

# DIVERSE AND EQUAL REPRESENTATION TOOLKIT



**Party Culture**

**Attracting and Identifying Diverse Talent**

**Nurturing and Supporting Diverse Talent**

Diverse5050 | 2025

# DIVERSE AND EQUAL REPRESENTATION TOOLKIT

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## About the toolkit

The Diverse and Equal Representation Toolkit was developed by Diverse5050 to support political parties in their work to achieve our joint aim - a Wales whose political institutions reflect the full diversity of Welsh society.

It is designed to help parties become places where people of any gender, protected characteristic and marginalised communities feel welcome and can succeed.

The toolkit comprises three areas covering different aspects of party life and candidates' journey towards elected office:

- **Party culture** – including policies, awareness and understanding, inclusive events and activities, and media and communications.
- **Attracting and identifying diverse talent** – including information and outreach, candidate assessment and candidate selection.
- **Nurturing and supporting diverse talent** – including training and development, mentoring and peer support, financial assistance, and protection from harassment and abuse.

Some actions covered in each area will already be established in your party. The Diverse and Equal Representation Toolkit provides an opportunity to join the dots, identify any gaps, and develop a comprehensive and coherent set of measures tailored to your party's individual circumstances. In doing so, the toolkit can be used alongside the Welsh Government's [\*\*diversity and inclusion guidance for registered political parties\*\*](#) to inform your party's diversity and inclusion strategy and ongoing work.

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It is important that your party's commitment to diversity and inclusion is underpinned by **a strategy that sets out your mission and objectives** alongside **measurable targets and actions**, and upheld in **party leadership and your constitution**. Your party should consider assigning a **dedicated Equality and Diversity Coordinator** to effectively oversee the implementation of this strategy, across different levels and branches of your party. To ensure transparency and accountability, your party should consider preparing a **diversity and inclusion report** that is presented at your Annual General Meeting (AGM) or Annual Conference.

The content of this toolkit is informed by the [Scottish Equal Representation in Politics Toolkit](#), which was developed by the Equal Representation Coalition for political parties in Scotland. We are grateful to the Equal Representation Coalition for their permission to use their materials as the basis for parts of this work.

## About Diverse5050

[Diverse5050](#) is an award-winning coalition convened by [Women's Equality Network \(WEN\) Wales](#) and led by a Steering Group including [Electoral Reform Society Cymru](#), [Race Council Cymru](#), [EYST \(Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales\)](#), [Age Cymru](#), [Stonewall Cymru](#), [Disability Wales](#), [National Union of Students \(NUS\) Cymru](#), [Carers Wales](#) and [Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales \(FTWW\)](#). Its aim is to ensure that Wales' political institutions are gender balanced, with meaningful representation from people with protected characteristics and from marginalised communities.

**Disclaimer:** The Diverse and Equal Representation Toolkit has been produced by Diverse5050. While it has been developed collaboratively in consultation with all members, membership in Diverse5050 does not necessarily constitute an endorsement of every single policy position in this document.

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The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust has supported this work in recognition of the importance of the issue. The facts presented and the views expressed in this report are, however, those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Trust.

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# PARTY CULTURE

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## Introduction

Your party culture is a framework that influences the behaviours, actions, and language of your staff, members, volunteers and elected representatives. A welcoming and inclusive culture can help your party attract members from a diverse range of backgrounds and facilitate a respectful and collaborative relationship with members with different perspectives and identities. A culture where discriminatory or excluding behaviour is encouraged or even tolerated will alienate portions of your current and potential members, stifle contributions from underrepresented groups, and can damage your party's public image.

This document covers key aspects of fostering an inclusive party culture, including:

- **Policies** needed to support diversity and inclusion
- **Raising awareness and understanding** among staff, members and volunteers
- Organising **inclusive events and activities**
- **Messaging and communications** that promote inclusivity
- Preventing and addressing **bullying, harassment and abuse**
- Collecting and publishing **diversity data**.

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## Policies

### **The constitution**

Your party's constitution should reflect a strong commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion. In the preamble or mission statement, it should clearly state that the party is dedicated to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and equitable society where all individuals, regardless of protected characteristics or socio-economic background, have equal opportunities to participate in political processes and leadership. Membership should be open to all individuals without bias or discrimination, and leadership and decision-making bodies should strive for gender balance and diverse representation, ensuring that underrepresented groups have a voice in party governance. As the overarching governance document, your party's constitution should also include a commitment to promoting policies that address systemic inequalities and support marginalised communities.

### **The code of conduct**

A code of conduct transparently sets out behavioural standards and expectations for party members, staff, volunteers and elected representatives. It ensures that all individuals associated with the party uphold ethical standards, treat others with respect, and contribute to a positive and inclusive political environment. A robust code of conduct that is effectively communicated and enforced promotes accountability, fairness, and integrity. While it can help prevent harassment, bias, and discrimination before they occur, it should also provide clear procedures for reporting and addressing violations.

To foster diversity and inclusion, the code of conduct should state that all members and officials must adhere to principles of respect, fairness, and non-discrimination and that any form of hate speech, harassment, abuse or discrimination on the basis of any protected characteristic or socio-economic status is not tolerated.

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It should affirm your party's commitment to equal opportunity and equitable participation, ensuring that underrepresented groups feel welcomed and valued.

## Internal policies

While engaged individuals within the party often play a key role in promoting diversity and inclusion, dedicated internal policies are invaluable to ensure this work is transparent, sustainable, and consistent.

Below is a list of key internal policies that parties should consider adopting to ensure inclusivity for all underrepresented groups. Each policy should set out clear expectations and processes and provide a structured way to approach decision-making and disputes.

### Accessibility Policy

Covers accessibility in events, elections, campaigning, and communication to ensure participation for all members.

### Candidate Assessment Policy

Outlines how the party's vetting, interview, and assessment processes ensure a fair and inclusive approach, including the use of diverse panels and training of panel members.

### Communications and Media Policy

Establishes guidelines for how the party communicates with the public and the media, ensuring inclusivity and respect.

### Complaint and Whistleblower Protection Policy

Sets out a safe and confidential process for reporting discrimination, harassment, or bias-related concerns and ensures individuals are protected from retaliation when raising diversity and inclusion issues.

### Discrimination and Harassment Policy

Articulates a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment as essential for a diverse and inclusive organisation. It clearly defines unacceptable behaviours, provides reporting

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mechanisms, outlines disciplinary actions for violations, and sets out an approach for preventing discrimination and harassment before it occurs.

## **Diversity Monitoring Policy**

Sets out the party's processes for measuring and tracking progress on diversity and inclusion through regular assessments, member surveys, and diversity reports.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy**

Outlines procedures for preventing bias in recruitment, performance evaluations, and career advancement, including diverse hiring practices such as structured interviews, blind CV screening, and partnerships with diverse talent pools.

## **Equal Pay Policy**

Sets out measures to identify, address, and prevent pay gaps, including salary audits and transparent pay structures.

## **Flexible Work and Accommodation Policy**

Workplace flexibility supports employees with different needs, including parents and unpaid carers, disabled individuals, or those observing religious practices. This policy should cover remote work, flexible hours, and reasonable accommodations.

## **Parental Leave Policy**

Establishes clear provisions for parental leave, including maternity, paternity, adoption, and shared parental leave. This policy should outline leave entitlements, flexible return-to-work options, and protections against discrimination to foster a family-friendly and inclusive environment.

## **Peer Support Policy**

Sets out how the party encourages, supports, and resources peer support networks, which provide vital support systems for underrepresented groups and help amplify their voices within the party.

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## **Positive Action Policy**

Sets out steps the party is taking to ensure underrepresented groups are actively considered in candidate vetting, longlisting, shortlisting, and selection.

## **Social Media and Online Behaviour Policy**

Sets out expectations for online conduct, including respectful and responsible engagement on digital platforms. It includes examples of behaviour that won't be tolerated, how people can report incidents, and the party's complaints and disciplinary procedures.

## **Welfare and Inclusion Policy**

Outlines how the party ensures the well-being, safety, and fair treatment of all individuals, promoting an inclusive environment free from discrimination. It should include provisions for support services, accessibility, equal opportunities, and measures to address welfare concerns effectively.

Each policy should set out clear expectations and processes and provide a structured way to approach decision-making and disputes.

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## Awareness and understanding

Awareness and understanding are essential for fostering a positive, supportive, and respectful party culture. Training is key to ensure that all associated with the party share a basic understanding of the importance of diversity and inclusion and how their actions can contribute to a more inclusive environment.

Your party should consider providing training in the following areas:

**Gender Equality:** covers structural barriers to gender equality, addressing gender-based disadvantage and strategies for promoting gender equality in leadership roles and decision-making positions within the party.

**Race Equality:** covers the challenges faced by racial minorities and the impact of systemic racism. It educates party members on how to create a more inclusive environment, recognising racial inequality and fostering racial equity in leadership, policies, and everyday interactions.

**LGBTQ+ Equality:** covers challenges faced by individuals from the LGBTQ+ community, including LGBTQ+ discrimination, heteronormativity and transphobia and how to address these within the party.

**Disability Equality:** covers disability discrimination and the social model of disability, including physical and online accessibility and how to address social barriers to equality.

**Socio-Economic Equality:** covers barriers faced by individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds, focusing on the impact of socio-economic status on opportunities and access to resources and ensuring equal participation regardless of socio-economic background.

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**Cultural Awareness:** focuses on understanding and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds, this module covers the importance of cultural competence, helping members interact respectfully and understand cultural perspectives to support diversity in the party.

**Caring Responsibilities:** covers the challenges faced by parents and unpaid carers, including balancing political engagement with caregiving responsibilities. This module explores policies and practices that support carers, such as flexible participation, accommodations, and ensuring their voices are included in decision-making.

**Age Inclusion and Intergenerational Collaboration:** addresses age-related bias and stereotypes, ensuring equal opportunities for individuals of all age groups. This module promotes intergenerational collaboration, recognising the contributions of both younger and older members, and fostering an inclusive environment that values experience and fresh perspectives alike.

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## Cross-cutting modules

**Intersectionality:** focuses on the overlap of various forms of discrimination, this module helps members understand how factors such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation intersect and create unique challenges for marginalised groups.

**Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment:** covers how to recognise, prevent, and address discrimination and harassment. It includes guidelines on handling complaints effectively and fostering a safe, inclusive workplace for all, regardless of background or identity.

**Active Bystander:** empowers members to intervene when witnessing discriminatory or harmful behaviour. It provides strategies for safely speaking up or taking action to challenge harassment, bias, or exclusion, promoting a culture of accountability and support within the organisation.

**Inclusive Language:** highlights the importance of using respectful and inclusive language to challenge stigma and reduce discrimination. Educates members on the impact of their words and covers how to challenge harmful language when encountered.

**Implicit Bias Awareness:** addresses unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that influence decisions and actions, often without awareness. It encourages members to recognise their own biases and provides strategies for mitigating their effects.

**Microaggressions Awareness:** focuses on understanding, recognising and addressing microaggressions—small, often unintentional comments or actions that cumulatively harm or exclude marginalised groups.

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Parties should consider commissioning training from **experts with lived experience**. Training requirements should be **tailored to different roles** within the party, such as general party members, recruitment and selection panels, and senior executives, to address the specific circumstances and responsibilities.

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## Inclusive events and activities

Inclusive events and activities ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, can participate fully. While few organisations deliberately exclude individuals, accessibility is often overlooked, unintentionally creating barriers for certain groups.

Under the [Equality Act](#), organisations are legally required to make **reasonable adjustments for disabled people** at any event, whether physical or online. This includes ensuring both physical and digital environments are accessible, allowing all participants to engage meaningfully. When organising events, venue selection should be based on accessibility, ensuring step-free access, accessible parking, space for assistance dogs, and communication equipment like a PA system or microphones. For online events, organisers should ensure platforms are accessible to disabled participants, such as providing captioning, screen reader compatibility, and support for sign language interpreters.

What is considered a "reasonable adjustment" may vary depending on the size and type of organisation. The guidance and examples of reasonable adjustments in a workplace context, published by the [Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service's \(ACAS\)](#) and the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#), may provide a helpful orientation. It is important to note that not all reasonable adjustments incur financial costs. Basic needs—such as step-free access, accessible toilets, a microphone system, or online captioning—should always be met.

