



# Labour For Equality

National Executive  
Council Statement  
to 2024 ADM



# Inequality has soared under the Tory Government. City bonuses are at an all time high, banks and energy giants are registering record profits whilst working people are suffering the worst pay crisis for two centuries.

The number of people experiencing destitution in the UK has more than doubled in the last five years. Food banks have become an established fixture of British society, there are now 4.2 million children living in poverty - 600,000 more than when Labour were last in power, and the NHS is on its knees.

We know that women, disabled, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and LGBT+ people have borne the brunt of many of the Conservatives' failings since 2010.

**Only the Labour Party will stand up and do something about it.**

Labour will:

- Bring about stronger family-friendly leave and pay rights.
- Make flexible working a day one right.
- Tackle workplace harassment.
- Give those with caring responsibilities greater protections.
- Act to close gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps.
- Deliver a social security system that provides a safety net for all.
- Boost the power of Unions to tackle inequality in the workplace.

This National Executive Council Statement sets out Labour's record as the party of equality and explains what Labour will do once back in power to build a fairer, more equal Britain.

**Together we can win the Labour Government our members, their families and our communities so desperately need.**

# General Secretary's Foreword



## This NEC Statement could not come at a more critical time for Usdaw members.

Fourteen years of Tory Government has had a devastating impact on the lives of our members and workers' rights across the economy.

The cost of living crisis, savage cuts to public services and rising inequality has left far too many of our members paying the price for failed Tory economic policies.

The next general election is a not to be missed opportunity to elect a government that will put this right. A government that will put workers before wealth. A Labour Government that will put equality and fairness at the heart of everything it does.

I am proud to lead a Union that is working for a Labour victory at the next election. Labour is and always has been the party of equality, and only a Labour Government can deliver a fairer and more equal society. From introducing the National Minimum Wage, tax credits and the Equality Act, to expanding childcare and school places, the last Labour Government gave millions of children and families the best start in life and helped to make work pay.

The last Labour Government did more to advance equality than any other in British history. Now, as we seek to win power, we must come together as a Labour and Trade Union Movement and do all that we can to deliver the Labour victory our members deserve.

History shows that when unions and Labour work together we are an unstoppable force for social justice. Because unions bring the collective voices of nearly four million working people to the heart of Labour, we are able to work together to achieve real gains for working people, such as the Race Relations Act, the Equal Pay Act and the Equality Act.

The most important thing any of us can do to help win a Labour Government is to campaign for Labour. Every one of us can make a difference and I would urge you not just to read this NEC Statement but to act on it. Every Usdaw member can make a crucial difference to the outcome of the next election.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paddy Lillis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

**Paddy Lillis**  
General Secretary

# Section One – Equality in Action

**The Labour Party's commitment to building a fairer, more equal society should be judged not by what they say but by what they do.**

This section charts the changes in the law that successive Labour Governments have enacted in their mission to promote equal rights and opportunities and tackle discrimination.

## Women's Equality

The Labour Party has a proud record of progressing women's rights and freedoms. It was a Labour Government that brought in the Equal Pay Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Equality Act and the National Minimum Wage, transforming the lives of women across the UK.

It was a Labour Government that introduced a right to parental leave, extended the period of paid maternity leave from just four months to nine months, introduced paid adoption and paternity leave, the right to request flexible working and equalised protections at work for part-time and full-time workers.

Labour's progress on women's equality has been driven forward by strong representation by women members self-organising within the Party, women from affiliated trade unions actively engaging and through women holding elected office at every level. This progress has also seen equal representation of women and men in the current group of MPs representing Labour.

## LGBT+ Equality

The Labour Party's record on issues of LGBT+ equality speaks for itself. A watershed moment in the struggle for equality was the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967 with the introduction of the Sexual Offences Act. However, it would take another 36 years and another Labour Government before the age of consent was finally equalised.

Between 2000 and 2010, the Labour Government did more for LGBT+ equality than any other government before it.

It was during these years that the Labour Party enacted legislation that; lifted the ban on lesbians, gay men and bi people serving in the armed forces, equalised the age of consent, enabled unmarried couples including same sex couples, to adopt, repealed Section 28, fully acknowledged the legal status of same sex relationships in law with the introduction of civil partnerships, and made it unlawful to discriminate against LGBT+ people at work and in the provision of goods and services.

## Race Equality

Labour has a long and proud history of tackling race equality and improving the representation of BME workers in public and political life. Of the 66 MPs from minority ethnic backgrounds, 41 (62%) are Labour MPs.

