

# The Labour Party

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**Gloria De Piero**  
**Labour's Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities**

April 7th, 2015

RE: International Women's Day

Dear Natalie,

Thank you for your letter setting out what the UNA believes should be the key priorities for future progress on women's rights.

Labour's vision for Britain is based on the fundamental principle that our success relies on everyone having the means and opportunity to fulfill their potential and play their full part in society.

The empowerment of women and girls, and eradication of the structural and social barriers that continue to hold women back are goals central to this principle and will be at the core of Labour's programme for Government. In 1995 189 governments signed up to the Beijing platform for action and affirmed the fundamental truth that women's rights are human rights.

I am proud of the leadership my Party showed in Government to deliver on this agenda, for women here in Britain and abroad.

The Labour government acted on economic inequality, introducing the National Minimum Wage and closing the gender pay gap by a third. With Labour record numbers of young women attended University, we opened over 3,000 Sure Start Centres, introduced the right to request flexible working, extended maternity leave to a full year and doubled maternity pay. We acted on discrimination, strengthening the law on sex and pregnancy discrimination, and we transformed the way that police, prosecutors and courts dealt with cases of domestic and sexual violence.

However, as you note in your letter, gender inequality continues to blight the lives of women around the world and here in the UK.

Last year the UK slipped from 18th to 26th on gender equality in the WEF Global Gender rankings.

In the last five years we have seen women's employment grow, but progress on the pay gap stall, women still earn just 81p for every pound a man earns on average. The growth of low-paid, insecure work and of zero-hour contracts has exposed and deepened women's economic inequality. And against this backdrop the Government has chosen to hit women hardest, with independent analysis by the House of Commons Library commissioned by Labour finding that six out of every seven pounds raised by the Government in changes to direct taxes and benefits have come from the pockets of women.

Cuts to work experience and careers advice mean young women are not being encouraged to consider subjects such as science and technology.



The number of rape and domestic violence cases sent by the police for prosecution are down and cuts to funding and refuge closures have left specialist services across the UK at crisis point. The Government has failed to ratify the Istanbul Convention on Violence against Women. Cuts to legal aid and evidence restrictions have led to fewer victims of domestic violence having access to justice and the introduction of employment tribunal fees has seen the number of sex discrimination claims fall by 82%.

Women remain under-represented in our politics, in our Cabinet and across public life.

Labour will place women's empowerment at the heart of our agenda and in Government we will be relentless in our efforts to keep driving forward progress.

We will renew focus on closing the gender pay gap and encourage women's economic empowerment by taking action on low pay which particularly affects women, providing a jobs guarantee for all young people out of work for over a year and cutting business rates for small businesses.

We will implement legislation championed by Labour requiring large companies to publish their pay gap, and we will build on the work of the Lord Davies Commission to continue championing increased representation of women in the Boardroom.

Greater support for childcare under Labour, with 25 hours free childcare for 3 and four-year-olds of working parents and guaranteed access to wraparound childcare for primary-aged children will support women to balance work with care commitments. And increased paternity pay and leave will enable both parents to share in those caring responsibilities from the start.

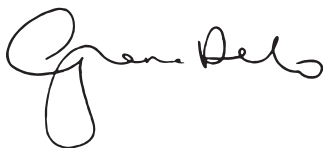
Labour will put tackling violence against women and girls at the very heart of our agenda for Government, appointing a new Commissioner to set minimum standards in tackling domestic and sexual violence and introducing age appropriate compulsory sex and relationship education in schools

We are proud that over this Parliament we had more women MPs than all other Parties combined, and over half our candidates at this election in target seats are women, however our goal is a gender balanced Parliament.

Labour will lead by example on gender equality and we will continue to build on work with other countries to drive forward progress for women internationally and eradicate violence, prejudice and discrimination against women. We want gender equality to be at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals.

If elected in May Ed Milliband will lead a Government with women's voices at its heart, and with the goal of women's empowerment underpinning everything we do.

Yours sincerely,



Gloria De Piero  
Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities

