Unpacking Diversity:

Barriers and incentives to standing for election to the National Assembly for Wales

SUMMARY

A Report Commissioned by the
Remuneration Board of the National Assembly for Wales

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ABOUT US

The Wales Governance Centre is a research centre that forms part of Cardiff University's School of Law and Politics undertaking innovative research into all aspects of the law, politics, government and political economy of Wales, as well the wider UK and European contexts of territorial governance. A key objective of the Centre is to facilitate and encourage informed public debate of key developments in Welsh governance not only through its research, but also through events and postgraduate teaching.

London Metropolitan University aims at transforming lives through excellent education. The School of Social Professions holds expertise in areas of devolution and good governance.

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INTRODUCTION

The Remuneration Board [the Board] of the National Assembly for Wales [National Assembly] commissioned the Wales Governance Centre to conduct academic research addressing the question of *"whether a diverse range of persons with the appropriate skills and interest" is in practice deterred from standing for election to the National Assembly by any aspect of the remuneration package (salary, pension, child care and office and staffing allowances) and what may provide the incentives to do so.*

More specifically, the Board was interested in expanding its understanding of incentives and barriers, within its remit, facing those who have been deterred from standing for the Assembly. The target group broadly identified by the Board included, but was not limited to,

- those who are active in civic society
- those who are generally politically interested and/ or
- any individuals who have left after only one term in the Assembly.

The Board outlined clearly that it was interested both in a rigorous review of the existing evidence and in a field study investigating the current factors that encourage or deter individuals from standing for the National Assembly, including:

- the aspects of the job that make it attractive;
- the aspects of the job that deter some people or groups of people from standing;
- if the current remuneration package is considered to be a deterrent to standing and how
- it should be changed to encourage people to stand;
- to what extent, if any, the work/life balance and job security of an Assembly Member is a factor and what measures could be taken to make the role more appealing.

The Review of Evidence

We designed the review of evidence as a focused literature review that first explored the links between diversity and political recruitment and then looked at what institutional measures exist in Wales, the UK and beyond to enhance diversity within political recruitment and to increase the attractiveness of the job.

We drew on important theoretical frameworks on *demand and supply in political recruitment*[1] to understand the role of personal circumstance, motivation, aspiration of potential candidates to elected office, the role of the 'gatekeepers' - political parties - as well as of other political institutions in removing barriers and enhancing electoral opportunity for people from underrepresented groups.

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1 Norris, P., & Lovenduski, J. (1995). *Political recruitment: Gender, race and class in the British Parliament*. Cambridge University Press.

The review of evidence was completed by a study of existing practice in other legislatures with regards to institutional measures that affect the various aspects of the job that the Board was interested in: the remuneration package, work/life balance, job security etc. We looked at legislatures within the UK (Westminster Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly, Scottish Parliament), national and sub-state legislature in Europe, and other examples from around the world where we found interesting practices.

The Field Study

Our research design consisted of a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods supporting an ambitious engagement exercise. We designed a four stage process that targeted individuals, first, more broadly, via a *survey*, and then through a series of *focus groups* and in depth one to one *interviews*, whilst also offering the opportunity to contribute to the Loomio *online discussion forum*.

Our Framework

From the outset of this project we looked at political recruitment as a journey and attempted to expand the understanding of barriers and incentives at each stage in the process. Our assumption is that becoming an AM is a complex journey punctuated with many stumbling blocks but also with facilitating factors. This view helped us refocus attention on the individual and their lived experience of socialisation into politics, candidacy and being an elected representative.

The most useful framework we have found in the literature draws on work by Krook and Norris.[2] The authors map out the journey in three stages. We adapted this framework slightly and organised our analysis in the following way: 1) the pathways into politics (eligible to aspirant) and the lived experience of political parties, candidacy and campaigning (aspirant to candidate); 2) perceptions around being an AM (elected); and 3) broader contextual factors.

| Becoming an AM: Eligible to Aspirant Candidate | Being an AM | The Bigger Picture |

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2 Krook, M. L., & Norris, P. (2014). Beyond quotas: Strategies to promote gender equality in elected office. *Political Studies*, *62*(1), 2-20.

