**Equalities Consultation Questions**

 **– Policy Process 2025**

Equality is a key value and principle of the co-operative movement – enshrined in the principles of the Rochdale Pioneers since 1844. In this year’s Co-operative Party Policy Process, renewing the equalities policies will be one of the two focuses, alongside imagining the co-operative economy of the future.

The equalities policy consultation will be a member-led review, taking in views and proposals from across the Party. Members, elected representatives, party branches and councils, and networks will be invited to contribute their thoughts and opinions on how to develop a modern equalities policy offering.

While this consultation is about public policy making, the Party take equalities seriously internally and has taken a series of measures to improve representation and inclusion, improving our internal structures – including establishing five Equalities Networks and holding regular equalities focused events.

The Co-operative Party’s existing policy on equalities can be found primarily in two documents, the [Women & Equalities Policy Document](https://party.coop/publication/women-equalities-2/) and [Co-operative Change](https://party.coop/publication/co-operative-change/), the Party’s platform for the 2024 General Election. While it has been over a decade since the last equalities specific paper was published by the Co-operative Party, during this time the Party has sought to mainstream equalities policy strands within our general policy making and output, including in publications on housing, healthcare, social care and more.

The Party is committed to creating a more inclusive society, ensuring all communities have equal representation. voice and visibility in parliament and politics. Party policy calls for greater action to be taken to end discrimination in society – ensuring people are not discriminated against due to their religion, sexuality, race, gender or any other characteristic.

The Party advocates for a social definition of disability and a commitment to increasing co-production with disabled people on the design and delivery of public services. Policy proposals on tackling violence against women and girls have been developed by the Party, which has undertaken work with Police & Crime Commissioners and elected representatives to reduce incidents.

We believe the new consultation is an opportunity to expand the existing policy offering – to maintain a forward-thinking policy platform which meets the challenges people face from diverse backgrounds.

Rather than equality related aspects of different policy areas, this Equalities Policy Process will focus on areas of change in the diversity, equity and inclusion space. This may include, but is not limited to:

* Proposed reform of existing equality legislation
* Policy to create more diverse representation at all levels
* Ways to promote and embed co-production of policy that includes under-represented communities
* Ways to tackle entrenched inequalities in health, education, housing and more.

The approach we will take for this consultation will include:

* Presentations at Co-operative Party Regional Conferences – raising awareness of the equalities Policy Process
* An online policy consultation for individuals and groups (party branches, party, councils, etc.)
* Policy discussions held between the national Policy Officer and each of the five Networks.

We believe this approach will enable the Party to focus on delivering a modern and broad public policy offering on equalities policy – which is informed by members’ lived experience and wider expertise.

**How to get involved**

The policy consultation will run until **Friday 13th June**. There are a number of ways to get involved – you could attend your local party meeting to discuss the topics and share your collective views or submit your individual answers to us, both via the online portal.

Your contributions will be collected and considered by the NEC’s policy sub-committee, who use your ideas and feedback to shape policy proposals. These will be brought to the Co-operative Party annual conference in the Autumn for delegates to debate and vote on.

These consultation questions are a guide for members. We do encourage you to share anything they feel is relevant to the debate and should not feel obliged to answer every single question either.

**Consultation Questions**

* How can the UK’s governments promote an intersectional approach to Equalities legislation?
* What more can be done to ensure community cohesion and celebration of diversity between different faiths and religions?
* What can be done to address barriers and increase opportunities for those whose character is NOT currently protected under the Equality Act 2010? For example, socio-economic background, health conditions, caring responsibilities, parental responsibility, language, experience in care
* How can the Government promote the interests and rights of the LGBTQ+ community globally?
* How can co-operative housing provide safe, secure housing for LGBTQ+ communities? Are there co-operative solutions for LGBTQ+ friendly retirement villages?
* How can the UK’s governments strengthen the protections of LGBTQ+ communities?
* How can central and local government ensure those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are not disadvantaged in the labour market, education or healthcare?
* How can we ensure youth voice is actively represented and encouraged in the political and public realm?
* How can the co-operative movement and social economy promote opportunities for young people – incl. education and training, apprenticeships, work experience, etc.?
* How can the UK’s governments support the growth of co-operative schools and academies?
* How can the UK’s governments improve youth services and youth hubs? i.e. community ownership, etc.
* What measures can be taken to support the development of student co-operative housing?
* What further measures can be taken by central and local government to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG)?
* What is required from central and local government to ensure victims of domestic abuse can safely and securely leave violent relationships and move on with their lives?
* How can the co-operative movement be a leader in supporting women at work – including equal pay, flexible working, etc.?
* How can co-operatives provide solutions to childcare – which has been a major impediment to women pursuing careers after having children?
* What further measures can the Government take to ensure decent maternity and paternity leave is available to everyone?
* What measures could central and local government take to pro-actively challenge and reduce racism wherever it is found?
* How can the UK’s governments challenge institutional racism that leads to inequalities in health care?
* How can the new Government strengthen the Equality Act, for example adding caste discrimination?
* What policy change would enable disabled people to engage more easily in political and public life?
* How can the UK’s governments help to improve the accessibility and inclusion of workplaces and public spaces?
* How can we build co-production of public services with disabled people and other under-represented groups facing barriers to access?
* How can we reduce discrimination against disabled people? I.e. disabled parents, etc.
* How can the Government develop a benefits system which supports, rather than hinders disabled people?
* How can the co-operative movement take the lead in improving disabled people’s lives?
* How could co-operative and community-led housing provide improved housing options for disabled people?
* What more can be done to integrate and improve the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK and beyond?