



Ethnic Minorities  
& Youth Support  
Team Wales

Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



Race Council Cymru  
Mingolion Iddia Equality  
Mingolion Cytundwr Cyfnewidiol



# Diversity and Inclusion Guidance for Registered Political Parties

January 2025

**About the Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales:** Our vision is of a Wales free from gender discrimination where all have equal authority and opportunity to shape society and their own lives. We work with our vibrant coalition of organisational and individual members to transform society. Our work sits under three pillars. We will Connect, Campaign and Champion women so our vision is realised.

## Key Messages

- 1. Diversity and inclusion strategies:** The draft guidance sets out a comprehensive range of actions that have the potential to make political parties more inclusive and increase the diversity in Welsh elections. As the suggested actions are necessarily high-level, their effectiveness will depend on the quality of their design and implementation. Parties should consider further evidence and best practice to ensure specific measures are designed and implemented in an impactful manner.
- 2. Diversity information:** Robust data is central to inform political parties' diversity and inclusion strategies and monitor their effectiveness. To ensure comparability and transparency, all parties and the Local Government Candidate Survey should use an identical core set of questions, and parties should publish their methodology and response rates alongside the survey results.
- 3. Voluntary quotas:** In the absence of legislative gender quotas, voluntary quotas are the single most effective measure parties can take to promote the equal representation of women. Parties should design their voluntary quotas in ways that ensure women are not placed in fewer favourable positions than men, and they should use placement criteria to encourage the election of women who experience intersecting discrimination.
- 4. Prioritisation:** Many measures suggested in the draft guidance will only make a difference over time. To achieve tangible results for the 2026 election in the expanded Senedd, parties should be encouraged to identify and progress actions that could have a more immediate impact as a matter of priority. This should include the use of voluntary quotas, the appointment of Equality and Diversity Coordinators, the promotion of candidate support schemes and the publication of clear and accessible information on how to become a candidate.

## Part 1: Diversity and inclusion strategies for all Welsh elections

### **Question 1: Views on the specified characteristics and circumstances for the draft guidance**

The specified characteristics in the draft guidance are comprehensive and recognise the multi-faceted nature of barriers to participation.

However, there is a need for greater emphasis on intersectionality, which recognises that individuals often face multiple, overlapping barriers to participation. Political parties should



Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



implement targeted actions to address intersecting forms of disadvantage that disproportionately affect women from ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled women, and those from socio-economically disadvantaged groups. This should include:

- establishing mentoring and support networks for women from marginalised groups to help build confidence, develop skills, and access political opportunities;
- Policies and grievance procedures that explicitly recognise and address intersecting forms of discrimination, ensuring individuals receive appropriate support to overcome compounded barriers;
- To support women with caring responsibilities, parties should provide financial assistance for childcare or logistical support to enable greater participation in political activities;
- Training and development programmes should, cover intersectionality and the unique challenges faced by individuals experiencing intersecting disadvantages.

**Question 2: Please indicate your level of agreement with the suggested actions for political parties to take to increase diversity and inclusion in Welsh elections?**

Agree.

**2a: Please explain your reasons for your rating of agreement with the suggested actions for political parties to take to increase diversity and inclusion in Welsh elections.**

### General comments

Part 1 of the draft guidance covers a comprehensive range of actions that can help create a more inclusive political landscape in Wales. Due to the nature of this document, the actions are described at a high-level. Parties are encouraged to develop their individual strategies and measures by drawing on research and evidence and the expertise of relevant stakeholders, including internal party networks representing underrepresented groups. We would like to underline the importance of this point, as the success of each of the suggested actions could vary greatly, depending on well they are designed and implemented. WEN Wales, in collaboration with the Diverse5050 Coalition, is developing further work on various diversity and inclusion measures and would be keen to support political parties in developing a robust suit of actions.

The 2026 election presents a major crossroads for diverse and equal representation. The boundary changes, a new voting system and the availability of 36 additional seats could be an opportunity for parties to modernise and bring in fresh perspectives from traditionally underrepresented candidates. At the same time, a failure to take timely and decisive action could easily yield a further reduction in diversity, and the risk of the lowest women's representation in the history of devolution. For this reason, we strongly encourage political parties to identify a set of priority measures that can be progressed before the 2026 election alongside the development of mid-to-long term diversity and inclusion strategies.