BECOMING AN AM: ELIGIBLE TO ASPIRANT CANDIDATE

We were interested in exploring both the lived experiences and the perceptions of past and prospective candidates and this section highlights some of the main barriers that participants perceive or have encountered at different stages. We focused on the following sections so that it reflects the individual journey of prospective candidates from becoming interested in and socialised into politics to standing as candidates:

- Socialisation into Politics
- Experience of Political Parties
- Experiences and Perceptions of Standing
- Training and Mentoring

We explored the experiences of different groups of people in each stage and identified various institutional, cultural, individual and political factors affecting the decision to stand in elections, such as access to networks and support, candidate selection procedures within parties, the electoral system, and the cost of standing.

Barriers

Overall, we found that people encounter many barriers on their journey from being an eligible individual to a candidate standing for election to the National Assembly. These include:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Effect on career
- Campaigning
- Finance
- The electoral system
- Candidate selection
- Building contacts and networking
- Lack of support and information

Some forms of socialisation into politics, through being involved in politics and political parties for a long time, remove some of these existing barriers (i.e. lack of knowledge of the structures and processes in party politics, lack of network and support systems and political capital), whilst others are more prohibitive (i.e. a newcomer in politics, active in their community but who feels they do not belong to any party political ideology and would want to stand as an independent).

"I've recently joined our local...party, not that I agree with a lot of it but I have, partly because I have got an interest in becoming an elected representative in some way shape or form, and the only way to do it is to be affiliated to a political party because there is no way you're going to get in as an Assembly Member [as an independent]." (Inv_19)

There are clearly important structural barriers, such as cost of standing, time, as well as limited accessibility that constitute important deterrents for some categories of people:

Young people

- 35.2% of all survey participants identified 'Age' as a barrier or significant barrier to standing - yet this perception varied considerably among age groups.
- 78% of those aged 18-24 and 55% of those aged over 65 perceived age to be a barrier.

- A couple of interviewees felt that young people are not taken seriously in democracy in Wales, due partly to their lack of experience, and the lack of young people in the Assembly is not encouraging others to stand (Inv_08 & Inv_16).

Gender

- Women were considerably more likely than men to view barriers as more 'significant', and view incentives more positively
- Women were considerably more favourable of diversity quotas for candidates than men, with 44% of women saying quotas would make them more likely to stand compared to 18% of men.
- Job sharing was also considerably more popular amongst women, with 68% of women saying it would make them more likely to stand compared to 45% of men.

- Barriers include: personal and family safety; too heavy a workload; an attitude of *'how are you going to raise a family if you're in Cardiff or Westminster?'* (Inv_09).

These types of behaviours and attitudes do little to encourage women to stand and a cultural shift within political parties, as well as more widely in society, has been perceived as much needed.

Disability

A woman with a hearing impairment explained that there was no financial support when she stood for selection. Nor was there a sufficient understanding of the barriers that she faced during the process.

"I had people saying to me, I'd like to help you, but we don't want to give you an unfair advantage. And I was like, but I am at a massive disadvantage here, I'm not asking, you know, to get ahead of other people I'm asking just to be on the same level and people don't understand that. There's still very much a mindset that if you want to treat everybody equally you've got to treat them all exactly the same way and that doesn't bring equality." (Inv_05)

An interviewee expressed that there is no representation whatsoever for autistic people in government.

"It seems that the only way you can be in politics is if you're a neurotypical thinker. If you perceive the world differently to those around you and your behaviours are not typical of expected society behaviour, then you're not welcome." (Inv_04)

A potential candidate noted that if you were a candidate, you need the parties to be positive about disability and the skills that a disabled candidate can bring. She would not want to hide her disability as it is an important part of who she is and wanted the party to support that positive message (Inv_05).