While meeting basic accessibility requirements is a good start, your party should aim to go beyond these, both in terms of ensuring access for disabled people and in addressing barriers experienced by other groups. Further accessibility measures that consider a wider range of protected characteristics include:

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- Selecting a **centrally located venue** with easy access to **public transport**.
- Being mindful of **event timing**, avoiding exclusive evening schedules.
- Providing **name badges** for all participants and speakers.
- Offering a **hearing loop** or similar accommodations where needed.
- Clearly communicating whether **children are welcome** and providing relevant spaces, such as a children's corner, breastfeeding-friendly areas, or a **crèche**.
- Ensuring **automatic doors** and an **accessible entry system**.
- **Clear signage**, including gender-neutral toilets and accessible pathways.
- Using venues with a **Changing Places toilet** (some wheelchair users are not able to use a standard accessible toilet).
- Ensuring **digital platforms are fully accessible**, including providing alternative text for images, screen reader compatibility, and captioning (for online events).
- Providing **large print** documents or using **clear fonts** like Arial.
- Offering **sign language interpreters** or other communication support when required.
- Allowing participants to submit **questions via text or social media** for those who find speaking in person difficult.
- Considering how to make **transport and accommodation** for events **inclusive and affordable**, e.g. through bursaries for people from underrepresented groups, car share schemes, and considering local facilities.
- Ensuring **adequate breaks**.

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- Providing **safeguarding and equality awareness training** for event staff and volunteers.
- Offering **easy-read versions** of documents and materials.
- Having a **welfare/inclusion officer** at the event responsible for handling accessibility and inclusion issues.
- Providing a **quiet or prayer room**.
- Thinking about the **diversity of your speakers and panellists**. A diverse speaker list is more inclusive of people from underrepresented groups.
- Displaying signs stating that racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and ableist language will **not be tolerated**.
- Providing information in **alternative formats** such as audio CD or braille.
- If you are providing food, consider **religious or other dietary requirements**.
- If events take place during **Ramadan**, provide networking opportunities that do not involve food or drink.
- Asking disabled people in your party to give **feedback** on accessibility.

This is not an exhaustive list and people who attend your party's events might have other access needs not listed above.

It is crucial that accessibility considerations are not reactive. Parties should proactively involve those with lived experience early on in planning accessible and inclusive events. Parties can also ask people when they become a member or when they sign up to attend an event about any access requirements they may have.

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## Remote, flexible and digital participation

The integration of remote, flexible, and digital participation offers opportunities to enhance inclusivity for underrepresented groups. By utilising digital platforms, political parties can eliminate barriers such as inaccessible venues and inconvenient event timings thereby broadening engagement opportunities. Offering events at a **variety of times and locations**, alongside **virtual platforms** for meetings, increases accessibility, especially for members in rural areas or those with mobility impairments or caring responsibilities.

Digital tools can **expand participation in campaigning activities**, providing alternatives such as phone canvassing, digital outreach, administrative tasks, and online fundraising, thus accommodating those unable to engage in traditional door-to-door canvassing.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that digital participation can present new challenges. Issues such as **digital literacy gaps** and **unequal access to technology** may disproportionately affect certain groups, including older people, women, ethnic minorities, and individuals on lower incomes. Therefore, parties should ensure their online resources are accessible and combine physical and digital engagement to ensure wider participation.

In order to maintain an inclusive environment, it is crucial to offer **both remote and in-person participation options**. This dual approach ensures that all members can engage fully, regardless of personal circumstances, and promotes a more diverse, accessible, and equitable political space.

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## Messaging and communications

Demonstrating a commitment to equality and diversity in your party's media and communications work is essential to engage your members and potential voters in all their diversity. It also takes seriously your party's responsibility that comes with having the influence and resources to put ideas into the public domain and shape public opinion.

Some actions parties should consider include:

- Regularly reviewing the **types of stories promoted** through your communication channels to check for unconscious bias
- Giving **equal communications coverage to different sections** of your party, including networks representing underrepresented groups.
- Writing a **communications and media policy** that sets out how your party will promote diversity and inclusion.
- Providing adequate coverage of **issues affecting people from underrepresented groups**
- Considering how people from underrepresented groups could **input into communications strategies** and influence how issues affecting them are communicated by the party.

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## Speakers and panels

Elected representatives and prominent party members will often be invited by media outlets, campaigns, and community groups to speak on a panel or do a media interview. One of the best ways you can demonstrate your commitment to equality and diversity is by sending a **wide range of spokespeople** to media and public events.

When selecting panel participants for your own events, consider prioritising **individuals with lived experiences** of the issues being discussed, particularly if the topic relates to equality or diversity. If no one with lived experience of a subject is available or feels comfortable speaking, encourage the spokesperson to connect with them or their peer-support network beforehand. It is also imperative that people from underrepresented groups have equal opportunity to speak on **topics that align with their expertise and interests**, not solely based on their identity.

To increase the diversity of your panellists, you should use positive actions. For example, you should consider encouraging speakers from overrepresented groups in the party to always ask who else is appearing on the panel before accepting an invitation. If, for example, it is an all-male panel, have a policy of suggesting a woman in the party to take their place. If it is not possible to send an alternative speaker, for example, if you need to send a particular person from a specific party, parliamentary or council committee, encourage the person to speak about equality and diversity in their statement.

Other actions you could take to increase the variety of spokespeople you have include:

- Running **media training** to develop public speaking and media skills in your members and **reserving places** for people from underrepresented groups

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- Including a session in media training about **issues people from underrepresented groups might face** when making media appearances. For example, techniques for challenging Islamophobia in media interviews
- Devoting some resources and staff time to **promoting the work and campaigns of underrepresented groups' networks** in your party through press releases, press events, receptions, etc.

When organising a debate or discussion, you should think in advance about what would make people feel more comfortable and enable more people to contribute. For example, people from majority groups often speak for longer and can speak over people from minority groups. To address this, you could consider actions such as having timed contributions from people during discussions and ensuring the chairperson chooses a diverse range of people to contribute.

## Inclusive election materials

People from underrepresented groups do not always feel represented in the materials, manifestos, images and campaign videos produced by political parties. Not only does this reinforce structural barriers to involvement in politics, but it can also be off-putting for people interested in joining a party. Making your party's **images representative of the diverse population of Wales** is important. When selecting campaign photographs and creating materials such as leaflets or party election broadcasts, it is important to showcase a diverse representation that reflects the full spectrum of society.

However, be aware that these images **should not be tokenistic**. There is no point in creating inclusive materials if you are not taking other actions described in this toolkit. For example, do not ask minority ethnic members to appear in photos and then not take proactive steps to remove barriers for them to fully participate in your party's activities.

