



# Local Election Manifesto 2023

## Our Promise to Congleton

This manifesto is for all the people of Congleton, to support a sustainable, inclusive community that supports women, men, children, the elderly, all kinds of families, LGBTQIA+ people, those with disabilities or ill-health, people of all faiths and no faith, working people, those on low incomes, and the most vulnerable. The Women's Equality Party will invest in the physical and social infrastructure so desperately needed to make Congleton and Cheshire East a fair, green, safe and prosperous place for all.

## Health

Healthcare is a major concern in Cheshire East. As for the rest of the UK, the NHS has had cuts due to austerity which mean the local service is chronically under-funded. In Congleton, the War Memorial Minor Injuries Unit is often closed due to resourcing pressures, meaning travel to Macclesfield A&E for urgent healthcare, which is difficult or impossible for the elderly and parents, mostly women, without their own transport.

Under-funding in mental healthcare contributes to the breakdown in families, domestic abuse and youth crime. Potentially strong service providers are being starved of resources meaning that home caregivers, mostly women, are picking up the pieces. The COVID pandemic exposed and exacerbated the challenges of a weakened system due to years of under-investment.

In Congleton Town Council, as part of the Health and Wellbeing Working Group, our Councillor Kay Wesley has lobbied for a mental health hub in Congleton like those in Crewe and Macclesfield and worked with local mental health providers like Visyon and SWANs to co-ordinate better services, as well as supporting local men's mental health support groups.

The Group has also pressed the NHS to maintain our Minor Injuries Unit – which the local Clinical Commissioning Group says has not closed permanently, but due to lack of nursing and other staff. This is a national government problem, but WE will continue to demand these improvements.

Kay has also worked with Motherwell Cheshire to support the establishment of a Menopause Café in Congleton. The WEP led a protest against our local MP's anti-abortion stance. Women's reproductive rights are human rights.

Our WEP Candidate Susan Mead is working with Bromley Farm residents to work with the local housing associations to address poor living conditions, problems with housing including mould.

Susan also runs a mental health peer support group helping to tackle isolation and loneliness.



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## In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will:

- Prioritise community mental health services, especially for children and young people, recognising the long-term damage that a lack of such services can cause.
- Work to ensure that new housing does not put additional pressure on health services and that health infrastructure keeps pace with physical infrastructure development.
- Push to maintain the Congleton War Memorial Minor Injuries Unit with real policy and strategies to ensure local families are supported.
- Continue to lobby to get a Mental Health Hub in Congleton, working with all relevant agencies and the NHS.
- Continue to work to establish improved support for women's health conditions, after the 2022 national survey showed that [84% of women feel they have not been listened to](#) by healthcare professionals.

## Social Care

Social care is considered by government to be a 'cost' to society – a burden. WE consider it to be an investment in people who have paid their taxes and contributed to our country.

The national crisis in elderly social care was exposed by the COVID pandemic. Under-funded for years, its dedicated workers are underpaid and exhausted. The Women's Equality Party led a campaign during COVID called 'Protect Them and Pay Them' demanding better PPE, pay and working conditions for social care workers.

Good social care improves and regenerates our society – it supports families and children, improves wellbeing and mental health, looks after the elderly and promotes cohesive communities.

Local authority spending on adult social care in England fell 13.5% in real terms per adult from 2009 to 2017, but has been rising since then due to the national living wage, greater outsourcing and the costs of the COVID pandemic.

Social care is a gendered issue:

- **More women than men depend on social care** in old age because women live longer than men on average and the gender pay gap continues into pension provision.
- **Women are overwhelmingly the workers** in social care – 82% of care jobs are done by women. They are undervalued, with half of them earning £7.50 per hour or below in 2016-17 (the National Living Wage was £7.20).
- When social care is cut back, **women fill the gap**, free of charge; 58% of unpaid carers in the UK are women. The Department for Health and Social Care has said that after Brexit there will be a shortfall of 30,000 care workers within five years, and suggested women will have to leave work to fill the gap.



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## In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will:

- Lobby national government for a long-term strategy and investment to address the crisis in social care.
- Prioritise a person-centred care service that sees social care as an investment to be used strategically to improve quality of life rather than a cost to be minimised.
- Support and challenge social care providers to ensure their women-dominated workforces are well-treated and fairly paid.

## Education

Due to the National Funding Formula, Cheshire East schools have had dramatic funding cuts per pupils. **This is a political choice to underinvest in our children and our future.** The early years has been hardest hit even though research shows that investment in early years education shows significant payback over time.