Experience and Perceptions of Standing

For some, the element of risk involved in standing for election is clearly too big, particularly when it comes to changing career. These could include: time and commitment needed to seek selection and to campaign; the ability to take time off work (through possibly unpaid leave); the potential requirement of giving up work; and the uncertain effect of becoming aligned with a political party.

Parallel to this was the concern that the nature of traditional forms of campaigning, campaign tactics, and the size and geography of constituencies were seen as barriers for prospective

candidates and those who had stood in the past. This was particularly the case for candidates with disabilities or with family and caring responsibilities.

"To be able to stand and run a campaign properly I would have to give up my job for a period, and I still have a mortgage and things like that, and giving up work for 6 months, I wouldn't be able to afford to do that, and really someone who is in a winnable seat needs to be fighting for a year and give it their whole attention. Then that's why I think maybe people without the resources behind them find it difficult to fight for a seat and that is why there are many more people who are retired maybe, or older, that can go for it, because when you're in your 30s 40s there are very often a lot of expectations in terms of supporting a family and other costs people can't really take the gamble of standing in an election…fact that someone has to give up their job and campaign full time is a barrier for the majority of people." (Inv_09)

A significant aspect for many people was the financial cost of standing as a candidate. This was the top barrier associated with campaigning highlighted in the survey.

- Over 65% of respondents said that this is a barrier they would need assistance to overcome;

- 20.7% answered that it is a significant barrier which meant that they would not stand.

A theme emerging out of the discussion on Loomio was the 'filtering' effect of the cost of standing as a candidate, effectively allowing only those who have either party support or other type of personal support around them to sustain the financial costs of standing.

Systemic and political factors, such as the electoral system, the electoral process, and candidate selection procedures in political parties are also contributing to lack of diversity. The electoral system was discussed mostly from the perspective of the barriers raised by the incumbency factor in the constituency vote, and the prohibiting nature of the system where independent candidates are concerned. The proportional element of the electoral system was not seen as a sufficiently big incentive to stand.

Cultural factors are also significant on this journey. There was a perception among participants of a (unconscious) bias of the party selectorate and the tendency to prefer the archetypal

candidate (usually white, male, straight, middle class). The lack of understanding around diversity is difficult to tackle. Ethnic minority candidates, women, as well as people with disabilities are especially affected by this.

"…if someone thinks of a politician the automatic picture that comes to the mind of very many people of an older generation, is a man of a certain age, with a wife, with the perfect 2.4 children and is a great family man, and I feel that is still there, even though it is improving, I think there is still that idea within those selecting within internal elections. They expect someone more traditional." (Inv_09)

Incentives

A **system of mentoring** was the most popular type of incentive to support potential candidates. Participants largely agreed that any mentoring support should satisfy the following criteria in order to be effective:

- It should be impartial;
- It should include shadowing of AMs;
- It should support candidates after standing, especially if they were unsuccessful.

- 48% of respondents are more likely to stand with advice from an Assembly Member mentor;
- 27.1% of respondents are much more likely to stand with advice from an Assembly Member mentor;
- This was supported by 83% of women;
- Supported by 68% of people with a disability;
- 10.3% of respondents had received advice from a mentor from a political party.

As well as formal mentoring and training, *having more information about the process of standing*, nomination and candidate selection was felt to be an important initiative by many participants. As one interviewee put it, '*wanting to know how the machine operates before I decide which role I would like in it*' (Inv_11). A former candidate said he was quite clued up on party politics but when he stood as an AM he had no idea what the process was. He said that this was partly down to parties as well as the information the Assembly provides for candidates (Inv_01).

An **'access to politics' fund** was supported by several participants. It was particularly debated in terms of supporting disabled candidates (Caernarfon) but participants on Loomio wanted to see a fund that could support those from other underrepresented groups as well. A financial support scheme with wider eligibility to fund travelling and campaigning expenses was supported in the survey as the second most popular incentive.