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## Manifestos

There is often a lot of content to fit into a manifesto, which can mean that topics such as equality are cut from the document or are not as prominent as they should be. When writing your manifesto, make sure that you consider from the beginning how your commitment to equality and diversity will be reflected. This could mean you have a specific section of your manifesto devoted to your equality policies, or you could include relevant commitments throughout the document. You could also consider producing targeted manifestos that detail policies relevant to different groups and their specific needs.

## Accessible election materials

All people in Wales should be able to access information about and get involved in political activities. To achieve this, it is essential that campaign and membership materials are easily understood by all your members and potential voters.

It is good practice to produce campaign materials, manifestos and leaflets in a variety of formats, for example: **Easy Read**, on **audio**, **BSL** and **Braille**. Parties should always add **subtitles** to videos to enable people with a hearing impairment to engage with the content.

Some people do not speak Welsh or English as a first language. It is important that parties anticipate this and, where appropriate, produce materials in **languages other than Welsh and English**. Alongside Welsh and English, you might consider making your campaign materials available in the three most spoken languages in that constituency or area. National parties should think about providing **extra assistance and funds** to local parties in areas where they know there are several languages spoken other than Welsh and English. When translating materials and documents, parties should use a **professional translator** rather than a volunteer.

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## Bullying and harassment

Bullying is any unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended. Harassment is bullying that occurs because of a person's gender reassignment, age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or because they are disabled. Under the [Equality Act](#), harassment is unlawful, and organisations have a **duty to act against it**.

Bullying or harassment can take various forms. Some examples include:

- **Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone** in words or behaviour
- Copying emails that are **critical about someone** to others who do not need to know
- **Ridiculing or demeaning someone** – picking on them or setting them up to fail
- **Unwelcome sexual advances** – touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
- **Preventing individuals progressing** by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.

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## Stopping bullying and harassment

To help your party members, staff, and elected officials feel safe, the party should produce a **clear bullying and harassment policy** which states your **zero-tolerance** approach to bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. This policy should be widely available to members and include:

- **Information** about what harassment is, with examples of what it can include
- **Ways people can report** bullying and harassment
- How reports of bullying and harassment will be investigated, including **clear timelines**
- The **disciplinary procedure** outlining the actions that will be taken against people who bully or harass
- **Support available** for people who want to report an incident.

Your party should also consider posting a **public statement** on your website or at events about your commitment to equality and that abusive or offensive behaviour won't be tolerated.

To understand whether bullying or harassment is a problem in your party, it is a good idea to **record the number of reports and complaints** each year and have this information widely available. Your party can also use the information to investigate whether there is a need to make further changes to your complaints procedures.

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## Supporting people to report harassment

Providing good support for victims of bullying and harassment is important in creating a culture where people are willing to report it. Staff at all levels should be trained to handle complaints **sensitively and empathetically**. It is good practice to have several different contacts to report incidents to and for these be widely publicised to members and staff. Where possible try to develop a **range of methods for reporting harassment** including anonymous, email, online, and face to face reporting. It can also be helpful to appoint someone at a local branch level who is not involved in the day-to-day activities of the party and can act as an **additional and independent person** to report bullying or harassment to. All reports of and complaints about bullying and harassment should be treated **confidentially**.

The [Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(ACAS\)](#) has guidance about how to carry out a fair investigation of complaints and what your legal obligations are if a staff member complains about harassment. It is good practice for investigations to be carried out by someone who is **independent of the incident and people involved**. To achieve this, your party could think about using someone from another section of the party to help investigate and run the disciplinary process.

It may be tempting to deal with incidents of bullying and harassment within the party and not involve the police. However, whilst bullying itself isn't illegal, harassment because of a person's race, religion, impairment, gender identity or sexual orientation is **classed as a hate crime**. If someone has been a victim of a hate crime, the person should be helped and encouraged to report this to the police, but **the ultimate decision should always lie with the individual affected**.

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After reporting an incident of harassment, the victim might be unsure about what will happen next or be scared about how they will be treated in the party. Training some of your members to provide peer support to victims during the process of making a complaint could enable people from underrepresented groups to feel more confident about coming forward. This support might include explaining the complaints process, supporting people to make their report into a formal complaint and providing advocacy support during the complaints process.

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## Data Collection

Data collection is essential for promoting diversity and inclusion in politics. Under the [Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#), local authorities must already carry out a standardised survey of councillors or candidates standing for local government elections. The UK Government has recently committed to [enacting Section 106 of the Equality Act](#), ensuring further transparency and accountability in political representation.

Section 106 requires political parties to publish anonymised diversity data for candidates in relevant elections, including Senedd elections. This data includes age, sex, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background. Putting in place arrangements for data collection, analysis and publication in advance of the 2026 Senedd elections will ensure your party is fully prepared when this provision is enacted.

When collecting data, parties should refer to the [Welsh Government's survey template](#), which ensures **comparability of data across political parties and different elections**. It is also vital that your political party respects **candidates' privacy** and complies with **data protection regulations**. While key points are covered in the [Welsh Government's guidance](#), your party should carefully consider how to collect, manage, and release data in line with the guidance.

# ATTRACTING AND IDENTIFYING DIVERSE TALENT

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## Introduction

The candidate selection process within your party plays a crucial role in shaping a more diverse and representative democracy. A fair, transparent, and accessible approach can help ensure that individuals from underrepresented backgrounds have equal opportunities to stand for election. In Wales, demographic differences across regions mean that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective, but political parties should work to remove systemic barriers that disadvantage certain candidates and implement positive actions to foster a broader range of elected representatives.

Candidate selection is influenced by party policies and procedures, leadership priorities, and the attitudes and behaviours of those involved in the process. Ensuring an inclusive and equitable system requires a commitment to proactive measures that support diverse perspectives in decision-making. Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), political parties also have a duty to uphold open and inclusive processes.

This document sets out key recommendations for fostering an inclusive candidate selection process, including:

- Strategies for **raising awareness** and **engaging** a diverse pool of candidates.
- Best practices for **fairly evaluating candidates** and ensuring diversity is considered.
- Guidelines for creating **inclusive and transparent selection processes**.

