

COUNTING WOMEN IN: BRISTOL GENERAL ELECTION CANDIDATES 2015 BRISTOL NORTH WEST

WHAT HAVE THE CANDIDATES SAID ABOUT WOMEN'S INTERESTS & SUPPORTING WOMEN'S EQUALITY?

Bristol's political candidates need to address issues of concern to women in the run-up to election day in order to demonstrate that they will represent women's interests effectively and take action for women's equality after the election.

Every candidate standing in the 2015 General Election has been invited to attend a "Women's Question Time" for each of the four constituencies, hosted by Bristol Women's Voice, to set out their pitch to women and to respond to questions posed by women living and working in Bristol.

This report, by Bristol Fawcett, summarises and offers some thoughts on what the candidates for Bristol North West said at the Women's Question Time Event on Thursday 12th March 2015.

Obviously, this report is no substitute for learning more about the candidates and their parties' policies and commitments through their manifestos and events (and we have included links to all the candidates' web pages as far as we can find them). Neither is this a comprehensive report on everything the candidates have said on all issues affecting women, or about women's equality. This report can only capture the responses given to the questions raised on the day. We have not scored opening and closing statements; nonetheless these will of course be of interest to readers seeking to discover how the candidates present their key messages for women.

What we did ...

We attended the question time event and noted the candidates' statements and their responses to questions determined by Bristol Women's Voice in consultation with their members. We then compiled some brief comments on the following basis:

1. 'What the candidate said' is a summary of candidates' statements and responses given at the Women's Question Time event based on combining the notes of three non-political party affiliated Bristol Fawcett members present at the meeting. Sometimes candidates were asked for a personal view and sometimes they were asked to talk about their party policy.
2. Any commentary was agreed with full consensus by three members of the Bristol Counting Women In group – none of these members has a party political affiliation and none is active in any candidates' campaigns.
3. We were interested in the questions: Did the candidate demonstrate awareness of the issues as they relate to women? Were they knowledgeable about the current policy position? Did they demonstrate commitment to key policy changes as recommended by authoritative cross-party or non-party sources? Are their commitments likely to make a significant impact for women and are they party or manifesto commitments?

The candidates will have views, and their parties will have policies, that are not captured in this report and we strongly encourage all voters to investigate the candidates and their political parties' manifestos.

If candidates had said something relevant in response to an earlier question or during their opening statement during the question time event, we took this into account when commenting.

There are three parts to this report – the first part lists the candidates who did not attend the event, the second part reports on those candidates who attended in person and the third part reports on those who sent a representative. Clearly, a representative can only provide information about party policy and not about the personal views of absent colleagues.

Part one – those who did not attend

Candidate:	Michael Frost www.bristolukip.org
Party:	UKIP
What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
The candidate did not attend the Question Time Event and did not respond to Bristol Fawcett's offer to brief all candidates	We are unable to provide any commentary for this candidate

Candidate:	Steve Norman www.classwarparty.org.uk/avonmouth-bristol-first-electoral-test-class-war
Party:	Class War
What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
The candidate did not attend the Question Time Event and did not respond to Bristol Fawcett's offer to brief all candidates	We are unable to provide any commentary for this candidate

