

COUNTING WOMEN IN: BRISTOL GENERAL ELECTION CANDIDATES 2015

BRISTOL 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 Tuesday 31st 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. Our comments were agreed with full consensus by two 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:	Paul Turner
Party:	UKIP
Website:	none
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:	Jan McDonald
Party:	Class War
Website:	none
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:	Stephen Williams
Party:	LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
Website:	http://www.stephenwilliams.org.uk/
	What the candidate said.....
Opening Statement	<p>Women's issues are society's issues and male politicians should be just as concerned as female politicians.</p> <p>Biggest challenge in Coalition was economy. Main issue for women is how to participate in economy. Unemployment has fallen and employment of women is at all time high.</p> <p>Fairness at work important and Vince Cable etc have worked on gender pay gap and lack of senior posts. Now, every FTSE 100 company has at least one woman director on Board.</p> <p>Income tax threshold raised so people keep more money.</p>
<p>Q1. Sexual Violence</p> <p>1 in 4 women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, demand on services is rising (quadrupled in local rape crisis). How will parties ensure support to women, including BME women, refugees, women with learning disabilities? And why is this not higher on the agenda?</p>	<p>Says visited centres as a Minister, e.g. met with Women's Aid and also Refuge in London.</p> <p>Government has put funding into services. £10m to ensure no refuges closed.</p> <p>Sits on ministerial committee on VAWG and Theresa May very committed.</p>
<p>Q2. Women's Budget Group estimate 80% of budget changes impacted on women. How would parties' economic plan change this situation?</p>	<p>£750 pa tax cut for everybody under this government and especially good for women as often earn less.</p> <p>There is mandatory reporting of the gender gap – companies have to report average wages.</p> <p>Apprenticeships massively expanded and now have more women than men taking them up.</p>
<p>Q3. Cuts to legal aid and introduction of fees for discrimination tribunals have resulted in a reduction in cases brought forward.</p> <p>How to address work-based discrimination and equal pay issues?</p>	<p>Legal aid budget - was agreed by Con, Lib Dem and Labour that it was too big.</p> <p>Schools need protecting, NHS needs investment, therefore smaller departments have had their budgets cut disproportionately.</p> <p>But despite that, protection to most vulnerable retained, e.g. domestic violence (definition expanded), asylum seeking and housing.</p>
<p>Q4. SW Women's Manifesto has 22 calls for action, which are the parties' manifesto commitments? (And invitation to sign the petition to the Minister for Women)</p>	<p>Lib Dem manifesto published next week but can't see any problem with any of the 22 calls for action; there won't be anything that is counter to them.</p> <p>On childcare, Nick Clegg and others have been strong promoters of providing 15 hours 3-4 year olds and 40% of 2 year olds.</p> <p>Public transport improvement is a strong commitment including local rail and buses.</p>

	<p>Was only male member of cross party committee on body confidence which led to report 2 years ago on media representations of women and anorexia etc.</p> <p>Acknowledged party's embarrassing record on women MPs.</p>
<p>Q5. Fracking risks leading to contamination of water especially affecting women, for example, causing birth defects and miscarriage – what is your party's view of these risks?</p>	<p>There is a consensus that climate change must be tackled.</p> <p>Demand for energy must be tackled.</p> <p>As Housing Minister in last two years, had helped pass strictest building standards ever, and tackled fuel poverty.</p> <p>But in reality we will have to continue to rely on gas to power our homes, industry and transport etc. Not possible to stop in the short term. Can't replace with renewables quickly and coal is most damaging and must be first to be phased out, then gas.</p>
<p>Q6. 50% of children in Lawrence Hill live in poverty, mostly in single parent households. What policies will your parties tackle this by?</p>	<p>Has worked with Single Parent Network over the years.</p> <p>Own mother widowed quite young and grew up in one-parent family.</p> <p>Lib Dems have provided free school meals for infants. Saves c.£400 pa to families.</p> <p>Only government minister who had free school meals at school, grew up in 'grinding poverty' in South Wales.</p> <p>Parliament imbalanced in class terms, not just gender terms.</p>
<p>Q7. Women seeking asylum who have experienced sexual violence, for instance, find it difficult to access services because don't have permit to stay in UK.</p>	<p>Has helped hundreds of people with their asylum claims. Legal aid for those cases has been protected.</p> <p>Supports asylum seekers being able to work if waiting more than six months for decision. Home Office does take long time to make decision.</p>
<p>Closing statement</p>	<p>Men can be feminists too.</p> <p>There will be difficult choices whichever party is elected.</p> <p>Lib Dems are only party supporting NHS investment. Also want to put mental health on same footing as physical health in terms of importance.</p> <p>Every child should be taught by qualified teachers.</p> <p>Coalition has been difficult admittedly, with the economic situation, but do you still want the Lib Dems to humanise winning party?</p>

