# Interim guidance on sexism and misogyny: speaking up and taking responsibility as individuals and as a Party

**This document has been produced by Green Party Women as an interim guide for members of Green Party of England and Wales**

## Sexism and misogyny is on the increase

The Green Party must recognise this and act on it. Internationally women and girls are under threat from violent men, they experience more material disadvantage, ecological harms and a relentless negative onslaught from social media which affects them and those around them. We must build a Party that combats sexism and misogyny nationally and internationally, a Party that is supportive and nurturing and helps build resilience.

## No one is immune

Sexism and misogyny exist within the Green Party as the Party is part of wider society and is therefore affected by cultural beliefs and norms. This guide endeavours to support members with recognising these behaviours and actions and to guide members on preventing them and minimising harm according to our Party's Core Values and Philosophical Basis.

## Defining sexism

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on biological sex. Sexism is the inability or refusal to recognise the rights, needs, dignity, or value of people of one sex and/or the devaluation of various traits of character or intelligence as 'typical' of one or other sex. Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on one's biological sex. This hierarchical thinking can be conscious, or it can be unconscious, manifesting perhaps as unconscious bias.

- **Sexism can affect either sex, but primarily affects women and girls** who are often seen as inferior or faulty as they differ from the 'default male human'; therefore the term "non-men" is an inherently sexist term. Sex role stereotypes may include the belief that one sex is intrinsically superior to another. Extreme sexism may foster sexual harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual violence.
- Sex discrimination in against the law and in this context is defined as discrimination toward people based on their sex, an example of this being workplace inequality. **"treatment of an individual or group, because of their sex, which results in detriment" Equality Act, 2010**
- **Sexism is linked to power** in that those with power are typically treated with favour and those without power are typically discriminated against. Sexism is also related to stereotypes since discriminatory actions or attitudes are frequently based on false beliefs or generalisations about these stereotypes, and on considering sex as relevant where it is not
- **Other factors can exacerbate the effects of sexism and discrimination:** racism, classism, ableism, ageism. Women are subject to material issues that affect them uniquely e.g.in many aspects of health and childbearing or where women are the predominant demographic e.g. as mothers and in relation to lower paid/status jobs and income

- The unique experience of growing up female and same-sex attracted or living as a lesbian means lesbians experience sexism and homophobia, and it cannot be assumed that an LGBT or Queer grouping or voice can represent the experience of lesbians.
- **It can be conscious or unconscious:** men *and* women can be unconsciously sexist.

### Defining misogyny

- Misogyny is literally hatred of women, shown by the **harassment, coercion, abuse** or **control** of, **discrimination** or **entrenched prejudice** against, **violence** (whether physical, sexual or psychological), **disgust** or **enmity** towards, or **contempt** for, women, girls or any aspect of what is considered feminine or femininity.
- Misogyny has been evident since ancient times and includes all forms of physical and psychological violence aimed at reinforcing, or 'policing' patriarchal structures, upholding the primary status of men and a sense of male entitlement, while subordinating women and limiting their power and freedom.
- Misogyny continues today in the objectification of women and violence towards them. In its most extreme forms it is misogynist terrorism and femicide.
- 'Misogynoir' is a term that describes the unique discrimination that black women face at the intersection of racism and sexism.
- Misogyny is a form of sexism that can keep women at a lower social status than men, thus maintaining patriarchal social roles.
- Misogyny also often operates through sexual harassment, coercion, and psychological techniques aimed at controlling women, and by legally or socially excluding women from full citizenship. Only biological women can be subject to misogyny.

