



## MARRIAGE & THE FAMILY – PARTY CONFERENCES OVERVIEW

### THE CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST PARTY

#### MARRIAGE & THE FAMILY

**Prime Minister** Rishi Sunak said that “family” is the “thing that matters most to most of us”. However, he praised the Conservatives for being “the party that legislated for same-sex marriage and is investing record amounts in childcare”. He stated that parents should know what children are being taught about in sex ed lessons, a point repeated by **Education Secretary** Gillian Keegan.<sup>1</sup>

**Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities** Michael Gove praised Tory policy to introduce same-sex marriage, saying they “fought to make opportunity more equal in the last decade for gay people”.<sup>2</sup> He also praised the recent decision to provide “many more hours of free childcare”.

#### SEX & GENDER

**The PM** said it was “common sense” that “a man is a man and a woman is a woman”.<sup>3</sup>

**Chancellor of the Exchequer** Jeremy Hunt said that “nobody should have their bank account closed because someone else decides they’re not politically correct”.<sup>4</sup>

**Then Home Secretary** Suella Braverman objected to gender ideology being presented as if it were uncontroversial. She said this leads to people being “chased out of their jobs for saying that a man can’t be a woman”.<sup>5</sup>

**Science, Innovation and Technology Secretary** Michelle Donelan objected to scientists being stopped from asking “legitimate research questions about biological sex”. She criticised Scotland’s Chief Statistician for “stating that data on sex can only be collected in exceptional circumstances”, and the ONS Census guidance for saying “it was possible to change your biological sex”. She said that Police Scotland recording a male rapist as a woman was “scientifically illiterate”, and announced she was “launching a review into the use of sex and gender questions in scientific research and statistics”.<sup>6</sup>

**Then Health and Social Care Secretary** Steve Barclay told the Conference that “we know what a woman is”. He said we cannot ‘ignore women’s voices’ when it comes to healthcare. He highlighted that he had “ordered a reversal of unacceptable changes to the NHS website that erased references to women”. He also announced that, following a consultation, the NHS constitution will be changed to acknowledge “different biological

needs and protect the rights of women".<sup>7</sup>

**Women and Equalities Minister** Kemi Badenoch said she "will not apologise for fighting for a society that knows what a woman is", and paid tribute to women's and LGBT groups which opposed Scotland's self-ID policy.<sup>8</sup>

**Education Secretary** Gillian Keegan said it is "common sense that girls should have separate toilets from boys".<sup>9</sup>

**Culture, Media and Sport Secretary** Lucy Frazer praised the July Sports Strategy which set out "a common sense approach to trans inclusion in women's sports".<sup>10</sup>

**Scotland Secretary** Alister Jack criticised Scotland's self-ID sex change law, saying it "ignored the harmful impact on safeguards for women and girls in existing reserved legislation".<sup>11</sup>

## THE LABOUR PARTY

### MARRIAGE & THE FAMILY

**Leader of the Opposition** Sir Keir Starmer said that Labour is the party that will conserve "family life", calling it the "careful bond between this generation and the next".<sup>12</sup>

**Shadow Attorney General** Emily Thornberry has said a Labour Government will give more financial rights to cohabiting couples who live together for a certain time.

Giving the rights of marriage to cohabitants dilutes marriage's significance, making it seem as if commitment is entirely optional and conveying legal rights when the couple have not sought them.<sup>13</sup>

### SEX & GENDER

**Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities** and chair of Labour's National Policy Forum Anneliese Dodds vowed that a Labour government will bring in "stronger laws" and "tougher sentences" for "anti-LGBT+ hate crime".<sup>14</sup> Labour's policy platform seems to include a raft of new incitement offences with potentially seven years in prison for inciting hatred against trans people and others (see below).

Dodds promised to introduce a "full, no-loopholes, trans-inclusive ban on conversion therapy". A sweeping conversion therapy ban could hamper the ordinary work of churches and other religious bodies in promoting marriage "to the exclusion of all others". Vicars and religious leaders could not counsel someone against having an affair outside of marriage with someone of the same sex.

Dodds also pledged to "modernise" the gender recognition law, whilst supporting the "implementation" of the Equality Act.<sup>15</sup> She has previously suggested this would mean only needing approval from one doctor, rather than two, to obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate.<sup>16</sup>

**Shadow Secretary of State for International Development** Lisa Nandy said "women's rights are human rights and human rights are non-negotiable". JK Rowling pointed out that

Nandy has supported allowing legal sex change by self-identification.<sup>17</sup>

**The Labour Party's Policy Document**<sup>18</sup> was voted on by the Conference and the party's manifesto will draw from it. It made the following commitments:

- “strengthen and equalise the law on hate crime and extend the aggravated offences regime to all five protected characteristics [including gender reassignment] recognised in law”
  - o This vague statement could include a) removing the free speech clause protecting criticism of same-sex marriage in the stirring up sexual orientation hatred offence<sup>19</sup> (as well as making the offence itself easier to commit) and b) introducing an offence of stirring up hatred on grounds of ‘gender identity’. These offences carry a potential seven year prison sentence.
  - o Critics said extending aggravated offences to gender reassignment could mean two years in prison for using the birth pronouns of a trans person.<sup>20</sup> JK Rowling has said she would ‘happily’ face this penalty.<sup>21</sup>
- “ensure LGBT+ hate crime is taken seriously by the police and public bodies”
- “ensure that political parties can take the action necessary to deliver and maintain diverse elected representatives, including greater representation of ... LGBT+ people, through positive action measures”
- “introduce a full, no-loopholes, trans-inclusive ban on conversion therapy”
- “modernise, simplify and reform the gender recognition law to a new process, taking into account international evidence of what works effectively, while continuing to support the implementation of the 2010 Equality Act ... including its provision for single-sex exemptions”
- “work to end discrimination against trans people, non-binary and gender diverse people and ensure they are treated with respect and dignity in society”

## THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

The Liberal Democrats did not say much on the issues of marriage or the family at the conference. However, their draft policy document promises to: “Respect and defend the rights and identities of all LGBT+ people, including trans and non-binary people”.<sup>22</sup> This commitment is of concern to real marriage supporters as, unlike the other two main parties, its policy platform backs rights for those who believe they are neither a man nor a woman and there is also no attempt to address conflicts between trans rights and women’s spaces.

The policy document also promises to: “Ban all forms of Conversion Therapy”.

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