

EQUAL REPRESENTATION COALITION

SELECTING CANDIDATES

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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. The free online tool enables you to assess how inclusive your current practices and activities are and provides tailored advice, guidance and an action plan of the steps you can take to advance equality and diversity in your activities.

Equality in our politics and our political institutions is beneficial for everyone. Being fair and inclusive will allow you to attract a diverse range of members to your party and will enrich your policy discussions. Diversity improves democracy at all levels of communities and could have a positive impact on the success of your political party.



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This guidance provides parties with information and advice about how the processes by which you select candidates for election and recruit staff can have an impact on the diversity of your party.

There is a checklist on page [x] which suggests actions that your party should take to improve your equalities practice in this area.

Positive action

Fewer minority ethnic, disabled, LGBTI people and women are selected to stand as candidates for political parties which results in fewer of them being elected to local councils or national parliaments. The reasons why fewer people from minority groups are selected are complex. They are discussed in more detail in the 'Attitudes and Assumptions' section of the Equal Representation in Politics tool.

To address the barriers which underrepresented groups face in being selected as candidates, parties need to take positive action. Positive action is used to describe steps which help or encourage groups of people who face discrimination or barriers to being involved in work, volunteering activities, and public life. Positive action is lawful under the Equality Act and is a helpful way of increasing the diversity of your candidates. You should be considering positive action to increase the number of women, minority ethnic, disabled and LGBTI people selected as candidates for your party. Scotland has several different voting systems and various forms of positive action might be appropriate for different selections.

Positive actions to increase the number of women selected include gender-balancing methods such as:

- **Gender quotas** where you stipulate a certain percentage of your candidates have to be women
- **Zippering lists** where you alternate women and men on a council or regional list
- **All women shortlists** where only women are able to stand in certain seats



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Other positive actions you should consider are:

- Targets for the number of disabled, ethnic minority and LGBTI candidates. For example, 1 in 5 people in Scotland are disabled. You could have a target that 20% of your candidates would be disabled
- Where a sitting member steps down, the national party might stipulate that post should be reserved for someone from an underrepresented group
- Acknowledging that some of your membership might not identify as a man or a women and making sure your target or quota system recognises that. For example: stating that the number of your candidates who identify as male and female won't differ by more than 1. This would enable non-binary people to be selected as candidates without preventing you from reaching a target that 50% of your candidates would be women
- Using the above positive actions in selection processes for your internal committees

The difference between a target and a quota

There is often confusion about the difference between targets and quotas and what legislation says about them. Targets are aspirational goals which a political party might set itself but not mandate any of its office bearers to achieve. Quotas, on the other hand, are mandated outcomes decided by your party. Quotas on the numbers of women candidates, for example, will mostly likely have been made by a policy decision at your National Committee or Party Conference and therefore your party has decided must be achieved. There is currently no legislation about targets or quotas for political parties in Scotland.

For more information about quotas and how they work see [this report](#) from Engender.

The importance of data

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It is clear there has been some modest progress in improving the diversity of political parties in Scotland. However, it is often difficult for parties and the public to quantify the extent of this progress due to the lack of equalities data which is collected. Accurate data about the number of members, candidates, and representatives who identify as an ethnic minority, women, disabled and LGBTI is essential if we are to identify and overcome barriers to involvement in politics.

All parties should ask new members to fill in an equalities monitoring form and each year review the diversity of their membership. Where you identify that a group is underrepresented you should investigate why. This might involve asking members from that underrepresented group about their experiences or approaching people who aren't members to ask them why they aren't involved.

Many people don't understand why an organisation would want their personal information. Helping people to understand why this information is being gathered, how it's used, and who will see it is key to collecting useful data and giving members confidence in your processes. The information you collect can then be used to address practices which might be a barrier for people. This could include:

- Making changes to how you run your activities
- Taking positive action in your selection processes
- Improving how you address bullying and harassment in the party

For more information about how to make your campaigning, events and meetings more inclusive please see the '**Events, elections and activities**' section of the Equal Representation in Politics Tool.

For more information about how to recognise and tackle bullying and harassment in your party please see the '**Organisational culture**' section of the Equal Representation in Politics Tool.

Collecting information about candidates

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You will probably ask people to fill in an application form when registering their interest in becoming a candidate. You should think about whether the information you are asking for is necessary for the role, whether the form is inclusive, and who in the party has access to the personal details of potential candidates.

For example, women who are victims of gender-based violence will often be unable to widely share their home address for personal safety reasons and may be discouraged from standing simply because you ask for this on the registration form. You should consider whether it is necessary for all members of the selection team to have access to the personal data of candidates and clearly state how the information collected from candidates will be used. In addition, any forms you ask people to fill in should always be available in large print and alternative formats, and people should be able to fill these out and submit them electronically.

You might be using the information you collect to do background checks on potential candidates or assess their suitability for the position. Be aware that for some people, revealing personal information may be a difficult process. For example, people from the trans community might not identify with a previous name. You should take steps to ensure that information about candidates is kept confidential and during selection only ask candidates questions which are directly relevant to their skills or the role of being an elected representative or that you need to know in order to offer support or prepare for potential media attention.

Equalities data about candidates

It is good practice for parties to ask potential candidates anonymous equalities monitoring questions. The data can be used to monitor if actions taken to address diversity in your candidates are having an impact. You should think carefully about the equalities monitoring form you use and always include space for people themselves to write how they identify rather than just having a list of identities and tick boxes.

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Stonewall Scotland has a useful [resource](#) which includes examples of some questions you could consider including.

Releasing equalities data

Public scrutiny of parties and their commitment to equality and diversity is important during an election. To assure voters you take diversity seriously, parties should be releasing equalities data about your candidates before an election. You should then be re-surveying your successfully elected representatives and releasing that data as soon as possible after the election.

