



Scottish Parliament Election 2021 – What are the parties promising on gender equality and the labour market?

1. Introduction

The 2021 Scottish Parliament elections present an opportunity for political parties to show leadership on gender equality and take the bold action that is needed to realise fair work for women. Action on women's labour market inequality has been rendered even more pivotal by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore critical that parties have a strong focus on gender equality in their manifestos, and that the next parliament prioritises a gendered economic recovery.

In December 2020, Close the Gap published our manifesto, *The Gender Pay Gap Manifesto*¹, which outlined 14 policies that could be adopted during the next parliament to address the gender pay gap and realise fair work for women. In line with the multiple causes of the gender pay gap, the policy priorities cover a wide range of policy areas including the undervaluation of women's work, economic development, and skills policy.

This briefing analyses the manifestos of the five political parties elected to the Scottish Parliament in 2016 to identify party priorities with regards to tackling women's inequality in the labour market. It maps party commitments against Close the Gap's policy asks as outlined in *The Gender Pay Gap Manifesto*.

The party manifestos covered in this briefing are:

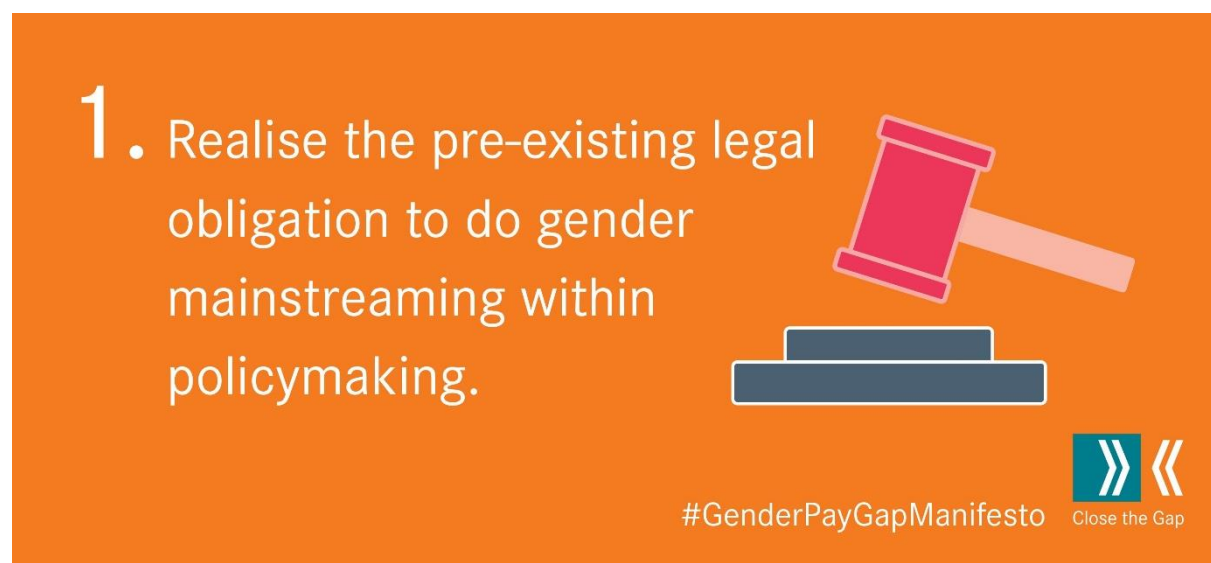
- [Scottish Conservatives – 'Rebuild Scotland'](#)
- [Scottish Green Party – 'Our Common Future'](#)
- [Scottish Labour – National Recovery Plan](#)²
- [Scottish Liberal Democrats 'Put Recovery First'](#)
- [Scottish National Party – 'Scotland's Future, Scotland's Choice'](#)

¹ Close the Gap (2020) *The Gender Pay Gap Manifesto* available at <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/The-Gender-Pay-Gap-Manifesto---2021-Scottish-Parliament-elections.pdf>

² Scottish Labour also published a Women's Manifesto which is available here - <http://scottishlabour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Womens-mini-manifesto.pdf>

This briefing focuses on policy commitments that are designed to tackle women's labour market inequality across key policy areas identified in Close the Gap's manifesto. A number of policies across skills, employability and the economy will impact women's equality in the labour market. However, in this briefing, we have only included manifesto commitments that have an explicit reference to women, or a clear commitment to advance gender equality. A more detailed look at party commitments on gender equality across other policy areas including health policy, violence against women and human rights is available in Engender's Gender Edit.