Ethnic Minorities  
& Youth Support  
Team Wales

Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



Race Council Cymru  
Mynegidlon ydoliau Equality  
Mynegidlon ydoliau Cyfnewid Cymdeithasol



The guidance should encourage parties to prioritise actions with the greatest potential impact within the available time. The draft guidance should make clear that robust voluntary quotas are one of the key measures to achieve that. Other priority areas could include the appointment of an Equality & Diversity Champion/Coordinator and providing clear, accessible and timely information on how to become a candidate.

To enhance clarity and usability, the guidance could present actions and their potential benefits in a table format, linking each action to its expected outcomes while recognising the importance of combining these measures. This approach would help parties understand the purpose and advantages of each action, facilitating internal evaluation.

Some actions give detail that relates only to some characteristics/circumstances and not others, which could give the impression that these should be prioritised. If there is a reason that the action is specifically relevant to that characteristic or circumstance, an explanation or evidence should be provided. If there is no reason for the suggested action to focus on a specific characteristic or circumstances, these should be clearly marked as examples or be described in a more general manner, to align with the overarching message that parties should tailor strategies to address the specific diversity gaps and barriers within their context.

***Question 3: Are there other things which you think political parties need to consider in developing, publishing, implementing and reviewing diversity and inclusion strategies for Welsh elections? If so, what?***

Political parties in Wales should consider the following key areas when developing, publishing, implementing, and reviewing diversity and inclusion strategies for Welsh elections:

### **Strategic Planning Based on Evidence, Research, and Information**

Setting realistic and evidence-based voluntary targets is a key step in ensuring meaningful progress. Diversity goals should be informed by data, research, and analysis, reflecting current representation gaps and addressing specific barriers faced by underrepresented groups in politics. To achieve this, political parties should start by analysing their current demographics, including gender, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic background among candidates and elected members.

To maximise impact, these targets should be reviewed periodically to assess progress and refine strategies. Tracking data after each election cycle will enable parties to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives such as mentorship programmes, financial support, or changes in candidate selection processes. Aligning targets with regional demographics—such as increasing the percentage of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic candidates to better reflect the diversity of an area—can further enhance their relevance and effectiveness.

### **Financial Support Mechanisms**

Candidates from underrepresented groups often face significant financial barriers that hinder their ability to participate in political campaigns. These barriers, including high costs for campaign-related travel, childcare, and accessibility accommodations, disproportionately affect women, disabled individuals, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Financial





Ethnic Minorities  
& Youth Support  
Team Wales

Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



Race Council Cymru



Wales  
Cymru



on key characteristics such as gender, age, disability, race, and socio-economic background, the questions comprehensively capture the diversity of candidates.

We note that the template survey differs from the one used in the [2022 local government elections](#), with some questions streamlined and others amended or added. While this results in a loss of comparability with previous surveys, we believe the updated survey is better suited for capturing relevant information, particularly regarding disability, socio-economic background, and parental or caring responsibilities.

While we regret that some comparability to previous local government candidate surveys will therefore be lost, we believe that the template survey is overall better suited than its predecessor in capturing relevant information, including with regard to disability, socio-economic background and parental/caring responsibilities. Going forward, it will be critical that the local government candidate survey and all political party candidate surveys use an identical set of core questions to ensure compatibility between the Senedd/local government, between parties, and over time.

*Caring/parental responsibilities:* We welcome that the template survey asks more detailed questions on this area, through asking separate questions on parental and caring responsibilities and, on the latter, asking how many hours of help or support the candidate provides per week. As we know that the share of parental responsibilities in Wales is still vastly unequal and can act as a barrier to elected office for women, we would welcome a more detailed question on candidates' parental responsibilities. Instead of the proposed "yes/no/prefer not to say" format, the question could ask whether the candidate is solely responsible, has the major share of the responsibility, shares responsibility equally with a partner, has the minor share of responsibility with a partner, or has no parental responsibility.

***Question 5: Do you think the guidance will help political parties to collect, collate and publish diversity information on Senedd candidates? /5a: Please explain why you think this guidance will / will not help political parties to collect, collate and publish diversity information on Senedd candidates.***

We think that the guidance will help political parties to collect, collate, and publish diversity information on Senedd candidates and especially welcome the provision of a template survey and timescales. The suggestion that parties could ask candidates to complete the survey as part of their candidate application to generate high response rates is also useful. However, as parties are encouraged to disaggregate data for candidates who were elected and those who weren't, it may be useful to share with the guidance information as to how this information is tracked in the local government survey. We also welcome the Welsh Government's recommendation for data to be disaggregated by intersectional characteristics, subject to anonymity being protected.