Gender inequality starts in the classroom, and although girls outperform boys in every level of education, female graduates earn £3000 less than their male counterparts, and women make up 94% of childcare apprentices and just 4% of engineering apprentices.

The [End Sexism in Schools Project](#), initiated and supported by the Women's Equality Party, has shown that women are under-represented as authors, playwrights and protagonists in the English Literature Curriculum. For example, 82% of texts studied have a male protagonist and 99% of plays studied are by men.

Good sex and relationships education is vital to ensure the concepts of consent and respect are understood by boys and girls and to promote family and social cohesion.

As a local Councillor, Kay Wesley has led the Congleton White Ribbon campaign and has visited several high schools with White Ribbon Ambassadors to talk about sexual harassment and abuse, the role of men and boys (in particular) to challenge toxic masculinity, and everyone's role in calling out sexist behaviours. This has had huge engagement from students from years 10 to 13, and this work continues.

Cheshire East reflects the rest of the country in its gender inequality in teaching with some of the high schools near the top of the 'gender pay gap' charts because, although more teachers are women, the majority of school leaders are men.

## In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will:

- Seek to match investment in physical infrastructure with investment in social infrastructure so that schools can spend their budgets on education, rather than social and health services.
- Provide more support for families – early interventions to support families – this is essential to get children to school 'ready to learn'.



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- 'Join-up' services so that a child-centred and family-centred approach is used and existing budgets go further to create successful outcomes.
- Lobby national government to increase funding for Cheshire East Schools in the funding formula.
- Support and use the outcomes of the End Sexism in Schools project to ensure our Cheshire East schools are creating equal opportunities and aspirations for girls and boys.
- Make age-appropriate sex and relationships education compulsory in all schools and at all ages, including continuing to run White Ribbon workshops.
- Encourage schemes for getting more women into senior roles in schools.

## Housing

Cheshire East local plan includes 36,000 new homes by 2030. Many are now being built on greenfield sites around the towns. There are affordable housing targets but there is less social housing than private rental property in Cheshire East – entry-level housing provision is critically under-served.

In Cheshire East, rents for a 2-bedroom home are more than 30% of the average salary – up from 10% in the 1980s. The most likely households to be classed as homeless in Cheshire East are lone parents, usually mothers, with young children.

In Congleton Town Council Planning Committee, Kay Wesley has consistently held developers to account if they have not included sufficient social and affordable housing in new developments or if they are not scattering these throughout the development as is required by the Local Plan.

Infrastructure such as schools, healthcare, public transport and social services are not keeping pace with the building programme. In Congleton Planning Committee Kay has also challenged developers where new schools and medical centres have not been delivered although they were promised in outline planning. With a seat at the table in Cheshire East WE will have more power to enforce this.

### **In Cheshire East – WE will:**

- Prioritise low-cost housing in new developments.
- Work with providers to help continually improve the quality of existing social housing.
- Develop strategies to make rents more affordable.
- Support and fund the Cheshire East Homelessness Strategy.
- Push for welfare reform, especially changing Universal Credit, which has created poverty and consequent homelessness.
- Ensure that new housing has proper transport links (see below)
- Support investment to social infrastructure, to match physical infrastructure.



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## Violence against Women and Girls

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a cause and consequence of gender inequality.

In Cheshire, there are 20 cases of domestic abuse reported to the police every day – one a day in Congleton itself – and studies show only a fraction of incidents get reported. Only a fraction of victims of domestic abuse that need it get a place in a refuge. In Congleton there is one incident of sexual violence reported every week.

As leader of the Congleton Town Council Antisocial Behaviour Working Group, Kay has ensured that VAWG crimes are reported in Council regularly as well as other crimes. (VAWG had never been discussed in Congleton Town Council before).

Kay Wesley brought the service provider MyCWA to Congleton Town Council to gain support for more services in the town. With this support, Kay helped myCWA establish a new Domestic Abuse Clinic in Congleton, where survivors and perpetrators can get support to end abuse, and survivors can access counselling, practical help, Police advice and peer support.

Kay also led the effort to get Congleton Town Council White Ribbon Accredited, which means it seeks to eradicate violence against women and girls and all gender-based abuse. There are now 11 male White Ribbon Ambassadors in Congleton and very productive work happening with local high schools and other organisations. Around 500 people in Congleton have made their White Ribbon Promise.

myCWA say that they have had men self-presenting at the Domestic Abuse Clinic, worried about their own behaviour – which is a first for them and they credit the increased awareness of this issue that the Town Council has created, due to Kay's work.