2. How the party manifestos align with Close the Gap's policy asks



This overarching call relates to the process of policymaking. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to proactively embed gender analysis in all policy and legislative development. This call also relates to tools such as equality impact assessment and gender budgeting.

Scottish Green Party

- Fully integrate gender budgeting into all public budgeting processes.

Scottish Labour

- Extend the Equality and Fairer Scotland Statement development process into a full gender analysis of the Scottish budget, where the cumulative impact of spending decisions on women's equality is considered.
- Equality proof all policy and legislation.
- Continue in the use of the Equality Act 2010 to frame equalities policies.

2. Require public bodies to produce a gender equality strategy and conduct equal pay reviews.



#GenderPayGapManifesto



This call relates to the prioritisation of gender equality by Scotland's public bodies, we are asking for public bodies to be required to conduct regular equal pay reviews and publish a gender equality strategy, both for their employment and service delivery functions.

Scottish Labour

- Propose an Equal Pay (Scotland) Act, which would require all public sector bodies and organisations with more than 250 employees who benefit from public procurement to publish regular equal pay reviews.

3. Deliver on the commitment to review the public sector equality duty, ensuring the duty advances women's equality at work.



#GenderPayGapManifesto



This call relates to the reform of the specific duties under the public sector equality duty, ensuring that the outcome is an effective duty that will advance women's equality at work.

Scottish Labour

- Improve the effectiveness of the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessments with additional resources, improved monitoring, and sanctions where necessary to ensure gender mainstreaming is realised across public sector policymaking.

Scottish National Party

- Introduce an overarching Scottish Diversity and Inclusion Strategy covering the public sector, our educational institutions, justice system, transport and workplaces. This strategy will focus on the removal of institutional, cultural and financial barriers which lead to inequalities in relation to gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and social mobility.

4. Develop an action plan to address the gender gaps in data used to develop and evaluate skills policy.

#GenderPayGapManifesto

Close the Gap

This call relates to skills policy in Scotland, with a specific focus on a commitment to a publicly available action plan to address gender gaps in the data used to develop and evaluate skills policy. Women are more likely to lose their job in the recession, and women's labour market participation has been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, making gender competent upskilling, reskilling and employability initiatives particularly important.

Scottish Conservatives

- Deliver a fresh campaigning initiative to encourage more girls to take up apprenticeships after school.

Scottish Green Party

- Increase support for apprenticeships and ensure they pay at least the living wage regardless of age, work to break gender stereotypes, and increase

opportunities for disabled people and people from minority ethnic groups. Government funding of apprenticeships should be contingent on these measures.

Scottish Labour

- Reform Modern Apprenticeships with a National Apprenticeship Plan to raise quality, tackle gender segregation and eliminate exploitation.

Scottish Liberal Democrats

- Set a target of a 50:50 male to female split for apprenticeships, with plans to achieve progress year on year, particularly in high paid sectors such as engineering.

Scottish National Party

- Increase and improve our data collection so that across all our policies we will have a strong evidence base, and be able to gauge intersectional inequality, measure outcomes, and recommend improvements.
- National Transition Training Fund will support workers whose jobs are at risk and provide retraining opportunities for high-tech, high skilled jobs and the provision of green skills to support Scotland's transition to net zero. As part of this, take action to tackle inequality, supporting those who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID such as women, people from minority ethnic communities and disabled people.

5. Support the employer accreditation programme Equally Safe at Work through continued funding.



#GenderPayGapManifesto



Close the Gap

This policy ask relates to continued funding to support the employer accreditation programme Equally Safe at Work, enabling all of Scotland's local authorities to

work towards accreditation. This would be a step towards a longer-term aim of rolling-out the accreditation programme across the public sector in Scotland.

Scottish Labour

- Support the employer accreditation programme Equally Safe at Work through continued funding.

Scottish Liberal Democrats

- Support the employer accreditation programme Equally Safe at Work.



6. Designate childcare a key growth sector, along with social care, to recognise care as vital infrastructure.

#GenderPayGapManifesto Close the Gap

This policy ask relates to a commitment to designate care a key growth sector in future economic strategies to enable a move towards focusing on the provision of childcare and social care as infrastructure.

Scottish Labour

- Designate childcare and social care as key growth sectors, recognising them as a vital infrastructure and key component of Scotland's economic recovery.
- Establish core training funds to subsidise the cost of entering, training, or completing continued professional development in these sectors.

Scottish Liberal Democrats

- Encourage enterprise bodies to recognise the value, beyond traditional economic measures, of more diverse sectors, and to increase their support for innovation activity and new technology in businesses that provide services such as care and education.