Whether with the Race Relations Act in 1965, the 2010 Equality Act, the establishment of the Equality and Human Rights Commission or the pioneering inquiry into institutional police racism following the murder of Stephen Lawrence, Labour has led the way in promoting and advancing race equality.

## Disability Equality

The Labour Party is the only party with a manifesto developed by and for disabled people, according to the principle of 'nothing about us without us'.

Labour also strengthened and extended rights for disabled workers in the Equality Act 2010 by:

- Making it easier for disabled people to fall within the definition of disability.
- Introducing express protection for carers, friends or family members who are subjected to direct discrimination or harassment because of their association with a disabled person, or because they are wrongly perceived to be disabled.
- Introducing new protections for disabled workers who experience indirect discrimination and less favourable treatment arising in consequence of their disability.
- Preventing employers from asking questions related to disability and health before a job offer is made (except in very specific circumstances).

However, the struggle for equality and liberation is never over. Rights won under a Labour Government can and have been lost under a Tory Government, as the next section of this statement makes clear.



# Section Two – Tory Failure on Equality

**Not much has thrived under fourteen years of Tory rule. Inequality, however has boomed.**

Stagnating wages, attacks on employment rights, brutal cuts to social security, punitive sanctions and slashed funding for public services have stacked up pressure on workers.

Failure to consider the equality impact of their responses to the Coronavirus pandemic and cost of living crisis has further entrenched problems and widened pay and employment gaps with women, Black and disabled workers at the sharp end.

The views expressed by Tory politicians have stoked sexist, racist, ableist and LGBT+ phobic narratives online and in the media and emboldened far right groups. This toxic culture has fuelled a rise in hate crime towards marginalised groups, with incidents from 2013 – 2022 rising year on year.



## Failing Women

The Tories have turned the clock back on gender equality, leaving women concentrated in low hours, low paid work. The benefit cap and the two child limit continue to disproportionately impact women, contributing to a steep rise in working family and child poverty.

Maternity pay is amongst the lowest in Europe. A rise in pregnancy and maternity discrimination left 54,000 women a year being forced out of their jobs on the Tories' watch.

The UK has the third most expensive childcare system in the world. Many women balancing work with childcare are left with no other option than to reduce their hours or leave their jobs, a situation which got even worse during the pandemic.

Domestic violence soared during the pandemic, while funding for specialist services was slashed and conviction rates plummeted.

Women have become the shock absorbers of poverty, going without to make ends meet and plugging the huge gaps in care for children, disabled and older people.

## Failing Black Workers

Black workers have been disproportionately impacted by the steep rise in insecure work under the Tories, remaining disproportionately in low paid and insecure work.

The Tories have ignored recommendations of the McGregor Smith Review, among others, to improve the lives of Black workers, backtracked on their commitment to introduce ethnicity pay gap reporting and denied the existence of institutional racism.

Their failure to tackle structural racism and protect key workers during the pandemic left Black workers overexposed and under-protected, more likely to be employed in front line roles, less likely to be able to access sick pay or isolated, leading to devastating and disproportionate deaths among Black workers.

The aggressive pursuit of their Hostile Environment Policy has denied safety, jobs and security to refugees and migrant workers, and fostered a culture of racism and discrimination. Race hate crime consistently makes up the majority of all hate crime, with a huge spike in racist incidents around the EU referendum.

Commitments to right the wrongs made during the Windrush scandal and Grenfell disaster have been dropped - denying justice and accountability to victims.

## Failing Disabled Workers

There has been zero progress on closing the gap in pay between disabled and non-disabled workers over the last decade, leaving disabled people around £3,700 worse off a year than their colleagues.

Meanwhile, the additional costs of living with a disability have more than doubled to £975 a month as a result of the Tories' failure to target support to disabled people. The Tories have also broken their promise to consult on a social energy tariff to support disabled people.

The rise in insecure work, the pandemic and cost of living crisis have added to a mental health crisis, but workers aren't able to access support when they need it due to huge underfunding for NHS mental health services.

Despite all the evidence that sanctions don't work, the Tories continue to pursue benefit cuts and ever more punitive sanctions which are leaving disabled people without access to the support they need.

## Failing LGBT+ Workers

Progress on LGBT+ rights has stalled under the Tories. LGBT+ workers continue to experience bullying, discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment at work because of who they are, and a third of workers feel they have no other option than to hide their identity at work.

Hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation are up by 112% in the last five years. At the same time, crimes directed at trans people have risen 186%, against a backdrop of UK Government fuelling a divisive and toxic debate around LGBT+ rights.

