

## **News story: Appointment to the board of the Environment Agency**

Joanne Segars OBE has been appointed to the board of the Environment Agency by Environment Secretary, Andrea Leadsom.

The appointment will take effect from 1 March 2017 for three years.

Joanne is the Chief Executive of the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association, having originally joined the organisation as Director of Policy. She is a board member of the Pensions Infrastructure Platform and Pensions Europe, with experience spent as Chair of both. Joanne is also on the board of Pension Quality Mark Ltd. Joanne is a founding governor of the Pensions Policy Institute and sits on its council. She is also a Director of TUC Stakeholder Trustees Ltd.

Formally, Joanne was Chair of the Scheme Advisory Board for the Local Government Pension Scheme; a member of the Secretary of State's Advisory Group on Stakeholder Pensions; and a board member of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority.

Board members provide non-executive leadership challenge and support to the Environment Agency's executive through regular board meetings, committees and groups. They also undertake individual lead roles on relevant issues and with local operational teams.

All appointments to the Environment Agency board are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. The appointment complies with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (which was superseded by the Ministerial Governance Code on Public Appointments in January 2017).

The Environment Agency is a Non-Departmental Public Body, set up under the Environment Act 1995 to take an integrated approach to environmental protection and enhancement in England. The Environment Agency has major responsibilities in flood management, water resources and quality, climate change, land quality, chemicals, pollution prevention and control, waste, conservation and biodiversity, fisheries conservation, air quality and navigation.

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## **Press release: Children living in**

# workless households at lowest level since records began

The number of households where no one works has fallen by 828,000 since 2010 and is now at its lowest level in more than a decade, according to new independent figures released today.

Over 17.6 million households now have at least one working adult, meaning that around 9 in every 10 children live with a working adult.

Less than 15% of households are classed as workless, with the number having fallen by 72,000 since last year.

Work and Pensions Secretary, Damian Green said:

More parents now have the opportunity to find work and enjoy the dignity and security of having a regular wage.

We will continue to build on this success as we roll-out Universal Credit to all parts of the country – ensuring that it always pays to be in work.

The latest employment figures show that there are 31.84 million people in work, and the unemployment rate (4.8%) is at the lowest in over a decade.

The proportion of lone parents working rose to 67.9% in 2016, an increase of over 10% since 2010.

The government's welfare reforms are returning fairness to the benefit system and encouraging people who are able to work to do just that. They include:

- the benefit cap, which ensures that families don't receive more in benefits than the average family earns
- Universal Credit, the biggest change to the welfare system in a generation
- the Claimant Commitment, which spells out what we expect from jobseekers when they search for work
- the New Enterprise Allowance scheme, which helps people on benefits to become their own boss

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5124

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# Dubs Amendment: the families that opened their doors to child refugees that have yet to come



1 March 2017

**Catherine Marchand:** “Our lives, like many others in our position, are on hold as we wait to see whether Theresa May will let us open up our home and provide the safety and security that these unaccompanied minors so desperately need.”

**Duncan Blinkhorn:** “Our message to politicians is: we are here, we are waiting to help, and we are not alone.”

**Keith Taylor MEP:** “There are families and local authorities across the country that are waiting to provide the support and security these vulnerable children need.”

There are families, communities and local authorities across the UK waiting to help vulnerable child refugees, according to Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East.

The former Brighton councillor is highlighting the story of a Brighton couple who have spent the last seven months going through a rigorous fostering process in the hope of offering a safe home to a vulnerable child fleeing conflict.

Catherine Marchand and Duncan Blinkhorn from the Hanover and Elm Grove area of the city are speaking out about the Government’s ‘callous’ abandonment of child refugees ahead of [Wednesday’s Commons vote](#) on the Dubs Amendment.

Catherine and Duncan, both 55, hope to demonstrate to MPs that there are compassionate families across the UK keen and able to care for and provide homes for the 3000 unaccompanied minors the Government had originally promised to bring to safety.