Due to her work in this area, Kay was co-opted onto the Cheshire Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership (CEDSAP) Board, and is also working on the Whole Housing Approach to domestic abuse – a national pilot project taking place in Cheshire.

### In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will:

- Seek to get White Ribbon Accreditation for Cheshire East Council
- Continue to challenge VAWG as a cause and consequence of inequality
- Support the Whole Housing Project and other long-term solutions to domestic abuse and sexual violence in Cheshire East
- Lobby national government for increased funding to support refuges, clinics, and long-term solutions like perpetrator programmes
- Continue to strengthen working with Cheshire Police to ensure optimal outcomes in VAWG, prevent reoffending and challenge misogyny in the Police force.
- Support initiatives to engage the public, especially young people, to challenge behaviours that lead to abuse and help to eradicate it.



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## Policing and Crime

Many of the challenges we see in the homes, streets and parks of Cheshire East are due to a breakdown in social infrastructure and the police having to step in to deal with the consequences. The Women's Equality Party is seeking to address the causes of this breakdown and believes investment in this will be more cost-effective than dealing with its consequences through the criminal justice system.

WEP is also alarmed at the national statistics for rape and sexual misconduct within the ranks of the Police forces themselves. A complete overhaul of policing is needed in this country to eradicate the toxic attitude that exist in all forces which mean that women do not feel protected by the police.

The Crime Survey of England and Wales estimates that there are nearly 100,000 rapes each year. Less than 5% of rapes reported to the police result in a conviction. This is due to an ineffective criminal justice system that blames and cross-examines victims of sexual violence. This is fuelled by the media perpetuating the myth that false allegations are rife, although this is in fact less than 1% of cases. The countries of the UK have among the lowest conviction rates in the world, lower than any other EU country.

In Cheshire, Cllr Kay Wesley was recruited to be a member of the Police External Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Board. She has met with the PCC and senior Police leaders and challenged them to root out misogyny and all prejudice in police ranks. The Board scrutinises initiatives such as recruitment policies, training and disciplinary process relating to all EDI topics.

In Congleton Town Council, Kay chairs the Community and Environment Committee and its Antisocial Behaviour Working Group. In this capacity she has ensured that the Police report on all crimes (not just street ASB) to the Town Council regularly. This means that sexual assault, domestic abuse, hate crime and traffic crime statistics are considered as well as street crime.

Kay also led the work to get Congleton Town Council to sign up to the Community Safety Charter, to challenge the behaviours that lead to street crime.

Kay has invited the Police to Congleton to inform the Council about the Cheshire VAWG strategy and its Safer Streets initiative on a regular basis.

Kay worked with the Police and Congleton Pride to make the Pride team a Hate Crime Reporting Centre, so that people affected by hate crime can talk to someone to support them reporting it and getting justice.

### **In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will:**

- Support mental health services, especially substance and alcohol abuse services.



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- Invest in domestic abuse services and take a strategic long-term approach for both survivors and perpetrators.
- Continue to invest in the Safer Streets initiative and challenge VAWG
- Prioritise family support services including social care and affordable childcare, to ensure those in challenging circumstances can achieve their potential.
- Continue to work with the Police to ensure that misogyny, racism and other negative attitudes have no place in policing in Cheshire.

## The Climate and Biodiversity Emergency

The [Climate Emergency is a feminist issue](#); worldwide it is women who are most affected by the impact of the climate change. The emergency itself has been created by patriarchal systems which value power and money above all else. Research shows that countries with a larger representation of women, politicians pass more ambitious climate policies.

The Women's Equality's economic policy is [Doughnut Economics](#) (or 'circular economics') which prioritises balancing the needs of the planet, its ecosystems and its people with financial and commercial interests.

WEP Candidate Susan Mead puts this into practice daily, running a business that has been awarded the Eco Green Flag, Plastic-Free status and numerous other environmental awards. Susan also runs the Bromley Bloomers, a group of residents that is working to improve the biodiversity of Bromley Farm in Congleton, while at the same time alleviate the problem of people not being able to afford food by growing free fruit and vegetables. Susan also helps families cook healthily using the produce they grow.

In September 2019 WEP Councillor Kay Wesley proposed that Congleton Town Council declare a Climate Emergency and set up a Green Working Group to address it and the biodiversity crisis.