Government lack of action to strengthen protections against workplace harassment means LGBT+ workers, particularly those in customer-facing roles, are left without the protections they need.

The Tories have also backtracked on their commitment to ban so-called conversion therapy that has damaged the lives of countless LGBT+ people in the UK. Even some of their own MPs have accused the Party of a moral failing to uphold the rights and dignity of LGBT+ people.

# Section Three – Labour’s Commitments to Equality

The next Labour Government has committed to undo the damage inflicted by the Tories and create a fair and more equal future for workers.

As well as introducing their New Deal for Working People within 100 days, their key equality commitments are set out below:

- **Action to Close Pay Gaps**

Labour will bring forward measures to tackle gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps. Labour will not only be enforcing the requirement for large employers to report their gender pay gaps, but also require them to devise, publish and implement plans to eradicate the gap. Ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting will be made mandatory for employers with more than 250 staff to mirror gender pay gap reporting.

- **Menopause Action Plans**

Labour will require all large employers to publish action plans detailing how they are supporting women experiencing menopause at work and publish guidance for small and medium employers.

- **A New Race Equality Act**

Labour will put race equality back at the front of the political agenda by introducing a bold new race equality act to tackle structural racism.

- **Uphold the Social Model of Disability**

Labour is the only party to commit to the social model of disability, ensuring disabled people are included in policy processes and putting ‘nothing about us without us’ at the heart of government. They will fix the Access to Work Scheme and strengthen reasonable adjustments.

- **Ban Conversion Therapy and Strengthen LGBT+ Rights**

Labour will deliver where the Tories have failed by bringing in a full, no loopholes, trans-inclusive ban on conversion therapy. They have also committed to modernise gender recognition legislation and tackle the rising tide of hate, with stronger laws and tougher sentences for those who commit anti-LGBT+ hate crime.

- **Create a Modern Childcare System**

Labour will ensure affordable, accessible and available childcare from the end of parental leave to the beginning of school. They will support children and enable parents, carers and grandparents to work the jobs and hours they choose, including introducing fully funded free breakfast clubs in every primary school.

- **Tackle Child Poverty**

A key part of their strategy is to tackle the drivers of poverty for children and families. This means action on low pay, poor housing, better childcare, investment in education and proper social security to give every child the opportunity for the best start in life.

- **Reform Social Security**

Labour will reform the social security system so it supports those hit hardest by the Tories' cost of living crisis and create a proper safety net for those who cannot work due to ill health, disability or caring responsibilities. This starts with overhauling the unfair system of Universal Credit and ending punitive Tory sanctions.

- **Tackle Workplace Sexual Harassment and Domestic Violence**

Labour will require employers to create and maintain workplaces free from harassment, including by third parties.

- **Stronger Family Friendly Rights**

Labour have committed to reviewing the parental leave system so that it best supports working families, ends the qualifying period for parental leave, introduces a right to bereavement leave, reviews shared parental leave and strengthens protections for pregnant women by making it unlawful to dismiss a woman who is pregnant for six months after her return.



- **Better Rights For Carers**

Labour will strengthen the rights of workers to respond to family emergencies with paid family and carers' leave, the right to have flexible working and greater ability to enforce these rights.

- **Day One Flexible Working**

Labour will make flexible working a day one right for all workers, with employers required to accommodate this as far as is reasonable.

- **Put Mental Health on a Par with Physical Health**

Labour have committed to 8,500 more mental health professionals to reduce waiting lists and move towards access to care within a month of referral. They will make health and safety at work legislation fit for purpose, review provision for stress and mental health and raise awareness of neurodiversity at work.

- **Tackle Health Inequalities**

Labour's national health mission will tackle health inequalities facing women, BME, disabled and LGBT+ people so that everyone can access treatment without risk of discrimination.

This is just the start. As the first section showed, Usdaw knows that a Labour Party in power is a government that listens to working people. The next election is an opportunity to put fairness and equality for Usdaw members at the heart of politics.



# Section Four – Usdaw for Equality

Over many years the partnership between Usdaw and Labour has delivered real gains for our members. Our link with Labour means that we are able to campaign to help secure a Labour victory and once elected, make the case for policies that will benefit our members and millions of other working people.

This NEC Statement reminds us that the equality rights we hold dear, and upon which so many of our members depend, have largely been delivered through political action and our partnership with Labour.

Maternity, paternity and adoption leave, flexible working, civil partnerships and laws against race discrimination did not come about by chance. These landmark rights exist because unions including Usdaw, made the case for them, explaining how they would impact on members' lives, setting out the difference they would make; and Labour listened.