Our Comments

Demonstrated some awareness of the issues as they relate to women and some awareness of appropriate action to address these issues but without strong evidence of commitments

Candidate:	Thangam Debonnaire
Party:	LABOUR
Website:	http://www.debonnaire.co.uk/
	What the candidate said.....
Opening Statement	<p>Spent whole life working for gender equality and domestic violence prevention, and in Bristol.</p> <p>Wants more feminists in Parliament. Only three women in Cabinet posts currently.</p> <p>Talking to local women, e.g. Woman with three jobs and can't find childcare; Woman who is scared of losing DLA and support to her carer; Single parents worried about crime and job prospects for their kids.</p> <p>Labour passed Equal Pay Act and anti-discrimination legislation.</p> <p>Still 20% pay gap.</p> <p>Women have been hit by 85% of cuts.</p> <p>Lots of women in Labour leadership positions.</p>
<p>Q1. Sexual Violence</p> <p>1 in 4 women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, demand on services is rising (quadrupled in local rape crisis). How will parties ensure support to women, including BME women, refugees, women with learning disabilities? And why is this not higher on the agenda?</p>	<p>Challenged statement that government has increased funding. ££ has suffered.</p> <p>Personal experience of setting up services (Women's Aid) and taking on government through legal challenge to increase protection to women and children.</p> <p>Three Labour candidates with direct experiences of service provision (Brighton Pavilion, Birmingham and Bristol West).</p> <p>Is in Labour manifesto. Will get rid of Police Commissioners and invest money in services instead.</p> <p>But bigger picture is gender inequality – needs to be tackled.</p>
<p>Q2. Women's Budget Group estimate 80% of budget changes impacted on women. How would parties economic plan change this situation?</p>	<p>Mandatory monitoring for companies employing over 350.</p> <p>Will boost minimum wage.</p> <p>25 hours free childcare.</p> <p>Reverse damaging cuts to Sure Start Centres.</p> <p>Increase girls' uptake and engagement with STEM subjects.</p>
<p>Q3. Cuts to legal aid and introduction of fees for discrimination tribunals have resulted in a reduction in cases brought forward.</p> <p>How to address work-based discrimination and equal pay issues?</p>	<p>Best protection is to be trade union member.</p> <p>Proud member of UNISON which is party of women, many of whom low paid. Unions give free legal advice.</p> <p>Pointed out that monitoring wage averages is not the same as the GAP, which is important.</p> <p>Priority is addressing maternity discrimination.</p> <p>Has direct experience of being a litigant in person.</p>
<p>Q4. SW Women's Manifesto has 22 calls for action, which are the parties' manifesto commitments?</p>	<p>Selected from all-woman shortlist. Very proud of that. Rwanda has twice as many women MPs than UK. When women are in parliament, we do things that benefit men and women.</p> <p>Will sign petition.</p>

