

Keir Starmer: a woman is an adult female

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Sir Keir Starmer said he does not think self-identification is the right way forward

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The Labour leader has been shifting position since struggling to say in 2021 whether a woman could have a penis, before declaring this year that [99.9 per cent of women](#) "haven't got a penis".

Challenged on a BBC Radio 5 Live phone-in, Starmer went further. "Firstly, a woman is an adult female, so let's clear that one up," he said.

The party would "keep it a medical process" to change gender, Starmer said, while adding that he wanted to "modernise" the Gender Recognition Act and "get rid of some of the indignities in the process".

The weekend's policy discussion has "allowed us to be clear that there should be safe places, safe spaces for women, particularly in relation to violence against women", he added.

Citing his own experience prosecuting violence against women as director of public prosecutions, Starmer said he felt "very strongly" about the need for safe spaces and that "biological women who have been subjected to violence against women and girls want a safe space where they can feel . . . that they are properly supported and protected".

Asked what women needed to be protected from, Starmer raised the

case of [Isla Bryson](#), a rapist who was moved from a female to a male prison after a public outcry.

"I think the Scottish prisoner case probably answers that question," he said. "I'm not saying there are a lot of examples of that, but I do think the principle of safe spaces is very important for women."

At the weekend Starmer was critical of [the expansion of London's Ultra-Low Emission Zone scheme](#), saying the party should not put forward policies which end up on Tory leaflets, while Labour's defeated candidate in Uxbridge, Danny Beales, said he had been "cut off at the knees" by the charge on the most polluting vehicles.

Starmer has told [Sadiq Khan](#), the mayor of London, to "reflect" on extending the charge, but yesterday accepted it would go ahead.

He mentioned a law requiring a reduction in air pollution, saying: "If the law requires a measure to be taken, it is not in the gift of the mayor to say, 'I'm simply not going to do it.' So, he's got to do something. What I'm working with him on and asking him to reflect on is in this scheme is there more that we can do to help people."

Arguing for more government money for a scrappage scheme to make buying cleaner new cars cheaper, Starmer said he wanted Khan to "look at the scheme, and see whether there are things that can be done to make it easier for people".