Labour has a strong track record of listening to our members. There can be no more effective argument for strengthening existing rights and legislating for new ones than to hear first-hand about the reality of our members lives and their struggle to juggle work and family life, to make ends meet and to be treated with decency and respect at work.

Our task has never been to sit back and let a Labour Government do our work for us. To deliver for our members we need Labour to be in government. But we also need the industrial strength of unions to build on the floor of rights that a Labour Government provides.

We need strong unions in the workplace to help our members enforce their legal rights and to improve those rights wherever we can. Labour's New Deal for Working People will restore the power of collective bargaining and support unions to recruit and organise workers, enabling us to make further gains on behalf of our members.

Usdaw has a strong record of improving equality rights through collective bargaining, all of them achieved through the hard work of Usdaw reps and full-time officers, with the strength of our membership behind them.

Our national 'Supporting Parents and Carers' Campaign has been running for over a decade now and has achieved significant improvements to rights for parents and carers. We have built on statutory rights and tried to make them work for our members and not just for workers in well-paid, secure jobs.

Significant improvements have been made to maternity and paternity pay across many of our agreements. We have played a key role in extending full contractual pay to all staff and in lengthening the period of paid leave.

Our domestic violence agreements give survivors support at work, including special leave to enable time off for medical appointments or to make alternative childcare arrangements. Some of our agreements also enable someone to change their place or times of work.

Most recently the Union has agreed menopause policies which recognise the challenges women face whilst working through the menopause and the duty of employers to offer appropriate support.

Extended leave agreements have helped Black members with family overseas to take leave without fear of losing their job on their return.

The Union is now encouraging employers to report and act on their ethnicity pay gap. This is not yet a legal requirement, but it plays a key role in assessing if and where inequalities exist in the workforce.

We have agreed reasonable adjustments passport schemes meaning disabled people don't have to explain their requirements every time their line manager changes, or they change job roles.

We are working with employers to agree policies that support members who are transitioning at work. In many cases the Union has been able to extend and improve the support offered by the employer.



# Section Five – Use Your Vote – It Matters

Britain's early trade unions played a crucial role in the battle to give every adult the vote. We had an obvious interest in extending the vote as our primary purpose was to give unorganised and unrepresented workers a voice. Unions understood that extending the vote extended the same principles to society. After all a Parliament elected by, and accountable only to, property-owning and wealthy men would never act in the interests of working people.

Whilst this was a battle the suffragettes, the Union and the Labour Movement won in 1928 with universal suffrage, some groups of people, although eligible to vote, continue to face real obstacles to casting their vote at the ballot box.

For instance, disabled people have to overcome many and varied barriers in order to vote. These include, but are by no means limited to, not having their voting rights communicated to them in a way they can access or understand and/or by coming up against physical or other barriers when voting at a polling station.

As well as barriers, certain groups of people are less likely to register or cast their vote, for example, young workers and Black workers, as they don't see themselves and the issues that matter to them reflected in Parliament or in politics.

The Elections Act 2022 has made it even more difficult for some people to cast their vote at the ballot box.

The Act introduced a requirement of bringing valid photo ID to be able to vote in England (it already exists in Northern Ireland). It does not apply to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Senedd, or council elections taking place in Scotland or Wales.

On the face of it, you might think it doesn't sound like a big deal to be asked to show some ID when you cast your vote, but this requirement makes democratic participation even harder for unemployed, BME and disabled people, as well as people living on a low income, groups who are already more likely to feel disconnected and excluded from political processes.

People working in an insecure job with irregular, unpredictable and long hours, or juggling work with caring responsibilities or working more than one job together with unemployed and disabled people, are less likely to apply for a free Voter ID Card. It is also much harder to apply for a card if you don't have access to technology, or if previous interactions with your local council or job centre have been difficult or stressful.

Overall, it's estimated that around 700,000 low income potential voters are at risk of being excluded from voting due to ID requirements.

Don't lose your vote. Make sure you have ID or register for a postal vote.

## What ID Can You Use?

Voters can use passports, full and provisional driving licences, Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS) cards, Blue Badges and some concessionary travel cards. The full list is available on the Electoral Commission website:

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voting-and-elections](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voting-and-elections)

People without an existing acceptable form of voter ID can apply online or by post for a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC). The VAC will display the name and a passport style photo of a voter.

The ID used in a polling station must be original, but it does not matter if it is expired, as long as the photo is a good likeness.

Voters may request their ID is inspected in private.

Alternatively you can apply for a postal vote where ID is not necessary. See the Electoral Commission's website to find out how: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/apply-vote-post](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/apply-vote-post)





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