(And invitation to sign the petition to the Minister for Women)	<p>Labour already has track record on many of the 22 actions. Wants to go further and get better.</p> <p>Wants to be held to account through regular annual meetings. Assess progress point by point.</p>
Q5. Fracking risks leading to contamination of water especially affecting women, for example, causing birth defects and miscarriage – what is your party's view of these risks?	<p>Labour pushed government to introduce more stringent regulation.</p> <p>Didn't know about particular impacts on women's health and would be interested to find out more.</p> <p>Need to be sure to look at the evidence as well. May be that no fracking takes place.</p>
Q6. 50% of children in Lawrence Hill live in poverty, mostly in single parent households. What policies will your parties tackle this by?	<p>Campaign office looks out on Lawrence Hill and some appalling housing, including rental sector. Must be tackled, as well as building new houses.</p> <p>Fuel poverty is a big issue.</p> <p>Labour Party passed Child Poverty Act and has history of tackling poverty – what it was founded on.</p>
Q7. Women seeking asylum who have experienced sexual violence, for instance, find it difficult to access services because don't have permit to stay in UK.	<p>Despite Human Rights Act, lack of provision, especially for women's mental and sexual health needs.</p> <p>Committed to being a champion and will fight within party and beyond.</p> <p>Supports asylum seekers working and thinks locking up people is wrong when they come for sanctuary.</p>
Closing statement	<p>Believes there needs to be more brave and feminist women in parliament.</p> <p>Inspired by Swedish foreign minister who this week has dared to speak out about mistreatment of women and girls in Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>Labour tradition of having an ethical foreign policy – bringing women's rights into that is essential. Link between human rights and gender equality. May mean you don't always agree with your party, but need to represent your constituency. Will support all points in the Women's Manifesto.</p>

Our Comments

Evidence of deep understanding of issues facing women, demonstrating clear and strong policy / spend commitments that would make a significant impact and including a number of party / manifesto commitments

Candidate:	Darren Hall
Party:	GREEN PARTY
Website:	http://www.darrenhall.org.uk/
	What the candidate said.....
Opening Statement	<p>Worked in Home Office commissioning DV services and drugs services for sex workers.</p> <p>Acknowledge long way to go to address gender equality, locally, nationally and globally.</p> <p>Fawcett report Cutting Women Out shows women are more likely to be hit, esp. as women hit by public sector cuts.</p> <p>Hidden problem largely.</p> <p>Must reverse austerity and build society from bottom up. Must take 'gender mainstreaming' forward – get women into decision-making.</p> <p>Wants to be a feminist in government.</p>
<p>Q1. Sexual Violence</p> <p>1 in 4 women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, demand on services is rising (quadrupled in local rape crisis). How will parties ensure support to women, including BME women, refugees, women with learning disabilities? And why is this not higher on the agenda?</p>	<p>Reality is that austerity economics means that very little money will be around to invest in services. Green Party is only party not signed up to austerity.</p> <p>Young people growing up with poor understanding of relationships – need better education in schools. Legal aid is very important too, and has been cut – Green Party would reverse.</p>
<p>Q2. Women's Budget Group estimate 80% of budget changes impacted on women. How would parties economic plan change this situation?</p>	<p>Easy to make political promises, but unless reverse austerity, won't be able to pay for things we all want.</p> <p>How do we place value – it's so driven by GDP. Needs to be thought of differently, e.g. value of care or 'non-jobs'.</p> <p>Not just minimum wage but a living wage and starting to think about Citizens Income so that everyone is valued, including often hidden contributions to society.</p>
<p>Q3. Cuts to legal aid and introduction of fees for discrimination tribunals have resulted in a reduction in cases brought forward.</p> <p>How to address work-based discrimination and equal pay issues?</p>	<p>At conference, legal aid was 8th most popular motion at conference. Unanimous call to cancel legal aid cuts.</p> <p>It's the sort of thing people may not realise has happened until they have experience of it.</p> <p>Fees for tribunals etc .is a very callous way of cutting people out of the system.</p> <p>Panorama programme about change to being a litigant in person and it's quite an aggressive male process, vulnerable women are going to find it especially difficult. Has to be changed.</p>
<p>Q4. SW Women's Manifesto has 22 calls for action, which are the parties' manifesto</p>	<p>A lot in the Women's Manifesto and has only looked at briefly – some immediately jump out as clear priorities, e.g. living wage and better childcare.</p>