Catherine, a Community Nurse who has worked in the NHS for more 35 years, said:

“The government’s decision to renege on its promise to thousands of the most vulnerable refugee children is utterly appalling.”

“Our lives, like many others in our position, are on hold as we wait to see whether Theresa May will let us open up our home and provide the safety and security that these unaccompanied minors so desperately need.”

“The success of the World War II Kindertransport scheme, to which my family and countless others will forever owe a debt of gratitude, relied on the

goodwill of national governments and their peoples. The British people's compassion and goodwill is not lacking – so where is our Government's? History will not judge us kindly if Theresa May insists on maintaining her callous approach to a refugee crisis that is driving unaccompanied children into the arms of human traffickers and extremist groups.”

Catherine's partner, Duncan, the co-ordinator of the Brighton Bike Hub, added:

“We have invested much of the last seven months in making preparations to help. We are lucky to have the support of our community and are proud that Brighton and Hove identifies as a ‘city of sanctuary’. Ours is not an isolated case, there are families like ours in communities across the country that are keen and able to help”

“Our message to politicians is: we are here, we are waiting to help, and we are not alone; now is not the time to pull up the drawbridge, it is the time to embrace your humanity and uphold a promise you made to three thousand vulnerable child refugees.”

Keith Taylor, who has been a vocal critic of the Government's wavering response to the refugee crisis, said:

“I share, wholeheartedly, Cathy and Duncan's sense of anger and frustration at the Government's behaviour towards the most vulnerable child refugees. While I want to commend Cathy and Duncan for their patience and their compassion it is important to recognise that their story is not unique; there are families and local authorities across the country that are waiting to provide the support and security these vulnerable children need.”

“The UK has taken just 350 lone child refugees which is nowhere near the 3000 originally proposed by Lord Dubs and is equivalent to fewer than one per local authority in the UK.”

“Britain has a proud tradition of welcoming those most in need. We stepped up to rescue 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi persecution. Which is why I am echoing Cathy and Duncan's calls for MPs to stand by the country's values and fight to reverse Theresa May's decision and keep the Dubs scheme alive.”

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# I strongly urge those who blocked this UN Security Resolution to reconsider – Emily Thornberry

**Emily Thornberry MP, Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary**, responding to the veto by Russia and China of a UN Security Council Resolution sanctioning the Syrian government for using chemical weapons, said:

"Under any circumstances, chemical weapons are barbaric, and their use must never be tolerated. This is a core principle of international humanitarian law, which the Syrian government itself accepted when it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention.

"There should be no impunity for those found responsible for using chemical weapons, and I strongly urge those who blocked this resolution to reconsider."

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## Sarah Champion speech at the London School of Economics

**Sarah Champion MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities**, speaking at the London School of Economics today, said:

**\*\*\*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY\*\*\***

It's such an honour to be here at the LSE.

Founded by Beatrice Webb, a visionary woman who paved the way for the Beveridge report, and who arguably drew up the blueprint for what would later become the welfare state and the birth of our NHS.

I would like to thank the LSE Department for Economics as well as the Equality and Diversity Taskforce, for hosting this important event here today ahead of the Spring Budget next week.

It is great to see so many senior female economists and academics here. Too often women's voices on

the economy are ignored or take a back seat.

Just over a year ago, the Fawcett society analysed newspaper coverage of the economy and found that over 80% of those quoted or referenced were men, and over 80% of articles were imbalanced in favour of men.

From that I take two things:

One, that the voices of women, like many of you here today, with relevant expertise and experience, are rarely given a platform – which reinforces the public perception that being an expert on the economy is a male role.

Secondly, the economy is an area where there have been significant negative impacts on women since 2010.

From cuts to tax credits to the crisis in social care budgets – it is women who have consistently been hit hardest, yet it is our voices that are continuously excluded.

This year, the Spring Budget is on the same day as International Women's Day – so the 8th March becomes a critical day both for women's rights and for the economy.