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## Information and outreach

### Transparent information

It can be difficult to find information about becoming a candidate. This can discourage and exclude those who are not already highly engaged and mean parties may miss out on diverse talent. To encourage potential candidates from a diverse range of lived experiences and backgrounds, parties should clearly communicate their processes, expectations and timelines, as well as their commitment to attracting diverse talent. This could include:

- Publishing a **statement** on your website which highlights that your party values a **diverse range of lived experiences**.
- Having a **stall at party conferences and events** with **information on how to become a candidate**, staffed with people who can answer questions and signpost to further support and information.
- Holding **regular information sessions** run by people who have gone through the process themselves.
- **Widely advertising dates and deadlines** for all aspects of the assessment and selection process.
- Setting up a page on national and local party websites with **information about the steps towards becoming a candidate**, including:
  - Legal and party-specific criteria for candidate eligibility
  - Required application forms
  - Vetting/due diligence checks
  - The candidate assessment process
  - Relevant timescales
  - Any fees prospective candidates will need to pay

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- Role descriptions for MSs, MPs, and Councillors, covering details about pay, average hours spent on formal duties, and expectations around participation in party activities
- Links to further resources and support.

People from underrepresented groups tend to have access to **fewer networks and resources** and may benefit particularly from support during the application process. This can include:

- Parties **resourcing relevant sections or peer networks** in their party to support and mentor potential candidates from underrepresented groups.
- Running **tailored information sessions** for people from underrepresented groups.
- Having a **buddy system or peer support** from those who have already gone through the process.
- Working directly with organisations and programmes such as **Equal Power Equal Voice, Disability Wales** and **Elect Her**, which offer peer support, mentoring and access to resources for underrepresented groups.

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## Proactive outreach

Outreach activities are a great way to promote your party, speak to potential voters, and encourage people to get involved in your activities. Face-to-face outreach can be particularly effective at engaging with people from underrepresented groups who might be interested in your policies but are unsure if they would feel welcome in the party.

When thinking about outreach activities, try and be innovative in where your party goes and who your party reaches out to. For example, to attract more people from a minority ethnic community, do not just approach the local religious leaders and ask for a meeting. Hold a stall at a local community centre, play group, youth project or festival. Your party could consider varying the times that you run the stall. Prioritising outreach activities will help your party recruit new, talented individuals and can be a helpful way to train current members be more confident in communicating the aims and work of the party.

Diversifying your party membership is a great way to ensure your party is **reflective of Welsh society** and will often be the first step on the journey of your future candidates. Your party should consider actively recruiting people from underrepresented groups into your membership through:

- Contacting people who indicated they would vote for you and **asking them to join.**
- **Placing advertisements** in publications that are popular with underrepresented groups, including online and social media.
- Highlighting your **equalities policies.**

Be open about the equality and diversity practices your party wants to improve on and clearly state that new members will be valued in helping the party achieve this. If new members help you to improve, make sure you acknowledge this.

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## Candidate assessment

The candidate assessment process determines which aspiring candidates gain approval to move on to the selection stage, where the final candidate for election is chosen. Each party uses different terminology, and here we refer to this stage as **vetting, assessment, or screening**. Common assessment activities include an application form, interviews, and additional tasks like presentations or political knowledge tests, though processes may vary across parties and elections.

To achieve equal representation, parties must remove barriers that may unfairly disadvantage underrepresented groups. Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), parties have a duty to ensure a fair and open process. A **transparent and inclusive vetting process** not only strengthens democracy but also enhances policymaking by ensuring diverse perspectives are represented. This stage provides an opportunity for parties to reflect on what skills and experiences they value in candidates and to equip those involved in the process with the necessary **training and support to uphold equality**. The following sections outline steps your party should consider at each stage of the assessment process.

## Application forms

An application form can be a good way to gather information about potential candidates. However, it can also become a barrier to participation and remove excellent candidates from your process before having a chance to discuss their experiences, skills and political interests. To make this process more accessible for all candidates, parties should consider:

- Having a **clear role** description that is easily accessible to potential candidates.

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- Outlining the **essential and desirable criteria** against which applications will be assessed.
- Using **plain language** and avoiding jargon.
- Avoiding application forms that are **overly lengthy or complex**.
- Being **clear about how many words are expected** for each answer or in a written statement.
- Communicating that **equal consideration** will be given to **references from outside of the party**.
- Using **anonymous recruitment and selection** to eliminate unconscious bias.

With verbal communication being a key skill in politics, a written application might not be the most accessible and effective format to identify the strengths of candidates whose first language is not Welsh or English or who have accessibility requirements. Parties should consider having an alternative choice of formats for the application, such as personal statement videos or voice recordings.

## Assessment panels

Although each party has a different process for vetting and selecting candidates, one common aspect is that potential candidates are interviewed by an assessment panel. It is crucial to consider equality and diversity when preparing for and conducting selection interviews.

Your party should have an **accessibility policy** to ensure the selection process is inclusive. Ensure that information provided to selection panels includes **guidance on diversity** and how to recognise and overcome **unconscious bias** and aim to have at least two people responsible for making decisions about who is selected.

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To promote diversity, it is important that the panel is inclusive, with members drawn from a range of backgrounds and experiences. Widely advertise the process and timeline for recruiting panel members and consider collaborating with relevant networks within your party to help recruit a diverse selection panel. It is essential to evaluate candidates against set criteria rather than making decisions based on 'gut instincts.'

Panel members should receive equalities training, covering topics such as barriers faced by underrepresented groups, the importance of equal representation, unconscious bias, and good practice in conducting interviews. Refresher training every three years will help keep panel members' awareness up to date.

## Interviews

Interviewing a potential candidate can be a good way of assessing their skills and suitability. However, party members from protected groups report that assessment interviews can create barriers to reaching selection and be a negative experience. Parties should consider the following steps to avoid this.

Preparing for interviews in advance gives an opportunity to implement best practice in making the process accessible and removing barriers. Before the interview, ask each candidate whether they require any **reasonable adjustments**. Parties have a duty under the **[Equality Act 2010](#)** to consider accessibility and provide reasonable adjustments. This could include holding interviews in a fully accessible building, offering video interviews, sending out interview questions in advance and communication adjustments, such as BSL interpretation.

Parties should consider how they can create a **welcoming and supportive atmosphere** and provide **clear instructions** on how to access the location or online meeting.

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For the interview process, parties should consider:

- Developing a **clear framework for assessing candidates**, identifying essential and desirable criteria and any weightings used.
- Making criteria accessible to potential candidates **before the interview**.
- **Agreeing on a set of interview questions in advance** to ensure consistency and fairness. (It may sometimes be appropriate to ask different follow-up questions to help clarify information or to address and further explore specific points).
- Focusing the discussion on evaluating a candidate's **skills, experience, and motivations**.
- Asking **open-ended or scenario-based questions** that allow candidates to provide comprehensive responses.
- Providing candidates with the opportunity to ask questions and outline any **reasonable adjustments or additional support** they may need during the campaign process.
- **Recording notes** on candidates' responses for future reference.