<p>commitments? (And invitation to sign the petition to the Minister for Women)</p>	<p>Green Party policy comes from grassroots and that is a powerful process and members have influence. May not have signed yet but will look up petition.</p>
<p>Q5. Fracking risks leading to contamination of water especially affecting women, for example, causing birth defects and miscarriage – what is your party's view of these risks?</p>	<p>Green Party totally against. Lots of evidence, it is very clear. Lots of regulation of oil industry but not always happy outcome but hadn't stopped disasters where not applied. Climate change and global warming means that fossil fuels should stay in the ground. Green Party MEP report due showing that South West can produce all its needs through renewable sources. New energy efficient houses in Portishead built resulting in bills to families of £20mth. Reducing energy needs is vital part of the challenge.</p>
<p>Q6. 50% of children in Lawrence Hill live in poverty, mostly in single parent households. What policies will your parties tackle this by?</p>	<p>Bristol West has extreme health and wealth inequality. Affordable childcare and living wage is important but also more fundamental issues. The Spirit Level book shows that in a more equal society, even the rich do better.</p>
<p>Q7. Women seeking asylum who have experienced sexual violence, for instance, find it difficult to access services because don't have permit to stay in UK.</p>	<p>Bristol is a city of sanctuary. Doing better than most, but Refugee Rights for instance only three days a week opening. Part of it is a food bank, giving people dignity. Language of fear – e.g. putting people into detention centres.</p>
<p>Closing statement</p>	<p>Reality is that very little will change in next parliament under the three main parties. There's a myth that there's no money but the national debt is a smaller proportion of GDP than was the case when the NHS was founded. The ideology needs to be tackled. See www.voteformpolicies.org. Proud of policies based on equality.</p>

Our Comments

Some understanding of the issues from a policy perspective and references to some existing or proposed policies or actions, but without demonstrating commitment to key policy changes of specific relevance to women

Candidate:	Dawn Parry
Party:	Independent
Website:	No webpage. LinkedIn profile: https://www.linkedin.com/pub/dawn-parry/25/8a2/340 http://mymp2015.org.uk/
	What the candidate said.....
Opening Statement	<p>Was young single parent and little has changed. Childcare problems. Important to modernise democracy.</p> <p>Wants to change status of MPs so that there can be job-share MP opportunities. More women and more independents necessary to represent people.</p> <p>Would be a strong voice for women.</p>
<p>Q1. Sexual Violence</p> <p>1 in 4 women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, demand on services is rising (quadrupled in local rape crisis). How will parties ensure support to women, including BME women, refugees, women with learning disabilities? And why is this not higher on the agenda?</p>	<p>Has two sons and is aware of how media works against parents' values because of constant online exploitation of women, across all platforms.</p> <p>Wants better relationship education – they are a two-way thing.</p> <p>Must stop women being objectified everywhere, starting from very young.</p> <p>Women's refuges have been hit in the cuts.</p> <p>(Appears to be using reference material from the Bristol Fawcett Cutting Women Out report here).</p>
<p>Q2. Women's Budget Group estimate 80% of budget changes impacted on women. How would parties economic plan change this situation?</p>	<p>Childcare so expensive (sees this as a grandmother as well as mother).</p> <p>Money should go to families to choose if they want to stay at home.</p> <p>Supports free English language tuition, part of a holistic problem.</p>
<p>Q3. Cuts to legal aid and introduction of fees for discrimination tribunals have resulted in a reduction in cases brought forward.</p> <p>How to address work-based discrimination and equal pay issues?</p>	<p>Whistle-blowing is important to highlight discrimination of any sort.</p> <p>Would reverse legal aid cuts.</p> <p>Even though illegal, violence and abuse has to be challenged through civil system. Makes a mockery of justice.</p> <p>Feels there *is* money - £120 billion is owed by companies in tax.</p>
<p>Q4. SW Women's Manifesto has 22 calls for action, which are the parties' manifesto commitments?</p> <p>(And invitation to sign the petition to the Minister for Women)</p>	<p>Has signed petition and urges everyone to sign it. Whoever is elected, this agenda must be endorsed in full.</p> <p>Also signed www.mymp2015.org.uk which is about getting more of a say for people.</p> <p>Only 22% MPs are women and similar proportion in senior management posts.</p>
<p>Q5. Fracking risks leading to contamination of water</p>	<p>Virtually all MPs voted for fracking.</p>