Part two – those who attended in person

Candidate:	Darren Jones www.darren-jones.co.uk	
Party:	Labour	
	What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
Opening Statement	Acknowledged being a man (being “born into patriarchy”). Wants empowerment for all and a level playing field. Labour are leading on women’s representation – All Women Shortlists and significant representation (almost 50%) in shadow cabinet – women’s voices being heard at the top. Would establish local commissions to advise on Local Jobs Plan with a seat at table for women’s organisations.	
Child poverty – 2% in Henleaze, 47% in Southmead. 92% of lone parents are female. What would you do to address this?	Experienced child poverty himself growing up in Lawrence Hill. This is one reason why he wanted to stand. He wants to empower families by increasing free childcare hours from 12-20 hours a week and lift the 3 hour block on childcare. Labour will offer free before and after school childcare.	Clear policy commitments around supporting parents in work and childcare provision. Did not address non-work benefits / child benefit
What would your party do to increase women’s representation at national and local level?	It is disrespectful to say that women from all women shortlists aren't there on merit. We mustn't have a flash mob. We need structural long term change. Fully support All Women Shortlists. Women in this government’s cabinet have resigned or been sacked – we need to ensure long term change.	Shares Fawcett position on AWS (all women shortlists) and has good understanding of the importance for long term structural change. Acknowledged cultural change needed but did not mention structural barriers of women’s caring role. In previous statement referred to local and national representation.
What are your main priorities for women’s safety?	Was appalled when researching sexual assault/rape/domestic violence figures. 40,000 women have experienced this in Bristol which is 10% of the population. Stats for reporting of crime. Reporting and prosecutions have gone down. Labour will bring in national commissioner to assure justice for women. There are inequalities across the country in the way police forces treat offences. Labour have proposed measures for relationship education in schools which were blocked by the current government.	Knowledge and understanding of facts and figures. Very good on victim focus and on policy commitments in criminal justice system. Also raised Labour’s multiple attempts to tackle violence through prevention via PSHE in schools. No mention of male entitlement as primary motivation for violence against women.
80% of cuts have come from women’s pockets. Do you think this is fair? What would you do about it?	£22bn of the £28bn of cuts have come from women. Labour are carrying out a zero based spending review. The pay gap still persists with women earning 81p to every £1 earned by men. Labour has a commitment to raise the minimum wage to a living wage of £8 an hour and wants to offer tax incentives to companies employing women.	Showed awareness of unfair impact of cuts on women. Did not raise how Equality Impact Assessments conducted properly would have mitigated against this unfairness. No commitment to tackle existing unfair cuts to welfare. Labour has commenced zero based spending review prioritising public services. Raised economic measures including living wage

		and childcare measures to 'offset' cuts. Did not propose reinstating cut services or welfare.
How can PSHE be assured and what would the compromises be?	Labour's attempts to get PHSE through have been blocked repeatedly by the current government who have whipped their MPs to oppose the bill. Labour will be giving £2m to NGOs and charities instead of just asking teachers to deliver the PHSE curriculum. Need to teach equality and respect to young boys as well as young girls .	Full answer demonstrating clear policy commitment, understanding of the issues and tensions and additionally made it clear that boys' attitudes are an issue.
Speaker is in favour of the Nordic model. What is your party's policy on prostitution? What would you do to tackle the sex industry in Bristol and I include our three strip clubs in that.	Jacqui Smith at the Home Office in the last government was an advocate of the Swedish (Nordic) model where we criminalise the demand side and not the supply side, as is Thangam Debonnaire (PPC in Bristol West). Sex worker recruitment can stem from sexual abuse. SEVs can't be assumed to be 'entertainment'. They are normalising sexual abuse and we need to address that. Speaking as a lawyer, if someone refuses a job it is seen as breach of contract and the client can be sued. For a sex worker, a breach of contract means rape. Sex work is not work like any other. We need to be bold about saying that.	The only candidate to speak about men's demand / entitlement to women's bodies. Referenced party policy, clear understanding of the issues.
What is your party's stance on pornography?	Not sure what our direct policy is on pornography. Have supported measures under this government around child pornography, strengthening restrictions around access with search engines & other online platforms.	No party position although evidence of party political action. 'Child pornography' is better described as child abuse pornography.
Closing statement	9.1m women didn't vote in the last election. We need to recognise why politics can make a difference. We need to look at the track record of the Labour government and the track record of other parties in women's issues and look at the manifesto.	

Candidate:	Claire Champion-Smith www.libdems.org.uk/clare_campion_smith	
Party:	Lib Dem	
	What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
Opening Statement	Here to represent older women. We are going backwards in terms of equality. We didn't need to fight for equality when she was at university. At a recent event about Bristol's flagship project to promote education about consent, abuse and healthy relationships, there was one man in the room. We need to make sure that we engage with men.	

