

EQUAL REPRESENTATION COALITION

POLICY

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This guidance is for political parties and their regional structures and branches in Scotland who want to increase the diversity of their membership, candidates and staff. It accompanies the Equal Representation in Politics online self-assessment tool and is an additional bonus module, summarising the internal policies you should have. It also discusses how you can make sure equality and diversity is referenced in your party policy.

Because this is a bonus module, we would encourage you to complete other sections of the tool before you try this one.

Why we need internal policies

Internal policies, documents and plans allow parties to set a positive culture and make equality and diversity a bigger priority for the organisation. In a busy, political environment, it is all too easy for people in overrepresented groups to ignore the barriers underrepresented groups face. Inequality is structural and without positive action and planning, equal representation will never be achieved for LGBTI people, women, ethnic minority and disabled people. Internal policies can go some way to addressing these issues and ensure everybody in the party understands the agreed way forward. Internal policies also help organisations respond quickly to events or behaviour outside their immediate control, for example, abusive press coverage about a candidate.

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However, whilst writing policies is a good thing, there is no point having a policy which has no influence on your practice. Equal representation requires changes to the practice of political parties.

Each section of this tool has a checklist which includes the internal policies you should have and use day to day. These include but are not limited to:

- A welfare and inclusion policy (see 'Attitudes and Assumptions')
- Positive action in your selection processes (see 'Selecting Candidates')
- An accessibility policy (see 'Selecting Candidates' and 'Events, Activities and Elections')
- Best practice in recruitment policies. For example: flexible working, maternity, sick pay, fair recruitment etc. (see 'Selecting Candidates')
- A bullying and harassment policy (see 'Party Culture')
- A communications and media policy (see 'Media and Messaging')
- A social media and online behaviour policy (see 'Media and Messaging')

Reflecting equality and diversity in party policy

All policy decisions have an impact (positive or negative) on the lives and experiences of people from underrepresented groups. In every policy decision you make, you should be considering the equalities impact of your actions on ethnic minorities, women, LGBTI people, and disabled people. This includes decisions which might not immediately seem relevant, such as financial or business policy. Actions you can take include: regularly doing an equalities impact assessment of your policy or providing equalities training for your manifesto or policy and research team.

When developing policy, it can also be helpful to involve and consult people from underrepresented groups to understand whether there are additional impacts on these groups which you have not considered or been aware of. You may already have networks within the party who represent people from underrepresented

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groups who you can ask and involve on these issues. If not, you should consider reserving a place on you manifesto or policy team for people from underrepresented groups who can give you expertise in this area.