

DLG 12
Ymgynghoriad ar amrywiaeth ym maes llywodraeth leol
Consultation on diversity in local government
Ymateb gan: Stonewall Cymru
Response from: Stonewall Cymru

Consultation: Diversity in Local Government

Evidence from Stonewall Cymru

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Introduction

Stonewall Cymru takes part in Equal Power Equal Voice (EPEV) – a mentorship programme partly funded by Welsh Government which seeks to increase diversity of representation in public and political life in Wales by connecting those with experience with aspiring people, providing training and building proactive networks.

EPEV is a partnership between Women’s Equality Network (WEN) Wales, Stonewall Cymru, Disability Wales, and Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team (EYST) Wales. It is also funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

The scheme works often with people of who have identities which may not feel as represented in public life or empowered to seek out a career in that sector, and aims to impart learnings and connections that give people the confidence to take that path.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute evidence about the successes and learnings of our joint work on increasing diversity of representation – specifically as it relates to influencing or attaining roles in Local Government.

Sessions on Local Government

We have hosted sessions on how to become part of Local Government for mentees for several years.

Course content includes a comprehensive look at the structure of Local Government bodies throughout Wales and its regions; the responsibilities of local authorities; the commissioning process local authorities undertake to provide and facilitate services; multi-agency partnership working, such as with local police, fire and rescue services, etc.; and the pathway to becoming a Councillor.

Speakers at sessions to help facilitate knowledge transfer and discussion have included Patience Bentu (Labour), Lauren James (Green Party), Pete Wong (Labour), Richard John (Conservatives) and Rhys Taylor (Conservatives) – a broad mix of people from different political parties and viewpoints who have shared their experiences and expertise.

Discussion topics have included ‘How do you effect change on key issues?’ ‘How do you deal with any issues or adversity you face?’ as well as best practice and access to contacts for those interested in pursuing a role as a councillor.

Impact and Learnings

The scheme is successful in empowering mentees to gain confidence in themselves, improve their education and skills through mentorships and the training we offer throughout the programme. Mentees may not make use of this straight after the programme but can use it when opportunities arise in their lives – for example, the local elections which will be held in 2027, where we look forward to seeing if any of our mentees will stand for election.

Having support from and access to people in public and political life in Wales is hugely beneficial to our mentees. The visual representation of having people that are like you in those positions is important.

As Stonewall Cymru, the majority of mentees we have primary responsibility for are LGBTQ+ and we are focused on increasing LGBTQ+ representation in public life – however by taking an intersectional approach we can see that many people have intersecting identities which mean that programmes like ours cannot work in silo. Therefore we appreciate the EPEV model which enables mentees to access expertise across a broad range of organisations and experience all in one place.

We are committed to building on our existing partnership working to ensure that mentees can feel entirely supported in bringing their whole selves to the programme and thriving in public life. This includes ensuring our application process is accessible and reaches people across Wales, that sessions and workshops are accessible and mentees feel comfortable and well-matched with their mentor and partner organisation.

We also know of the value of local authorities themselves becoming more inclusive spaces, which requires a need for zero tolerance of discrimination and inaccessibility. Increasing access to roles in public life will only do so much if the spaces themselves are not geared toward supporting staff to feel safe and supported at work. For this reason we look forward to hearing more about the outcome of this consultation and learning about the measures local authorities are putting in place for this purpose.