- 73.3% of respondents said that they would be more likely or much more likely to stand if an option of a loan or grant was possible;

- 45.5% more likely;

- 27.8% much more likely.

One suggestion from a female interviewee on tackling discrimination against female candidates was to *introduce gender quotas*, but she believed that this needed to be done as part of changes to the voting system (Inv_22).

A focus group participant suggested that *diversity quotas* for wider groups of people or a *change to a proportional system* should be implemented so that there is more opportunity to vote for diverse candidates (Aberystwyth).

The flexibility for careers of candidates was an issue raised by many and one focus group felt that 'not many employers' would be happy to give candidates that time. They then went on to discuss *ways to incentivise employers* such as putting a time limit on the position of an AM. (Wrexham).

Clearly, not all barriers identified here, and not all suggestions for change that came from our participants, are within the remit of the Remuneration Board. However, we believe there is scope for holistic action and wider debate on tackling some of the barriers highlighted above. We make recommendation for improving the engagement strategy of the Board through the provision of accessible information and contribution to mentoring and education schemes for prospective candidates.

BEING AN ASSEMBLY MEMBER

We were particularly interested to understand how the participants in this project saw the job of being an Assembly Member, and explore attitudes and beliefs with regards to different aspects of the role. In particular we wanted to know:

- how much people feel they actually know about the job;

- what aspects of the job were particularly appealing to them;

- what they perceived as possible unattractive aspects of the job;

- and ways in which they see the job of the Assembly Member changing into a more attractive prospect for a wider range of individuals.

We explored various themes, ranging from: information available about the role; salary and other benefits; level of support AMs get once in office; travel and accommodation arrangements; working arrangements; childcare; work-life balance; and job security. We wanted to discern what aspects of the job itself might be considered a barrier to standing, with the aim of drawing up recommendations for possible incentives.

Barriers

The discussion on what aspects of the job are off-putting for people revealed some interesting, mainly, institutional factors. These factors encompass:

- Knowledge about the role of being an AM

- Office support

- Travel and Accommodation

- Salary

- Job security

- Work/life balance

- Childcare

- Attitudes towards expenses

Knowledge about the Role of Being an AM

In terms of knowledge of the role of an AM, there was a disparity between survey results and interviews, focus groups and Loomio discussions:

- Amongst survey respondents, there was a good level of knowledge about the role; 7 being the most common response on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = nothing at all, 10 - a great deal);
- Most respondents answered 6 or above.

However, some people we spoke with felt that there is an information deficit and genuinely want to have more detailed information about the job:

"If you just google 'what does an AM do?' it would come up with the main stuff like 'they speak in the Senedd or whatever' but I think there needs to be more done to promote all the aspects that an Assembly Member does, not just speaking in the Senedd" (Inv_12)

"I know the Assembly Member for [constituency] and I know she's got an office, she's got staff and those staff have different roles and everything - so people need to know that that is available as well, that they will have the funding or whatever to be able to have an office of staff to support them. So you know, I don't think people really know what being an Assembly Member means." (Focus Group)

Respondents were concerned with finding out more information about the institutional provisions available to support them in office. The overall assumption of the participants was that once in office they will be well taken care of and that they will receive adequate support to setup their office. The issue of office support seemed to be particularly important to those individuals who felt they needed some form of assistance. It could act as a barrier if adequate support was not provided.

Travel and Accommodation

With travelling from north Wales and other parts of Wales to Cardiff being necessary for AMs, travel was always going to be a main concern for some about working in the Assembly. However, the survey results do not find travel and accommodation as major barriers to standing:

- 69% of survey respondents felt that travelling commitments were not an important barrier or were no barrier at all to considering standing as an Assembly Member;

- This may have been skewed by the geographical spread of respondents.

