



# **A BETTER FUTURE FOR BRITAIN'S LGBT COMMUNITY**



## FOREWORD

The extraordinary progress Britain has made on lesbian and gay rights over the last 20 years is one of the reasons we are proud to be Labour.

Since Harold Wilson's Government finally decriminalised homosexuality in 1967, Labour has continued to lead the fight for LGBT equality. We abolished the hateful section 28, equalised the age of consent, gave statutory rights for NHS fertility treatment for lesbians, created civil partnerships and delivered the votes that put equal marriage on the statute book.

But we are not complacent. While many legal barriers have been broken down, the battle for hearts and minds will take far longer. Homophobia and transphobia are still too prevalent in some schools, workplaces and communities. And in some parts of the world, many LGBT people are today subjected to even greater persecution and injustice than that which was eradicated here a generation ago.

We want a Britain where no LGBT person is held back or discriminated against because of their sexuality or gender identity, and we want a world where LGBT people can live free from persecution. That's why the next Labour Government will work with schools to foster an inclusive and safe environment for LGBT young people, ensuring all teachers are equipped to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. We will strengthen the law on hate crime and seek to bring about the same progress towards equality for trans people that has been achieved on lesbian and gay rights. And we will use our influence in the world to improve LGBT rights globally, appointing our first ever International Envoy for LGBT rights.

The next Labour Government will champion the rights of LGBT people at home and abroad, and build a Britain that is fairer, safer and more equal than it is today.

*Ed Miliband*

Ed Miliband

*Gloria De Piero*

Gloria De Piero

*Angela Eagle*

Angela Eagle

# Introduction

Labour believes that no-one in Britain should be held back or discriminated against because of their sexuality or gender identity. The decisions we take in government will always be taken with this in mind.

Despite the great strides we have made in the legal framework that now guarantees rights such as equal marriage, there is more to do to ensure that equality is reflected across society.

We have seen a rise in recorded hate crimes against LGBT people, and narrow and offensive representations of gay, lesbian and trans individuals are still prominent in public life. In our schools and workplaces, too many people are subject to homophobic and transphobic bullying and tragically, almost a quarter of LGBT young people have tried to take their own life.

For the trans community in particular, we need to go much further to ensure people feel as though Britain is a country in which identity is respected and supported.

This LGBT manifesto sets out Labour's approach to take forward LGBT equality in Britain and through global leadership on rights, justice and tolerance.

## Labour's plan for a better future for LGBT people:

- Deliver 'Turing's Law', offering posthumous pardons for gay men convicted under historic indecency laws.
- Undertake a review of gender identity law and policy.
- Legislate to strengthen the law on hate crime.
- Tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools.
- Make age-appropriate sex and relationship education compulsory in all state-funded schools.
- Appoint an International Envoy for LGBT rights.
- Ensure our asylum procedures are fair to people fleeing persecution based on sexuality or gender identity.
- Improve access to mental health services for LGBT individuals.
- Work with the trans community to improve access to gender care services.
- Seek and support more LGBT people to run as candidates for public office.



# 1. Respect in society and at work

While we can be proud of the progress made on LGBT rights in recent years, it also right that we do what we can to make amends for the injustices of the past. Labour will offer posthumous pardons for gay men previously convicted under the anti-homosexuality laws that existed until 1967. The law will be known as “Turing’s Law” in memory of Alan Turing, the Enigma code breaker who was convicted of ‘gross indecency’ in 1952 and has subsequently received a posthumous Royal pardon.

The pace at which the rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual people have been improved in recent years has not been replicated for trans rights. Labour will strengthen the legal rights of trans and non-binary people by undertaking a review of gender identity law and policy.

We will ensure that anyone who may face more than one form of disadvantage at work because of their gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, or disability is protected, implementing the dual discrimination provisions of the 2010 Equality Act. Where there is evidence more progress is needed in other areas covered by the Equality Act, we will enforce the relevant provisions.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has a vital role to play in promoting equality at work and in society, and we will ensure it fulfils its function as intended.

Labour will ensure that those who do face discrimination are able to challenge it. We will promote equality reps at work, and we will abolish the Government’s employment tribunal fee system as part of reforms to make sure that affordability is not a barrier to workers having proper access to justice, employers get a quicker resolution, and the costs to the taxpayer do not rise.

Hate crime blights lives and can have a devastating impact. Labour will strengthen the law on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime, equalising protection for these groups. We will build confidence in the criminal justice system to highlight hate crime reporting by ensuring the CPS publishes data on enhanced sentencing for each protected characteristic.

## Labour will:

- Implement ‘Turing’s Law’ offering posthumous pardons to those men previously convicted under anti-homosexuality laws.
- Undertake a review of gender identity law and policy.
- Implement the dual discrimination provisions of the Equality Act.
- Abolish the Government’s tribunal fee system.
- Strengthen the law on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime to equalise protection, and improve recording by the CPS.

## 2. An education free from homophobia, biphobia and transphobia

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying - like other forms of bullying - can severely impact upon the life chances, learning opportunities, and mental health of children. The next Labour Government will take action.

For too many young people, school isn't the safe and inclusive environment it should be. We believe all schools should have a zero-tolerance approach to homophobia in the classroom and playground. We will equip all teachers to tackle LGBT-phobic bullying.

It is unacceptable that half of young LGBT people have reported self-harming, and nearly half of young trans people have attempted suicide. A Labour government will promote mental health services for young people who have been bullied because of their sexuality. Under our plans, mental health will be given the same priority as physical health and people will have the same right to psychological and talking therapies as they currently have to drugs and medical treatments.

Our commitment to age-appropriate compulsory sex and relationship education (SRE) in all state-funded schools will ensure children have the opportunity to learn about and respect

different family lives. With Labour, SRE will be compulsory in all publicly funded schools, and we will issue new guidance to schools to support them to fulfil their duty to deliver high quality SRE to all young people.