Robustness of the data is paramount. We would expect the guidance to encourage political parties to publish a methodology, including response rates broken down by constituencies, to ensure transparency and reliability of the data. Additionally, clearer guidance on managing sensitive data is essential to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and to protect candidate privacy. Detailed instructions on anonymisation, secure storage, and data usage should be included to build trust among candidates, as candidates are more likely to share personal information if they are confident their data will be handled securely and transparently.



Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



We also note that, while response rates to the local government survey are overall low, some councils have successfully attained very good response rates. We would encourage the Welsh Government to explore what factors have driven high response rates—such as clear communication about the survey’s purpose, confidentiality assurances, or incentives—and share, as part of the guidance, suggestions or good practices that could help political parties achieve better response rates for their own surveys. Learning from these high-response councils would be invaluable for informing best practices at all political levels.

Finally, to improve candidate participation further, the guidance could recommend offering incentives, such as public recognition for parties that demonstrate high diversity levels in their candidate pools. This approach, combined with strong communication strategies, would encourage more candid responses and enhance the overall effectiveness of data collection.

### Part 3: Voluntary quotas for women at Senedd elections

***Question 6: Do you think the guidance will support political parties to take appropriate steps to achieve better gender representation in the Senedd? 6a: Please explain why you think this guidance will / will not support political parties to take appropriate steps to achieve better gender representation in the Senedd.***

We strongly welcome the inclusion of voluntary quotas for women at Senedd elections as part of this guidance. Research shows that, in the absence of legislative gender quotas, voluntary party level quotas are the most effective tool to encourage equal representation.<sup>3</sup>

The guidance rightly recognises that, in order to have the desired impact, quotas need to be designed to ensure that enough women are placed on lists and, importantly, women are not systematically placed into less favourable positions. The design of the gender quota system set out in the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill provides a suitable template to achieve this through the combination of vertical and horizontal placement criteria.

It could be helpful for the guidance to refer back to the evidence that motivated the design of the quota system in this Bill and which may not be immediately obvious to members of political parties considering their own arrangements. This could include evidence as to why 50% representation of women on a party’s candidate lists is unlikely on its own to deliver a 50% representation in its elected Senedd members and why vertical and horizontal placement criteria are needed.

As the proposed system is in line with international best practice and tailored to the Welsh context and voting system, and as the general principles of the Bill were agreed by the Senedd prior to the Bill’s withdrawal, we believe there is a strong case for parties to adopt the proposed quota on a voluntary basis. We would like to echo the point that parties that may wish to go further in ensuring equal representation should consider adopting a targeted approach of committing to place women in at least 50% of what they identify as the more favourable positions on their lists.

---

<sup>3</sup> Electoral Reform Society, *Pursuing Parity: Examining Gender Quotas Across Electoral Systems* (Electoral Reform Society, 2022) <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/latest-news-and-research/publications/pursuing-parity-examining-gender-quotas-across-electoral-systems/>



Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



While we welcome the draft guidance advice on gender quotas, we would like to reiterate the importance of encouraging parties to take steps to encourage the election of a diverse range of women candidates. Research suggests that voluntary quotas are less effective than legislative gender quotas in increasing the representation of women from marginalised groups.<sup>4</sup> While the mechanisms behind this are not fully understood, it is critical that parties take proactive steps in ensuring any voluntary gender quota they implement benefits a diverse range of women. While the actions set out in Part 1, if robustly designed and implemented, will help parties attract and support a more diverse range of women candidates, these efforts will only translate into the election of more diverse women candidates if these women are placed into favourable positions on candidate lists.

We believe that this point should be made clearer in the guidance, and should be accompanied by examples on what positive actions parties could take through candidate list to encourage the election of a diverse range of women. This could include further information and, where available, case studies, on positive action measures that are permitted under the Equality Act, such as shortlists that are restricted to disabled people, the use of “proportional shortlists” for people with other protected characteristics, and whether parties can legally reserve seats for candidates with specific intersecting identities.

