



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Consultation on diversity and inclusion guidance for registered political parties

Guidance to support political parties to develop strategies to increase diversity and inclusion amongst candidates for Welsh elections; to collect and publish information on the diversity of candidates for Senedd elections and to consider voluntary quotas for women for Senedd elections.

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Overview

Under duties in section 30 of the [Elections and Elected Bodies \(Wales\) Act 2024](#) and using the Welsh Ministers' powers in sections 60 and 62 of the [Government of Wales Act 2006](#), the Welsh Ministers intend to publish guidance for registered political parties to support them in achieving our shared aim of creating a more diverse Senedd.

This consultation invites the views of key stakeholders and the wider public on the draft guidance.

Responses to the consultation will be considered as part of the process of finalising the guidance ahead of formal publication before 1 May 2025.

Introduction

The Welsh Government is consulting on draft guidance for registered political parties in Wales to:

- develop, publish, implement and regularly review diversity and inclusion strategies for Welsh elections (Part 1 of the guidance)
- collect, collate and publish diversity information relating to candidates for Senedd elections and elected Members (Part 2 of the guidance)
- consider steps they may take in relation to voluntary quotas for women (Part 3 of the guidance).

Parts 1 and 2 of the guidance are issued under section 30 of the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024. Part 3 of the guidance is issued under the Welsh Ministers powers in sections 60 and 62 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

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Part 1 of the guidance relates to all Welsh elections, including elections for Senedd Cymru, elections for members of councils of counties, county boroughs and communities in Wales and elected mayors.

Parts 2 and 3 of the guidance are relevant to Senedd elections only.

The Welsh Ministers must publish the guidance by 1 May 2025 and keep the guidance under review.

The guidance is voluntary for registered political parties.

Background

The Welsh Government is committed to increasing diversity across all aspects of public life and to advancing the rights of, and outcomes for, people with certain characteristics and those who experience socio-economic disadvantage.

Within this broader context, the Welsh Government considers it important that our democratic institutions in Wales reflect the diversity of the communities which they serve. It wishes to build on steps already taken to support diversity in democracy at all levels and in particular to take forward the significant amount of work undertaken over recent years, by various expert committees, in considering what reforms are needed to make the Senedd fit for the 21st century.

From the scheduled 2026 Senedd election, the 40 constituencies and 5 regions used for previous Senedd elections will be replaced by 16 constituencies, each represented by 6 Members of the Senedd, making a total of 96 Members. The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru has recently consulted on initial proposals for these new constituency boundaries and will report on its final recommendations before 1 April 2025.

Also from the scheduled 2026 Senedd election, all Members of the Senedd will

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be elected using a closed proportional list system, which means that people will be able to vote for a list of candidates that a political party puts forward in a constituency. If a party goes on to win one or more seats in that constituency, the seats will be filled by the candidates on the party's list in the order they appear on the list. Parties will select candidates to stand on their lists and will determine also where each individual candidate is placed on the list, for example in first, second, or third place. Each party will be able to stand up to eight candidates on a single list in each constituency. This new closed list system is considered more proportionate than the existing voting system for Senedd elections on the basis that the closed proportional list system is more likely to result in parties winning the number of seats which more closely matches the share of votes they received.

Under the new voting system for Senedd elections, political parties will have the opportunity to put forward a diverse range of candidates for election and will potentially have considerable influence over the diversity of the membership of the Senedd.

Where we are now

While there is some information available about the diversity of local government candidates, response rates have historically been low.

There is no standardised process for collecting information on the diversity of Senedd candidates and Members of the Senedd. What little information we do have is gleaned from different sources and pieced together in an attempt to provide a comprehensive picture.

In recent years, several reports have recommended that Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 should be commenced. Section 106 would mandate political parties to collect and publish diversity data on candidates for Senedd elections. The power to commence this provision is a power for the Secretary of State, not

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the Welsh Ministers.

Pending further representations to the UK government on Section 106, the Welsh Government is pleased that it is able to take immediate action to publish this guidance under its existing powers. During early scrutiny of the **Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill**, all of the main political parties represented in the Senedd indicated their commitment to be more transparent about their work with regard to increasing diversity and inclusion within their parties. This guidance will help them do that.

Specified characteristics and circumstances

There is research to indicate that some people find it more difficult to stand for election and to fully participate in the political process. This can sometimes be as a result of certain barriers, discrimination, inadequate support and unfair treatment.