Kay has been on the Working Group and has supported a number of initiatives including:

- Estimating the carbon footprint of the Council's properties and activities and prioritising ways to reduce it.
- Prioritisation of a number of sites across Congleton to be Biodiversity sites and offering to be the lead on one such site.
- Helping with an air quality monitoring project to evaluate pollution outside our primary schools
- Running an annual Green Fayre, inviting providers and charities to share their products, tools and expertise.
- Promoting the Congleton Repair Shop which helps residents reuse broken items.

Kay has been a regular volunteer with Trees for Congleton, helping plant 30,000 trees and hedges by 2025, and has also taken part in numerous Town Tidies.

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Kay has led on aspects of the Green work including

- Creating a [Sustainable Living in Congleton eLearning](#) course, covering energy, waste, food and transport
- Creating webpages for the CTC site on [Green Council](#), [Green Living](#) and [Green Business](#)
- Meeting with other groups including Congleton Sustainability Group, Congleton Climate Emergency, Plastic Free Congleton, the Old Saw Mill, Trees for Congleton.
- Helping with the Trees for Congleton Consultation, especially supporting getting it online to engage more people and gather comments digitally at [www.treesforcongleton.co.uk](http://www.treesforcongleton.co.uk)
- Challenging developers and others in Planning Committee where they seek to remove or damage trees, green spaces and important habitats.
- Ensuring that all Council decisions are evaluated for environmental impact as well as financial and equality impact.

## In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will

- Seek to strengthen the [Environmental Strategy](#) which does not go far enough in recognising the transformational change needed to challenge the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency
- Ensure that every decision and project is implemented with a view to driving towards net zero and improving environmental outcomes.
- Protect important habitats, including Dane's Moss between Macclesfield and Congleton, a vital ecosystem and important resource for absorption of CO2.
- Ensure that in the planning process, green spaces are protected and no ecosystems are lost in new developments. Use brown-field sites where possible.
- Make sure new development puts sustainability first with safe active travel routes, electric charge points, carbon-neutral building material and push for carbon-neutral buildings, where possible.
- Ensure that waste and recycling schemes are optimised to benefit biodiversity and the climate, and lead campaigns to reduce consumption and waste. (see HWRC section)
- Scrutinise Council activities and push for chemicals, weedkillers and practices harmful to biodiversity or the climate to be eradicated.
- Promote the vital role that sustainable transport for all plays in addressing the climate emergency and work to achieve this for both residents and Council operations (see transport section)

## Transport

Despite new housing developments and road-building in Cheshire East, public transport services are woefully inadequate and in many rural areas, are non-existent. Parking is cheap



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but bus fares are prohibitively high. The only places where parking is expensive are, ironically, the train stations, discouraging commuters from using public transport.

Support for walking and cycling services is increasing but we still do not have clear routes throughout the town that are safe and away from major roads.

Kay Wesley has been on the Integrated Transport Working Group of Congleton Town Council and has been a vocal supporter of walking and cycleways and the '20s Plenty' movement – the Working Group recommended, and the Town Council agreed to request, 20 mph zones in all residential streets in Congleton.

Kay has led on developing an improvement plan for Bus Services in Congleton and has been working with CEC officers and bus companies on ideas for improvements. However, without funding, this is unlikely to happen and CEC has been unsuccessful in securing funding from a national government that claims to be supporting public transport. If WE get elected to Cheshire East Council there will be more opportunity to move this forward than lobbying from Town Council level.

The health and environmental impact of the lack of public transport is felt by everyone, but especially those who do not have a car such as the elderly, the young and those on low incomes.

### **In Congleton and Cheshire East – WE will:**

- Work for a truly integrated transport policy that rewards active travel and public transport (including train) use and discourages car use – ensuring that there is a practical alternative for all.
- Continue to support '20's Plenty'
- Promote, support the development of and protect safe cycling routes, footpaths and green spaces.
- Support the provision of increased bus services, in rural areas and in towns, including bidding for national funding for new bus schemes.
- Evaluate the rail services and support increased use of trains, free parking at stations and rail services integrated with walking, cycling and bus routes.

### **Household Waste and Recycling**

A major part of challenging environmental emergency is consumption, waste and recycling. Congleton has recently lost its Household Waste and Recycling Centre ('Tip'), which has been a major step back for the town. Residents are forced to travel longer distances in their cars to access a HWRC and fly tipping has increased.

Kay Wesley has been working with colleagues in Congleton Town Council to challenge the decision to close Congleton Tip and ask Cheshire East Council to provide Congleton with a new facility.



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Kay has spoken at several CEC meetings on the subject, is an administrator of the 'Save Congleton HWRC' Facebook Group and has joined in public protests.