For an overview of international research on quotas for other characteristics and how they interact with gender quotas, please see WEN’s briefing on Diversity Quotas.<sup>5</sup>

**Question 7: Are there other measures you think political parties could take to achieve a gender balanced Senedd? If so, what?**

**Supporting Candidates Experiencing Harassment and Abuse**

Abuse and intimidation towards candidates and elected officials remain serious obstacles to diverse and equal participation in politics. In Wales, 43% of MPs and Senedd Members have reported receiving death threats, highlighting the severity of this issue.<sup>6</sup> Further data from the Electoral Commission indicates that 56% of women candidates in the UK experience harassment during election campaigns, with nearly half expressing fears for their safety.<sup>7</sup> This hostile environment creates significant personal risks for candidates, discourages underrepresented groups from standing for election, and undermines democratic representation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Hughes, M. M. (2011). Intersectionality, quotas, and minority women's political representation worldwide. *American Political Science Review*, 105(3), 604–620. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055411000293>

<sup>5</sup> WEN Wales (2022), *Diversity quotas: Ensuring fair representation in political processes*, [https://wenwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/DiversityQuotas.WenWales.Final\\_.pdf](https://wenwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/DiversityQuotas.WenWales.Final_.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Senedd Research (2024), *Committee wants more done to remove barriers facing women standing for election*, <https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/committee-wants-more-done-to-remove-barriers-facing-women-standing-for-election/>

<sup>7</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Research reveals unacceptable abuse and intimidation towards election candidates*, <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media-centre/research-reveals-unacceptable-abuse-and-intimidation-towards-election-candidates-3>



Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



The Jo Cox Civility Commission strongly advocates for the creation of comprehensive support systems to tackle abuse and intimidation.<sup>8</sup> One key recommendation is the provision of clear guidance and accessible resources for candidates. These resources would enable individuals to report incidents effectively and access the support they need, including legal advice and emotional assistance. These suggestions align with Recommendation 23 from the Reform Bill Committee,<sup>9</sup> which calls for the Welsh Government to work with the Electoral Commission and other partners to provide guidance and support for candidates and elected Members facing harassment.<sup>10</sup> Many advocacy organisations have emphasised the importance of tailored training programmes for women, minority groups, and first-time candidates.<sup>11</sup>

Such guidance should also include an action relating to robust complaints and grievance procedures. These procedures should include detailed descriptions of the features of effective systems, ensuring that political parties adopt a consistent, transparent, and accessible approach to handling complaints. This is critical to demonstrating “zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, abuse, misogyny, homophobia, racism, or disablism” and providing “reassurance that party members and candidates will be supported if they experience discrimination”, two potential benefits listed in the Organisation Culture section of the draft guidance. Without clearly defined and well-communicated procedures, the actions outlined in this section may not achieve these critical intended benefits.

Political parties should:

- Adopt a robust approach by implementing an effective, consistent, transparent, and accessible process for dealing with complaints of discrimination or abuse that occurs internally within a party.
- Ensure the process provides clear timelines, confidentiality where appropriate, and a structured resolution mechanism to foster trust and accountability.
- Train party leadership and administrators to manage complaints fairly and empathetically, ensuring all members understand their rights and the procedures.

Parties could also share guidance and training on campaign safety and communications, linking to resources from organisations such as the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Local Government Association (LGA), and Glitch. These materials could include strategies for managing online abuse, best practices for secure communications, and protocols for physical safety during public engagements. By equipping candidates with practical tools and connecting them to expert resources, political parties can reduce risks and empower individuals to campaign with confidence.

To ensure alignment with broader organisational strategies, this section on complaints and grievance procedures should be moved from “Candidate Support” to “Organisational Culture.”

---

<sup>8</sup> The Jo Cox Civility Commission (2024), *No place in politics: tackling abuse and intimidation*, <https://www.jocoxfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Jo-Cox-Civility-Commission-report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> [Senedd Cymru \(Electoral Candidate Lists\) Bill: Stage 1](#)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



**Ethnic Minorities  
& Youth Support  
Team Wales**

Tim Cymorth  
Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig  
& Ieuenctid Cymru



**Race Council Cymru**



**Wales  
Cymru**



**Electoral  
Reform  
Society  
Cymru**

Framing it as part of organisational culture underscores the importance of embedding zero-tolerance principles into the ethos of political parties, rather than limiting it to support for individual candidates.