The Welsh Government wants to address such barriers and increase opportunities for underrepresented groups to play a full role in supporting and representing their communities. The purpose of the guidance is to suggest to political parties what actions they could take as part of their commitment to achieving our shared aim of creating more diversity in our democracy here in Wales.

The Election and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024 requires the Welsh Ministers to specify in the guidance the characteristics or circumstances in relation to which political parties should promote diversity when developing their diversity and inclusion strategies. The Act also requires the Welsh Ministers to specify what information political parties should collect about Senedd candidates, and that information must relate to candidates' characteristics and circumstances. These specified characteristics and circumstances could include all, or some, of the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, but they do not

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have to be limited to these.

The Welsh Government has considered existing evidence and research relating to barriers facing particular groups, including relevant evidence provided to the Reform Bill Committee in its recent Stage 1 scrutiny of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill. The Welsh Government has also taken into consideration the characteristics and circumstances currently covered by the local government candidate survey in Wales on the basis that it will be important to ensure there is as much consistency and comparability between the data sets as possible. Informed by these considerations, the guidance specifies the characteristics and circumstances parties should collect diversity information about (including signposting them to a template survey) and those which their diversity and inclusion strategies should take into account when promoting diversity. These are:

- Age*
- Disability*
- Race*
- Religion or belief*
- Sex*
- Sexual orientation*
- Trans status or history (including gender reassignment*)
- Socio-economic background
- Health conditions
- Previous political experience
- Caring responsibilities
- Parental responsibility
- Language

* Protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010

As the evidence base on underrepresentation and barriers develops over time, the characteristics and circumstances prescribed in the guidance will be kept

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under review and may be revised in the future.

Whilst the Welsh Government recommends all political parties who collect data and develop a diversity and inclusion strategy, use the prescribed characteristics and circumstances set out in the guidance, political parties are not limited to these data sets and may choose to consider additional characteristics and circumstances relevant to their party.

What does the guidance cover?

Part 1

The purpose of Part 1 of the guidance is to support political parties to develop, publish, implement and regularly review diversity and inclusion strategies for local and national Welsh elections.

Diversity and inclusion strategies can reflect an organisation's commitment to foster a more diverse, equitable and inclusive environment. It is hoped that political parties will develop these strategies to show their commitment to increasing the diversity of candidates and elected Members at both local and Senedd elections and to be clear about how they intend to achieve this.

This section outlines for political parties the types of issues they should consider addressing in their strategies and the type of action they should consider taking, for example:

- drawing on data, relevant research and evidence to formulate a strategy that is right for them
- assessing the party's current status with regards to diversity and inclusion, underrepresentation of particular groups of people and barriers currently faced by certain groups

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- engaging with stakeholders (including internal party networks representing underrepresented groups)
- reviewing candidate assessment and selection processes to make them more inclusive
- assessing and making changes to organisational culture to embed diversity and inclusion.

The guidance highlights that such action can:

- reflect a party's commitment, at the highest level, to promoting diversity and inclusion and tackling barriers to participation
- demonstrate public accountability, transparency and trust
- empower networks within parties to represent different interests and lived experiences
- create a working environment that is respectful and welcoming, potentially attracting a more diverse membership and staff
- mean there is better support for candidates during the selection and election process
- send a message that the party values having candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds and perspectives.

Part 2

Part 2 of the guidance provides information to political parties in relation to collecting and publishing diversity information about their Senedd election candidates and elected Members of the Senedd.

The guidance provides advice on how political parties can collect, collate and publish the information and importantly provides a template survey containing recommended questions about their candidates' characteristics and circumstances which political parties should use to gather the information. Parties should use these questions to capture this information, to ensure that

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there is as much consistency as possible in the information that is published by different parties. The guidance also explains how the information can be used by political parties as a foundation on which to build their initial diversity and inclusion strategies, and as a yardstick for measuring how well they are doing in future years against any specific measurable targets in their strategies.

The section reminds political parties about their obligations in relation to data protection legislation.

Part 3

Part 3 of the guidance is to support political parties in identifying steps they may be able to take to achieve the shared aim of returning a Senedd which is broadly reflective of the gender make up of Wales. This part draws on some of the valuable evidence gathered and considered as part of the scrutiny of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill. In particular, the guidance highlights some of the international evidence relating to the benefits of ensuring that women's voices are represented in the bodies which make key decisions that impact on the lives of people in Wales.

Drawing on examples of international good practice and models which have proved successful elsewhere, the guidance invites political parties to consider if they may be able to implement quotas on a voluntary basis so that the proportion of women who are elected broadly reflects that of the Welsh population.

