

Update Bulletin: 2018 January

# Fair Play South West (FPSW – [www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk](http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk)) is made up of individuals and organisations based in the South West of England that share a commitment to promoting gender equality and eliminating gender-based discrimination and disadvantage wherever it may exist, and by all available means. Fair Play South West’s vision is economic and social equality for women in the South West. Follow us on Twitter - @FPSouthwest

Our work continues to be guided by the SW Women’s Manifesto[[1]](#footnote-1).

The Women's Equality Network is run by a Board of volunteers.

To register as a member of Fair Play SW, to be added to our wider database or to express interest in joining our Board, please fill in and send   
[[docx](http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/images/Fair_Play_South_West_Joining_Form_revised.docx)a joining form21.89 KB](http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/images/Fair_Play_South_West_Joining_Form_revised.docx) to [mail@fairplaysouthwest.org.uk](mailto:mail@fairplaysouthwest.org.uk).

# Message from the Chair

2017 was a very mixed year for FPSW and its members.

As Chair I was immobilised. for much of the year through illness and long periods in hospital and nursing home. Fortunately Board members rallied round and we managed what turned out to be a full programme of work and informal meetings, though this was necessarily centred on developments in Bristol. We will be holding our first formal Board meeting for many months on 19th January 2018, and this will initiate a new work programme which I hope will include projects more widely across the South West region. I would like to thank all members for their help and patience over 2017.

To say the year was interesting both politically and in developments affecting women would be an understatement! With open criticism of the misogynist USA President, sudden outcries about abuse and harassment of women by powerful men which have been going on for years, and recognition at last by the media of the iniquity of the gender pay gap, one might be forgiven for thinking our work was done. However, progress for women at the grass roots is not yet being felt; they are still poorer than men and more subject to abuse; they are still in the minority in positions of power; and the health and social care sectors continue to be under-resourced in a way which particularly affects women.

There are particular and new threats; from Brexit and the EU Withdrawal Bill with its powers for government Ministers to alter law by Regulation including equality legislation; from continued cuts to public spending particularly to Local Authority budgets and services including women specific services such as refuge from abuse; from proposals to change legislation about gender and what it means to be a woman; etc ……

On the other hand, we end 2017 with some big opportunities, working with partners on a number of exciting projects in 2018, for example: childcare is being discussed as infrastructure with Bristol’s Mayor as part of plans for economic growth; funding has been achieved for a project to improve the chances of women getting decent jobs in the Temple Quay Enterprise Zone; and women’s activism and involvement are being celebrated as part of the centenary of women’s suffrage. So this update on FPSW activities focusses on our positive achievements over the year.

# Women’s position in the economy

## Childcare and Industrial Strategy

The FPSW report[[2]](#footnote-2) presented to the Bristol Women’s Commission in January 2017 continues to be used to support work on childcare and flexible working, particularly in Bristol by our partners Bristol Women’s Voice and Bristol Women’s Commission. The report recommends the twin actions of public/private investment in childcare as infrastructure and the acceptance by employers that decent jobs should be available for flexible working. The argument was pressed in the hustings for the Bristol Mayor in May and the general election in June, which both led to Labour victories in Bristol. It was further used in numerous consultations, for example on papers from RSA and JRF on inclusive growth. FPSW published its own briefing[[3]](#footnote-3) on Industrial Strategy and Inclusive Growth in February 2017 which pressed the case on childcare and flexible working as well as social infrastructure more generally. This was submitted to numerous consultations from Government, the Labour Party, Bristol’s Mayor, the Combined Authorities Mayor and others. After much lobbying by the BWC Economy Task Group, towards the end of 2017 Bristol’s Mayor has been indicating publically that he agrees. The campaigning continues!

## Gender pay gap reporting and business commitments

FPSW Chair wrote a blog[[4]](#footnote-4) for Business West, an employer organisation for the region, on how a business might set about reducing its gender pay gap. This was in response to the coming into force of gender pay gap reporting regulations. The blog encourage amongst other things the advertising of all jobs as available for flexible working.

FPSW also drafted a set of business commitments to encourage quality employment of women. This has been taken up by BWC Business Task group as the basis for further work on how business might contribute.

FPSW attended a British Council event in London discussing the role of social entrepreneurs in supporting women’s empowerment. Many of the recommendations mirrored those of FPSW in relation to women’s position in the economy.

## ROSA Funded Project on Women’s Employment in Temple Quay

FPSW has been participating in the work of BWC seeking to make the Temple Quay Enterprise Zone a beacon of good practice for women’s employment. As part of this, BWV, wth the help of the Women’s Budget Group, was successful in obtaining money from the ROSA managed ‘Woman to Woman’ Fund, which comes from the ‘Tampon Tax’[[5]](#footnote-5). The project will help women in a nearby disadvantaged neighbourhood to access decent jobs in the Zone. FPSW continues to be on the steering group for the project.

# Feminist Democracy and Brexit

FPSW role in the Brexit developments has mainly been through keeping updated and passing on briefings through the website and twitter account. See[[6]](#footnote-6) for example. The main concern for women’s organisations is the potential for watering down equalities legislation once the UK government is no longer constrained by EU Directives. A late amendment to the Committee Stage of the EU Withdrawal Bill proposed by government would mean that Ministers have to tell parliament if they intend to amend the Equality Acts by Regulation – which at least would mean they couldn’t slip it in un-noticed. The amendment also commits Ministers to a limited equality impact assessment of Regulations, though it remains to be seen how well this is enforced. FPSW is watching this space and will lobby where appropriate.

FPSW Chair contributed to a paper[[7]](#footnote-7) about feminist democracy in a Brexit environment presented to the ESA Conference in Athens[[8]](#footnote-8) in September. The paper uses historical case studies to demonstrate that progress in women’s equality can only be made by women for women in grassroots movements. There has been much evidence internationally of the effectiveness of women coming forward together in 2017. FPSW will need to consider how to continue to mobilise our SW UK grassroots organisations and women in 2018.

# Women and Power

2018 is the centenary of women (or at least some women) getting the vote and the government has recognised this by funding celebratory projects[[9]](#footnote-9) in some cities including Bristol[[10]](#footnote-10). BWV have developed a full year of exciting events[[11]](#footnote-11) starting on February 6th with a lantern march. FPSW has agreed to have a stall and run a workshop at the International Women’s Day event on 3rd March[[12]](#footnote-12).

# SW Women’s Manifesto

The last update to the Manifesto was published in October 2015. Much has happened since then and FPSW intend to review it. However, a quick read suggests that the 22 ‘calls for action’ have not yet been fully achieved!

We continue to use our website and twitter feed to update members with relevant material from the wider women’s movement and other social developments.

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1. [www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/manifesto](http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/manifesto) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/images/High_Quality_Affordable_Childcare_event_report_final.pdf>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/images/Industrial_Strategy_and_Social_Infrastructure_V4.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.businesswest.co.uk/blog/how-reduce-gender-pay-gap-your-business> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.rosauk.org/blog/over-700000-invested-in-women-and-girls-in-local-communities-through-the-woman-to-woman-fund/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/links/442-women-and-brexit-news-1> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk/images/ESA_Final.2.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.europeansociology.org/conferences/un-making-europe> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/centenary-cities-100-years-of-votes-for-women> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/100-years-of-votes-for-women/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <https://www.facebook.com/events/340176859798953/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/international-womens-day-call-for-stalls/> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)