

13th November 2019

Dear Standards of Conduct Committee,

We write to you as organisations fighting for gender equality, who are increasingly concerned about the levels of abuse and harassment levelled at women in public life. This is clearly a widespread issue, and not one just confined to the Assembly, however there is a role for each and every institution to tackle this.

We have long been concerned that the role of Standards Commissioner has not been robust enough to provide a meaningful response to the issues seen in today's politics.

The events of the past few days have highlighted even further to us that the role of Standards Commissioner needs urgent reform.

There is now an opportunity to deliver that reform. We are calling for:

- The Standards Commissioner role to be replaced by a panel to ensure experience and expertise in dealing with sexual harassment cases as well as a wide range of other issues. It is clear that one person can not have the expertise required to cover a range of fields.
- The appointment must take account of diversity
- Specialist support to be offered to the panel as required.
- Stronger teeth for the next commissioners with increased sanctions around abuse and harassment.
- Mechanisms to be developed to allow the commissioners to investigate incidents beyond the current timeframe of 12 months and to allow for cases that include multiple complainants.

We look forward to your response to these calls and engaging in a dialogue with you about this.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Catherine Fookes'.

Catherine Fookes, WEN Wales
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Welsh Government

Frances Beecher, Llamau
Lynne Tedik, Soroptimist International Wales South Representative.
Mutale Merrill, Bawso
Sarah Rees, Women's Equality Party
Rachel Cable, Oxfam Cymru
Rhian Davies, Disability Wales
Eleri Butler, Welsh Women's Aid
Auriol Miller, Institute of Welsh Affairs

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