

# National Federation of Women's Institutes-Wales

# Manifesto for the Senedd Elections

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INSPIRING WOMEN

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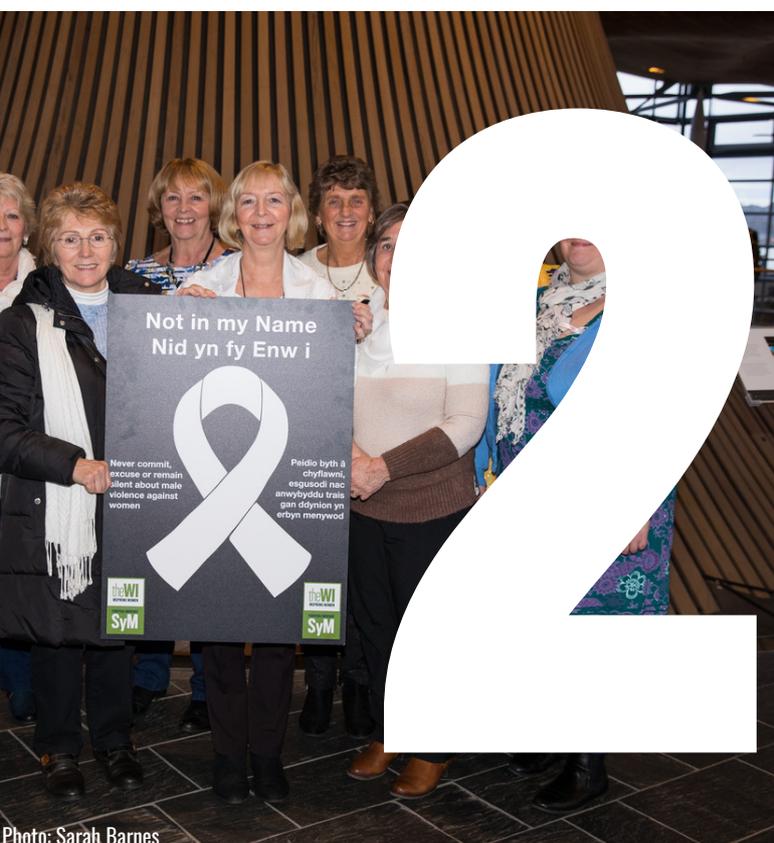


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# THE WI

The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) is the largest women's organisation in the UK with more than 200,000 members in over 6,000 WIs across England, Wales, and the Islands. In Wales, we have about 16,000 members belonging to 600 WIs.

We are an educational, non-party political organisation, established to ensure that women are able to take an effective part in their community, make new friends, widen their horizons, and together influence local, national, and international affairs on issues that matter to them.

Since its inception in 1915, the WI has campaigned to empower and support women within society, exerting their individual and collective influence; brought a series of controversial issues into the public domain; and brought about many changes in legislation and government policy.

**NFWI-Wales calls on all political parties and candidates to support the asks within our manifesto.**

# STOP MODERN SLAVERY



The true extent of modern slavery in the UK and globally is unknown but it is estimated that there are around 40 million victims worldwide.

The UK government estimates that there are tens of thousands of people in slavery in the UK today.

According to the National Crime Agency, there was a 30 per cent increase in reported cases of modern slavery in Wales in 2018 with 251 NRM referrals. There was a further rise with 329 NRM referrals in 2019.

Modern slavery has severe consequences for the health and mental wellbeing of survivors.

## **What the WI wants**

Commitment to protecting victims of modern slavery and delivering long term support to help victims to rebuild their lives.

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The WI has a long and proud history of taking action to protect and enhance our natural environment. Climate change is the single biggest threat to the people and places we love, both here in Wales and globally.

Over recent years we have seen the impact of climate change at national and international levels: through increased flooding and summer heatwaves in the UK; and increasing typhoons, droughts and other natural disasters more globally. All too often, women around the world are the ones who suffer first and hardest from the effects of climate change.



To address the climate crisis, the NFWI supports a green and just recovery that puts nature as well as people at its centre. In a member survey by the NFWI about the impact of Covid-19, over 50% of respondents from Wales stated that the 'Government should make sure that action taken to help the economy to recover doesn't harm our environment or make climate change worse'.

## What the WI wants

- Commitment and leadership in prioritising and tackling climate change.
- Greater investment in tackling the climate emergency accompanied by a budget plan.
- Policies that focus on:-
  - green jobs and training which provide a fair and just transition away from heavy industry;
  - cleaner, greener energy and transport;
  - protection, restoration and enhancement of green spaces;
  - nature-based solutions to climate change;
  - protection and support of the most vulnerable, at home and abroad, from the impacts of climate change.
- Focus on public awareness and behavioural change to reduce Wales' carbon footprint including reducing consumption of single use plastic and microplastic fibre emission from clothing.
- The voices of women to be equally represented at all levels of decision-making in responding to climate change.
- Ambitious plans to achieve a zero waste nation.

# NO MORE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



NFWI-Wales is committed to highlighting and tackling violence against women (VAW).

VAW is a systematic abuse of women's essential human rights and is both a cause and a consequence of inequality.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, every year three million women across the UK experienced VAW with an average of two women a week killed by a partner or former partner. Since the pandemic, specialist services have reported increases in the numbers reaching out for support. During the first Coronavirus lockdown period last March, there was a rise of 49% in the number of contacts made to the Live Fear Free helpline and the number of domestic killings in the UK has more than doubled.