Kay has worked behind the scenes with CTC colleagues and Cheshire East officers to evaluate other options (like 'pop-up recycling') for Congleton and has spoken at CEC Communities and Environment Committee three times:

- [March 2021](#) when Kay challenged the decision to close the Congleton Tip on environmental and equality grounds
- [May 2021](#) when Kay asked why a Task-and-Finish Group had not been convened to evaluate options for Congleton.
- [September 2022](#) when the Committee finally decided to set up a Working Group to evaluate the need and practicality of providing a new Tip in Congleton.

## In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE Will

- Campaign for a new HRWC in Congleton as part of the reorganization of household waste and recycling
- Champion waste reduction, reuse and recycling schemes including 'pop-up' recycling and repair shops close to where people live
- Insist that council activities minimise waste and reuse and recycle where possible, including working with suppliers and providers that do the same.

## Intersectional Equality

Kay wrote the new Equality and Inclusion Policy for Congleton Town Council and ensured that all new Council measures are tested for Equality Impact as well as Environmental and Financial. The Policy covers the nine legal protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) plus caring responsibilities, being in care and socio-economic status as additional characteristics.

WEP has active Caucuses for Race Equality, Disability/Illness Equality and LGBTQIA+ Equality and supports intersectional equality.

Kay Wesley is a Trustee of Congleton Pride and has volunteered at the Pride events in Congleton. With Pride, Kay has focused on community engagement and has developed its Equality and Respect policy. Kay worked with the Police and Churches to further collaboration and understanding, as well as conducting public surveys to assess progress in LGBTQIA+ support and welcome in Congleton.

Susan Mead works with Plus Dane Housing to make sure residents are getting the support they need such as food vouchers, energy vouchers, meals for the elderly. She also runs a children's clothes bank and recycle of toys bank, helping families who are struggling to make sure they have everything they need to look after their children.

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## In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will

- Support the rights of all sections of the community and place equality and human rights at the centre of policy and practice.
- Monitor the outcomes for people with protected characteristics and ensure that programs are put in place to address gaps.
- Revise the Equality Strategy and strengthen it to include more actionable tasks and measurable impacts.
- Ensure everyone working for and with the Council has EDI training and is able to champion the rights of those with protected characteristics and deal with discrimination effectively.

## Equal Pay and the Gender Pay Gap

It is illegal to pay men and women differently for doing the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap refers to the difference between the average pay for men and women in the same organisation. The gender pay gap exists for several reasons

- **Unequal caring responsibilities:** women do the lion's share of caring for children, the elderly and the ill, and many more women than men therefore have to work part-time.
- **Lack of affordable childcare.** The national government has not invested enough into childcare.
- **The labour market is divided.** Women and girls are channelled into the 5Cs – caring, cleaning, catering, cashiering and clerical. These tend to be lower paid than the jobs that men and boys are encouraged to do.
- **Discrimination.** 54,000 of pregnant women report discrimination at work each year in the UK. 77% have had discriminatory experiences on returning to work following maternity leave. Opportunities and promotions are blocked to women because of expected parenting responsibilities. Unconscious and conscious bias amongst senior leaders means that opportunities and promotions are blocked to women (see also Equal Representation), meaning more men than women are in the higher-paid jobs.

In Cheshire East, the mean pay gap in 2022 was 16.5% - up from 7.2% in 2017.

## In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will:

- Assess pay structures in the council itself to ensure equal pay for equivalent work and seek to role-model best practice as an equal opportunities employer.
- Eliminate barriers to equal pay by providing opportunities for flexible working and shared parental leave (see Childcare section).
- Meet with local businesses who have the highest gender pay gaps to ensure they have strategies in place to address it e.g. mentoring, anonymised job applications, unconscious bias training, outreach work to encourage girls into STEM professions.

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- Provide services and training to businesses to help them close the gender pay gap.

## Childcare and Parenting

Childcare in the UK is among the most expensive in the world, is a major contributor to the gender pay gap (by the time a child is 20 mothers earn on average a third less than the fathers) and the current provision is failing – the Institute for Public Policy Research estimates it is underfunded by £1 billion.

Most women who stay at home to look after children would prefer to work, and do not do so due to the cost of childcare.

In Congleton WE conducted a survey in 2019 in which 83% of parents who responded had had their work, study of family lives impacted by a lack of affordable childcare. Since then, the population has increased and local provision has decreased.

