

16<sup>th</sup> May, 2022

Dear Members of the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform,

### **Consideration of Hybrid Working in the Senedd**

As you know, at the Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales, we focus on creating a Wales free from all forms of gender discrimination, including in leadership and representation. Our Diverse5050 Campaign aims to enshrine diverse and equal leadership in the Senedd and Local Government especially for women from under-represented groups: Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups, the LGBTQ+ community, disabled women, and women of other protected characteristics.

We understand that the Business Committee is currently considering the future model of working for Senedd Business and whether to retain an element of hybrid working, by asking the party groups for their thoughts on this matter. In light of our commitment to equality and fair opportunity for all women, we urge that your committee in its recommendations on the electoral reform give due consideration to the importance of keeping hybrid working in the Senedd. This will benefit all those with caring responsibilities, which we know are mainly women, as well as disabled people.

Our [research report](#) on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women in Wales found that women continued to undertake much higher levels of childcare than men, 63% of women compared to 17% of men.

However, the pandemic has revealed the possibility of hybrid working and this has helped to reduce these inequalities especially for women facing the double challenge of caring responsibilities and fulfilling their work obligations.

As former Senedd Member from Plaid Cymru, Bethan Sayed, has rightly [stated](#): "*We live in an unequal society. If women weren't in so many caring roles, if women weren't on so many zero hours contracts, if they weren't suffering maternity discrimination I would say, yes, let's have meritocracy [...] Until we get to a system where we are all equal, we will need things like quotas, and we will need measures like job shares.*"

It is therefore pertinent to create flexible working policies as you consider Senedd reform to enable a fair balance especially for women who have caring responsibilities or disabled people.

There is need for a shift in culture regarding flexible working which should be normalized including family friendly practices like bringing children to work and men to take extended paternity leave. We trust that in the interest of equality and justice, that your committee will support hybrid working in the Senedd as a practice going forward.



Please feel free to contact us for further information or for ways in which we can support the advancement of equality and diversity in representation and leadership.

Yours sincerely

Evelyn James, Diverse 5050 Campaign Manager, WEN Wales