<p>Child poverty – 2% in Henleaze, 47% in Southmead. 92% of lone parents are female. What would you do to address this?</p>	<p>Lib Dems would help by lifting the tax threshold and increasing childcare provision. Loneliness for single parents is a big issue. Lib Dems have maintained children's centres locally in Bristol. Lib Dems would push these services to reach out to single mothers and would offer training in adult learning centres.</p>	<p>Did mention initiatives for childcare, tax threshold and higher employment (but: not among women). Very focussed on local services for families – children's centres maintained in Bristol but this is local government while at national government they are closing in huge numbers. Tackling loneliness does not tackle child poverty.</p>
<p>What would your party do to increase women's representation at national and local level?</p>	<p>Applauds what Labour did to increase women's representation. Has noticed that a lot of young girls are keen to be on youth council but this is not politically affiliated. The cut and thrust can put them off. Locally we need to encourage people to become school governors, mentor women and applaud whenever we have a good role model, e.g. the female leader of the Council.</p>	<p>Personal strong support for AWS (but this is not a Lib Dem policy), good understanding of role of media bias and party political tribalism. Did not mention structural barriers of women's caring role. Good recognition of positive encouragement steps but not structural steps.</p>
<p>What are your main priorities for women's safety?</p>	<p>Women are more in danger in their own home. We need to make sure that the legal process for prosecutions is carried out in a sympathetic way. Challenge national commissioners. On average there are 3 contacts with victims before they make the break. We need to change the culture and start with young people by offering compulsory PHSE. There has already been a culture change from when the police would be called to an incident and would dismiss it as "just a domestic."</p>	<p>Good victim focus in terms of criminal justice system and raised importance of good local services. Culture change and compulsory PSHE acknowledged. No policy commitments. No mention of male entitlement as primary motivation for violence against women.</p>
<p>80% of cuts have come from women's pockets. Do you think this is fair? What would you do about it?</p>	<p>Finds questions like this quite difficult. We haven't been able to unpick the problem. The cuts haven't intentionally been aimed at women. We need to look at it more carefully. Knows this is not a very good answer. Needs to find out what our concerns are.</p>	<p>Demonstrated no awareness of unfair impact of cuts on women. Focussed on lack of intention of politicians to cause disproportionate harm. Did not raise how Equality Impact Assessments conducted properly would have mitigated against this unfairness.</p>
<p>How can PSHE be assured and what would the compromises be</p>	<p>PHSE should start at age 4-5 and be age-appropriate. We need to look at how schools could incorporate it into the curriculum.</p>	<p>In support of PSHE on the curriculum. Referenced the Bristol Ideal and men's engagement in her opening statement.</p>
<p>Speaker is in favour of the Nordic model. What is your party's policy on prostitution? What would you do to tackle the sex industry in Bristol and I include our three strip clubs in that.</p>	<p>SEVs are covered by national frameworks for local licensing. Feels uncomfortable about SEVs. Would like to know more about the Nordic model. We need to give women more support. Often victims start at an early age. Do not criminalise prostitutes.</p>	<p>Somewhat vague answer and with only one firm point.</p>
<p>What is your party's stance on pornography?</p>	<p>The girl guides did a great campaign on page 3. The Lib Dems believe in personal liberty. Personally would like to get rid of pornography altogether. Women with a free choice would not put themselves in those positions. The party does get its knickers in a twist about this. Young boys are accessing pornography online.</p>	<p>A conflict between personal and presumed party policies here.</p>

	Doesn't know off hand the party's policy on it.	
Closing statement	Lib Dems are fighting to keep the libraries open. Shares vision for an equal society. Lib Dems have started rebalancing the tax system but obviously difficult with only 8% of MPs. Norman Lamb has committed to mental health being given the same significance as physical health.	

