created, and what new aggravated offences might need to be established. ... And we will establish a Commission for Countering Extremism ... to identify policies to defeat extremism and promote pluralistic values* (pp 52-3). They will also *develop a new integration strategy, which will seek to help people in more isolated communities to engage with the wider world, help women in particular into the workplace, and teach more people to speak English* (p. 52)

Lib Dems and Greens promise to end the Prevent strategy and replace it with community strategies; Labour would review its operation, and *advocate a long-term multinational political strategy, led by regional actors, to tackle the spread of extremism* (p. 108)

UKIP will *test the social attitudes of migration applicants to foster community cohesion and protect core British values* (p. 34) and will *... draw up proposals to disband sharia councils* (p. 35). They will *trial segregation of Islamist prisoners and refuse admission to prisons to any imam, preacher or individual known to promote views contrary to British values* (p. 41).

Equalities legislation

Four parties promise to strengthen equalities law. Welsh Conservatives would extend the Equality Act to *mental health conditions that are episodic and fluctuating* (p. 54); Lib Dems will *Extend protection of gender reassignment in equality law* (p. 71) and extend the Equalities Act to cover companies with 250+ employees and to outlaw caste discrimination, and would enshrine the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in law. Labour would *strengthen access to justice for disabled people by enhancing the 2010 Equality Act enabling discrimination at work to be challenged* (p. 52) and would make terminal illness a protected characteristic. The Greens would extend equality for *LGBTIQ+ people* (p. 21). However, UKIP expresses its opposition to *a raft of faith, race and equalities legislation* (p. 32).

Conservatives, Labour and Lib Dems all promise to tackle disparities in recruitment and pay between people of different ethnic origins, especially in the public services and large employers. Labour offers a range of employment policies covering each equalities area.

Conservatives *will legislate to mandate changes in police practices if 'stop and search' does not become more targeted* (p. 54) and also regarding *the disproportionate use of force against Black, Asian and ethnic minority people in prison, young offender institutions and secure mental health units*. However, UKIP would *reinstate full Stop and Search powers to the police* (p. 40).

Labour *will end racism and discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and protect the right to lead a nomadic way of life* (p. 102), while UKIP would *Make the setting up of a traveller pitch without permission a criminal offence* (p. 41).

Labour would enhance the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Lib Dems would review it and the Greens would reinstate its funding.

People with disabilities

Welsh Conservatives promise that *We will get 1 million more people with disabilities into employment over the next ten years* (p. 55) and promise policies to enhance access to work and to local facilities.

UKIP *promises to protect the rights of the disabled* (p. 31) and to make changes to disability benefits and Work Capability Assessments. Labour also promises to make a number of changes to the treatment of disabilities in the social security system, including a new *personal, holistic assessment* (p. 51). Plaid Cymru says *We will support and encourage disabled people into employment without facing threats of sanctions* (p. 26).

Liberal Democrats promise to *increase accessibility to public places and transport and ... bringing into effect the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act on discrimination by private hire vehicles and taxis*. (p. 71)

Hate crime, violence against women and domestic violence

Labour will strengthen bring the law on LGBT hate crimes and introduce annual reporting and action plans on disability hate crime and violence. Conservatives promise to *push forward with our plan for tackling hate crime committed on the basis of religion, disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity*. (p. 45)

A Conservative government will bring forward a Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill ... to consolidate all civil and criminal prevention and protection orders and provide for a new aggravated offence if behaviour is directed at a child, establish a Domestic Violence and Abuse Commissioner and review funding of refuges and tenancies for victims (pp 55-6). Labour would also appoint Violence Against Women Commissioner, building on the National Adviser in Wales, and would provide central funding for women's refuges and rape crisis centres. The Liberal Democrats would *review the investigation, prosecution, procedures and rules of evidence in cases of sexual and domestic violence* (p. 75)

UKIP would arrange compulsory annual check-ups for girls *identified to be at risk* of female genital mutilation (p. 36)

Greens would *Implement a UK-wide strategy to tackle gender based violence, including domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, FGM and trafficking* (p. 19).

Cultural practices

UKIP will ban wearing of the niqab and the burqa in public places (p. 37) and would publish official documents only in English and (*where appropriate*) Welsh (p. 38).

The Lib Dems would *Guarantee the freedom of people to wear religious or cultural dress, and tackle the growing incidence of Islamophobic hate crime*. (p. 71)

UKIP would require the labelling of *food that has been ritually killed as halal or shechita* (p. 55) and *forbid Jewish and Muslim methods of slaughter being carried out by unqualified individuals in unregulated premises, and deal severely with such transgressions.*

References

Welsh Conservative manifesto – *Forward Together*:

https://www.welshconservatives.com/sites/www.welshconservatives.com/files/2017-05/Forward_Together_Eng.pdf

Welsh - https://www.welshconservatives.com/sites/www.welshconservatives.com/files/2017-05/Forward_Together_Cym.pdf

Welsh Labour manifesto – *Standing up for Wales*:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/labourclp221/pages/1547/attachments/original/1495724888/GE_2017_Welsh_Labour_Manifesto_ENG.pdf?1495724888

Welsh -

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/labourclp221/pages/1547/attachments/original/1495724909/Standing_up_for_Wales_-_Welsh_Labour_Manifesto.pdf?1495724909

Liberal Democrat manifesto (UK) – *Change Britain's Future*:

<http://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/themes/5909d4366ad575794c000000/attachments/original/1495020157/Manifesto-Final.pdf?1495020157> (English only)

Green Party manifesto – *Confident and Caring Britain*:

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/gp2017/greenguaranteepdf.pdf> (English only; Welsh summary at: <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/gp2017/greenguaranteepdf.pdf>)

Plaid Cymru Action Plan -

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/plaid2016/pages/1399/attachments/original/1494843830/Plaid_Cymru_-_Defending_Wales_-_2017_Action_Plan.pdf?1494843830

Welsh -

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/plaid2016/pages/1398/attachments/original/1494843824/Plaid_Cymru_-_Tarian_Cymru_-_Cynllun_Gweithredu_2017.pdf?1494843824

UKIP UK manifesto – *Britain Together*:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ukipdev/pages/3944/attachments/original/1495695469/UKIP_Manifesto_June2017opt.pdf?1495695469

UKIP Wales manifesto – *Wales into the World*:

<https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ukipdev/pages/3485/attachments/original/1495714884/2017WalesManifestoOpt.pdf?1495714884> (both English only)