There are certain questions that are always inappropriate to ask when assessing a candidate's suitability. For example, questions about:

- Personal life, sexual orientation, gender, or relationship status.
- Plans for pregnancy or family.
- Where someone 'is really from'.
- A person's health or impairment, beyond discussing any adjustments or support they may need.

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- Any other personal questions that would not reasonably be expected in a formal interview for a job or volunteering role.

If your party requests potential candidates to complete an additional task, knowledge test, or presentation as part of the interview process, consider the purpose of this request. Ensure it aligns with your party's commitment to widening participation in politics and does not inadvertently create barriers.

## Valuing diverse experience

In politics, there may be **unspoken requirements** that a person must demonstrate before they will be accepted as a potential candidate. Public-facing and campaigning roles are often seen as more important and are given greater value than roles that are more administrative, internal, or repetitive. Potential candidates who have done lots of previous party campaigning (especially 'traditional' activities such as door-knocking and leafleting) may be seen as more loyal, reliable or deserving than those who have gained their experience in other contexts.

While it is reasonable to expect a qualified candidate to have participated in party activities, it is important to remember that individuals from underrepresented groups are more likely to experience **barriers to participation**, for example, due to an impairment, caring responsibilities, or reliance on paid work. Participating in party campaigning is time-consuming and often incurs costs to activists, and due to structural inequalities and stereotypes, people from underrepresented groups **are more likely to take on less traditionally valued roles**.

During candidate assessment, it is important to recognise that previous experience in party campaigning is not the only measure of a strong candidate. Many potential candidates will have work, community or other experiences just as credible as party political campaigning.

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To reflect this, parties should consider designing interview questions and criteria in a way that brings out and values a wide range of relevant experiences.

## Giving feedback

Your party should **promptly inform potential candidates** whether they have passed the assessment and consider providing constructive feedback to candidates who were unsuccessful. **Offering supportive and constructive feedback** is also a way of building the next generation of potential candidates, while feedback that is overly personal or vague is unhelpful and discouraging.

Use the role description and the competencies assessed during the interview to discuss the skills or attributes the interviewee did or did not demonstrate. It is important for unsuccessful candidates to be able to act on the feedback. The feedback should be objective, specific, and where appropriate set out potential ways to improve. It may be helpful to direct candidates to training or development opportunities as part of the feedback, along with a realistic timeframe for when they might be eligible to try again.

## Timescales and challenges

There can be challenges in achieving best practice during candidate assessment. Application processes are often run under tight deadlines and are typically led by volunteers. At times, elections are called on short notice, which means the process may need to be completed quickly. To reduce the risks of a process that may create barriers for individuals in protected groups, it can be beneficial for your party to **plan ahead**. Consider implementing actions that prioritise equal representation in your processes. For example:

- Having a **pool of already-screened potential candidates**

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- Offering **multiple opportunities** for candidates to be vetted or creating a rolling programme of candidate assessments throughout the year
- **Widely advertising assessment dates** in advance to allow for maximum participation.

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## Candidate selection

### Positive action

A main driver of the lack of diversity in elected office is that individuals from underrepresented groups are **less likely to be selected as candidates**, especially in winnable seats. If effectively designed and implemented, positive action in candidate selection is the **single most effective measure** your party can take to advance diversity and inclusion.

Many forms of positive action in candidate selection are lawful under the [Equality Act](#). [Guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) provides a helpful overview. Depending on the protected characteristic, voting system and other circumstances, various forms of positive action might be appropriate for different selections.

Positive action measures for women can include:

- **Gender quota thresholds**, where you stipulate that a certain percentage of your candidates must be women.
- **Zippering lists**, where you alternate women and men on a party list.
- **All-women shortlists**, where only women are eligible to stand in certain seats.\*

Positive action measures for women are used by parties in **two thirds of all countries worldwide**. Their effectiveness depends on several factors, including:

- The level of the **threshold** – the closer to 50% the more effective

\*Note that, while all-women shortlists are currently permitted under the Equality Act, this provision will be automatically repealed at the end of 2030.

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- Thresholds acting as a **'floor' (minimum)** rather than a 'ceiling' (maximum)
- Consistent **compliance or enforcement**
- The use of safeguards to ensure placement in winnable seats. This can include:
  - Criteria about where women are placed within a list ('vertical' criteria)
  - Criteria about the proportion of wards or constituencies across Wales where women are placed in the first or only position ('horizontal' criteria)
  - Requiring that women are stood in a proportion of seats that your party identifies as 'best performing' or 'winnable.'

Other positive actions your party should consider include:

- **All-Disabled-Shortlists.** Similar to All-Women-Shortlists, shortlists that are made up exclusively of disabled candidates are possible under the Equality Act and have been previously **used** in the UK.
- **Reserved places on shortlists for other underrepresented groups.** While requiring *all* candidates on a list to have a certain protected characteristics is currently only legally possible for women and disabled candidates (see, All-Women-Shortlists and All-Disabled-Shortlists), parties can reserve any number of places *short of all* for people with other protected characteristics.
- **Targets for the number of underrepresented candidates.** For example, if 1 in 5 people in Wales are disabled, you could set a target for 20% of your candidates to be disabled.
- **Reserved seats for underrepresented groups.** Where a sitting member steps down, the party could stipulate that the position should be filled by someone from an underrepresented group.

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- **Intersectionality in positive action.** People who experience intersecting discrimination or multiple disadvantage face additional barriers and tend to be most underrepresented. Parties should give special consideration as to how positive action measures can address this.
- **Acknowledging gender diversity** by recognising that some of your members may not identify strictly as male or female. Your party could implement a target or quota system that ensures the number of candidates identifying as male and female does not differ by more than one, allowing non-binary individuals to be selected as candidates without preventing your party from meeting its gender balance targets (e.g., 50% women).
- **Applying these positive actions** in the selection processes for your internal committees and senior roles.

As with positive action measures for women, the effectiveness of these measures will stand or fall with effective **compliance and enforcement** and the degree to which they facilitate **placement in winnable seats**. For more information on the impact of quotas for characteristics other than gender and intersectionality, see [WEN's Diversity Quota briefing](#).