A different view emerged from focus groups, interviews and Loomio. The general finding is that, depending on where people are in Wales, travel can potentially be a barrier and an unattractive feature of the job. For those who identify geography and the need to travel to Cardiff for the role of an AM, the prospect of the weekly travelling has been described as 'difficult', 'horrendous', 'horrific', with travelling to Cardiff from north Wales being described by one participant as 'physically inaccessible'. Related to the issue of travelling is accommodation:

"I think if you are someone from the north, if you have a family you will want to be able to bring them with you and have that flexibility there and there are not many people who can afford to buy a house themselves in Cardiff and have a house in their constituency, and I think… members should have the right to be with their families with them while they are down in Cardiff. This idea of just being in a hotel room is maybe not the best or most suitable thing if you want to bring a young family with you. It's a challenge then if someone cannot afford isn't it, if the expectation is to be in a hotel for two or three nights a week and that's it, that is not going to be very comforting." (Inv_09)

Salary

We found that salary was not a prominent concern for most participants:

- 16% of respondents to the survey admitted they knew nothing at all about the remuneration package;
- Just over 50% of respondents gave a score of 0-5 (where 0 is nothing at all and 10 is a great deal in terms of knowledge of the remuneration package);
- 52% of respondents said that the current salary is 'neither a barrier nor an incentive' to standing.

Overall, the salary is not necessarily a major factor for the people who took part in the research. Whilst for some individuals it was not an attractive financial prospect, they would still consider standing, but this was largely dependant on the job of the respondent. On the other hand, some suggested lowering the salary so that it would appeal and feel more achievable 'to the ordinary man on the street' rather than the political class (Llanelli). Most respondents felt that the salary was not a barrier as it was more than adequate for the role - but it was not necessarily an incentive.

Job Security

Job (in)security is seen as an accepted feature of the role of an Assembly Member, and therefore a degree of the 'unknown' is accepted.

- 63% of survey respondents felt that the uncertain job security of being an AM was either not an important barrier or not a barrier at all;
- 26.8% of survey respondents felt it was an important barrier and would need support to overcome it.

Some people felt that the turnover of politicians was a good thing - as one interviewee told us: *"'You want to see a churn, you want to see new people coming into politics' (Inv_21).* However, some respondents felt that it could be off-putting:

"I know a few former AMs who lost their jobs in 2016 […] and then had to re-make their careers. Would they come back? I am not so sure - although most if not all are still involved in political activity behind the scenes. There is no job security, so you have to have a great deal of flexibility in career, life, family etc. to contemplate doing this. That excludes a lot of good, competent people."

Work/life balance

The issue of work/life balance was explored through perspectives on the effect working hours and travelling commitments had on AMs and on their families, issues around personal and family safety and emotional strain on personal lives.

- 42.1 % consider spending time away from their family and friends a significant or an important barrier;
- 39.9% consider personal and family safety an important or significant barrier.

"Not only is your life affected, but if you have a partner, their life is affected, your children's life if you have children, is affected. It's the whole structure of your family life that's affected." (Aberystwyth)

Childcare

Childcare issues were of major importance to many respondents when considering becoming an AM. Whilst the survey results might not necessarily reflect this, the interviews and focus groups in particular highlighted that to those who have childcare responsibilities, especially women and individuals with young families, this would be a barrier to standing:

- 57.4% of survey respondents felt that childcare is 'not a barrier, it would not affect my decision to stand';
- 22.6% of people said it was an important barrier to standing and that they would need support to overcome it;
- However, Women perceived childcare facilities a bigger incentive than men: 32% said it would increase the likelihood of them standing compared to 19% of men.

"Only last week I heard that the Assembly had gotten rid of the creche…because there were not enough people using it, so it's gone. My argument is that they shouldn't have got rid of it because it's going to make thing even more difficult for people when deciding if they should do this. There is not even a creche there any more so it is obviously not the job for me." (Aberystwyth)

Incentives

One of the most significant areas for change that participants in focus groups, interviews and on Loomio saw was *better provision of information and more engagement* with citizens with regards to the role of an AM. It was felt that more visibility, clarity and accessibility was needed for the general public to better understand the role of an AM.