Appendix

The Appendix which is published alongside this consultation document and draft guidance is intended to provide useful context and background for political parties. It includes a brief summary of some of the known barriers faced by

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particular groups and people who share particular characteristics or circumstances, as well as some of the benefits of diversity and inclusion in politics. This is not an exhaustive summary of all the research and evidence available, and political parties are encouraged to draw on the evidence which is most relevant to their particular circumstances, including new and emerging evidence, to inform their strategies.

Impact

During the scrutiny process of the then Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill and the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill, full Integrated Impact Assessments were undertaken. The [integrated impact assessment relating to the Elections and Elected Bodies \(Wales\) Bill](#) considered, among other things, potential impacts the guidance for political parties could have on particular groups of people. This assessment is relevant to Parts 1 and 2 of the draft guidance now being published for consultation. The [integrated impact assessment relating to the Senedd Cymru \(Electoral Candidate Lists\) Bill](#) considered the impact of imposing rules relating to the proportion and placement of women on party candidate lists, which is relevant to Part 3 of the guidance.

These assessments will form the basis of an Integrated Impact Assessment which the Welsh Government will develop and keep under review throughout the consultation period. The conclusions of the assessment will be published after the consultation exercise when it has been possible to take into account the views provided during the consultation.

Why are we consulting and timeframe?

The purpose of the consultation is to gather views on draft guidance in advance of its final publication. The Welsh Ministers are keen to hear from political parties

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contesting relevant Welsh elections, large and small, as well as from organisations representing groups and communities which may be underrepresented in the elected bodies or which face particular barriers, and from members of the public.

This consultation is being conducted over a slightly shorter time period than the usual 12 weeks. This reflects the fact that there has already been engagement with a number of key stakeholders (including registered political parties currently represented in the Senedd) and opportunities to discuss with organisations representing relevant groups on the shared ambition of creating more diverse democratic institutions in Wales. The Welsh Government will take steps around the launch of the consultation to ensure that as many as possible of the people and organisations who have expressed an interest in engaging are made aware of the consultation exercise and afforded an opportunity to provide their thoughts.

A slightly shorter consultation period will also help ensure that this voluntary guidance is made available to political parties at the earliest opportunity, to optimise the opportunity for steps to be taken in advance of the scheduled Senedd election in 2026.

The consultation will close on 7 January 2025.

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Consultation questions

Part 1: Guidance for political parties about developing, publishing, implementing and regularly reviewing diversity and inclusion strategies for local and national Welsh elections

Question 1: The Welsh Government must specify the characteristics and circumstances for the purpose of Parts 1 and 2 of the guidance. What are your views on the specified characteristics and circumstances? For ease, they are listed here:

- Age*
- Disability*
- Race*
- Religion or belief*
- Sex*
- Sexual orientation*
- Trans status or history (including gender reassignment*)
- Socio-economic background
- Health conditions
- Previous political experience
- Caring responsibilities
- Parental responsibility
- Language

* Protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010

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?

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- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

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.

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?

Part 2: Guidance for political parties standing candidates at Senedd elections on collecting, collating and publishing diversity information relating to candidates and elected Members

Question 4: What are your views on the candidate survey questions in Part 2?

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.

Part 3: Guidance for political parties standing candidates at Senedd elections on voluntary quotas for women

Question 6: Do you think the guidance will support political parties to take

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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.

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

Welsh language

Question 8: What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the guidance on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

- Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?
- Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

Question 9: In your opinion, could the guidance be formulated or changed so as to:

- have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or
- mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

Final comments

Question 10: We have asked a number of questions in respect of the different parts of the guidance. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share

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with us on the guidance?

How to respond

Submit your comments by 7 January 2025, in any of the following ways:

- **complete our online form**
- download, complete our **response form** and email **Seneddreform@gov.wales** (please include 'diversity guidance consultation' in the subject line).
- download, complete our response form and post to:

Diversity guidance consultation

Senedd Reform Division
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Please get in touch by emailing **Seneddreform@gov.wales** by **20 November 2024** if you would like to register your interest in attending a virtual consultation event relating to the draft guidance. Please include 'diversity guidance consultation' in the subject line of your email.

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- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the UK GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer

Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Email: dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh.

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

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UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be data controller for Welsh Government consultations and for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation.

Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. The lawful basis for processing information in this data collection exercise is our public task; that is, exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government (Art 6(1)(e)).

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. In the case of joint consultations this may also include other public authorities. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh

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Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation and that the Welsh Government may be under a legal obligation to disclose some information.

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than 3 years.

Further information and related documents

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