Smaller parties with a small number of candidates and/or fewer seats will need to consider whether releasing data about a person's identity might unintentionally release personal or traceable information about a candidate into the public domain without their consent. For example, if you only have two candidates and you send a press release saying 50% of your candidates are disabled, it might be possible for the public to work out who that person is. Also be aware that people might not disclose their identity in all areas of their lives. For example, an LGBTI candidate might have disclosed their identity to friends in the party but not wish this to be made public.

If any of the above is a concern, make sure you speak to the person to ensure they are happy with you releasing information about them before you do it.

To summarise, the action parties should be taking on equalities data are:

- Using an equalities monitoring form when people put themselves forward to be a candidate and again after they are elected
- Have someone at the count to collect the equalities data at each of the counts
- Having an agreed timeline for releasing equalities data after selection and after your candidates have been elected

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- Ensure equalities information is anonymous unless you have the consent of the people involved

Vetting/Selection panels

Although each party has a very different process for vetting and selecting candidates, one common part is potential candidates being interviewed by a selection panel. It is important to think about equality and diversity when preparing for and doing a selection interview. You should have an accessibility policy to ensure your selection process is inclusive. Make sure that information given to selection panels about how to conduct the interview includes guidance about diversity and recognising and overcoming unconscious bias. You could consider running equalities training for people who are involved in selection. Also think about the diversity of the panel and always have two or more people responsible for choosing who is successful.

Fair recruitment

Lack of diversity amongst staff is an issue which political parties need to be aware of and work to address. Politics is a small world, and research shows that most of us are more likely to recruit people to positions of influence who are similar to ourselves, have been recommended to us, or who we have worked with before. Having a wide diversity of staff is just as important as having diverse candidates. It helps create an inclusive environment and will help you develop campaigns which speak to all sections of society. Some actions you should be doing are:

- Widely advertising staff positions inside and outside the party
- Allowing equivalent but different experience to count in applications
- Signing up to the two ticks recruitment scheme
- Have paid work experience schemes for people from underrepresented groups
- Having pay scales and regular pay reviews



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- Striving for best practice in recruitment including: avoiding use of short term and zero hours contracts, a bullying and harassment policy, fair maternity and paternity policy, fair sickness pay policy

You might not have paid staff at every level of the party but the principles of fair recruitment are still relevant when recruiting volunteers. For more information please see the 'Attitudes and Assumptions' section of the Equal Representation in Politics Tool.

Equality Champions within the party

Your elected representatives and candidates are the public face of your party and often have an influence on the views of your voters and members. Choosing candidates who have a personal commitment to equality and diversity and can act as a champion of these issues will be beneficial in promoting diversity within the party. It might encourage more people from underrepresented groups to become members.

Some actions you could try are:

- Including questions about a personal commitment to equality and diversity in your selection process/candidate selection days
- Including a statement in support of inclusivity in candidate declarations or candidate application forms
- Encouraging members to ask questions about equalities issues at candidate hustings
- Having an equality and diversity spokesperson

Developing potential candidates

Deciding to stand for election is a big decision, which requires confidence and knowledge about how the electoral system works. Most people don't suddenly decide they want to be a candidate, especially people who have been structurally disadvantaged in politics including: disabled people, minority ethnic groups, LGBTI

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people and women. To increase the number of candidates from underrepresented groups you will need to take positive actions to develop members from underrepresented groups into potential candidates.

There are positive examples of mentoring, training, and development programmes which already exist in political parties in Scotland. However, it is essential that these programmes are funded and have the support of either staff or the local party committee.

Some actions you can take are:

- A funded training and development programme for people from underrepresented groups. Don't expect people to run this themselves
- Holding skills sharing sessions for members to develop new skills
- Funded peer support programmes and networks for people from underrepresented groups (for more information about peer support see the 'Party Culture' section of the tool)
- Plan ahead and start encouraging people to stand a while before the election. People need time to consider



CHECKLIST

<p><u>Positive action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive actions to promote gender-balancing are considered • Positive actions to encourage more candidates who identify as gender non-binary are considered • Targets for the number of disabled, ethnic minority and LGBTI candidates are considered • Positive action is considered for use in internal elections • Members understand the differences between targets and quotas 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Equality Champions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions about a personal commitment to equality are included in candidate selection events/panels/meetings • Including statement in support of inclusivity in candidate declarations or candidate application forms is considered • Members are encouraged to ask questions about equalities issues at candidate hustings • The party appoints an equality and diversity spokesperson 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Data collection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is ongoing equalities monitoring of the party membership • Where an underrepresented group in the membership is identified, action is taken to address practices which might be a barrier for people • Personal information about candidates is kept confidential • During selection, candidates are only asked questions which are directly relevant to their skills or the role • Anonymous equalities monitoring of both selected and successfully elected candidates take place • There is an agreed timeline for releasing equalities data after selection and after an election result 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

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<p><u>Fair Recruitment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff posts are widely advertised inside and outside the party <input type="checkbox"/> • Equivalent but different experience is considered in applications <input type="checkbox"/> • Signing up to the two ticks recruitment scheme is considered <input type="checkbox"/> • Paid work experience schemes for people from underrepresented groups is considered <input type="checkbox"/> • There are published staff pay scales and regular pay reviews <input type="checkbox"/> • Best practice employment guidelines are followed <input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Training and development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a funded training and development programme for people from underrepresented groups <input type="checkbox"/> • Skills sharing sessions for members to develop new skills are considered <input type="checkbox"/> • There is a funded peer support programme or networks for people from underrepresented groups <input type="checkbox"/> • People are encouraged to stand early in the election cycle <input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>