Participants in Wrexham argued that the *language needed to be simplified* and introduced in a more accessible way so that the electorate, and importantly, young people can get engaged with the process of the Assembly.

An interviewee suggested *Assembly staff go through with candidates what it means to be an AM. This would take the party politics out of it and give candidates the information they need in order to know what they are going to be doing and what the challenges are* (Inv_08).

We found evidence that participants in our research genuinely think of the National Assembly and the job of an AM in terms of a 21st century workplace, where geographical barriers are best tackled by remote and flexible working and by the use of technology. Flexible working arrangements were generally seen as having the potential to mitigate against some of the negative effects of long travelling distances, accommodation costs and so on. *Remote working* came out particularly strong both in surveys and in focus groups.

Another interviewee said it was important for *Assembly Members to go out and engage with people about the role of an AM and the work the Assembly does* (Inv_14). One interviewee believed that *AMs have a role in inspiring their successor to come from their community by giving them one or two days a month of experience shadowing them* (Inv_20).

One interviewee said he would like to see *social media used to explain the work of AMs, and Ministers and Cabinet Secretaries*, in videos such as 'A day in the life of…' that show the different aspects of working as an AM (In_20).

There was also consensus that *there should be more information available with regards to the whole range of support that Assembly Members get*, including *a full breakdown of the salary of an AM, what they earn and their allowance* (Inv_20).

One interviewee said that *there needed to be a way of being able to claim expenses and support where it cannot be used as a political weapon* (Inv_03). Expenses were vital for one interviewee with a hearing impairment. She said that she would not be happy with her communication support being 'lumped in' with her personal expenses.

"It's about leadership and it's about how we frame access and equality issues and inclusion and getting that message across that you're not talking about making things inclusive for one person, if it's inclusive for that one person it is inclusive for many more people and benefits many more people." (Inv_05)

Recommendations for the Remuneration Board that derive from this part of the journey include; reviewing and clarifying the 'exceptional expenses' rules; consideration for aligning provisions on childcare support; and reviewing the appropriateness of flexible working and job share.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

In the previous sections we have presented our findings illustrating the perceptions, attitudes, and the lived experiences of individuals who either stood in an Assembly election, who intend to stand, or who are interested in standing. We have encountered many interesting viewpoints, concerns and ideas for change. In this section we move from the core specific aspects of the journey from being an aspirant to being an elected AM, to offering some interpretations on the more general political, cultural and environmental contexts that affect whether individuals want to stand or not. Naturally, not everything that we found will fall under the remit of the Remuneration Board. We will highlight a series of issues where the Remuneration Board can be part of a much broader conversation

Issues

The National Assembly and Diversity

Many of the issues raised during the discussions were wider cultural and individual factors. Diversity in the National Assembly was generally seen as being relatively strong in comparison with Westminster, but respondents considered there to be a notable absence of representation for particular groups including: disabled members, young people, BME people, and people from working class backgrounds.

- 70% of survey respondents thought young people were not sufficiently represented;
- 64% of survey respondents thought disabled people were not sufficiently represented;
- 59% of survey respondents thought that BME people were not sufficiently represented;
- 51% of survey respondents thought that working class people were not sufficiently represented.

"I've never seen, with all due respect, a whiter...middle class... and I just thought, the ethnic minorities...I was just observing that the only ethnic minorities represented within the Welsh Government, or within the Welsh Assembly or in the Senedd were the cleaners or the security. I thought, hang on, if we're seeing that we're going to be pioneering change that we are going to get more diversity in politics and we're the policy makers, and yet, we're sitting...in Cardiff Bay, one of the most multi-cultural, multi-diverse communities, and yet there is not one ethnic minority researcher, well there might be one or two that I might have overlooked." (Inv_20)

Lack of Understanding around Diversity

Several participants argued that diversity would be strengthened by people having an understanding of why diversity is a positive institutional factor in terms of good decision making. It was felt that the lack of understanding with regards to diversity was a wider issue for society and so all actors in the system had a role to play in promoting and encouraging diversity. This includes political parties, the National Assembly, and the electorate itself.