Candidate:	Charlotte Leslie www.charlotteleslie.com	
Party:	Conservative	
	What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
Opening Statement	Recently saw "The Imitation Game". Appalling how we recently treated gay people and that women had such a struggle to get anywhere. Porn and hyper-sexualisation a timebomb of abuse. In terms of representation we have a long way to go. Progress has been made re women on FTSE Boards and on the pay gap. There are great things that women can do in politics. Men tend to focus on status, women work together to get stuff done. Come on in.	
Child poverty – 2% in Henleaze, 47% in Southmead. 92% of lone parents are female. What would you do to address this?	The Conservatives have extended free childcare for under 2s. 15 hours for younger children. Tax free child care. We need more people in work to create a healthier economy.	Mentioned rising employment but with no gendered analysis. Did refer to positive childcare provision and future plans for tax free childcare. Broad brush economy approach but not gendered. Did not refer to benefits.
What would your party do to increase women's representation at national and local level?	Really solid change takes time. We need to ensure that all women are there on merit. Is pleased that she got elected on merit and not via an all women shortlist or via positive discrimination. There are things that put women off entering politics like the mud-slinging. Has decided personally that she won't be negative about her opponents. Positive discrimination can work – all Conservative PPCs in Bristol are women.	Acknowledged cultural barriers. Used 'positive discrimination' to describe positive action but handled being corrected very well. In favour of positive action 'at starting point'. Talked of need for everyone to know women candidates are there on merit. Described how 'soft' measures contributed to all PPCs in Bristol being women – which is positive - but as this is not replicated nationally is not a systemic solution to a systemic problem. Did not mention structural barriers of women's caring role. She is a sitting MP and a role model.
What are your main priorities for women's safety?	The fact that people are surprised at things like DV statistics shows that people (victims) don't tend to talk about it. It is good that we have a female police and crime commissioner. We need to empower victims and make sure that they (she) understand that it's not her fault. We need to offer education in schools so that women can understand the signs and be convinced when to get out.	Good awareness of spectrum of violence. Focus on empowerment of women and less on tackling male violence other than that specifically originating from people who had themselves experienced abuse. Sex and relationship education – good focus but again on raising girls' awareness. No mention of male entitlement as primary motivation for violence against women.

	There are cycles of abuse – often abusers have been abused themselves. The Southmead Project aims to tackle this.	
80% of cuts have come from women's pockets. Do you think this is fair? What would you do about it?	We have the fastest growing economy in the Western World. Wages are rising above inflation. Austerity is not stand alone. We can't spend on everything we want to. The calculations that are quoted don't take into account the tax cuts that benefitted 12m women. 12% of FTSE 100 companies now have women on their boards which is a positive story. We need to get the economy going.	Focussed on economic profile of UK not on gender impact. Focused on some measures which mitigated impact on women and did acknowledge the cuts impacted more on women than on 'others'. No policy proposals to address unfair impact.
How can PSHE be assured and what would the compromises be	One of the problems is that there is no time to add additional content to the curriculum. We need to identify the problem and put it in the curriculum. Teachers tend to panic at the idea of adding more. We need to release teaching from politics. Has personally been working on the establishment of a Royal College of Teaching. The Government has pledged to fund this. This will enable teachers to make those decisions. The government has been guilty of portraying the unions as a negative force when it shouldn't have done.	Understood the compromises – clearly knowledgeable about the area of teaching and supported including it in the curriculum.
Speaker is in favour of the Nordic model. What is your party's policy on prostitution? What would you do to tackle the sex industry in Bristol and I include our three strip clubs in that.	Won't know what the party's policy is until the manifesto is released. There is a balance. There has always been alcohol/prostitution so it is unlikely that we would ever get rid of it altogether. Strict measures would likely drive it underground where people would be less protected and less safe. That's the same for strip clubs as well. Growing political consensus that criminalising people is not the answer. Often prostitutes are victims of long-term disadvantage. At the other end you'll find prostitutes who have chosen this as a lifestyle choice. Government's priority should be to protect women. Personally has great sympathy for the Nordic model.	A considered view. There is no evidence that strip clubs would be driven underground. Focus on women in prostitution but no mention of men's demand or entitlement. Did not address Bristol SEVs.
What is your party's stance on pornography?	Elephant in the room is the internet. Children are growing up with this. We need to recognise the scale of the problem. Any action to tackle the problem needs cross party support. Government is giving £500k to set up an internet safety centre which will do things like offer teachers advice. There is a ticking timebomb of abuse problems with people growing up now. This is quite scary.	Makes the connection between abuse and pornography and refers to her government's related actions.
Closing statement	Believes in practical answers. Working in politics has been a pleasure. Women are good at putting status aside and getting stuff done. We need to say how good it is in politics too.	