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## Introduction

Attracting, developing, and retaining a diverse range of talent within your party is crucial to ensuring that the political landscape reflects the society it serves. This section outlines practical steps your party can take to ensure that aspiring candidates and members have the support they need to participate fully and succeed in political life.

Key areas covered in this section include:

- Providing **training, mentoring, and peer support** to help members develop skills and confidence.
- Offering **financial assistance and clear information** on campaign costs to ease financial barriers for underrepresented candidates.
- **Protecting candidates from harassment and abuse**, including online threats, and providing training on how to manage these challenges.

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## Training and development

Deciding to stand for election is a big decision that requires confidence, knowledge and skills in various areas. To increase the number of candidates from underrepresented groups, your party can take proactive action to develop potential candidates through training or skill-sharing.

Here are some potential modules that can particularly benefit potential candidates from underrepresented groups:

**Public speaking and messaging:** Clear and confident communication is essential for engaging with voters, media, and community groups. Potential candidates from underrepresented backgrounds may have had fewer opportunities to develop these skills. Public speaking, speechwriting and debate training can help candidates build confidence and articulate their messages effectively.

**Media and press:** Engaging with the media is a crucial part of campaigning, but it can be intimidating, especially for those with less exposure to traditional press. Since media representation can be biased, underrepresented groups may also face additional scrutiny or misrepresentation. Training in media engagement, handling tough questions and avoiding common pitfalls helps candidates communicate effectively with journalists and different audiences and navigate potential challenges.

**Fundraising and resource management:** Running for office requires financial resources, but not everyone has the same access to fundraising networks. Training in budgeting, donor outreach, and financial regulations helps candidates build sustainable campaigns. Underrepresented groups often face systemic barriers to funding, so guidance on alternative fundraising methods—such as small-donor campaigns, grants, and community-driven support—ensures a more level playing field.

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**Voter engagement and organising:** Engaging voters is at the heart of any campaign, but different communities require different approaches. Training in canvassing, volunteer coordination, and targeted outreach helps candidates connect with diverse audiences. As underrepresented groups often have lower voter turnout due to historical disenfranchisement, equipping candidates with tailored engagement strategies helps ensure broader participation and representation.

**Personal and online safety:** Public-facing roles come with risks, including harassment and threats, especially for people from underrepresented groups. It is critical that they are equipped to recognise and manage risks and know how to access support. Training on personal safety, online privacy, digital security and risk assessment helps candidates recognise, respond to, and report threats effectively. Information on relevant support networks, legal protections, and mental health resources ensures all candidates can campaign with confidence and security.

**Social media and digital literacy:** Online platforms are powerful tools for reaching voters, mobilising supporters, and shaping public debate. Training on digital strategy, audience engagement and content creation helps candidates build an effective online presence. However, digital spaces can be challenging, particularly for some people from underrepresented groups who may lack digital literacy skills. To make digital activities more inclusive, consider offering training and sharing 'how to' guides.

To ensure many potential candidates can access these training opportunities, consider flexibility in how training is delivered. Offering online sessions, recorded content for self-paced learning, and in-person workshops at different times can accommodate the schedules of individuals with various personal and professional commitments. Additionally, providing support such as childcare services, travel stipends, or ensuring venues are accessible can help break down barriers for candidates with caring responsibilities or disabled candidates.

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## **Mentoring, shadowing and coaching**

People from underrepresented groups often face structural barriers when entering politics, including a lack of networks, role models, and access to insider knowledge. Mentoring, shadowing and coaching opportunities can help break down these barriers.

### **How to create a mentoring scheme**

A mentoring scheme is a structured programme where experienced individuals provide guidance, support, and advice to less experienced individuals to help them develop professionally. To establish an effective mentoring scheme, parties should:

**Identify potential mentors.** Encourage experienced politicians, activists, and campaigners to volunteer as mentors, including those who have relevant lived experiences and understand the challenges faced by underrepresented groups.

**Define clear objectives.** Determine the goals, such as skill-building and confidence development. Tailor mentoring to different needs, including first-time candidates, grassroots activists, and those interested in leadership roles.

**Match mentors and mentees thoughtfully.** Consider factors such as background, experience, and career aspirations when pairing participants. Offer mentees the option to request a mentor from a similar demographic or lived experience.

**Structure the programme.** Set a clear timeframe (e.g., six months to a year) with regular check-ins. Provide training for mentors on how to guide and support mentees effectively. Establish a code of conduct to ensure a respectful and inclusive mentoring environment.

**Monitor and evaluate.** Collect feedback from both mentors and mentees to assess the effectiveness of the scheme. Track outcomes,

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such as how many mentees go on to stand for election or take on leadership roles. Adjust the programme based on participant experiences and needs.

## How to create shadowing opportunities

Shadowing allows aspiring politicians to observe and experience the daily work of elected officials. To implement a shadowing initiative:

- **Partner with elected officials.** Encourage MSs, MPs, councillors, and other representatives to offer shadowing opportunities. Promote the scheme within the party to maximise participation.
- **Develop a flexible structure.** Offer both short-term (one-day) and long-term (weeks/months) shadowing placements. Allow mentees to attend public meetings, observe campaigning and participate in constituency work.
- **Ensure accessibility.** Provide financial support for travel and accessibility needs. Offer remote shadowing options (e.g., virtual meetings, online campaign activities).
- **Create a supportive environment.** Provide pre-shadowing briefings to help participants understand expectations. Assign a point of contact for participants to ask questions and seek guidance.
- **Encourage long-term engagement.** Help participants transition from shadowing to active political roles, such as joining campaign teams or standing for internal party positions. Connect them with further training and development opportunities within the party.

Similar considerations apply to establishing coaching schemes. In addition to supporting and resourcing your own schemes, your party should consider regularly sharing information on independent programmes that are open to individuals from all parties, including the [Equal Power Equal Voice Mentoring Programme](#), [the Access to Politics Grassroots Network](#) and [Elect Her](#).

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## Investing in peer support

Peer support is when people use their personal experience to provide knowledge, advice, emotional or practical support to each other. Peer support can enable individuals from underrepresented groups to develop skills, build confidence, and actively pursue roles they are interested in.