"There's certain individuals or certain personality types or gender types or whatever that tend to monopolise the political arena so it perpetuates those kind of standards in a way because no one comes into question it do they, so perhaps it's even more important that we have a diverse representation in these kind of establishments." (Merthyr Tydfil)

I think that the Assembly has a role as an institution to promote itself to try and get more people from a wider range to stand. [They need] resources and then ensure resources are promoted...If the Assembly came out and said, 'we need more women, disabled, LGBT, young people', if they made an emphasis on opening themselves up and say, 'we want these type of people to stand as candidates' that would I believe give the confidence for people like me and more people to stand." (Inv_12)

Abuse and Harassment

A perception of a political culture of abuse and harassment was raised as a barrier. In particular, participants were worried about an environment where personal matters could be raised and used in public, rather than the focus being on issues and policies. Some took a pragmatic and thick-skinned approach and felt that it was a part of the role, while, for others, it was an off-putting factor that they wanted to avoid. The fact that harassment was coming from several perspectives, where it could be driven by the public or the media, or driven for political gain between parties, makes it a complex issue to tackle. A former candidate recalled how colleagues and acquaintances would ignore her once they knew which party she stood for, and it's that culture that she did not like:

"If the culture was different, and the environment was different, and if it was much more about working with each other, and yes, exploring differences of opinion and accepting that and trying to improve the lives of people in Wales I would want to consider standing, but what I experienced didn't feel like that. I wouldn't want to be in that kind of system...No organisation is perfect...I'm not sure if I was naïve but I didn't think it would be quite like that in Wales." (Inv_13)

A BME candidate at local authority level had people asking them why they were standing in the local election because there was another BME candidate standing for another party:

"I've even had some of the advisors from another party come up to me and saying 'why are you standing?'…You could read in between the lines in that we've already got […] representing you, and I just thought, 'wow, oh my God, it's not even hidden'. I just thought that's disgusting. And I just said 'you've got to have words with yourself' and I said 'just evaluate what you have just said and put it in context'." (Inv_20)

Welsh Language and Identity

The ability to speak Welsh was raised as a personal barrier in the survey. When this was discussed in focus groups and interviews comments revolved around the issue of location, where the need to speak Welsh was perceived to be more prevalent in some areas than others, and an issue of identity. In particular, some participants raised personal factors, such as they did not feel Welsh enough or that they felt that they were being seen as 'too English'.

The issue of identity was also touched on in a wider sense than Englishness as well with one BME young woman saying that a future female BME candidate 'should feel like she's Welsh' and not just be there to fill a quota.

"It would be nice if we did have an ethnic minority woman, but I don't want it to be a quota. I want it to be that she feels like she represents Wales, she feels like she's Welsh and she exemplifies that but just through another realm of being Welsh." (Inv_10)

Education and Knowledge

Political education and the lack of public knowledge about Welsh politics were seen as barriers to the general public being more involved with the National Assembly. Several focus groups pointed out that this leads to apathy and disillusionment with the institution. Political education for young people was seen as a key way of encouraging more interest and engagement with Welsh politics and the National Assembly.

"Education is a huge one for me, because everybody that I speak to about politics in Wales, not everybody, the majority of people, know very little about the Welsh Assembly, what goes on or about what it takes to be a member or a politician, you know" (Llanelli)

Wider cultural and societal matters are naturally beyond the direct powers of the Board. However, we believe that the Board can make a contribution to assist with tackling the challenging political culture that candidates face through liaising with other actors and contributing to education initiatives.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the context of these findings, and the further context of the Board's own strategic objectives, we set out our recommendations:

R1: The Board should review / design a clear public engagement and outreach strategy.