Labour are determined to ensure that we do not miss this opportunity to lay out our demands for women to be at the heart of economic decisions.

For women's voices, perspectives and interests to be properly understood, considered and heard.

As of the last autumn statement, 86% of the net gains to the Treasury through tax and benefit changes since 2010 had come from women.

That figure is up on the previous year's autumn statement, in which the figure was 81%.

That is why, today, Labour are calling for a Spring Budget that works for women.

A budget that invests in jobs for women.

A budget that recognises

and supports the services that women depend on.

A budget that advances women's equality and economic independence

At its heart, we expect a budget that works for women as it is a key opportunity for the advancement of gender equality.

This concept, often referred to as gender budgeting, now takes place in more than 40 countries around the world.

It was originally inspired by the early experiences of countries such as Australia, and then given further momentum by the United Nations commitment to gender budgeting in the Beijing platform for action.

The perceived assumption is often that budgets are neutral, that they benefit and impact on everyone equally, regardless of gender, ethnic background or disability.

We know this is not the case.

Women are particularly vulnerable to being hit harder by this Government policies, for a number of reasons.

First, social security payments make up a greater share of women's income than men's, as women still earn less in the labour market.

Women make greater use of public sector care services than men, because they have greater caring responsibilities.

Women also pay less direct tax than men, because they tend to earn less. Meaning that tax breaks for top earners disproportionately benefit men.

Finally, women are hit harder by this Government's policies, because a higher proportion of women are employed in the public sector, which is consistently under attack.

If we are to create a budget that works for women, these factors must be properly taken into account during the formative stages of policy making and budget setting. It needs to be done in a way that ensures that women are not disproportionately

penalised, and that gender economic equality is advanced.

However, Gender inequality will not simply be addressed through gender budgeting.

Children aren't born with expectations about what is, or is not, appropriate for their future careers, or beliefs about what their work is worth.

The stereotypes we see embedded from such a young age [ultimately contribute to the inequalities we see in adult life](#), in the workplace and in the economy more widely.

This must change.

Violence against women, maternity discrimination, unequal pay and lack of access to decently paid, secure employment: all take an economic toll.

Gender inequality is economically inefficient. Gender equality is good for economic growth.

Janet Stotsky, who has researched the economics of gender since the mid 90's, recently led an International Monetary Fund survey. She has said simply that;

'gender budgeting is good budgeting'.

The imperative for a budget that works for women goes far beyond an economic one. Legal and international obligations on the Government are clear in the need to protect and advance women's economic equality.

The Equality Act 2010, introduced by Labour, enshrined in law the public sector equality duty which requires public authorities to have due regard of equality considerations when exercising their functions.

In section 149 of the Act, Labour placed the provision that any public body must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to "eliminate discrimination" and "advance equality of opportunity" for those with protected characteristics, which include gender and ethnicity.

Given that the legal and economic arguments are clear that budgets must work for women, why is it women who continually fair worst under this government?

My belief is it is a combination of outdated and intrinsically biased assumptions in accounting and policy, as well as a lack of transparency in how equality considerations are taken into account, have brought us to the point where the 86% figure I mentioned earlier is a reality.

Take, for example, the way investment and current expenditure are defined by the Treasury.

Currently, the wages of construction workers paid to build a school count as public investment. However, when government staffs the school to provide education, the wages of the teachers are not counted as investment expenditure, but as current expenditure.

The benefits produced by teachers accrue over the years, both to the children who have been educated, and to the wider economy. These are not just 'day to day' immediate benefits.

Feminist economists have long argued that the work force is a produced asset that requires investment of resources for it to be available on a daily basis.

In the example I just gave – both the wages of the teachers and the construction workers would be defined as public investment.

Similarly, there is also an inherently skewed way that governments think about infrastructure.

The Labour Party have long acknowledged that economic development requires a well-functioning social infrastructure; Schools, hospitals, care and public services.