### Labour will:

- Support schools to implement a zero-tolerance approach to LGBT-phobic bullying.
- Ensure all teachers are equipped to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.
- Make age-appropriate sex and relationship education compulsory in all state-funded schools.
- Prioritise early intervention and referral for young LGBT people to access mental health services.



### 3. Leadership on LGBT rights around the world

Around the world millions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people face criminalisation, hatred and persecution.

Labour will appoint an International LGBT Rights Envoy to promote respect for the human rights of LGBT people. We will work tirelessly towards the decriminalisation of homosexuality worldwide, the protection of trans people, and the repeal of “anti-propaganda” and other discriminatory laws and practices. We will also ensure our development cooperation meets the needs of LGBT communities and aids human rights activists.

The Human Rights Act is a modern day British Bill of Rights that protects basic rights, such as right to a fair trial, right to life and the right to privacy. It is a crucial check against unaccountable state power and vested interests, and has led to changes in the law, including to protect the rights of LGBT people. Labour is proud of Britain’s role in protecting and championing human rights across Europe and beyond. Other countries look up to the UK, and our moral authority as a member of the European Convention on Human Rights empowers us to demand change of those who have weaker human rights records. Labour will protect the laws that enshrine and protect our rights.

With Labour, Britain will always be a country that provides refuge for those fleeing persecution, whether on the basis of their sexuality or gender identity. There have been too many cases of discriminatory and offensive treatment of LGBT people claiming asylum, so we will review the procedures to ensure the rules are upheld fairly and humanely.

#### Labour will:

- Appoint an International LGBT Rights Envoy to promote respect for LGBT human rights globally.
- Work towards the decriminalisation of homosexuality worldwide and greater protection and recognition for trans people.
- Protect the Human Rights Act and work to improve recognition of same sex marriage and civil partnerships of British Citizens across the European Union.
- Review the process and guidelines around applications for asylum on the basis of persecution for sexuality or gender identity.



## 4. Accessible and supportive health services

The LGBT community exhibits higher rates of depression and anxiety, suicidal feelings and self-harm than the rest of the population, often because of the prejudice and experiences they have faced because of their sexuality or gender identity.

As a society we have become a lot better at talking about the sexual health needs of the LGBT community, but we still do not talk enough about mental health.

A Labour government will improve mental health support, particularly for young people. Under our plans, mental health will be given the same priority as physical health and people will have the same right to psychological and talking therapies as they currently have to drugs and medical treatments. We will increase the proportion of the mental health budget that is spent on children and young people, and make sure that teachers have training so they can identify problems early and link children up with support. We are also committed to putting in place a strategy to ensure the vast majority of patients, both young people and adults, can access talking therapies within 28 days.

We want LGBT people to feel confident accessing health services and discussing any issue without fear of

misunderstanding or an unsympathetic attitude, and will look at models which can help achieve this, for example the dedicated LGBT mental health service which has been established in Brighton.

Much progress has been made to ensure that individuals transitioning gender get the care and support they need. However, too many trans people face barriers and delays to the care to which they are entitled. We will work with the trans community in tackling problems with access to gender care services.

Being LGBT is not an illness and it should never be treated as something which should be 'curable'. We oppose the use of 'conversion' or 'cure' therapies and with Labour, public money will never be spent on them.

We believe rules on giving blood should be evidence based and non-discriminatory. The rules have been revised to end the permanent ban for men who had ever had sex with men, but a deferral period was set at 12 months from the last relevant contact. There could be a case for reviewing these rules to see whether the deferral period could be reduced further, but this must be based on clinical evidence.

We want to ensure that everyone, particularly young people, have the information they need to make informed and safe choices about their relationships and sexual health. Our ambition is to stop and then reverse the rise in cases of sexually transmitted diseases and to significantly reduce the level of undiagnosed and late diagnosed HIV. We will work to challenge the stigma of HIV and promote increased availability of testing.

### Labour will:

- Improve mental health support, giving people the same right to access talking therapies and mental health treatment as they currently have for drugs and medical treatments.
- Ensure teachers are trained to identify problems early and link children up with support.
- Work with the transgender community to improve access to gender care services.
- Make reducing undiagnosed and late diagnosed HIV a national priority, working to challenge the stigma of HIV and promote increased availability of testing.

## 5. Fairer and more diverse representation in public life

The 2010 election saw a record number of openly gay MPs elected, and we are proud that 35 Labour candidates standing at this election are LGBT, including our first openly trans Parliamentary candidate Emily Brothers. But we still have a long way to go to secure fair representation. Openly LGBT MPs made up just four per cent the last Parliament, of whom only two were lesbian women, a symptom of the multiple barriers that LGBT women face. In other parts of public life both nationally and locally this problem is replicated and is often a lot worse.

As a party we are proud that the first out gay and lesbian MPs were Labour's Chris Smith and Angela Eagle and we are committed to ensuring LGBT candidates are supported and encouraged to seek public office. The Chris Smith List, run by LGBT Labour, provides financial support to our candidates and we will continue to actively seek and support LGBT people to run as candidates through programmes like our future candidates scheme.

We will also continue to lead by example when it comes to ensuring women have the chance to participate in public life, helping to increase the representation of LGBT women. We will promote positive action measures to achieve a

better balance of representation, including through the use of all women shortlists in Labour Party parliamentary selection contests.

Better representation of LGBT people in high profile positions will help ensure that every young LGBT person can see that no goal is off limits. No LGBT person should ever be held back or put off from public office.

### Labour will:

- Support more openly LGBT candidates through the future candidates programme.
- Remain committed to positive measures to improve representation amongst our MPs such as All Women Shortlists.