### How sexism and misogyny can manifest in front of our eyes, inside and outside the Party:

- Enforcing a blanket belief that certain interests, jobs and roles are only for men, or only for women
- Making statements that equate being female with immaturity, childishness, or as somehow or as somehow inferior to, or less capable than, masculinity
- Expecting women to conform to stereotypes
- Policing or drawing attention to physical appearance
- Granting less pay, fewer rewards or recognition for the same work
- Accepting a lack of sex disaggregated data in key areas
- Sexual objectification or being offered favours or rewards in return for sex
- Assuming that a woman has less knowledge than a man on any given subject
- Expecting women to endure more emotional or physical pain than men
- Behaving as if women speaking or drawing attention to themselves is wrong
- Expressing double standards for women and men
- Asserting that sexism and misogyny are not stand alone issues

### Examples of every-day sexism and misogyny

Please read these and reflect on how *you* would respond if you witnessed some of the words or actions, how you respond to women's issues:

- “At a meeting a man tried to interrupt me while I was speaking and because I continued speaking he asserted that I was interrupting him” “Needing a 'man parrot' in meetings because when I make a point, everybody is blank. But then a man says the same thing and there's much agreement and excitement.” “Asking a question repeatedly only to be ignored until a man asks the same question - with replies being addressed to him” “As a woman, others assuming I know less than a man and I have to have things explained to me.” Going to meetings and people talking to my husband, assuming he makes my decisions” “Going to run a training session on governance… and being asked to go get some tea when I walked into the room” “Being referred to as a 'Secretary' when I'm actually in charge...” “Women are perceived as having been talking for longer than during meetings when they haven't”
- “When women’s issues can’t be considered on their own - we have to consider everyone else’s oppression first, like good girls - literally, we have to be the housekeepers of politics”. “Men shutting down women in meetings with some elitist mantra which translates as your issues aren’t important enough”
- “A woman displays emotion = 'unprofessional'. A man displays emotion = courageous, leadership qualities, commanding presence. Charismatic… Tone policing - not being allowed to show emotion in a conversation without being told you're doing it wrong” “‘Hysterical’ being a term that means crazy or so emotional that you're irrational.” ““Men's emotions being justified, whereas women's emotions are overreactions”
- “Being called called Love, Darlin', Sweetheart, etc. … and insist that it's 'being polite'” “Performative chivalry that you're expected to accept even when it makes life more dangerous for you”
- “Black children are often seen and treated as adults much earlier than white children their own age. Black female children are subjected to wolf whistling and sexual advances from ages as young as 9”
- “Muslim women experience magnified misogyny as their appearance is policed more often and more strongly than women who are perceived as non-religious.”
- “Old woman seems to be a legitimate criticism now” “old bag” “they (older women in GPEW) will be dead soon” “your experience and years of work for the Party dismissed”
- “weaponised incompetence/learned helplessness by men”
- “Working class girls treated as rubbish by the media”
- “Boy wearing a purple scarf being asked, why are you wearing a girly scarf?”
- “When I was younger I had men speculating on the colour of my underwear, or describing my hair as 'handlebars' - which I didn't understand until I was much older.”
- “Not believing men and women can be friends - an assumption if you're a woman and spend time with men that you're only interested in sex etc”
- “Many women experience health problems associated with menopause which are minimised, denied or under-researched” ‘Women have been going through menopause for thousands of years. You don't need HRT" “Women's pain being dismissed or diminished”
- “Types of misogynoir can include becoming overly emotional when a person of colour explains their feelings and emotions. It can extend to claims that a person is scared or feels threatened by a person of colour’s words when they have not threatened violence”

| **Taking appropriate action is what Greens do** | |
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| ● **The points below are not final and will always be a work in progress**<br>● **They are not in a hierarchical order**<br>● **They are starting points for self-reflection and part of your commitment as a Green Party Member to speak up and contribute to the greater good** | |
| What can I do if I experience sexism or misogyny? | What should all members do? |
| ● Speak up. This is hard when you have experienced discomfort or direct prejudice and you may rightly feel that it is not your job to take responsibility for poor or discriminatory behaviour<br>● Expect to be listened to and supported by GPEW members and | ● if you have observed prejudicial or discriminatory words or actions, do not stay in your comfort zone - speak up<br>● It’s the responsibility of all members to ensure all Party forums and events are welcoming and supportive |