Part three – those who sent a representative

Representatives should only give a party overview and cannot represent the personal views of absent candidates.

Candidate:	Anne Lemon (represented by Selena Williams) www.facebook.com/pages/Anne-Lemon-for-Bristol-North-West/1530288930591775	
Party:	TUSC (Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts)	
	What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
Opening Statement	TUSC oppose all cuts. Railways and Royal Mail would be re-nationalised, 'bedroom tax' scrapped and no more council estate sell-offs. No nuclear weapons, banks brought back into line. TUSC oppose all racism and fascism and are for equality for women's rights and equal pay.	
Child poverty – 2% in Henleaze, 47% in Southmead. 92% of lone parents are female. What would you do to address this?	80% of tax/benefit changes come from women's pockets. Refuges have been closed which traps women in abusive relationships. We need to reverse the benefit cuts, offer affordable housing and support women to get back to work.	Raised housing, training, benefits and this was not all about employment although she did not mention childcare. Omission of childcare a big omission but had much more holistic gendered analysis of child poverty
What would your party do to increase women's representation at national and local level?	We need to support women at a national/local level. There is a gender difference in confidence. Candidate is a member of Unison and there has been a history of fighting for rights by unions. Mentioned example of closure of care home as a route for women campaigning locally to find their voice.	Talked about confidence in particular and how local engagement including in unions encourages women to find their voice. Did not mention structural barriers of women's caring role. No policy position mentioned.
What are your main priorities for women's safety?	Women are in greatest danger in the home. Domestic Violence and Abuse have a basis in economics. If cuts mean that women can't get out they can't leave abusive relationships. Most women have been sexually harrassed at some point in their life. We have a raunch culture in the media so it is worse now. There is a proliferation of sexual images. Things like the Slutwalks are aiming to tackle this. Women are fighting back.	Some awareness but no clear policy commitments. No mention of male entitlement as primary motivation for violence against women.
80% of cuts have come from women's pockets. Do you think this is fair? What would you do about it?	HSBC after reforms. Offshore tax schemes. Tackling tax avoidance would clear the need for austerity. The choices we make are political. We need to end austerity.	Proposed solutions to austerity that will not take more from women – refer back to opening statement for proposed reforming measures. Did not specifically address gendered nature of cuts but proposal to remove them as inherently unfair to women and to those in poverty.
How can PSHE be assured and what would the compromises be	The autonomy of teachers has been taken away. We have increased the pressures on children. We need a less target based curriculum.	Did not answer the question. Did not address what party would do if in government.
Speaker is in favour of the Nordic model. What is your party's policy on	Sex workers as a body should be supported. TUSC supports sex worker unions to help and defend each other. Sex workers can suffer horrendous abuse	Has good awareness of impact on women in prostitution but no mention of men's demand or entitlement. Did not address SEVs or provide policy solutions.

prostitution? What would you do to tackle the sex industry in Bristol and I include our three strip clubs in that.	and attacks. Candidate works in the BRI as a nurse and sees the effect. We need to protect individuals. And support organisations like One 25 who are helping women e.g. who have problems related to the drug industry. There needs to be a two pronged attack and a massive injection to social services.	
What is your party's stance on pornography?	Personally has argued against page 3. Not useful for pornography to be made illegal. We need to ridicule it as form of degradation to women.	Demonstrated a policy view -but ridiculing degradation of women is not a solution to women's oppression.
Closing statement	Works as a nurse. Wants to ensure that there's a free NHS. Don't close the libraries.	