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented additional challenges to service providers and brought to light the urgent need for violence against women specialist support services to be sustainably funded.

## What the WI wants

- Tackling violence against women to be a cross-cutting theme across government.
- Effective delivery of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.
- Investment in education and prevention to increase public awareness about VAW and challenge the attitudes and behaviors that persist in our society.
- Sustainable funding of violence against women specialist support services.
- Women in all areas of Wales to have equal access to specialist support services.

# MAKE TIME FOR MENTAL HEALTH



The Covid-19 pandemic is having a huge impact on the mental health of the population and it is vital that the necessary support is available for people to access. During the pandemic, the mental health of the population will have been impacted by issues such as domestic abuse, digital exclusion, loneliness and social isolation, health inequalities, poverty and the economic downturn. It will also have caused additional challenges for people with existing mental health support needs.

Mental health charities have highlighted concerns that some people have not been able to access services during the pandemic. Prior to Covid-19, mental health services were under pressure and there are concerns about the additional challenges that services will face in meeting future mental health support needs.

Fifty-nine percent of members from across England and Wales who took part in the NFWI's survey on mental health in 2019 revealed that they had provided unpaid care and support for a friend or a family member with a mental health problem.

## Findings of the NFWI's Covid-19 Survey - summer 2020

- 35% told us that Covid-19 had negatively impacted their mental health or wellbeing
- 13% experienced difficulties accessing medical care
- 17% said they are spending more time caring for others
- 13% said they are unable to care for someone they usually support
- 5% said they are having to organise remote support for someone vulnerable

## Perinatal mental health care

Despite clear and prescriptive guidance outlining what makes high quality postnatal care, too many women are still not getting the support they need at this crucial time. We are concerned there are no mother and baby units in Wales.

## What the WI wants

- Removal of the stigma surrounding talking about mental health by improving public understanding of mental health problems so that it is as acceptable to talk about mental health issues as much as physical health issues.
- Parity of esteem between mental health and physical health.
- Investment in mental health services to ensure that people with mental health problems can access mental health treatment for as long as they need it and get the right care for their condition.
- Ensure that unpaid carers of people with a mental health illness have access to the support they are entitled to and know where to access information and support.
- Establishment of a Mother and Baby Unit.

# FOOD MATTERS



Since 2016, we have been campaigning on the issues of food waste and food poverty in the UK. In communities across the UK, people are going hungry. Some have to rely on emergency parcels from food banks to feed themselves and their families. At the same time, over 9 million tonnes of food are binned each year in the UK and over 50% of adults in Wales are overweight or obese.

## What the WI wants

- Appointment of a Minister with responsibility for food poverty and for co-ordinating a cross-governmental approach to addressing the roots causes of food poverty with the ultimate aim of ending the need for food banks.
- Policies to ensure that no child experiences holiday hunger.
- Enhanced food skills education across the curriculum and within communities providing individuals with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about the food they eat and how to cook nutritious meals from scratch on a budget. This would help reduce avoidable food waste and support individuals to improve their health.

# GET ON BOARD FOR A BETTER BUS SERVICE



Bus services play a vital role in ensuring communities remain sustainable, reduce social isolation and ensure access to employment, education, local facilities and health services. Public transport is vital to reduce physical and mental health problems among older people. Encouraging people to move away from polluting cars and use public transport is also key to cutting our carbon emissions and tackling climate change.

With around 23% of the population of Wales without access to a car, it is vital that communities across Wales have access to affordable and reliable bus services that meet their needs in order to help reduce inequalities and social exclusion. Yet over recent years we have seen bus services reduced or removed, particularly in rural communities.

Our members have highlighted the impact of poor bus provision on community members who rely solely on public transport to access services. Members have noted some cases in which members of their community have had to sell their home and move to another area due to poor bus provision. In other cases, people have to rely on family members and friends for lifts to attend appointments.

## **Some of the other issues highlighted by our members:-**

- There is no alternative in rural areas to using a car;
- Services in rural communities that do exist do not meet people's needs, for example, the needs of women who work part-time, and consequently buses have few passengers;
- No connectivity between bus services and trains;
- The need to improve access to bus timetables.

## **Findings of the NFWI survey - summer 2020**

In a survey undertaken by the NFWI in summer 2020, 50% of respondents from across Wales and England said they would use the car less if they had access to a frequent reliable service. Only 18% of the 1,341 respondents who lived in a rural area said they had access to a frequent, reliable bus service. When asked 'what would make you use the bus more', 51% said more services, 41% said a better range of destinations and 35% said bus timetables that meet their needs. 59% said changes to their bus services have increased dependency on travelling by car.

## **What the WI wants**

- Support and investment to achieve viable and sustainable bus services that meet the needs of the communities that they serve.
- Investment in cleaner, greener, low/zero carbon buses.
- Travel by bus that is affordable, reliable and accessible to all.
- Buses to be part of a fully integrated public transport network.
- A strategy to create a modal shift away from dependency on cars as the main form of travel.

# FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on any of the issues featured in this manifesto,  
please contact the NFWI-Wales Office.

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