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| the Party<br>● Reflect on what happened and what you would like to see occur as a result<br>● Discuss what has happened with a trusted friend<br>● Discuss what has happened with branch officials who you feel you can approach<br>● If something takes place at a GPEW meeting or event, raise your concerns, or ask someone else to, with the Chair or organiser, even if it is after the event. They should support you, take responsibility where appropriate and help resolve the issue<br>● Look for support from Special Interest Groups<br>● You may feel able to discuss the incident with the person you feel is responsible and think it is appropriate and safe to do so.<br>○ Think about the best way to do this<br>○ Be clear<br>○ Consider repercussions and talk this over with a trusted friend<br>○ Consider mediation with local or national GPEW structures<br>● It is sometimes absolutely appropriate to make a formal complaint.<br>○ Write down what happened in your own words before you send the complaint and talk to others who were witnesses<br>○ Seek support<br>○ You should rightly expect that your complaint will be treated fairly and expedited to ensure the investigation is accurate and appropriate | ● Support members where you see discrimination - even if you do not support that member's politics on other issues<br>● We can be passionate and speak forcefully about political issues but there is never a place for personal insults or discriminatory behaviour<br>● if someone brings something *you* have said or done to your attention, try not to be defensive. Listen carefully and be calm:<br>○ Try to appreciate and acknowledge the feelings of the person<br>○ Apologise straight away if you've got it wrong and ask 'how can I make this right?'<br>○ We can only deal with bias if we are honest with ourselves and admit our mistakes<br>○ Keep listening and show empathy even if you think it is unfair - seek mediation from an agreed other party if you don't think it can be resolved<br>○ It is good to contribute ideas and suggestions, but take care not to undermine women or assume they do not know a great deal about the issue in hand. How do *you* like to be told something?<br>○ Reflect on your behaviour and actions after any experience which you felt wasn't right<br>● Think about how you engage with women on an every-day basis Woman members may also be subject to unconscious bias<br>● Think before you post on social media. Would you write this about a man? Is it really important? Is it worth it? The internet is forever<br>● Engage with Party policies on discrimination, if you do not feel our policies are effective you need to reflect on that and take action |

## What should those in positions of power of GPEW do?
## This means any agent, committee member, representative and spokesperson

- Keep listening to women and learning
- Reflect regularly on your personal views and positions
- Be aware that as an agent, spokesperson or representative of the Party you will be held to higher standards
- Make efforts to understand what the law says about discrimination - members cannot expect their leaders and reps to be experts on all things but they need to feel reassured that their leaders and reps will do the best job they can and that they will seek advice where it's appropriate to do so
- Resist the urge to discuss women's issues within the context of other oppressions where it is not directly relevant.
- Engage with Party policies on discrimination, if you do not feel our policies are effective you must take action.
- Think about how you plan meetings and run them - how might the structure and timings for example impact women?
- Think about how often men speak at meetings and how often women are interrupted. Who gets to chair?
- Do not impose your views, or try to shut down difficult conversations particularly with people with long-lived experience.
- Accusations of sexism or misogyny should *never* be used vexatiously or as a form of harassment
- Your actions on social media reflect on the Party's image and reputation. If you have a doubt, act on it. The internet is forever
- How do the forums you work with within GPEW monitor for sexism, misogyny and women's equality? Is this included in your reports with relevant data? How do you evidence fairness and confirm your accountability to participants/observers
- Ask for advice: from trusted friends, from authoritative websites, from Party Structures, from Special Interest Groups
- Members must act quickly in the case of serious misdemeanours. Become familiar with the safeguarding policy. The safety of members comes before the perceived reputation of the party. The police must be involved for serious concerns that involve real threats and any violence. Action plans must be made and reported on after serious incidents.

This interim guidance has been voted on and approved by GPW members at the July 2025 GPW meeting