Candidate:	Justin Quinnell (represented by Anna McMullen) www.swgreen.org.uk/bristolnorthwest	
Party:	Green	
	What the candidate said.....	Our comments.....
Opening Statement	Greens want to offer real equality to everyone – men and non-men - anyone who wants to define themselves as not male gender. Pay gaps still persist, need more women in leadership. Radical changes are needed to push equality in FTSE 100 companies. This means quotas. Need to expand childcare and encourage workplaces that engage women. Greens are fighting against the cuts. Quoted Fawcett report on cuts to health and social care.	
Child poverty – 2% in Henleaze, 47% in Southmead. 92% of lone parents are female. What would you do to address this?	Went to visit a foodbank recently and met a woman who couldn't afford to go to work once she had paid for childcare. Greens want to see a living wage – want the minimum wage increased to £10 an hour by 2020.	All about low pay; childcare related to affordability not accessibility
What would your party do to increase women's representation at national and local level?	100% of Green MPs are women! Party leader is a woman. The party's membership is made up of a huge number of women under 30. The party provides coaching for leadership and good role models for women. We need to push this model of a different style of politics.	Missed opportunity to discuss Green Party structural policies and previous action taken. Good vision for new inclusive model of politics. Did not mention structural barriers of women's caring role.
What are your main priorities for women's safety?	Was on jury service earlier in the day sitting through a domestic violence case. The case was withdrawn by the woman who ended up being persuaded by perpetrator's family that she would suffer if she proceeded with it. Quoted Fawcett numbers. We need awareness raising on domestic	Good awareness of some statistics. Raised need to 'find' policies putting victim experience at centre. Awareness-raising but not prevention work mentioned. No mention of male entitlement as primary motivation for violence against women.

	violence and to have policies that put victims at the centre and support them.	
80% of cuts have come from women's pockets. Do you think this is fair? What would you do about it?	Agrees with Selena. The cuts have been a smokescreen for the government to cut the public sector and privatise services. The government has borrowed more in the last 5 years than the previous government did in 13 years. The Greens would raise income, would scrap Trident, would introduce a wealth tax on financial transactions in the City and increase income tax on those earning over £100k a year. Green Party would also crack down on tax avoidance.	Raising income, scrapping Trident, cracking down on tax avoidance are measures to tackle austerity which is main concern but these are not measures to redress unfair impact on women. Did not raise how Equality Impact Assessments conducted properly would have mitigated against this unfairness.
How can PSHE be assured and what would the compromises be	Teaching unions are strong but they have been ignored. Any education policies are top down and target driven. We need to trust schools/teachers.	Did not answer the question. Did not address what party would do if in government.
Speaker is in favour of the Nordic model. What is your party's policy on prostitution? What would you do to tackle the sex industry in Bristol and I include our three strip clubs in that.	The Green Party supports the Dutch model which would legalise the sex worker and the buyer of sex. It reached this policy because a sex worker came to speak at the conference one year who said she chose it freely and there were others who wanted to have the choice. The Greens wouldn't want the industry to grow, would want to minimise the number of people entering the industry for the wrong reasons and provide exit support. The Greens want to see transparency in the workplace for sex workers. Locally the Greens have tried to close down SEVs. They encourage men and boys to see women in inappropriate ways.	Focus on women in prostitution but no mention of men's demand or entitlement. However does make these links when it comes to SEVs which seems inconsistent – evidence of party action to tackle SEVs but not the wider sex industry. Evidence of party policy to support women's rights and need for support but very worrying explanation of how party policy was arrived at.
What is your party's stance on pornography?	Caroline Lucas argued against page 3. Do not know what party policy is. Porn is fine between consenting adults but is damaging where there is harm.	Without explaining context of remark about harm and damage, it is difficult to interpret this response.
Closing statement	The Greens want to pursue politics of hope not fear and want to change the fabric of politics.	