

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Safonau Ymddygiad
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RC03

Ymateb gan: Elect Her

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Welsh Parliament
Standards of Conduct Committee
[Review of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Senedd](#)
RC03

Evidence from: Elect Her

Elect Her Response to the Standards of Conduct Committee Consultation

Review of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Senedd

Introduction

Elect Her welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Standards of Conduct Committee's consultation on proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct for Members of the Senedd, ahead of the Seventh Senedd.

Our work focuses on addressing the structural and cultural barriers that prevent women – particularly those facing intersecting forms of discrimination – from entering, remaining and thriving in political life. We therefore approach this consultation with a strong emphasis on prevention of harm, institutional accountability, and public confidence in democratic standards.

We broadly welcome the Committee's intention to modernise the Code in response to changing political realities, including online abuse, workplace culture, and public trust. However, we believe that the effectiveness of any Code depends not only on clarity of standards, but on robust enforcement mechanisms and genuine independence in how complaints are handled.

Our approach to this consultation is constructive and collaborative. We recognise the Committee's leadership in strengthening standards and accountability, and we welcome the opportunity to contribute our expertise.

Our core position is that:

- Clear, robust standards addressing harassment, discrimination and online abuse are essential to maintaining public trust and democratic participation; and
- These standards are most effective when supported by independent, trusted and well-resourced investigation and safeguarding mechanisms.

Our response is intended to support the Committee's objectives.

General Observations

We welcome the Committee's recognition that standards must evolve in response to societal change, technological developments and lived experience within the Senedd. The consultation demonstrates a thoughtful and evidence-led approach, drawing on the Committee's practical experience during the Sixth Senedd.

We particularly welcome the Committee's explicit invitation for views on transparency, accountability and equalities impacts. From our perspective, the proposals would be further strengthened by:

- Explicitly situating harassment, discrimination and online abuse within a dignity, safety and equality framework;
- Emphasising preventative, institutional responsibilities alongside individual standards of conduct; and
- Continuing to strengthen independence and clarity within complaints and enforcement processes.

These observations are offered in a spirit of partnership and with the shared aim of supporting a safe, inclusive and trusted parliamentary culture.

Responses to the Committee's Consultation Questions

In line with the Committee's request, our comments below address areas within specific proposals in order to improve transparency and accountability, their potential equalities impacts, and where further clarification or development may be beneficial.

Proposal Three – Use of Members' Social Media Accounts

We welcome the proposal to introduce a standalone rule clarifying that Members are responsible for content published in their name, including by staff acting on their behalf.

From our experience, online abuse is one of the most significant barriers to political participation, particularly for women and marginalised groups. Clear accountability for social media conduct is therefore essential.

We recommend that:

- Consideration is given to how this rule interacts with wider institutional responses to online abuse, including safeguarding and support mechanisms.

Proposal Four – Members as Responsible Employers

We support the introduction of a rule requiring Members to act as responsible employers, and the expectation that Members maintain staff codes of conduct, handbooks and dignity-at-work policies.

We welcome the Committee's intention to link training attendance to consideration in complaints. However, we believe this should be further improved by:

- Making enhanced dignity, respect and harassment training mandatory for Members in these senior and/ or leadership roles;

- Ensuring training is trauma-informed and addresses power dynamics and identity-based harassment; and
- Embedding employer responsibility directly into the Overarching Principles of the Code, not only guidance.

Workplace culture is shaped by leadership behaviour, and the Code should reflect this reality.

Proposal Six – Preventing Interference with Complaints

We welcome the proposed amendment to Rule 21, which would prohibit Members from discouraging potential complainants or witnesses from coming forward.

This is a critical reform. In our experience, fear of informal pressure, reputational damage or career consequences is one of the primary reasons individuals do not report misconduct.

We support the Committee’s clarification that this would prevent the use of NDAs to silence complaints about Members’ conduct. We would encourage the Committee to ensure that guidance makes clear:

- That informal pressure or implied consequences are included within the scope of this rule; and
- That breaches are treated as serious, given their direct impact on access to justice and accountability.

Conclusion

Elect Her welcomes the Committee’s work to review and update the Code of Conduct in advance of the Seventh Senedd. We believe the proposals represent a positive and important step towards clearer standards, improved accountability and greater public confidence.

Our comments are offered in a collaborative spirit and with the intention of supporting the Committee’s objectives. In particular, we encourage continued attention to:

- The equalities and safety implications of harassment, discrimination and online abuse;
- The value of preventative, institution-led approaches alongside individual accountability; and
- The importance of independence and trust in complaints handling and enforcement.

We would welcome ongoing engagement with the Committee as the proposals are refined and implemented, and we thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.