Investment in social infrastructure both alleviates unpaid care work and generates more jobs for women.

Underinvestment in public services and infrastructure not only reduces the productivity of the current and future work force, but it also dumps the burden of, often unpaid, care work on women. This leads to an inevitable impact on women earning ability.

Yet in statement after statement, we hear the government effortlessly justify investment of tax payer money in roads and transportation projects, while their last Autumn Statement, failed to offer any investment in care or the NHS.

The government's excuses for their unprecedented lack of investment in care, the NHS and public services don't stack up for the economy, and they definitely don't stack up for women.

When the UK Labour government invested in creating the NHS in 1948, the ratio of debt to GDP was over 200 per cent, and that higher public investment led to higher growth. High debt ratios did not prompt cuts to public investment in the 1940s, 1950s or 1960s.

What is unarguable is that at the same time as imposing cruel spending cuts that have been shown to hit women hardest, this government has added almost £700bn to the national debt.

That's not just more than the last Labour government.

It's more than every Labour government, in history, added together!

So, not only have public services like our NHS or our Local Councils been shredded, the scale of the failure is such that the Tories can't even claim to have reduced the debt!

The question that we must focus on is whether an individual investment project has economic returns that are higher than, or at least equal to, its costs in terms of interest payments.

If the returns are high enough, debt sustainability would automatically be satisfied as the additional growth would decrease, or at least stabilise the debt to GDP ratio.

But, if we continue to think of public investment exclusively as spending on physical infrastructure – roads, railways, ports, airports – the benefits to women will continue to be limited by this definition.

And remember, this is in addition to the deepening and damaging cuts to social infrastructure under this government that fail to invest in our future workforce, and women in particular.

The last autumn statement posed a real opportunity for the Government to make changes:

They had the opportunity  
to start a new economic path with a new female Prime Minister.

They missed that  
opportunity by a mile.

The disproportionate  
impact on women had in fact increased from the autumn statement the previous  
year, from 81 to 86%.

Joint analysis from the  
Runnymede Trust and the Women's Budget Group also showed that, as of the last  
autumn statement, low- income black and Asian women are paying the highest  
price for this Government's failed austerity agenda.

The 86% impact figure  
sounds shocking, but we know it isn't just a number in a textbook or a policy  
paper.

These are real  
women.

Real women whose lives  
are being made increasingly more difficult through government policy and  
successive budgets.

Women who have to  
struggle with more caring responsibilities due to the ever increasing gap in  
social care funding.

Women on increasingly  
insecure employment terms, unable to plan properly for their family's future.

Women born in the 1950's  
who, with little to no notice, are having to face a crisis in their  
retirement  
planning.

54,000 women a year who  
are forced out of their jobs through maternity discrimination and who can't  
afford this government's extortionate fees to take their employer to  
tribunal.

Women in my constituency  
and constituencies up and down the country who will have to wait another 60  
years before the gender pay gap closes.

155 women and 103  
children on a typical day, who are turned away from refuges due to lack of  
space, according to Women's Aid

Women struggling under  
more pressure placed on them through cuts to universal credit and to child

tax  
credits.

And perhaps most shamefully, women who, as of next month, will have to prove their third child is a product of rape if they wish to qualify for child tax credits.

I'm not sure how we have ended up here?

But I am sure that this cannot continue, and that Labour will hold this government to account for their seismic failings.

Twice Labour has formally presented the government with clear analysis on the impact of their budgets on women, only for the data to be dismissed out of hand by Ministers.

It would be far more credible if the government produced their own gender impact analysis alongside their financial statements, rather than to criticize the House of Commons library data without producing any alternative of their own.

To add insult to injury, the Government knows how to conduct a proper audit of their policies on women and those with protected characteristics.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission, and the Women's Budget Group, have outlined suggested methodologies very clearly.

We have to ask why, in the light of the availability of those methodologies, the Government continue to be so evasive in stepping up to their duties.