R2: As part of the strategy, the Board should review its provision of information and use of external communication channels. This would entail a redesign of the Remuneration Board website and use of other platforms in line with principles of:

A. **Interactivity:** moving away from static to more dynamic content. For instance the Board could create short videos about the range of expenses AMs can claim, and the rules for claiming expenses, but also about the support AMs receive in their roles.

B. **Accessibility:** create and publish easy read versions for all major reports and disseminate via multiple channels and formats;

C. **Two way communication:** move away from the 'push' of information to establishing dialogue with stakeholders i.e. interactive webinars.

R3: As part of the new strategy the Board should consider liaising with relevant internal stakeholders (i.e. the Assembly Education Services) to review what type of content and material they can feed into the Assembly's outreach, education and engagement initiatives.

R4: As part of the new strategy the Board should liaise with relevant internal stakeholders (i.e. the Assembly Commission) to review how to improve the visibility of the National Assembly and the Remuneration Board across Wales: holding more meetings across Wales; participate in an 'Open Senedd Week', or candidate 'roadshows', to bring information about standing as an AM into communities.

R5: As part of the strategy, the Board should consider regular engagement with external stakeholders (i.e. political parties, campaign groups, non political leadership and mentoring programmes, prospective candidates not affiliated to political parties). The Board should provide early information and guidance regarding the determination and support available.

R6: The Board should consider ways it could provide shadowing opportunities or open some of its meetings to the public to better publicise its own work.

R7: Consider aligning its provisions on childcare support (expenses and facilities) with:

A. the sitting of the Assembly, and

B. the schedule of AMs to include commuting time (early morning and late evening)

R8: The Board should raise with the Assembly Commission for consideration:

    A. Reviewing the appropriateness of provisions around flexible working (including remote voting) and explore other ways in which technology could facilitate the work of Assembly Members.

    B. The merits of job shares, or second jobs, for Assembly Members.

R9: Consider reviewing the 'exceptional expenses' rules, clarify in what situations these apply, and better publicise the more specific support offered (i.e. specific support available for people with a disability).

R10: The Board should consider whether it is possible to give allowances to AMs to support shadowing opportunities and work experiences for people from their constituencies and regions. For example, an allowance to support constituents to travel to the National Assembly for a shadowing opportunity could be provided for AMs through their remuneration package. The Board should consider what type of rules should be in place to support this.

R11: The Board should explore with organisations like the Electoral Commission, the National Assembly, and the Welsh Government, how an *Access to Politics* fund could be established for candidates. Such a fund should be used to support disabled candidates and candidates from other underrepresented groups.

In addition, there are a series of areas where a much broader conversation is necessary. We recognise that the Board may not have immediate scope to act on these, but it is important to have this conversation with the Board's stakeholders. Further research and consultation is required in order to address some of the critical barriers to diversity addressed in this report:

- A non-politically affiliated 'one stop shop' advice website for candidates would address some of the information deficit, limitations and barriers encountered by some candidates along the journey from being interested in politics to actually standing for elections. This should contain Remuneration Board approved content on the remuneration package, the job itself, additional support offered to AMs and rules for claiming expenses.

- The Board should contribute to the debate, with other relevant actors (EHRC, Electoral Commission, political parties etc), on the implementation of diversity quotas and diversity monitoring and reporting at all stages in the candidates' journey.

- The extent to which the nature of electoral campaigning is limiting diversity requires further research. The Electoral Commission and the Electoral Reform Society are perhaps the most relevant actors, together with the Assembly Commission, in starting a conversation along these lines.

- Tackling issues of abuse and harassment of candidates and elected politicians would require a cross party dialogue and consultation involving political parties, the Standards Commissioner, and other civil society organisations and public bodies.