7. Ensure action to address the undervaluation of “women’s work” is core to labour market and economic recovery policymaking.



#GenderPayGapManifesto



COVID-19 has illuminated the critical role “women’s work” plays in Scotland’s economy. The majority of key workers are women, working in jobs such care and childcare which are undervalued, underpaid, and under-protected. This policy ask relates to addressing the undervaluation of “women’s work” as a core aspect of economic recovery policymaking.

Scottish Conservatives

- Support many of the recommendations and principles set out in the Feeley review, including introducing national employment conditions for staff.

Scottish Green Party

- Ensure that the pay and conditions of carers reflect their expertise, supporting calls for social care workers to be paid at least £15 an hour.
- Place closing the gender pay gap at the heart of our plans for a green recovery.
- Facilitate the creation of national collective bargaining structures in areas linked to the public sector which do not currently have high levels of collective bargaining, such as social care and childcare.
- Work to incorporate Engender and Close the Gap’s Gender and Economic Recovery Principles in the next Parliament.

Scottish Labour

- Establish a National Care Service, with national standards, improved terms and conditions for workers and collective bargaining established for the sector.

- Deliver an immediate pay rise to £12 per hour for care workers and the commitment to work with trade unions to increase this further to £15 per hour.
- Over the longer term the [social care] workforce needs to be treated as the skilled professionals they are, with consistent access to training and development, and proper workforce planning for the sector.
- Create National Care Contracts to set the framework for social care services - promoting greater consistency and raising minimum standards.
- Tackle the gender pay gap by encouraging women into leadership positions with targeted training and strengthened childcare support.

Scottish Liberal Democrats

- Prioritise the establishment of national pay bargaining in the social care workforce, and commit to funding the outcomes so that care workers get fair pay and better career progression as soon as possible.
- Make it a requirement that any care service by any provider must comply with fair work requirements which are set nationally.
- Monitor progress on closing the gender pay gap.

Scottish National Party

- Take forward the recommendations of the Feeley review and establish a National Care Service in the next parliamentary term. The National Care Service will ensure enhanced pay and conditions for workers and provide better support for unpaid carers.
- Introduce a National Wage for Care staff and enter into national pay bargaining for the sector, based on fair work principles, for the first time.

8. Deliver a further extended funded childcare entitlement equivalent to 50 hours a week to enable women to work full-time.



#GenderPayGapManifesto



Women need wraparound childcare to allow them to participate in the labour market, and in education and training, on an equal basis with men. The 1140 hours must be implemented at the earliest opportunity, with this entitlement viewed as the starting point, rather than the end point, of reform.

Scottish Conservatives

- Introduce free wraparound childcare for children in Primary 1-3, equivalent to five hours a week, and work with schools and local community groups to build capacity and create choice for parents.
- The 1140 hours of funded childcare promised to all 3- and 4-years-olds must be introduced in August 2021.
- All parents who choose to defer their child starting primary school should be able to continue to access funded childcare from August 2021.

Scottish Green Party

- Ensure equal access to early years and childcare and work to implement 1140 hours as soon as possible.

Scottish Labour

- Following the planned expansion to 1140 hours, seek a year-on-year increase with the eventual ambition of offering 50 hours a week for every child.
- Ensure that services take into account the specific needs of lone parents.
- Implement all-age, all-year, wrap-around affordable early years services, focused on the needs of the child and with the flexibility that families need.

Scottish Liberal Democrats

- Deliver wraparound childcare with a focus on increasing the 1140 hours entitlement to cover all 2-year-olds.
- Expand nursery education to meet the promise of 1140 hours for 3 and 4-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds.
- Extending the existing childcare provision that is available for students to cover their periods of independent study and vocational placements.

Scottish National Party

- Build a wraparound childcare system providing care before and after school, all year round, where the least well-off families will pay nothing.

9. Develop a strategic mechanism for building capacity on gender stereotyping and occupational segregation in the ELC workforce.



#GenderPayGapManifesto



This policy ask relates to a strategic approach to building gender competence in the early learning and childcare workforce. Addressing gender stereotyping and occupational segregation should be built into mandatory training as part of the national occupational standards and qualifications for the sector.

Scottish Labour

- Address the gender gap in subjects like STEM through a strategic approach to building a better understanding of gender stereotypes and the skills in challenging them among teachers, practitioners and career information advice and guidance staff.