It is getting to the point where the government can no longer plead ignorance of the way their policies are impacting women or that there doesn't exist evidence to show this impact or the strategies to overcome it.

And the continued lack of transparency is deeply concerning.

The cross party, parliamentary Women and Equalities select committee have had precious little cooperation from the government in this area.

The Treasury have refused, in writing, to send a minister to answer questions on the impact of

the Autumn Statement on women. And they have sent inadequate or incomplete answers to questions asked by the committee.

The committee have stated publicly that, I quote,

'The lack of information provided to us demonstrates a concerning lack of transparency. The promotion of transparency is a central aim of the Public Sector Equality Duty requirements, but the Government's current position does not engender confidence that these requirements are being complied with.'

Next week, during the Chancellor's budget, on international women's day, there will be nowhere to hide if the government continue to avoid addressing this omission.

The game is up.

Labour is demanding the government put an end to this embarrassing ducking and diving and produce a transparent, cumulative impact analysis of their policies on women since 2010, as well as an equalities impact assessment of the specific measures announced in the Spring Budget.

The usual one-off cash give-away, or a gimmicky policy aimed at women, will not suffice.

Let me be very clear;

We are talking about a fundamental, structural, disproportionate impact on women of government policy since 2010.

Nothing short of a fundamental, structural solution will do.

This government seem keen to support gender equality on paper if it only means marginal changes, or a few one off measures.

What is needed however, are root-and-branch changes on how the fiscal system supports gender equality.

I appreciate this is much more challenging, but it is vital and long overdue.

The Labour Party will not shy from this challenge.

I am pleased announce today that Labour will build upon current equalities legislation, consulting over the next 12 months on bringing in an Economic Equality Bill.

Put simply, this Bill would seek to ensure that on equality, the money follows the policy.

It will no longer be possible for governments to talk the talk on equality while implementing economic policies that make life harder for women and protected groups.

It's about ensuring that we eliminate intrinsic, structural barriers that prevent people from reaching their full economic potential.

Next week, during the Spring Budget, Labour will be watching.

In the absence of the government conducting their own gender impact analysis on the budget, once again, Labour will be working hard with the House of Commons Library to produce this data.

I have to say, I find it shameful that we have to hold the Government's feet to the fire in this way, simply to ensure that their policies are not disproportionately impacting one particular group and reversing progress on economic equality.

Globally, when one of Trump's first acts as President, in a room full of men, was to curtail women's reproductive rights while Vladimir Putin has de-criminalised domestic violence, leadership from the UK on gender equality has never been so urgent.

Then there is the triggering of Article 50 and a Government white paper that failed to even mention the word equality.

The prospect of the UK becoming a deregulated off shore tax haven, free from EU treaties and law does not bode well for women.

Labour will make clear during our budget next week that that we expect the government to fundamentally and structurally enable and promote economic equality for all women.

Labour's economic aims always have, and always will be, our social aims too.

Our new Economic  
Equality Bill is the next step in realising this.

Labour is committed to  
overturning a rigged economic system that sees women bearing the brunt of  
failed austerity.

Labour has committed to  
producing a gender impact analysis alongside all of our financial statements  
in  
government.

Historically, I am  
extremely proud that that almost every major piece of legislation that has  
improved the lives of working women has been introduced by a Labour  
Government.

It was a Labour  
Government who introduced legislative protections for women under the Equal  
Pay  
Act, the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equality Act.

Labour were the first  
administration since the Second World War to accept state responsibility for  
developing childcare policy, and we introduced paternity leave and increased  
maternity leave. Labour brought in Sure Start centres, working tax credits  
and  
all-women shortlists, and we have more women MPs than all the other parties  
in  
the House combined.

And it is Labour who are  
now at the forefront of challenging the government on their abysmal record on  
gender economic equality and it is Labour who are taking the lead on working  
to  
develop in government, a budget that works for all.