WEP Candidate Susan Mead runs a day nursery in Congleton and is a national childcare campaigner, having spoken about it on Radios 4 and 5 Live. Susan represents Cheshire on Early Years Equality nationally, campaigning for improved funding for childcare.

Evidence from IPPR suggests that a 10% increase in the proportion of mothers working could raise £1.5bn nationwide in increased tax revenue and reduced benefits – in other words, providing affordable childcare boosts the national and local economy.

In 2022 Save the Children estimated that as many as 870,000 mothers in the UK want to work but don't due to lack of adequate and affordable childcare provision. If all 870,000 were in full time employment at a mean average salary, that would raise in the region of £7.5 Billion in PAYE and NI.

Shared parental leave is essential to close the 'parenting gap' – where mothers lose out financially and fathers by necessity work more, and so lose out on parenting opportunities.

Nationally the Women's Equality Party has a fully-costed plan for universal free childcare from the end of parental leave, as well nine months parental leave at 90% of pay with an enforced 3 months each.

### In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will:

- Prioritise funding for affordable childcare in Cheshire East and have a strategy to ensure all parents who want to work have access to affordable childcare.
- Work with businesses to emphasise the importance of childcare options, flexible working practices and shared parental leave to close their gender pay gaps.
- Review local provision to ensure childcare is available for all those that need it, including those working non-standard hours and wrap-around school care.
- Ensure information about provision is visible and available to new parents and those moving to the area.



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- Work to find a solution for parents of Daven School who require after-school childcare provision so that they can work.

## Equal Representation

For girls and women to achieve their potential, decision-makers in government, business, education and everywhere must prioritise equality; yet most institutions are themselves not balanced. [96 per cent of FTSE-350 CEOs are men.](#)

On the board of the East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce there are 8 men and one woman.

Only 35% of MPs are women. In Cheshire East, 39% of councillors are women, but not all of them have spoken out for gender equality; some are definitely not standing up for women and girls.

In Congleton Town Council, Kay Wesley has

- Brought a proposal to change the language from Chairman to Chair – approved by the council
- Led an initiative to write to the government to support the provision of childcare support to town/parish councillors to help more parents become councillors.
- Worked with officers to implement hybrid meetings technology so that in future, residents may be able to observe council meetings from home (subject to a Council vote). This will open up our democracy to those with caring responsibilities, disabilities or no transport, who might not otherwise be able to observe meetings.

### In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will:

- Work to create more gender equality in the councils by pushing for better support for those with particular characteristics (e.g. parents, disabled) to become councillors.
- Push for better facilities and priorities for parents in CEC. The CEC equality strategy did not even quantify the number of workers who have taken maternity or parental leave. This data needs collecting and we must ensure proper support for parents.
- Work with school governing bodies, companies and chambers of commerce to ensure equal representation for women and challenge those who assert that women 'choose' not to have power.
- Challenge businesses and others to close their gender pay gap and create equal opportunities for all to progress in their organisations

## Women and Heritage

'If you can see it, you can be it' and it is vital that women's stories are told. WEP supports the End Sexism in Schools project and national initiatives to include women in our history and heritage.



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In Congleton Kay Wesley is a Museum Trustee and also a trustee of Elizabeth's Group, a charity promoting the life and work of women's rights campaigner Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy.

In 2022 the group erected a statue of Elizabeth in Congleton Town Centre, an event that attracted the national broadcast media to the town.

The local bypass road was named Wolstenholme Elmy Way and Kay got four further Congleton streets named after women from the town's history.

**In Congleton and Cheshire East, WE will** continue to ensure that women's stories, and those from other under-represented groups, are told in our schools, events, and museums.

### Why the Women's Equality Party?

When women thrive, everyone benefits. Studies around the world have shown that the more gender-equal a society is, the more happy and prosperous it is. The World Economic Forum evaluates health, wealth, education and prosperity in its annual Gender Gap report, and says that a girl born in the UK today has 78% of the life chances of a boy. It also observes that 'Gender parity is fundamental to whether and how economies and societies thrive'.

The Women's Equality Party was started in 2015 by Sandi Toksvig and Catherine Mayer to challenge systematic discrimination and prejudice in the UK. WEP's seven core objectives are equality in work, health, the media, representation, education, pay, parenting and caregiving, and to end violence against women and girls. In 2020 WEP voted to mainstream the Climate Emergency as a core component of all seven policy areas, and adopted the model of Doughnut Economics, which balances the needs of the planet and people with those of financial growth.

You can read more about Why WE Exist at [www.womensequality.org.uk](http://www.womensequality.org.uk)