



Women

Women do not get a fair deal in Britain today. They still get paid less than men and are far more likely to have to take responsibility for childcare and looking after elderly relatives. Rape and domestic violence are still too widespread. And there are huge pressures in everyday life, compounded by media portrayals of how women are supposed to look and behave. Liberal Democrats want to build a society where women are paid fairly, feel safe, are able to share the responsibilities of family life if they choose to, and are no longer bombarded by images of “the perfect woman”. We will crack down on sex discrimination at work with name-blind job application forms. We will make parental leave interchangeable between mothers and fathers. We will stop advertisers secretly airbrushing pictures to imply their product can work miracles. And we will introduce common sense changes to help protect women from violence, like making sure night buses let you off between stops if it’s closer to home.

Fair pay checks for every company. It’s not fair that men get paid 12% more than women. To stamp out discrimination, every company that employs more than 100 people should have its pay arrangements examined with an Equal Pay Audit. Unequal salaries can then be identified and changed to give everyone a fair deal.

Name-blind job application forms to end sex discrimination. It’s too easy for women – as well as men, or people from ethnic minorities – to be cut out of the job application process right at the start because their gender or background is clear from the name on their CV or application form. Names should be blanked out so this discrimination can’t happen.

Shared parental leave. When a baby is born, the mother gets a year’s leave and the father gets just two weeks. That means the mother has to take the lion’s share of responsibility, even if she and her partner would rather share things equally. We will allow parents to share 12 months of leave between them in whatever way suits them best.

Flexible working. As we move away from the nine-to-five routine, many employers believe that flexible working makes good business sense. That is why the Liberal Democrats will give all employees the right to request flexible working. Like now, employers’ rights to turn down a request will remain unchanged if the nature of the work or the needs of the business do not make flexible working possible.

Honesty in advertising: regulation of airbrushing. Some adverts are ridiculous. The models have been airbrushed so much it gives a completely unfair representation of what the product can do. And by creating an unrealistic ideal of beauty it can lead to body image problems especially for young girls. Advertisers should have to state clearly whether they’ve used airbrushing, and it should be banned completely for adverts aimed at children and young teens.

Stop-on-request for night buses. Walking home late at night can be intimidating and dangerous. But with bus stops often very far apart, that long walk home gets even longer. At night, you should be able to ask the driver to let you off between stops, so you’re as close to home as possible. It’s a small change but it could make a real difference.