especially affecting women, for example, causing birth defects and miscarriage – what is your party's view of these risks?	Totally against fracking. Shouldn't be legal to frack under people's homes. Not at all sustainable. We need to be more creative for cleaner and greener ways of generating power. Fracking should be banned. Should be about people not profits.
Q6. 50% of children in Lawrence Hill live in poverty, mostly in single parent households. What policies will your parties tackle this by?	Government talks about more employed women but mainly doing rotten part time jobs. The great workforce of women is not being utilised properly. Strongly in favour of living wage. And need women into Parliament to say what we need.
Q7. Women seeking asylum who have experienced sexual violence, for instance, find it difficult to access services because don't have permit to stay in UK.	Recent play on Radio 4 was devastating. Women held as prisoners. Would vote to get rid of detention centres. Also worried about government if re-elected to get rid of Human Rights Acts which would be monstrous.
Closing statement	Wants more democracy and more women in government. Doesn't believe in austerity. Elected MPs seem to work against not for us. Ashamed that UK is one of greatest tax havens while one million use food banks. Bristol has some of the poorest and richest 10% in the country – such extremes unacceptable.

Our Comments

Some understanding of the issues from a policy perspective and references to some existing or proposed policies or actions, some commitment to key policy changes of specific relevance to women

Candidate:	Claire Hiscott
Party:	Conservative
Website:	http://www.clairehiscott.org.uk/
	What the candidate said.....
Opening Statement	Family motto of 'don't moan about it, do something about it'. She was first to go to university. Inspired by first female Prime Minister. Wants to be selected on merit. First home secretary and first openly lesbian party leader in Scotland. Proud of track record including tackling FGM and forced marriage.
Q1. Sexual Violence 1 in 4 women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, demand on services is rising (quadrupled in local rape crisis). How will parties ensure support to women, including BME women, refugees, women with	Good news is that more women are coming forward, and that's a credit to society. Taboos being removed. Referenced funding for community champions for FGM and forced marriage. In Bristol, translated health care information to make it available to many communities. Better awareness and adverts on abuse and consent.

learning disabilities? And why is this not higher on the agenda?	
Q2. Women's Budget Group estimate 80% of budget changes impacted on women. How would parties economic plan change this situation?	Cuts are unpleasant but important to pay off the 'credit card debt' and not leave it for future generations to pay. Government has taken people out of taxation (25 million people). No magic wand but are investing in women.
Q3. Cuts to legal aid and introduction of fees for discrimination tribunals have resulted in a reduction in cases brought forward. How to address work-based discrimination and equal pay issues?	Has had personal qualms about legal aid changes and would fight to pull some of that back; don't have to always agree with own party, needs a debate. Splitting maternity leave with paternity leave is progress.
Q4. SW Women's Manifesto has 22 calls for action, which are the parties' manifesto commitments? (And invitation to sign the petition to the Minister for Women)	Worked in NHS for 25 years and would promote 10, 11 and 12 as women's health issues should be more recognised, including more dignity and respect, e.g. after childbirth. Personal interest and commitment. Joined Cross Out Cancer campaign. Only issue is with women-only shortlists. Not sure supports this measure.
Q5. Fracking risks leading to contamination of water especially affecting women, for example, causing birth defects and miscarriage – what is your party's view of these risks?	Not an expert and not preferred choice, but government has extended protection to water sources. Stringent rules on where to frack is very important. Doesn't think it will take off as cost is prohibitive.
Q6. 50% of children in Lawrence Hill live in poverty, mostly in single parent households. What policies will your parties tackle this by?	Often works in Lawrence Hill and the inequalities have been around for decades. As councillor keeps urging Council to stop talking about inequality and start doing something. Proud of free childcare for two year olds for families with low incomes. Have to build more houses. Feels energy costs have been tackled.
Q7. Women seeking asylum who have experienced sexual violence, for instance, find it difficult to access services because don't have permit to stay in UK.	Proud of launch of access information which has been translated. Reiterates that legal aid budget fro asylum seekers is protected. Wants to get rid of detention centres.
Closing statement	If you want something said, ask a man. If you want something done, ask a woman. She's a doer. Compassion (in NHS work and local charities) and common sense.