Some forms of peer support that your party could consider setting up include:

- Befriending and buddying schemes
- Peer mentoring or shadowing
- Peer networks or representative groups
- Online forums
- Peer training schemes

Peer support schemes should ideally be led by individuals with relevant lived experience with adequate **support and resourcing** from your party. As people from underrepresented groups are likely to have less time, financial and other resources, support and resourcing is particularly important. Your party should prioritise peer support groups and make sure they are seen as an equally valued part of your party. For example, your party should consult peer support networks on policy proposals that are relevant to their group, allocate time at conferences, and provide opportunities for peer networks to feed back on their activities at local party meetings.

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## Financial assistance and information on campaign costs

Candidates from underrepresented groups often face significant financial barriers when running for election. Due to structural inequalities, people from underrepresented groups tend to have lower savings and income and more limited career progression opportunities.

Having **fewer savings and financial assets** increases the risk associated with running a campaign, as candidates may need to take unpaid leave or invest personal funds into a campaign they may not win. These financial risks can discourage talented individuals from standing for election. Candidates from underrepresented backgrounds may also have **fewer connections to political donors and fundraising networks**, making it more difficult to finance their campaigns.

Beyond general campaign expenses, candidates from underrepresented groups often incur additional costs, such as:

- **Access-related expenses** – Disabled candidates may require funding for transport, assistive technology, personal assistants, or accessible campaign materials.
- **Childcare and unpaid caring responsibilities** – Candidates with children or family care obligations may need financial support to cover care costs while campaigning.
- **Appearance-related costs** – Women, in particular, face heightened public scrutiny over their appearance, often requiring higher spending on professional attire, grooming, or hairstyling.
- **Safety-related expenses** – Those at higher risk of harassment, abuse, or violence may need to invest in personal security measures, such as home security upgrades, travel safety provisions, or online protection services.

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To address these financial barriers and promote equitable access to political participation, your party should consider:

- **Providing direct financial assistance.** Offering bursaries, grants, or dedicated funds to cover essential expenses such as childcare, access-related costs, and safety measures.
- **Ensuring transparent information on campaign costs.** Give candidates a detailed breakdown of anticipated campaign expenses. Provide clear information on what costs will be covered by the party and share information on any financial support available, including party-internal bursaries as well as independent schemes such as the [Access to Elected Office Fund](#).
- **Clarifying exemptions from campaign spending limits.** Providing guidance on which expenses (e.g., access costs for disabled candidates) are not counted towards official spending limits, helping candidates allocate funds effectively. Note that the Welsh Government intends to exempt safety-related expenses from candidate and party spending limits in time for the 2026 election, following a recommendation from the [Jo Cox Civility Commission report](#).
- **Expanding access to fundraising opportunities.** Facilitating connections between underrepresented candidates and potential donors, as well as providing training on fundraising strategies.
- **Developing an inclusive financial support strategy.** Reviewing your party's financial assistance policies to ensure they meet the needs of diverse candidates, e.g. ensure timely reimbursement and do not expect candidates to pay major reimbursable expenses in advance.

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## Harassment and abuse

Candidates from underrepresented groups tend to face significantly higher levels of harassment and abuse, which can be a major deterrent from standing for elections. This section outlines several steps your party can take to support potential candidates who experience harassment and abuse in the public domain.

### Provide support to affected individuals

When candidates know they have a strong support system within your party, they are more likely to feel safe and empowered to continue their political journey. A strong **public and internal stance against harassment and abuse** is essential in creating a safe political environment. Your party should **openly condemn** any form of intimidation or violence against candidates.

Internally, your party can ensure that candidates facing harassment or abuse have **access to both legal and emotional support** to help them navigate these challenges. This could include assistance with filing police reports, legal advice and representation in pursuing legal action against abusers or responding to false allegations. Additionally, **mental health support** is crucial, as persistent harassment can take a significant emotional toll. Parties should offer access to counselling services, peer support groups, or mental health professionals to ensure candidates have the emotional resilience to continue their campaigns. Your party should provide timely **training on personal and online safety** to ensure candidates are equipped to keep themselves safe.

Additionally, parties can provide direct support by ensuring staff or committee members are **monitoring candidates' online presence**, helping them identify and report harmful content, and ensuring swift action is taken against harassment on social media platforms. It can be exhausting and traumatic for victims to view abusive content and report abuse to platform providers because many require each individual message to be reported separately.

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Online abuse is more likely to happen or increase after a media appearance, debate or event. Parties should anticipate events that might result in online abuse and consider providing proactive support. Your party should also consider recruiting a 'screening team' to view, screen shot and sort abusive messages either to report to the social media company or the police.

## Digital self-care and positive online engagement

Candidates and elected representatives are particularly likely to experience online bullying and abuse due to their public facing role and because they frequently use social media to communicate with voters and members. Digital self-care is a strategy to set digital boundaries, empower victims and reduce the harm caused by online abuse. Steps that parties can take to promote digital self-care include providing individuals with information and training on:

- **Blocking and privacy controls:** How to block abusive accounts, adjust privacy settings, disable location tracking and mute notifications.
- **Platform policies and reporting:** Understanding the terms of use for digital platforms and knowing how to report abusive messages effectively.
- **Account security:** Using long, strong and unique passwords, as well as enabling two-factor authentication for added protection.
- **Protecting personal information:** How to blur backgrounds and remove identifying details or tags that could compromise privacy.

Party communications teams could consider **limiting the amount they tag** individual candidates and representatives in party social media posts or receiving explicit permission before they do so. This may help to limit the number of abusive messages received.

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Online platforms and social media have meant that debate and political activities can happen in any place at any time of day. Whilst this has many benefits, it can create a culture of '**online presenteeism**', where people feel they will only be rewarded or progress in the party if they put in longer hours online or are constantly and quickly responding to posts or news articles.

Presenteeism can be particularly harmful to individuals from underrepresented groups in politics, including those who are disabled or have caring responsibilities. To promote a positive party culture, it can be helpful to **discuss candidates' expectations for online activities** before an election campaign begins. The party could also consider encouraging candidates to **set their own boundaries** to ensure a healthy and respectful digital environment. For instance, candidates may prefer to only post social media themselves during the working week or during certain hours of the day, or they could request that photos of them at events are not posted until they leave a location to increase their safety.

Parties should not automatically expect candidates or activists with prominent party roles to use their personal social media accounts to promote their party role or during an election. Consider having structures around candidates and representatives which **support them with social media and online engagement**, especially during internal selection processes or election campaigns. Your party might also consider staff or volunteer support to enable candidates to take breaks from social media.