10. Ensure the national funding model enables ELC providers to pay the Living Wage to all staff, with a more ambitious target around pay to be set thereafter.



#GenderPayGapManifesto

Close the Gap called for a commitment to ensure the national funding model enables private and third sector early learning and childcare providers in partner settings to pay the Living Wage to all early learning and childcare staff, not just those delivering the funded entitlement, with a more ambitious target around pay to set thereafter.

Scottish Green Party

- Deliver equitable funding to all relevant childcare providers.

Scottish Labour

- Workforce plan for ELC sector focused on recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff, including a graduate apprenticeship option.
- Establish a national framework through sectoral collective bargaining to deliver attractive pay, terms and conditions, as well as training and career progression. The underrepresentation of men in the sector will also be addressed, and childcare will be designated as a key growth area.
- While the Scottish Living Wage will be an improvement for many workers in the sector, it does not fully value these skills, and pay should be commensurate with the qualifications.

11. Include addressing gender stereotyping and occupational segregation in the framework content for the ELC graduate apprenticeship.



#GenderPayGapManifesto



The roll-out of the early learning and childcare graduate apprenticeship may assist with redressing the undervaluation of care work. We are asking for a commitment to embed learning on challenging gender stereotypes and occupational segregation into the framework content.

Scottish Labour

- Workforce plan for ELC sector focused on recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff, including a graduate apprenticeship option.

12. Ensure Scotland's policy responses to automation are gendered, challenging occupational segregation, and women's wider inequality at work



#GenderPayGapManifesto



This policy ask relates to ensuring Scotland's policy responses to automation and AI are gendered. This should include targeted skills programmes should be developed to support groups of women most at risk of automation and to tackle occupational segregation in the tech sector.

Scottish Labour

- Support lifelong learning, including union learning, to ensure workers are not left behind in a period of technological change, prioritising the development of skills needed for low-carbon jobs. This includes ending poor quality apprenticeships and replacing them with genuine off-the-job learning and employment opportunities that also tackle occupational gender segregation.
- Renew the national approach to the digital skills pipeline, making sure that actions to inspire, educate, train and nurture digital talent are accessible to women and girls.

13. Given the link between women's poverty and child poverty, prioritise action to tackle women's low pay in addressing child poverty.



This policy ask relates to a commitment to substantive action to tackle women's low pay in its approach to address child poverty. The economic and labour market impacts of the COVID-19 crisis have made this even more pivotal.

Scottish Green Party

- Suspend interest payments on student loans during maternity and paternity leave to tackle the additional costs which overwhelmingly fall on women.

Scottish Labour

- Addressing low incomes as a whole must be central to reducing the number of women in poverty. Tackling women's poverty and gender inequalities is also key to tackling child poverty.
- Redistribute caring and unpaid work responsibilities between women and men and between the family and the state.

Scottish Liberal Democrats

- We will continue to press for justice for WASPI women from the UK Government and will consider a new Scottish benefit to close the gap in cases of hardship.

Scottish National Party

- Build flexible and family friendly working into the Fair Work First programme – learning lessons from the pandemic to make it easier for women, particularly single parents, to return to work and also encourage a more equal share of childcare responsibilities.
- Package of measures to address the ‘motherhood penalty’ and encourage more flexible and family friendly working:
 - Halt interest on student loans during maternity leave and continue funding for our Women’s Returners’ Programme.
 - Ensure that single parents are a priority group in expansion of Connecting Scotland – our programme of improving connectivity through the provision of tablets and laptops and access to support.
 - Developing measures of economic performance that take proper account of the contribution and cost of formal and informal care. This will help to ensure that we do not take for granted the care which, though not exclusively, is so often done by women.

14. Create an occupational segregation commission to drive public bodies’ action to tackle occupational segregation.



#GenderPayGapManifesto



Occupational segregation is one of the key causes of the gender pay gap, and it remains an entrenched problem on which there has been very little progress. Close the Gap called for a commitment to establish an occupational segregation commission which focuses on adopting a strategic approach to addressing occupational segregation across the Scottish labour market as a whole.

Scottish Labour

- End poor quality apprenticeships and replace them with genuine off-the-job learning and employment opportunities that also tackle occupational gender segregation.

Scottish Liberal Democrats

- Create an occupational segregation commission to drive public bodies' actions to tackle the occupational segregation which limits opportunities for women and men in different workplaces.
- Make Scotland the home to science by building on our great strengths, encouraging more people to take up science all through school, and helping more women establish successful careers in science.

Scottish National Party

- We will further promote fair work and tackle occupational segregation.