Our Comments

Some understanding of the issues from a policy perspective and references to some existing or proposed policies or actions, some commitment to key policy changes of specific relevance to women

Part three – those who sent a representative

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

Candidate:	Samuel Williams (for Stewart Weston)
Party:	Left Unity
Website:	none
	What the candidate said.....
Opening Statement	<p>Part time primary school children and assists partner as child minder. Enjoys being dad.</p> <p>Socialist, feminist, environmentalist, anti-racist party.</p> <p>Feminist is core because exposes power imbalances. 50% of elected posts have to be women.</p> <p>SW Women's Manifesto is good.</p> <p>To achieve equality, must change class-based system. Wants full democratisation.</p>
<p>Q1. Sexual Violence</p> <p>1 in 4 women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, demand on services is rising (quadrupled in local rape crisis). How will parties ensure support to women, including BME women, refugees, women with learning disabilities? And why is this not higher on the agenda?</p>	<p>Left Unity manifesto was democratically produced and is anti-austerity, needs to be reversed.</p> <p>Asylum seekers are often women who have suffered sexual violence and really important to support specialist services.</p>
<p>Q2. Women's Budget Group estimate 80% of budget changes impacted on women. How would parties economic plan change this situation?</p>	<p>Austerity is an ideological response to crisis in capitalism. Can and should be reversed.</p> <p>Women are still responsible for childcare and housework and 'social reproduction' which a healthy society needs, and should be valued.</p> <p>Supports free crèches but also valuing motherhood. Things are valued where there is profit, not just use.</p>
<p>Q3. Cuts to legal aid and introduction of fees for discrimination tribunals have resulted in a reduction in cases brought forward.</p> <p>How to address work-based discrimination and equal pay issues?</p>	<p>Drew on Left Unity manifesto</p> <p>Reinstate legal aid funding and end privatisation of justice system</p> <p>Directly elected police authorities instead of PCC</p> <p>Recent changes have denied most vulnerable people access to justice.</p> <p>Needs a fundamental approach that looks at causes of crime, such as poverty and alienation, and rehabilitation, not just punishment.</p>
<p>Q4. SW Women's Manifesto has 22 calls for action, which are the parties' manifesto commitments? (And invitation to sign the petition</p>	<p>Left Unity Manifesto includes access to jobs and equal pay. Access to healthcare for women specifically not in the manifesto but certainly spoken about; likewise access to power and influence for women but noted 50% elected posts are women. Also caucuses for marginalised</p>

to the Minister for Women)	<p>groups can organise within the organisation.</p> <p>Will sign the petition.</p> <p>Welcomes suggestions for policy, also a bottom up process.</p>
Q5. Fracking risks leading to contamination of water especially affecting women, for example, causing birth defects and miscarriage – what is your party's view of these risks?	<p>Meeting recently in Easton Community Centre attended by Frack Free Bristol. Local organisations are very important (it's not just about elections).</p> <p>There are no marketplace solutions to climate change – what's needed is fundamental transformation of our relationship with nature. Humanity's exploitation of nature often leads to exploitation of people.</p>
Q6. 50% of children in Lawrence Hill live in poverty, mostly in single parent households. What policies will your parties tackle this by?	<p>Having worked in a nearby school, aware of the devastating impact of poverty on children. Rent controls and agency fees have to go.</p> <p>Mentioned Women's Manifesto points. Support them as ways of addressing having decent housing, heat and food.</p>
Q7. Women seeking asylum who have experienced sexual violence, for instance, find it difficult to access services because don't have permit to stay in UK.	<p>Access to specialist services very important.</p> <p>Left Unity want strong migration voice especially given the rise of UKIP and move to the right. Need to defend rights of asylum seekers and freedom of movement across borders. Sustained campaign of vilification from all the major parties; rights to benefits, housing, legal rights all restricted.</p>
Closing statement	<p>Important to hold elected representatives to account but must acknowledge that whoever gets in, there will be a democratic deficit and a lack of mandate. Elections are only part of democracy and probably not the most important. Bristol has such a lot of grassroots organisation – need to continue organising at community level and make links to make a fairer society from the bottom up.</p>

Our Comments

Did not demonstrate adequate understanding of issues as they relate to women; few personal or party political commitments made